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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST 1948-1951: BRITAIN AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

by
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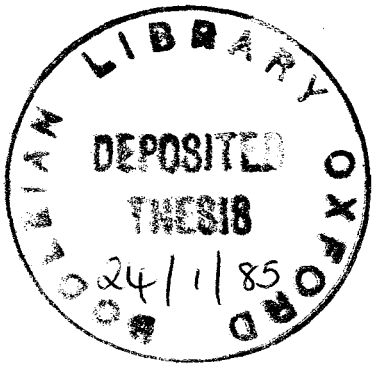

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Abstract

This work is an analysis of Britain's policy towards the Palestine question in the post-mandatory era. The British Foreign Office advocated the partition of Mandatory Palestine between Israel and Jordan. The thesis examines the circumstances which led to the formulation of this policy and the stages of its implementation. A major theme of the thesis is that one of the most important effects of Britain's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict was the overlooking of the importance of giving the other Arab states and the Palestinians a role in the solution of the conflict.

The introduction analyses Britain's Middle East policy as a function of two main features: Britain's close alliance with Transjordan; and its pragmatic adaptability to developments in the area.

The first chapter describes Britain's policy towards the 1948 war. Britain's endorsement of Abdullah's plans to annex the West Bank - which had been allotted to the Arab Palestinians in the UN 1947 partition resolution - enabled Britain to determine, to some extent, the outcome of the war. The second chapter describes British involvement in the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan, which ended with the creation of greater Transjordan. The third chapter treats Britain's approach to the refugee problem, which was forged by its fear that a Palestinianized Jordan would be anti-western. The results of this attitude are analysed in chapters two and three.

The last two chapters describe the evolvement of Britain's policy towards Israel, which consisted in attempting to balance two conflicting interests:on the one hand, it aimed to keep its dominant role in the Arab world, on the other, it perceived Israel as a strategic asset for the Western Alliance. Thus, towards the end of this period, solving the local conflict was overshadowed by the determination to secure Israeli and Hashemite loyalty to NATO.

The analysis given in this work was not possible before as it relies on new primary sources - only recently made available in British, Israeli and American archives.

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ADS	-	Arab Development Society
AHC	-	Arab Higher Committee
ALA	-	Arab Liberation Army
ASoS	-	Acting Secretary of State
bga	-	Ben Gurion Archives
BMEO	-	British Middle East Office
CiC	-	Commander in Chief
CID	-	Criminal Investigation Department
CO	-	Colonial Office
CoS	-	Chiefs of Staff
ERP	-	European Recovery Programme
ESM	-	Economic Survey Mission
GA	-	General Assembly
GHQ BTE	-	General Headquarters British Troops in Egypt
GHQ MELF	-	General Headquarters Middle East Forces
GOC	-	General Officer Commanding
HC	-	House of Commons
HC (Jerusalem)		High Commissioner in Palestine
IDF	-	Israeli Defence Forces
IFO	-	Israeli Foreign Office
IPC	-	Iraqi Petroleum Company
IRC	-	International Red Cross
IRO	-	International Refugee Organization
ISA	-	Israeli State Archives
MAC	-	Mixed Armistice Committee
MEAC	-	Middle East Allied Command
MI	-	Military Intelligence
MoD	-	Ministry of Defence
NEA	-	Near Eastern Affairs Division in the State Department
NER	-	Near East Radio
ONEAA	-	Office of Near Eastern and Asian Affairs in the State Department
PCC	-	Palestine Conciliation Commission
PGI	-	Provisional Government of Israel
PUSC	-	Permanent Under Secretary of State Committee
TC	-	Trusteeship Council
UNRPR	-	United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees
UN UK NY	-	United Kingdom delegation to the UN, New York
UNWRA	-	United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees

Introduction

British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in the years under review was the outcome of two basic factors: Britain's alliance with Transjordan; and Britain's pursual of an ad hoc policy. This introduction will deal with those two elements. British policy towards the Palestine question was based on the strong Anglo-Transjordanian alliance which dated back to 1921, when the Cairo conference of the Colonial Office decided to offer the rulership of Transjordan to Amir Abdullah.[1] The reaffirmation of the British commitment to the Amir in 1948 is in many ways the point of departure for our story. However, it seems that not only British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was affected by the Transjordanian orientation of the Foreign Office; Britain's general Arab policy was as well. The second important feature of British policy towards the conflict was the pragmatism of the Foreign Office and Mr. Bevin. Their ad hoc policy enabled the British government both to accept the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East and to play a decisive role in the negotiations following the Palestine war of 1948.

The combination of Britain's pragmatic attitude to the new developments in the area with its Transjordanian orientation turned Britain into an important party to the Jewish-Transjordanian understanding which shaped the political border of post-mandatory Palestine. The British support for the partitioning of Palestine between Transjordan and the Jewish state cohered with the policies of both these states. The three parties, the British, the Transjordanian

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1. R. Bullard, Britain and the Middle East (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), p.113.

the Transjordanians and the Jews advocated the division of Palestine according to the UN General Assembly's partition resolution of November 1947. However, whereas the UN proposed the partitioning of Palestine between an Arab and a Jewish state, the three parties divided Palestine between the Jews and the Hashemites. The idea of a 'Greater Transjordan' that is, of the proposal that the UN Arab state in Palestine be annexed to Transjordan, became the basis of British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948-51.

A. British influence and position in Transjordan.

'We are by force of circumstance and in recognition of King Abdullah's loyalty to us, basing our policy in Palestine and in the Middle East generally, to [a] pretty large extent on the maintenance of a stable Transjordan, particularly in relation with us'.[1]

The withdrawal from Palestine in May 1948 left Britain with the need to review its Middle East policy in general and its policy towards the question of Palestine in particular. Both the Foreign Office and the Army believed that the future of Britain's position in ex-mandatory Palestine depended on the loyalty and strength of the Hashemite Kingdom.

The British and American fear that the Middle East would turn into a secondary theatre, in case of war with the USSR, and the knowledge that they could not reinforce this theatre, was the reason for Britain's concentration on building and strengthening the Legion, by reinforcing it with British officers.[2] Palestine and Transjordan were

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1. The head of the Eastern Department in FO 371/68864, E13842, FO Minute, 8.10.48.
2. E. Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's Arab Policy', St. Antony's Papers, No. 11 (London, 1961), p.13.

seen as the last defence line in the path of a possible enemy invasion of the area, which, according to British and American estimates, would be aimed at the Suez Canal and the oilfields of Arabia.[1]

During the years 1948 to 1949, it was felt in the Foreign Office that the new Jewish state was, at best, neutral in its attitude towards the East-West conflict, and at worst pro-Communist. Thus Israel, it was felt, could not be trusted to serve British and American interests, whereas Abdullah succeeded in convincing the British that his and their interests coincided with regard to Palestine. The British Legation in Amman shared this view of the King and conveyed the message to London that the stability and strength of Transjordan depended on its ability to maintain control over Palestine and its readiness to resist Jewish and non-Hashemite Arab dominance there.[2]

Nevertheless, there was little doubt in London that in time of war, Egypt was far more important than Transjordan as a strategic asset.[3] Yet, what the King and the pro-Hashemite school in the Foreign Office succeeded in doing was to deliver the message that in time of peace and for the sake of British interests in the Arab world, Transjordan was an important asset, and probably more valuable than Egypt. The pro-Hashemite school succeeded to such an extent that, during the period 1948-1951 every Transjordanian problem, whether external or internal, became a British problem.

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1. FO 371/68378, E4319, Notes on Intermezzo (exercising a Russian invasion to the Middle East) 9.3.48; FO 371/80457, E1197, MoD to GHQ MELF, December 1950.
2. See Chapter Two.
3. The memories of the Germans sweeping over the continent were still vivid in the mind of British generals and politicians, hence the importance of Egypt: 'In the event of an attack on the British Isles, it is none of the principle areas for which offensive air action can be taken against the aggressors' (FO 371/75067, E13989, PUSC, 30.4.49. See also A. Bullock, Bevin, p.272. Also the HQ of the British Middle East forces.

It seems that Transjordan became so important because it was loyal in an area which had become, at best, neutral with regard to the bipolar conflict and, at worst, increasingly hostile to British interests. As the minister in Amman had described it: Britain was putting all its eggs in one basket since 'all the other baskets are unwilling to accommodate our eggs'.[1]

Abdullah had been attempting since the 1930s to prove his usefulness and importance to Britain, first by participating in the Allied war effort in the Middle East and then by promising to protect British interests in Palestine.

Nevertheless, it was in the interest of both countries to refute allegations that Abdullah was Britain's protegé. Abdullah sought to strengthen his position in the Arab world by trying to implement the Greater Syria plan. The last attempt in this direction was made in July 1947, before the Syrian National elections, when the King contemplated the annexation of the Jebel Druze through the help of the Atrash family, the ruling Druze family in that area. The scheme failed owing to Glubb's opposition and refusal to use the Legion.[2] Abdullah had realized that only in Palestine did his ambitions and British interests coincide.

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1. FO 371/68864, E13843, Kirkbride to Burrows, 21.10.48.
2. Abdullah suggested that the Druze would boycott the elections, and according to the British Legation in Damascus, Glubb and Abdullah, promised military assistance if the Atrash family would declare its wish to annex Jebel Druze to Transjordan. According to this version, Abdullah changed his mind after ten days, and in the meanwhile the Syrians had armed the Atrash enemies in the Jebel thus greatly weakening the Atrashes. Glubb denied this version. In December 1947, Abdullah conveyed to Kamal Jumblat in the Shuf mountains a similar message, namely his desire to assist the Druze against the Syrians, but by that time, Palestine occupied everybody's minds. See FO 371/68403, E300, Damascus to FO, 13.1.48 and E2001, Amman to FO, 24.4.48.

Britain hoped that the conclusion of the 1946 Anglo-Transjordanian treaty, which was followed by the Kingdom's declaration of independence, would refute the accusation of British dominance in Transjordan. However, the cool reception accorded to the treaty by the Arab World, indicated that Abdullah's image in the region had not improved.[1] The main object of criticism was the clause which allowed Britain to station troops on Transjordanian soil.[2]

It was Abdullah who decided to exploit the reaction in the Arab World as a pretext for negotiating the revision of the treaty.[3] However, it seems that the King cared less about Arab reaction, contrary to what Monroe and Wright seem to imply, than about the situation in Palestine.[4] The King sent his premier to London with the proposal that the British and the Hashemites co-ordinate their policies towards the Palestine question. As will be illustrated in the first chapter, the King suggested the division of Palestine between the future Jewish state and Transjordan. It was the British Foreign Secretary who first introduced the idea of the annexation to Transjordan of those areas in Palestine allotted to the Arabs in the UN partition resolution of November 1947. The circumstances in which this solution for the Palestine question - the Greater Transjordan concept - emerged, will be elaborated upon in the next pages.

The revision of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty was also discussed during this meeting in London. The revised treaty served to strengthen

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1. E. Wright, 'Abdullah's Jordan, 1947-1951', MEJ 5 (1951), pp.439-460.
2. E. Monroe, Britain's moment in the Middle East, 1914-1971 2nd edition, (Chatto and Windus: 1981), p.156.
3. See in more detail in Chapter One.
4. Monroe, Bevin, p.13; Wright, op.cit., pp.439-460. Shwadran adds that Abdullah needed a revision in order to facilitate his admission to the UN, in B. Shwadran, Jordan: A State of Tension, NY Council for Middle East Press, p.217; see FO 816/110, Amman to FO, 18.3.48.

British control and influence in Transjordan. Whereas the negotiations with Egypt and Iraq on defence treaties had proved to be an ordeal for the Foreign Office and the CoS, the talks with Transjordan were a comparatively easy task. Owing to Britain's dominant role in Transjordan, the CoS had little problem in agreeing to the revision of the 1946 treaty. In fact, the CoS recommended to the Foreign Secretary to revise the treaty and comply with the Transjordanians request since they realised that the treaty's substance and spirit would not be altered.[1]

The main amendment in the 1948 revised treaty concerned the relationship of the CoS with the Legion. The direct British control over the Legion was replaced by a joint board of defence.[2] The British hoped to reduce the impression of complete British control by excluding Glubb Pasha from this body. However, its chairman was a British officer.[3] Thus, in practice, nothing had changed. Moreover, the CoS sent two directives to the joint board, after the treaty had been concluded. One was sent to the board itself, emphasizing the relevant article in the treaty which called for co-operation, whereas the second one was sent only to the British members of the board. This latter directive stated that the board was incorporated in the British military organization in the Middle East, and that it had become subordinated to the CiC Middle East Forces.[4]

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1. FO 371/68818, Brief for Mr. Bevin's meeting with Abu Al-Huda, 6.2.48, CoS (48)24(0), 29.1.48.
2. Article 3a, Annex to the 1948 draft treaty in FO 371/68818, E1899, FO Minute, Pyman, 3.2.48.
3. FO 816/118, Amman to FO, February 1948; FO 371/68819, E2433, Burrows to Kirkbride, 20.2.48.
4. See chart I in the appendix; FO 371/68818, E2994, Burrows FO Minute, 2.3.48. JP(48)17, 24.2.48; FO 816/113, Amman to FO, 2.3.48.

There was no intention of involving the board in the preparation for the war in Palestine. In fact they rejected Abdullah's appeal to convene the board before the termination of the British Mandate as they had no intention, unlike Abdullah, of becoming militarily involved in Palestine.[1]

As could have been anticipated, the treaty was widely condemned throughout the Arab World. After all, it was almost the same draft that the Iraqis had rejected.[2] With respect to the latter, the Foreign Office was convinced that the unpopularity of the Iraqi government, and not of the treaty, was the cause of such strong opposition in Iraq to the revised treaty.[3] This was a manifestation of the general British tendency to play down the importance of the Arab opposition to the revised treaty. In the same way the Office believed that the opposition was initiated by the Syrians, owing to their animosity towards King Abdullah and their fear of his ambitions towards Greater Syria.[4]

It was not merely military dominance which the British had enjoyed in Transjordan. Their political influence was no less important. It was due to Sir Alec Kirkbride's immense influence on King Abdullah that

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1. FO 816/113, Amman to SoS, 24.4.48.
2. Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda explained later that the Transjordanian parliament did not have to approve the treaty as was the case in Iraq; FO 816/113, Abu Al-Huda to Bevin, 20.3.48. The nationalistic pressure of some Iraqi politicians and Nuri As-Said desire to strengthen the alliance with Britain contributed to the Iraqi determination to negotiate a revision of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty in the summer of 1947. In January 1948, the revised treaty was agreed upon, but was rejected by the Iraqi politicians who did not participate in the Portsmouth talks and was never ratified by the Iraqi parliament; see E. Penrose, Iraq: International Relations and National Development (London: Benn, 1978), p.112; C. Hollingworth, The Arabs and the West (London: Methuen and Co., 1952), p.73.
3. FO 371/68443f, E931, Baghdad to FO, 21.1.48.
4 FO 371/68385, E4371, FO Memo, 1.3.48.

Britain could rely without any hesitation on Transjordan's co-operation and loyalty. As Elizabeth Monroe has summarised it: since Jordan was an absolute monarchy, an agreement with Abdullah was an agreement with Jordan.[1] This was certainly the case until 1949, when the King's position was undermined considerably owing to the emergence of a Palestinian public opinion in the country.

Kirkbride enjoyed a position similar to a Colonial High Commissioner and together with Glubb occupied the most important position in the country after the King and his premier. In a letter to the head of the Eastern Department, Bernard Burrows, Kirkbride admitted that he was so well informed about the King's state of mind, and influenced his decisions to such an extent, that it caused him embarrassment. As he explained: 'As a result of our long association (27 years) King Abdullah had got into the habit of informing me of what he had in mind, in both official and private matters with such a frankness which is sometimes startling'.[2] The Minister in Amman was embarrassed since he conveyed Abdullah's thoughts to London, and this information was sometimes used to rebuke the King.[3]

Both in London and in Amman it was realised that a British representative with a similar standing should be found to replace Kirkbride- Furthermore, every efort was made so that Abdullah's heir apparent, Prince Talal, would be under British influence as much as his father was. In October 1948, Kirkbride reported that Talal, who in the early years of the Second World War displayed an anti-British attitude

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1. Monroe, Mr Bevin, p.113.
2. FO 371/68818, E2832, Kirkbride to Burrows, 16.2.48.
3. Ibid.

and was therefore excluded from the succession to the throne, had considerably mended his ways and could be trusted to be pro-British.[1] Kirkbride advised that a Foreign Office official who spoke Arabic should be sent to win the confidence of Talal since Kirkbride 'will not last for ever'.[2] According to Kirkbride, the establishment by him of personal influence over Talal would be, the principle safeguard against the decline of British control in Transjordan.[3]

Kirkbride was right for as long as he himself remained in Transjordan, and personally secured British interests there. With his departure, however, Britain ceased to play an important role in Transjordanian politics.

B. The Foreign Office organization in the Middle East (Where was policy made?)

A close examination of the Foreign Office's machinery and the process by which the Middle East policy was formulated in the period under review seems to lead to the conclusion that most of the Foreign Office's decisions about the Arab-Israeli conflict were taken by the senior civil service officials. Thus, it was the permanent strata and not those who were nominated politically who formed the Office's policy.[4] It is necessary to comment that their decisions had to be confirmed by the Foreign Secretary.

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1. There was an additional reason: the second son Naif could not be trusted owing to his involvement in 'disgraceful escapades' (blackmail and smuggling), FO 371/68864, E13842, Kirkbride to Burrows, 21.10.48; Hector Bolitho, who had spent a considerable time with the Hashemites in Jordan, refuted British accusation about Talal's anti-British attitude. H. Bolitho, The Angry Neighbours - A Diary of Palestine and Transjordan, London, 1957, pp.118-9.
2. FO 371/68864, E3843, Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. H.M. Stout, British Government (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p.321.

In time of crisis, or when British interests were directly threatened, the decisions were taken by the Defence Committee. This body formulated British policy in reaction to the Anglo-Iranian crisis, the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations and towards the Israeli advance to the Gulf of Aqaba and Israeli penetration of the Sinai peninsula. But in matters such as Israeli-Jordanian negotiations, which were closely watched by the Eastern Department of the Office, decisions were taken at the level of the superintending Under-Secretary of State. Some cases were even left in the hands of the ambassadors and the representatives in the various British legations.

The process of decision-making would usually begin by a survey carried out by all the British diplomatic posts in the area. The Office's attitudes towards the Arab League, Israel, and treaties with the Arab countries were formed in this way. In other cases the representatives would be called back home for a conference. The first conference after the War was in 1945; four years later another one was convened. Bevin explained that the conference was a medium for co-ordination so that 'HMG representatives would be able to speak in one voice'.[1]

Whoever it was who made a decision had to consult a very complex organization. It is not only the researcher who is bewildered by the tangled structure created for preserving British interests in the Middle East.[2] One of Mr. Bevin's first actions as a Foreign Secretary was to establish a co-ordinating body consisting of three main constituent elements. In London there were two committees: a ministerial one (the Middle East Defence Committee) chaired by Bevin and an official

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1. FO 371/75072, E9043, UK ME Conference, 21.7.49.
2. See Appendix 1.

one chaired by the Minister of State. In the Middle East the task was placed in the hands of the British Middle East Office (BMEO).[1] Its political function was to co-ordinate policy and liaison with the Arab League as well as giving advice to the British army authorities in the area. BMEO communicated with the Middle East Secretariat, a body left over from the War which soon ceased to play any significant part in the policy making.[2]

The local military authorities and the head of BMEO were members of a joint committee which was subordinate to the Army organization in the Middle East and to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The area under the responsibility of the British Defence co-ordination committee ME, included Greece and Turkey, North Africa, Ethiopia and the Persian Gulf.[3] However, the Committee never functioned properly. It could only have done so if there had been a general British strategy for the Middle East, but there was not. As those who were members of this committee complained: 'There existed on paper machinery for co-ordinating all aspects of British policy in the Middle East', but 'Policy and strategy in practice were formulated separately'.[4] Thus in the Middle East itself the co-ordinating body malfunctioned or did not function at all.

In London the situation was similar. The co-ordinating ministerial committee never met. The official one had held eight sessions after its establishment. However, it had only a marginal effect on the

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1. It was an offspring of the two war-time institutions in Cairo: the resident minister of state and the Middle East Supply Centre.
2. FO 371/81926, E1052/20, T. Rapp to FO, 1.1.50, commenting on directives sent to him and on those sent to Sir J. Troutbeck in 1947.
3. FO 371/81926, E1052, DO(49)17, 16.2.49 and DCC(49)23, 7.9.49.
4. FO 371/75072, E10304, UK-ME conference, 25.7.49. He was supported by Air Marshal Dickson (Air Officer CiC in the area) who expressed similar views.

British policy. It was supposed to co-ordinate army and Foreign Office policy but could never find its way through the complex structure which stretched from the Defence Committee, through the CoS , down to the CIC ME committee. And if this were not enough to confuse the members of the committee, they had also to take account of various intelligence committees and joint defence boards.[1] It was probably just as well that these three co-ordination bodies hardly ever functioned - if they had it might have complicated things even further. Thus when one looks at the chart of the Middle East organization, one has to ignore the co-ordinating machinery and presume that most of the activity was either between embassies and the Eastern Department or between local commanders and the CoS. In cases where there were both military and political implications, it was transferred to the Defence Committee.[2]

The Ad Hoc policy - 'We have bowed too often to fait accomplis'.[3]

The main outcome of this complex structure was the Foreign Office's lack of ability to initiate policy so that it was rather a receiving organization than an active actor in the area. Some officials in the Office could not conceal their frustration over the absence of any British initiative since 1948. Indeed the Greater Transjordan concept, revision of treaties with the Arab World, British policy towards Israel and its attitude towards the conflict in general was part of a policy which followed events and did not precede them. The same could not be said of Bevin who from time to time initiated new policies as will be illustrated.

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1. Like the Joint Intelligence Committee Middle East and Joint Planning Staff; FO 371/68819, Burrows FO Minute, 2.3.48; JP(48)17, 24.2.48.
2. See Appendix 1.
3. FO 371/75064, E4691, FO Minute, Beith, 29.3.49.

When he was appointed as the head of BMEO in 1950, Sir Thomas Rapp had this to say on ad hoc policy: 'There is little that I can find in the immediate past which confirms the idea that our ad hoc basis for policy decisions has proved adequate, even admitting the difficulties occasioned by the rapidly changing conditions in the Middle East and the external threat to peace. In some respects the multiplicity of diverse passions, prejudices and interests involved has seemed to overawe us and we have hesitated to take a line until a crisis has arisen where an empirical solution has had to be sought in an atmosphere fraught with emotions'.[1]

The Americans took the initiative on various cases like the introduction of their plan to solve the Palestine question by trusteeship and the refugee problem by economic means. But they did not succeed in either. It seems that Sir Thomas Rapp, the head of the BMEO, discovered precisely why an ad hoc policy was required even though it was doomed to fail. In the colonial period Britain had been able to dominate this volatile part of the world by force. However, in the post-colonial era the emergence of anti-British Arab nationalism, on the one hand, and the decline of Britain's power in the world on the other, had meant that all Britain could do was to react to events rather than precipitate them by action.

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1. FO 371/91182, E1022/7, FO Minute, Bowker, 12.6.51, and Rapp to Bowker, 6.7.51.

CHAPTER ONE: Britain's Policy Towards the Palestine War, 1948.

When the UN General Assembly recommended the partition of Palestine Britain could have pursued one of two distinct policies. As the Mandatory Power, HMG could have, and some would argue should have, cooperated in enforcing the resolution on behalf of the UN, or at least have facilitated the transition of Mandatory Palestine to its two successors, the Jewish and the Arab communities. Alternatively, the British government could have chosen to do 'nothing', ignoring the UN resolution. That is, Britain could have resisted the implementation of the resolution, for as long as it was the sole authority in Palestine. The first alternative would have meant doing what the Jews wanted at the expense of the Arabs, whereas the second alternative, doing nothing, would have favoured the Arabs and antagonized the Zionists. It seems, however, that what the British chose to do was done not in order to satisfy either side, but rather in accordance with purely British interests.

In many respects Britain's decision to refer the Palestine problem to the UN was meant to extricate HMG from a position in which it would have to make a decision. As Bevin pointed out in the House of Commons, in February 1947, while announcing the decision to withdraw from Palestine, Britain was unable to find a solution acceptable to both parties. The Foreign Secretary explained to the House in simple terms the root of the problem: 'For the Jews, the essential point in principle is the creation of a sovereign Jewish state. For the Arabs, the essential point in principle is to resist to the last the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in any part of Palestine'.[1] This

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1. Bevin in the HC, 18.2.47 in CO537/2343, Beeley's history of the British Mandate in Palestine.

was still the situation after the UN resolution on partition, and Britain was still faced with the same danger of losing the sympathy of all the parties involved in the Palestine conflict. According to Elizabeth Monroe they chose to do 'nothing'.[1] This 'nothing' meant taking care to safeguard the British evacuation from Palestine, as the sole objective of HMG's policy in Palestine in the days left to the end of the Mandate. This theory certainly explains British behaviour in Palestine between January and May 1948. However, doing nothing meant giving up Palestine altogether.

Thus, the Foreign Office and the War Office were preoccupied with the possible consequences of HMG's decision to adopt a neutral posture towards the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine. How important and vital was post-Mandatory Palestine to British interests in the Middle East was the main question being asked in London in December 1947.

The Chiefs of Staff could not envisage the exclusion of Palestine from the British sphere of influence. Their committee ruled in January 1948 that one of the basic and essential British defence requirements was the maintenance of strategic rights in Palestine.[2] Most of the British diplomats in the Middle East shared this view. In fact, there was hardly any part of the Middle East that was not considered strategically important to Britain; hence, the British efforts to obtain military alliances with most of the member states of the Arab League. Palestine was not a different case, and giving it up altogether was as unthinkable as the idea of leaving the Middle East itself. The British government was thus 'very far from thinking of moving out of the Middle East generally'.[3] Bevin himself made it very

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1. E. Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-71 2nd edition (Chatto and Windus, 1981), p.167.
2. DEFE 4/10, COS Committee (JPS), 13.1.48.
3. Troutbeck to Cunningham, Cunningham Papers, Box 6, File 1, St. Antony's private papers collection.

clear that Britain's interest in Palestine was not lost. He told the American Secretary of State Marshall, that the British government would not oppose the implementation of the UN resolution. However, he stressed that HMG would 'do their utmost to preserve their position and influence in that area'.[1]

Thus, unless Britain could ensure it would have some impact, or indeed a decisive impact on the course of events in Palestine, after the termination of the Mandate, it could not be confident of its ability to preserve its strategic rights in that country. Therefore, the British policy makers had to concern themselves with questions like the outcome of the Palestine war, its implications for British interests in the area, and finally with the dilemma of the most desirable solution for the Arab-Jewish conflict from the British point of view.

This chapter will concentrate on the emergence of a British policy designed to solve the Arab-Jewish conflict while at the same time preserving HMG interests in the area. This policy was formulated during the Anglo-Transjordanian negotiations in London in February 1948. The gist of this solution was a Transjordanian-Jewish understanding about the implementation of the UN partition plan. However, whereas the UN recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an independent Arab state, this solution advocated dividing Palestine between Transjordan and a future Jewish state. This solution was first suggested by the Transjordanians to the Jews, in the earlier contacts between Abdullah and the Jewish Agency.

The factor which united the three parties concerned (the Jewish Agency, Britain and Transjordan) in their support for this concept was their opposition to the establishment of an independent Arab

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1. FO 371/68365, Washington to Bevin, January 1948.

Palestinian state as provided for by the UN partition resolution. the Foreign Office, like the two other advocates of this concept, believed that such a state would be ruled by the Mufti of Jerusalem and the chairman of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), Haj Amin Al-Husseini. The reasons for the Israeli, British and Jordanian opposition to a 'Mufti State' will be dealt with in the following chapters. In general terms, one could say that its creation would have prevented both Abdullah and the Jews from implementing their territorial and national ambitions in Palestine, and in particular from the point of view of the Jewish Agency such a state would have perpetuated the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine, whereas an agreement with Abdullah seemed more feasible and workable. As for Britain, it would have to reconcile itself to the division of Palestine between two elements conceived by HMG, at the time, as strongly opposed to British influence in the area.

The British foreign secretary was, more than anyone else, responsible for the shaping of this policy. He was motivated by a genuine desire (usually dismissed by Israeli writers) to find a solution acceptable to both sides. From the moment a Jewish-Transjordanian and later an Israeli-Jordanian agreement seemed possible and practical, Bevin became its main protagonist.

This approach had ignored two important factors in the Palestine conflict. In the first instance, it disregarded the demands and aspirations of the Arab Palestinians. However, this was hardly a new phenomenon; since the active involvement of the Arab countries in Palestine's affairs (from 1936 onwards) this seems to have been the attitude of everyone concerned. Thus, satisfying Arab demands did not necessarily mean satisfying those of the Arab Palestinians.

The concept was also unacceptable to the Arab League and in particular antagonized Egypt and Syria. It had caused a serious

deterioration in Anglo-Arab relations, already considerably affected by the emergence of a new trend of anti-British Arab Nationalism.

Notwithstanding these problems, the Foreign Office regarded this solution as the lesser evil. It seems that the UN and the Americans, as this chapter will try to illustrate, viewed the situation in very similar terms. Nevertheless, it took some British persuasion before this concept was accepted by the former as the best solution for the Palestine problem.

Thus one has to differentiate between two main currents in Britain's Palestine policy during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. There was on the one hand, a concern to safeguard the British withdrawal, which was accompanied by a policy of non-interference in the developing Arab-Jewish confrontation. On the other hand, there were the British plans and ideas about post-Mandatory Palestine. This last effort was based primarily on the Greater Transjordan concept, i.e. enlarging the Transjordanian territory at the expense of the UN's Arab Palestine.

Finally, attention will be paid in this chapter to the question of whether the Greater Transjordan concept was a British initiative or just the fruit of Bevin's pragmatism and the Foreign Office's ability to adjust itself to the new situation that had emerged. In this discussion it would be useful to find out whether Britain possessed the means and ability to determine events in the Middle East to that extent. This is an essential question for anyone wishing to assess Britain's role and indeed responsibility for the development and the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A. The Last Days of the Mandate (January-May 1948)

Britain was still responsible for law and order in Palestine in the first half of 1948. However, in practise, the British took

responsibility only for narrow zones in Palestine, where British forces were stationed.[1] Britain's main security concern was to prevent Arab countries from intervening in the conflict in Palestine itself, prior to the termination of the Mandate (May 15, 1948). Furthermore, the Palestine government did its utmost to prevent Jews and Arabs from taking up positions which would obstruct the evacuation. The British government took a further precaution to ensure its safe withdrawal by refusing to allow the entrance into Palestine of the officials of the UN Palestine Committee (UNPC) who were appointed by the Security Council to assist in implementing the partition resolution.

Britain would subsequently be blamed by Arab historians for its actions against Arab incursions and its share in the creation of the Jewish state. And, on the other hand, its response to the UN decision would be seen by Israeli commentators as part of a British scheme to prevent the creation of a Jewish state.

2. Arab Incursions.

Whereas in London the Foreign Office was mainly concerned with the policy of the Arab governments and their intentions prior to May 15, the Palestine government and the High Commissioner's main worry were the incursions of Arab irregulars from Syria and Transjordan.[2] These groups attacked Jewish settlements, and their presence in Palestine could have led to large-scale clashes with the British troops. There was a tendency within the Foreign Office to ignore the requests of the High Commissioner in Palestine that it exert pressure on the Arab governments to stop the incursions into Palestine, and to withdraw

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1. Monroe, Britain's Moment p.168.
2. FO 371/68365, E862, Amman to FO, 21.1.48 and E941, Amman to FO, 21.1.48.

those bands which had already succeeded in infiltrating the country.[1]

The incursions were initiated by the Arab League. In October 1947, the Arab League Council met in Aley and decided to allow volunteers to enter Palestine after they had been trained in Syrian camps by Syrian and Iraqi officers.[2] These irregulars were to form the nucleus of the 'Arab Liberation Army' (ALA), to be commanded by Ismail Safwat, a senior Iraqi officer. Furthermore, it was decided that the Arab armies would be concentrated near the Palestine borders and put on the alert.[3]

After the first incursions took place, the High Commissioner demanded that public protests to the Arab governments be made. The Foreign Office was prepared to make discreet protests to the governments concerned; but these had very little effect. A British protest after a Syrian attack on a Jewish settlement in the north of Palestine made no impression on the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs.[4] In this incident, unlike the more quiet infiltrations, the Arab irregulars went too far, and the local British forces became involved. With the help of the British commander the attack was beaten off.[5] However, even in a case like this, which resulted in an open clash between British and Arab forces, the Foreign Office only reluctantly made a formal and public protest. When the Times and the BBC published and reported this protest, it brought upon them the wrath of the Foreign Office.[6] The

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1. FO 371/68365, E1256, High Commissioner (HC) Jerusalem to FO, 31.1.48.
2. H. Qasmiya, Falistin fi Muzakarat Al-Qawqji (Palestine in Al-Qawqji's memoirs), part 2 (Beirut: Markaz Al-Abhath wa-Dar Al-Quds, Munazamat Al-Tahrir Al-Filastiniya, 1975), pp.123-124.
3. A. Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, 1947-1952 (The Catastrophe), (Sidon: Manshurat Al-Maktaba Al-Misriya wa Al-Nashra, undated), p.15.
4. FO 371/68364, E458, Damascus to FO, 10.148 and E459, Damascus to FO, 10.1.48.
5. Toldot Milchemet Hakommemiut (The history of the Israeli independence war) (Israel Defence Ministry), p.14.
6. The Times, 10.1.48; FO 371/68364, E489, Damascus to FO, 11.1.48.

Foreign Office had no desire to endanger its relations with the Arab world.[1] From Clayton in Cairo they learned that the Arab premiers were still of the opinion that the fighting in Palestine should be carried out by the Palestinians themselves.[2] Sir Alan Cunningham warned that this concern with the precarious maintenance of day to day good relations with the Arab governments instead of preventing the Arab incursions would have grave consequences for Anglo-Arab relations.[3]

Apparently, the Foreign Office did not think much of the High Commissioner's remarks.[4] The Eastern Department regarded the efforts in this direction (protests to the Arab governments) as a waste of time and energy. The department advised the High Commissioner to carry on with local operations, which they thought were more important, in order to accelerate the evacuation.[5]

Kirkbride himself believed that the incursions via Transjordan were engineered by Damascus to embarrass the king.[6] Fawzi al-Qawqji's version of the way the infiltrations were planned verifies Kirkbride's suspicions that the Syrian President, Shuqri Al-Qawatli wanted to put Abdullah in a difficult position. Thus Abdullah was apprehensive of any movements on his southern or northern borders regarding them as a Saudi-Syrian attempt to attack Transjordan.[7] However, the king could not deny the right of passage for long, otherwise the Transjordans would be condemned for betraying the Arab cause.

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1. FO 371/68364, E1377, High Commissioner (Jerusalem) to SoS for the Colonies, 25.1.48; 27.1.48; 1.2.48.
2. FO 371/68365, E758, Cairo to FO, 19.1.48.
3. FO 371/68366, E1785, HC (Jerusalem) to SoS for the Colonies, 5.2.48.
4. FO 371/68366, E1439, Wright to Martin (CO), 29.1.48.
5. FO 371/68366, E1482, Amman to FO, 1.2.48.
6. FO 371/68365, E1165, Amman to FO, 21.1.48.
7. Qasmiya, Al-Qawqji, pp.142-3.

At the end of January 1948, after Sawfat and Al-Qawqji, the commanders of the ALA, had already been in Palestine, another irregular force entered the country. The High Commissioner's protests rose to a crescendo after February saw further incursions. He complained that the Palestine government appeared ridiculous.[1] He was not alone in his worries. The presence of these volunteers led to much criticism in the United States, but this was overlooked by the Foreign Office. Furthermore, most of the British representatives in the Arab capitals (Beirut, Jedda and Damascus) demanded that the Foreign Office make formal and public complaints to the Arab governments which had allowed volunteers to infiltrate into Palestine. However, under the Eastern Department's advice, this line was not taken.[2]

In short, the Foreign Office advocated a policy of non-interference in the incursions, unless they had aggressive intentions. The main reason for this was HMG's wish not to endanger British troops and to secure the evacuation. Monroe remarked that the news of the worsening situation in Berlin had an immense influence on the decision not to confront the Arabs and that the British had orders to avoid loss of life and equipment, since all would be needed for a future confrontation in Europe.[3]

From the Foreign Office's viewpoint, there was an even more important, or at least equally important, reason. These incursions reduced the power of the much hated (in British eyes) former Mufti. The main force that crossed the Jordan was commanded by Fawzi Al-Qawqji, who became the acting commander of the Arab Liberation Army, a post the

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1. FO 371/68366, E1377, HC (Jerusalem) to SoS for the Colonies, 2.1.48.
2. FO 371/68364, E460, E489, E1988, various Arab capitals to FO, 10.1.48 and Beeley's FO Minute in E1988.
3. Monroe, Britain's Moment, 169.

Mufti desired for himself. In many respects, his appointment and the League's decision to form an independent Palestinian force subordinated only to the League's military committee, indicated the League's determination to exclude the Mufti from the main Arab thrust in the future war in Palestine. Owing to the Iraqi and Transjordanian opposition the League Council did not accept the former Mufti's proposals for a Palestine government.[1] Moreover, the Eastern Department felt that Al-Qawqji could be held at arm's length by the Transjordanians.[2]

The British reaction towards the Arab incursions has been dealt with at length since it is one of the many cases cited by Israeli writers and others of alleged British bias against the Jews in the last days of the Mandate.[3] We will turn now to an examination of other allegations made by both sides about British impartiality.

2. The Case of British Partiality.

Britain's refusal to cooperate with the UNPC (United Palestine Committee) is the most serious accusation brought by the Israelis. The Israeli Foreign Office blamed the British for deliberate sabotaging the UN's schemes by launching what it called 'Operation Chaos'.[4] Ben Gurion did not doubt that the incursions were part of this scheme.[5]

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1. FO 371/68366, E1702, FO Minute,Beeley, 6.2.48 and E1482, Amman to FO, 1.2.48 and Arab version of events: Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat Filastin wa Asrarhuha As-siyasiya wa Al-Askariya (The defeat in Palestine) (Beirut, 1970), p.123.
2. FO 371/68367, E1998, HC (Jerusalem) to SoS for the Colonies, 5.2.48. Qasmiya, Al-Qawqji, 131-132.
3. Among many others: Sacher, Europe, p.508; J. and D. Kimchi, Both Sides of the Hill (London, 1960), p.36; M. Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1977), p.669; Toldot Milchemet, p.66; and C. Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, 1917-1948 2nd ed. (London: Indiana University Press, 1973), p.336.
4. ISA 2412/26, Israeli army memo, 12.5.48.
5. Ben Gurion diary, 13.3.48.

The British cabinet refused to allow the UNPC to arrive in Palestine in February 1948 as was scheduled by the UN. As the Foreign Secretary explained in a minute he wrote to the Cabinet, the arrival of the commission would have so gravely affected the security situation as to render impossible the task of maintaining civil administration over the whole of the country for more than a limited period.[1] This, of course, could not have been the only reason. The Cabinet could not appear in Arab eyes as cooperating with the enforcement of the UN resolution. All it agreed to do was to consult the commission in London and permit a nucleus of its staff to proceed to Palestine before May 15.

The UN declared that this behaviour was 'bordering on obstruction' and the president of the UNPC asked for a month to 'overlap' with the British administration, but was refused.[2] It is noteworthy that the Foreign Office was supported on this issue by the Colonial Office, the GoC Palestine and the High Commissioner there.[3]

This was not the only item in the UN resolution that the British failed to comply with. The UN plan stipulated that the Mandatory Power should ensure that an area situated in the Jewish state, including a sea port and an hinterland adequate to provide facilities for substantial immigration, should be evacuated not later than February 1, 1948.[4] The British did exactly the opposite. They doubled the population of the detainee camps in Cyprus in January 1948 and the surveillance of Jewish ships continued until April 4, 1948.[5] The coastal blockade was

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1. CAB 128/12, CM (48) 12, Bevin, 5.2.48.
2. FO 371/68531, E1388, NY to FO, 31.148.
3. FO 371/68531, E1388, SoS for the Colonies to HC (Jerusalem), 4.2.48.
4. CAB 128/12, CM(48)12, Bevin, 5.2.48.
5. FO 371/68513, E85, Commissioner for the Jewish camps to SoS for the Colonies, 8.1.48 and E87 Marseilles to Paris, 1.4.48.

maintained by a new decree issued in February 1948, which aimed at stopping Jewish immigration and arms smuggling. The British effort to stop Jewish arms deliveries was extended at one point to the US, where many British and FBI agents were engaged in the search for the arms suppliers. Thus there was certainly a significant difference in the way Arab incursions were dealt with and the way the flow of Jewish immigration was blocked.[1]

The British government explained that Tel-Aviv had not been evacuated, since it would cause unrest and 'render it impossible for the Arab states to maintain their existing policy of restraint'.[2] Again this was not the whole explanation. The Cabinet suspected rightly that the port would be used for importing arms to the Jewish Hagana and Irgun movements.

Ben Gurion's biographer stated that the British were acting intentionally and maliciously towards the Jews.[3] Apart from letting the ALA enter Palestine, Bar Zohar pointed to various clashes between the Arabs and the Jews where the British were always on the Arab side. One tends to accept the assertion made by Michael Cohen, that on the local level there were British officers who intended to settle old scores with the Jews, but this was a local interpretation of London's directive to evacuate Palestine without causing loss of British life and equipment.[4]

Christopher Sykes has suggested that a future researcher should look into the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office documents of the

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1. ISA 65/4, HC Jerusalem to Bevin, 5.2.48; CID to Haifa Police, 17.1.48 and SoS for the Colonies to HC, 17.1.48.
2. CAB 128/12, CM(48)12, ibid.
3. Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.669.
4. M. Cohen, 'The Birth of Israel - Diplomatic failure, military success', Jerusalem Quarterly 17 (Fall 1980), p.33.

time to determine whether there was a planned anti-Jewish British policy.[1] It seems that there was hardly any sign of planning in British policy towards the Middle East since 1946. This, quite probably, applied to British policy towards Palestine. Vague guidelines from London to protect British interests in Palestine, namely, a clean and smooth evacuation with a bias towards Abdullah's interests in Palestine were the only coherent elements in British policy. The rest was left for the local commanders' initiatives.[2]

The British position became somewhat clearer in a decision taken by the Cabinet on March 22, 1948, a decision that reduced all Cunningham's efforts to maintain law and order to nothing. It was decided both not to oppose the entrance of Transjordanian and irregular forces into those parts of Palestine allocated to the Arabs in the partition resolution; and not to oppose any Jewish attempt to establish a state of their own prior to May 15.[3] Thus the guideline coming from London could not be regarded as biased towards one side only. There were also the anti-Jewish decisions that were not taken in Palestine, as Elizabeth Monroe has pointed out. The British refusal to let Jews of military age who were in the camps in Cyprus, enter Palestine was a cabinet decision and had provoked Jewish resentment.[4] In fact, the British decision not to comply with the UN resolution requirements, although not intended as such, was anti-Zionist in its implications. The motives, however, were purely British.

It would be beyond the scope of this work to establish the particular sympathies of each local British commander in the various cases

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1. Sykes, Crossroads, p.333.
2. Cohen, op.cit.
3. PREM 8/860, Ministry of Defence to Colonial Office, 22.3.48.
4. E. Monroe, 'Mr. Bevin's Arab policy' St. Antony's Papers No.11, and see CAB 128/12, CM(48)12, Bevin, in 5.2.48.

mentioned in the Arab and Israeli historiography. For the sake of this analysis, it is more important to concentrate on the consequences of general British policy in Palestine, with particular attention paid to the Arab and Jewish response to it.[1]

3. The price of neutrality.

It is not surprising to find that the British have been accused by both sides of biased behaviour. This is particualrly notable in the two sides' accusations about the British evacuation plan. Some writers claim that the British gave the Arabs the schedule of their evacuation (dates and places) in advance so that the Arabs could capture strategic posts.[2] On the other hand, Al-Jaburi argued that the Arabs were surprised by the early British withdrawal prior to May 15 and were unprepared for it.[3] The Foreign Office files reveal that the Eastern Department advised the Office not to give detailed plans of the evacuation either to the Jewish Agency or the Arab Higher Committee and that it was sufficient to give a vague explanation to the Arab states.[4]

This was the result of the lack of coherent policy in London which allowed local commanders to decide by themselves about the process and manner of evacuation. The price that Britain would pay in terms of prestige would be dear. Whereas writers like Kimchi, Sacher and even

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1. The British attitude towards the fighting in Haifa epitomized the dilemma of the British forces and it has since remained one of the most controversial issues. It seems that the version given in D. Kurzman, Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli War (World Publishing Company, 1970), pp.155-157; and in E. O'Ballance, The Arab-Israeli War 1948 (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp.51-53 is confirmed by FO 371/68505, which includes the report of the Consul Marriot as well as of Major General Stockwell.
2. Kimchi, Both Sides, pp.117-8; Sacher, Europe, p.509.
3. Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, p.152.
4. FO 371/68531, E1389, Beeley FO Minute, 3.2.48; see also M. Cohen, Palestine and the Great Powers 1945-48 (Princeton University Press, 1982), p.315.

Arab writers like Taha Al-Hashimi and Nimr Al-Hawari tell a story of a pro-Arab policy;[1] the general consensus in Arab historiography would be that Britain cooperated with the Jews in the fighting in Palestine in January-May 1948.[2] Arab politicians of a pro-British orientation would already in 1948 blame the British for protecting isolated Jewish settlements while Arab villages were left defenceless.[3] The impression in the Arab towns in Palestine was that the battle in the mixed towns was decided by the British siding with the Jewish forces.[4]

It is interesting that the allegations on the Arab side are of the same nature as those coming from the Jewish side. Thus one can only agree with the Kimchi brothers when they conclude: 'Friend and critic alike could pick and choose those aspects of British policy which they either liked or disliked and praise them or denounce them as they wished'.[5] Hence, the Jews saw in British policy a means to deprive them of the UN decision and the Arabs felt betrayed.

4. The price of chaos.

Britain paid in prestige and probably, with hindsight, in loss of influence, but Palestine paid an even greater price - that of chaos.

The British Cabinet decided to maintain its administrative control until May 15,[6] thus not allowing any period of transition. This

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1. See fn.2 p.14 and N. Hawari, Sirr Al-Nakbah (The secret of the catastrophe) (Beirut, 1955), pp.46-48; Hashimi, Muzakharat Al-Harb as it is quoted in Kimchi and Sacher.
2. M. Shafiq, 'Al-Qadiya Al-Filastiniya min 1948 ila 1950 wa Purusaha' (The Palestine problem from 1948 to 1950 and its study), Shuun Filastiniya No.21, 1973, pp.70-72.
3. FO 371/68365, E1211, Beeley FO Minute, 22.1.48; FO 371/68368, E2737, BMEO to FO, 25.2.48; FO 371/68 505, E6429, Haifa to FO, 26.4.48 reporting conversations between Dr. Jamali and Azzam Pasha.
4. FO 371/68505, E6429, Haifa, ibid.
5. Kimchi, Both Sides, p.9.
6. CAB 128/12, CM(48)12, Bevin, 5.2.48.

British policy, which was not accompanied by an effort to maintain law and order, was a formula for future chaos. The UNPC decided on a gradual evacuation of the civil administration, but this was not achieved owing to the lack of a transitional period. The British Cabinet itself realised what its policy would mean in the final analysis. A cabinet minute accurately described the collapse of the civil, legislative and security systems in Palestine.[1]

The Jewish Agency offered an alternative which was accepted by the UNCP - an international force would impose partition on behalf of the UN.[2] The Cabinet feared that this would open the door to Russian intervention. Therefore, it was decided to abstain in the General Assembly or Security Council if the issue was brought to a vote.[3] In addition, the British government, through its delegation in the UN, made an enormous effort to put across the idea that the security situation in Palestine rendered any use of international force impossible.[4] It is notable that British support for the idea in the UN would have forced British participation in implementing the UN partition plan. By that time, April 1948, the Americans had withdrawn their support for the idea of partition and introduced their scheme for Trusteeship instead of partition.

American documents indicate that the British effort to put across the dangers which would be incurred by implementing partition, using a non-Palestinian force, had affected to a large extent the American decision to introduce the idea of Trusteeship.[5] The British document

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1. CAB 128/12, CM(48)12, Bevin, 5.2.48; M. Cohen, Great Powers, pp.314-5.
2. ISA 2412/26, IFO Memo, 12.5.49.
3. CAB 128/12, CM(48), op.cit.
4. FO 371/68531, E1277, NY to FO, 28.1.48.
5. FRUS 48, Memo by Ross to Austin, 12.2.48, p.627.

warned the US that such an action would result in severe Arab measures leading to the stoppage of the flow of oil to Europe so necessary to the Marshall plan.[1] Moreover, the US Department of Defense estimated that 100,000 troops would be needed, half of them American forces, if the Russians were not to be allowed to participate.[2]

Hence, as Sir A. Kirkbride pointed out ten years later, the main British 'crime' was the refusal to hand over authority to the UN; this was 'inexcusable'.[3] The need to appease the Arab governments, the desire to protect British lives and, above all, the lack of a thorough evaluation of the implications of their policy, led to the stigma attached to the British role in the days before the Mandate ended. Indeed, some of the British measures were taken as a result of a process of 'gut reaction', such as the decision to expel Palestine, without warning, from the Sterling Block, and to freeze over a million pounds of Palestine's accounts in London, thus harming both the Jewish and the Arab communities. Mr. Rees Williams, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, followed Kirkbride's line in self-accusation and declared in the House: 'On the 14th of May, 1948, the withdrawal of the British administration took place without handing over to a responsible authority any of the assets, property, or liabilities of the Mandatory government. The manner in which the withdrawal took place is unprecedented in the history of our Empire'.[4]

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1. FO 371/68531, E 1239, Bevin to Marshall, 3.2.48.
2. FRUS 48, Defence Department files, Memo Joint CoS to Truman, March 1948, p.798; The State Department initiated the Trusteeship proposal. It was proposed to the UN on March 19, 1948. But, the President, immmediately after that declaration in the UN, had announced his support for partition once more. M. Truman, Harry S. Truman (London, 1973), pp.387-9; A. Bullock, Ernest Bevin (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp.560-1.
3. Monroe Papers, St. Antony's private collection archive, Interview with Kirkbride, September 1959.
4. Hansard, HC Deb. Vol.461, p.2050, 24.2.49.

5. The possibility of an Arab invasion before May 15, 1948.

The continuation of the Arab incursions, the Jewish successes in the battle over the mixed towns and the chaotic situation in Palestine in general created a situation which could have induced a large scale Arab invasion of Palestine before the termination of the Mandate. The High Commissioner in Palestine was convinced that there was nothing in the British behaviour hitherto that would have deterred the Arabs from taking such an action. Thus he enquired from his superior, the SoS for the Colonies, what would be the British reaction.[1] Mr. Creech-Jones assured the High Commissioner that the Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, had been instructed to 'use such naval, army and air force reinforcements at their disposal in the area' and prevent such an invasion or any major incursions.[2]

However, the commitment of the army to stand by the High Commissioner in case of an Arab invasion was not as categorical as it appeared to Sir Alan Cunningham. In fact, he was not informed about certain qualifications attached to this directive. That is, although the CiCs were ordered to use any force at their disposal against 'formed bodies of Arabs entering Palestine from neighbouring states', they were not supposed to be opposed unless the Arabs attacked the British position.[3]

The Chiefs of Staff were worried by a despatch sent by General McMillan, GOC Palestine, in which he announced that he would not be able to prevent a large-scale Arab incursion into Palestine prior to May 15.[4] Thus, the Foreign Office agreed to add the above

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1. FO 371/68370, E5185, HC (Jerusalem) to SoS for the Colonies, 23.4.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/68370, E5185, Beeley to Campbell, 3.5.48.
4. FO 371/68370, E5185, HC, Jerusalem to SoS for the Colonies, 23.4.48.

qualifications.[1] The Colonial Office tended to support the High Commissioner on the other hand; it asserted that such an invasion could and should be resisted.[2] However, Attlee interfered on the side of Mr. Bevin and it was decided that such an invasion would be resisted only in order to guard the British withdrawal. In his remarks on this issue, Bevin revealed that he preferred not to talk in terms of defined policy on the Palestine question at that period, but rather to examine every incident individually.[3] Hence, his disinclination to give an ultimatum to the Arab states on this issue. He was quietly confident that the Arab irregulars would infiltrate in such a way so as not to interfere with the British evacuation.

The decision to enter Palestine with the full Arab force did not lie in the hands of the Palestine Committee formed in February 1948 by the Arab League for that purpose.[4] It depended more on the Arab leaders' ability to reach a consensus about the course of the invasion and its aims. This was only achieved in the end of April 1948. Until that time the Arab leaders were aiming at prolonging the Mandatory period and winning the political and diplomatic struggle.[5]

Thus, Arab preparations for entering Palestine had begun only in April 1948. The Political Committee of the Arab League decided upon a military operation on April 12.[6] A week later the CoS of the Arab armies met to discuss the final plan. The Arab generals recommended the use of five divisions and six air squadrons. The Political

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1. FO 371/68371, E5676, CO to FO, 1.5.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/68370, E5185, Beeley to Campbell, Ibid.
4. Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, p.108.
5. Qasmiya, Al-Qawqji, p.136; W. Ad-Daly, Asrar Al-Jamiya Al-Arabiya wa-Abd Al-Rahman Azzam (The Arab League's secrets and Abd Al-Rahman Azzam) (Maktab Ruz Al-Yusuf, 1982), pp.231-3.
6. Ad-Daly, Azzam, p.233.

Committee did not approve of these suggestions and claimed that only a fifth of this force was necessary.[1] The precise route of entry was outlined at the end of that month. However, Abdullah's claims for his appointment as the supreme commander of the Arab forces entering Palestine had postponed the final formulation of the battle plans until the 10th of May. Thus, notwithstanding the uncertainty about Egypt's participation, the Arab armies could launch an operation only a few days before the end of the Mandate. Yet, there was a genuine concern in various British circles.

British ability to assess Arab intentions on this issue depended on the information obtained by their representatives in the Arab capitals since the important decisions were taken by the Arab leaders themselves and not by the Arab League's Palestine committee. It is worthy of note that neither the British Middle East Office which had the responsibility of informing the Foreign Office of inter-Arab relations, nor the representatives in Amman or Cairo who were usually well informed, could make out the content of the various Arab meetings.[2] This obscurity added to the confusion within the Eastern Department. The Department had to rely on reports given by the Arab leaders themselves, and these were, as could be anticipated, conflicting. From Syria and Lebanon the information was alarming, namely, the Arab leaders had no inclination to wait until the termination of the Mandate.[3] From Amman came more information than from any other Arab capital, owing to the close contacts between Kirkbride and the King, and the involvement of Glubb in the preparations for the war.

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1. Ad-Daly, op.cit.; Aref Al-Aref claimed that the meeting took place at the end of April, Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, p.283-88.
2. FO 371/68371, E5351 and E5296, FO to Amman, 27.4.48; E5431, Baghdad to FO, 28.4.48.
3. FO 371/68371, E5398, Beirut to FO, 28.4.48; E5461, FO to Amman, 29.4.48.

Kirkbride reported during May 1948 that the Arab leaders' meetings in Damascus at the beginning of the month, were an attempt to exert pressure on Transjordan to intervene in Palestine prior to the end of the Mandate.[1] Kirkbride attributed Abdullah's resistance to this pressure to his own efforts in that direction.[2] He was more apprehensive than his colleagues in London about Abdullah's behaviour during April-May 1948. His main concern was that Abdullah's alternate moods of 'lucidity and sometimes approaching a complete nervous breakdown' could lead him to decide on entering Palestine before the 15th of May.[3]

It is noticeable that Bevin and the senior officials in the Foreign Office did not believe that such an invasion would take place. This assumption was based on personal promises to Bevin from some Arab leaders.[4] Moreover, it proved to be the result of a correct assessment of Arab intentions. The Arabs still hoped that Britain would be persuaded to remain in Palestine until a favourable solution could be found, an unthinkable possibility from a British point of view.[4]

Thus these rumours of an early large-scale Arab incursion originating mainly from Syria, were aimed at convincing the British to stay longer. They served also as a means to boost Arab morale after the loss of the mixed Palestine towns to the Jews. Bevin's statement to the Cabinet that 'until the end of the Mandate we succeeded by strenuous diplomatic efforts in preventing the Arab states from sending armed forces into Palestine' was correct insofar as British pressure

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1. FO 371/68371, E5998, Amman to FO, 8.5.48.
2. FO 371/68371, E5602, Amman to FO, 2.5.48.
3. FO 371/68372, E5915, Amman to FO, 29.4.48.
4. FO 371/68371, E5549, Baghdad to FO, 1.5.48.
5. Incidentally, until 1947 even Zionist leaders like Ben Gurion had still considered the prolongation of the Mandate a favourable solution for the problem, see I. Amizur, America, Britania ve-Eretz Israel (America, Britain and Palestine) (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi publications, 1979), p.263.

and resistance to the entrance of the regular Arab armies into Palestine rendered impossible any such action on the Arab side.[1] However, as far as large scale incursions by Arab irregulars were concerned, the British, quite intentionally, failed to foil the Arab plans.

B. The emergence of the Greater Transjordan Concept.

In the end of 1947, Abdullah expressed his wish to revise the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty. Abdullah's request came as a surprise to the Foreign Office since only two years had elapsed since the last treaty was signed. Before sending a delegation to London to discuss the revision, Abdullah explained that his main motive was to refute Arab allegations of his being a British puppet.[2]

As was indicated in the introduction, Abdullah needed the treaty as a pretext for something else. The Eastern Department and Kirkbride suspected that the King wanted to discuss the future of Palestine. Very few in the Transjordan delegation knew the real motives for the negotiations. In order to discuss Palestine, the Transjordan premier asked for a separate meeting, without the knowledge of his minister for foreign affairs, who was considered to be more militant and nationalistic, as far as accepting any deal on the future of Palestine was concerned.[3] Already in Amman, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda implied that he wanted to discuss a 'very delicate relationship' that would develop after the termination of the Mandate.[4] He was referring to the King's

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1. FO 371/68509, E7220, SoS draft note to the Cabinet, 27.5.48.
2. FO 371/68818, E1901, Brief for Bevin's meeting with Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, 6.2.48 and A. Muhafaza Al-Alaqat al-Baritaniya Al-Urduniya (The Anglo-Transjordanian relationship), (Beirut, 1973), p.167.
3. FO 371/68366, E1730, Amman to FO, 6.2.48.
4. Ibid.

contacts with the Jewish Agency and his attitude towards the future Jewish state. It was not the first time the British had heard about these, however, it was the first time that the Transjordan government had asked British advice on the issue.

Abdullah warned Kirkbride that chaos in Palestine could harm his position. He urged the British to prevent hostilities between Jews and Arabs there.[1] The alternative, from Abdullah's point of view, could only be the annexation of the whole of Palestine, or the Arab parts in the country to Transjordan. Abdullah had talked publicly about this possibility already in 1946.[2] For that purpose he commenced negotiations with all the parties concerned, namely, the Arab Palestinians, the Jews, and the British.[3] However, Abdullah revealed his real motives only to the Jews and the British. He deemed it necessary to have an outlet to the Mediterranean and could not accept the idea of either an independent Palestine or a chaotic Palestine.[4] Yet before sending his premier to London the King had told Kirkbride that he would occupy Palestine only if he was to be welcomed as its liberator by the Arab world and if the British guaranteed to assist him in the Security Council to the extent of using their Veto. The Amman legation doubted Abdullah's chances of success in getting the blessing of the Arab World and were confident that HMG would never agree to use their Veto for such purposes.[5]

One could venture and assert that Abdullah did not anticipate that the British would be enthusiastic about his plans. This is presumably

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1. FO 371/68365, E548, Amman to FO, 11.1.48.
2. Report by the political department of the Jewish Agency, 27.10.47, ISA 163/4.
3. Y. Nevo, Abdullah ve-Arviyei Eretz-Israel (Tel Aviv, 1975), pp.61-68.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/68364, E306, meeting between Dajani (King's representative) and Legation officials, 7.1.48.

the reason for his decision to give priority to contacts and agreements with the Jewish Agency. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand why his contacts with the Jews preceded the arrangements with the British. After all the British had the ability to grant Abdullah the Arab parts of Palestine with or without Jewish approval.

In November 1947, King Abdullah met the Head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, Golda Meirson, and offered the Jews an independent Jewish republic as part of a Hashemite monarchy covering Transjordan and the ex-Mandatory Palestine. When this was rejected he asked for the Jewish Agency's consent to his annexing the territories allotted to the Arabs in the UN partition plan. The Jewish Agency representative gave her consent in return for the King's promise not to attack the future Jewish state.[1]

In December these contacts continued and were conducted by Alias Sasson and the King's private physician, Dr. Shawkat As-Sati.[2] In the meeting in December the King reiterated his support for the partition of Palestine between Transjordan and the future Jewish state.[3]

In January 1948, the King communicated to the Jewish Agency that he would formulate his final attitude after consulting the British.[4] It seems that already in December 1947 the British were informed about these meetings and about Abdullah's intentions to annex the Arab parts.[5]

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1. Ben Gurion, Yoman Hamilchama (War Diary) ed. Rivlin and Oren (Israeli Defence Ministry, 1983), p.100; H. Abidi, Jordan: A Political Study, 1948-57 (London, 1965), pp.26-27; A. Kirkbride, From the Wings (London: Frank Cass, 1976), p.5.
2. CZA S25/9038, 26.1.48.
3. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 1.1.48, pp.100-1; CAZ S25/1701, op.cit.
4. CZA S25/9038, 26.1.48.
5. FO 371/68364, E101, FO Minute, Beeley, 31.12.47; and Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, p.67, Clayton to Campbell, 14.12.47.

Only few officials in the Foreign Office at that stage tended to support Abdullah's scheme. Harold Beeley was the main opponent of such a possibility (the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan). It would have meant, asserted Beeley, the enforcement of the UN partition by the Transjordans.[1] He warned that this course of action would lead to the destruction of the League and would cause clashes with the Mufti. As regards the British position in the Arab world, Beeley argued that supporting Abdullah would embarrass HMG since it would mean taking a position against the majority of the Arab League. Kirkbride shared Beeley's apprehensions about the damage to British interests from such a course of action.[2]

Bevin expressed similar opinions in a conversation with Marshall. However, there was a significant difference between Bevin's and Beeley's outlook for the future. Beeley advocated that the Arab countries should let the local Arab forces in Palestine launch guerrilla warfare against the Jews that would bring about the creation of an independent Arab Palestine;[3] whereas Bevin still hoped that, in the end, partition would prove a failure and the parties would go back to his own plan - provincial autonomy with an autonomous Jewish and Arab province controlled by the High Commissioner's advisory council in which the Jews and the Arabs would be represented, and with the proviso that after four years of restricted Jewish immigration the country could be granted its independence.)[4] Beeley had already observed during the London conference (September 1946) that the Arab leaders believed that any scheme of provincial autonomy would lead to

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1. FO 371/68364, E504, FO Minute, Beeley, 22.12.47.
2. FO 371/68364, E306, Amman to FO, 7.1.48.
3. FO 371/68364, E504, FO Minute, Beeley, 22.12.47.
4. Abidi, Jordan, p.24.

partition.[1] Abidi's assumption that Bevin still harboured hopes about his plan are reinforced by American documents. Bevin told the American ambassador in London that Nahum Goldmann was working among Jewish Agency leaders for the acceptance of his plan.[2]

This was the background for the Anglo-Transjordan talks in February 1948. Until these talks, there was disinclination on the British side to support the King's ambitions. However, when Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda requested British assistance for Abdullah's programme he found a very sympathetic Foreign Office, and moreover, he succeeded in getting Bevin's approval for the plan. Thus the whole British position had changed in less than a month. In his conversations with the Transjordan premier Bevin learned that Abdullah was determined to acquire the Arab areas of Palestine, either those defined by the UN or those with an Arab majority.[3]

1. The British support for the Greater Transjordan option.

What caused this shift in British policy and thinking? The most apparent feature that emerges from Bevin's behaviour on this issue was his pragmatism. As was indicated earlier in this chapter, the Foreign Secretary looked for ways of maintaining a dominant British strategic position in the area in spite of the termination of the Mandate. Abdullah was the first to offer one. Thus although it initially seemed a risky option, the direct meeting with Abu Al-Huda and further thinking about it convinced the Office and Bevin that this was a credible policy.

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1. CO 537/2343, Beeley's history of the Palestine Mandate, p.38, July 1947.
2. FRUS 48, Douglas to Marshall, 16.4.48 (conversation with Bevin), p.826.
3. FO 371/68366, FO Minute to Walker, 10.2.48.

After the Jewish successes in Palestine in April 1948, any doubts remaining about the desirability of this policy disappeared. It was also seen as the only way of leaving Palestine in an orderly manner. The Foreign Office adapted itself to Bevin's pragmatism with little difficulty. Already, under the Coalition government, it had shown its ability to adapt itself to new developments, even those which were initially regarded as anti-British such as the Arab League. As Gomma has illustrated in his book, the formation of the League was an Arab initiative viewed unfavourably by the Foreign Office. However, in a relatively short period the Office supported the new organization and tried to direct it towards a pro-British policy.[1]

The failure of the Foreign Office to effect a re-orientation of the League's policies along pro-British lines serves as an additional explanation for the formulation of a new British policy towards Palestine. One of the gravest consequences of Abdullah's action would have been, as the British conceived it, the deterioration of Transjordan's relations with the League. However, even before Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda's visit to London, the Foreign Office and Mr. Bevin had made up their minds about the future of Anglo-League relations. For them, the League was an unimportant political factor and merely a tool for Egyptian anti-British policies. Arab unity was conceived as a mere utopia and the Office advised the government to treat Arab countries individually.[2] The implication of this attitude was that Abdullah could win British support even if he acted in defiance of the League's decisions.

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1. W. Gomma, The Foundation of the League of Arab States (London, 1977), pp.195,212,229,264,267, and Y. Porat, 'Agada Umeziut be-Tahlich Hakamat Ha-Liga Ha-Aravit (Reality and myth in the establishment of the Arab League), Zemanim, University of Tel Aviv (Winter, 1981), No.5, p.43.
2. FO 371/68381, 68382 (E8103); 68443; 75051 (E13522). This was also partly owing to a personal animosity towards Azzam which dated back to the 1930s, see M. Ralph Coury, 'Who Invented Egyptian Nationalism?' Part I, International Journal of ME Studies 14 (1982), pp.249-281.

The High Commissioner in Palestine had supported Abdullah's plan even before it had the blessing of London.[1] The Secretary of State for the Colonies submitted to the Cabinet a memorandum based on information and opinions expressed by Cunningham in which he objected to Bevin's provincial autonomy plan and advocated support for partition.[2]

The Colonial Office position, and in particular Cunningham's views, had immense importance for the Foreign Office. The reports from Palestine, as well as Creech Jones' views, provided, in the final analysis,the evidence the Office needed to prove to the British Cabinet that the 'Transjordan option' was the right one. On the basis of these reports, the Eastern Department was convinced that the Arabs in Palestine were giving no sign of attempting to work out any kind of civil administration for their part of Palestine.[3] This information was coupled with the reports about the disunity and ineptitude of the local Arab forces in Palestine. It became evident that the local Arab Palestinian forces could not confront the Jews by themselves. Following this information, the Eastern Department concluded that such Arab inaction would result in a state of anarchy, unless the UN administrated the Arab areas which was unlikely, or unless the Arab Legion did so.[4]

Once Bevin decided to back the Transjordan option, it was quite easy for the Foreign Office to explore its advantages for Britain. Annexation of this territory to Transjordan meant the extension of the British rights contained in the Treaty to Arab Palestine, thus compensating the British for the loss of Palestine.[5]

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1. FO 371/68364, E101, FO Minute, Beeley, 31.12.47.
2. CAB 129/16, CP(47)28, annex to Creech Jones memo, 13.1.47.
3. FO 371/68368, E2299, FO Minute, Buss, 13.2.48 (see Chapter Two for more information). This information is confirmed by Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, 124-5; and Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, 36.
4. FO 371/68367, E2046, Amman to FO, 11.2.48.
5. FO 371/68818, E1899, FO Minute, Pyman, 3.2.48.

After the discussion in London between Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda and Bevin, the Foreign Office took some practical decisions in preparation for the coming conflict. The officials in London thought that British officers serving in the Arab Legion should not be ordered out and that Britain should continue its subsidy to the Arab Legion.[1] When the day of the fighting approached, Kirkbride suggested that, until open warfare developed, the British combatant officers would accompany their units even if they moved into Palestine proper.[2] The Foreign Office approved his recommendation, thus probably leading to some involvement by British officers.[3] In an interview Kirkbride gave in the 1960s he admitted that even after the fighting commenced, he ignored consecutive telegrams ordering the withdrawal of British officers since he believed that the Legion could not have done without them.[4]

It was decided in the Foreign Office that the Legion would be allowed into the Arab areas without hindrance. Sir Alec Kirkbride did not expect that the Transjordans would be welcomed in those areas. However, he could not see any other alternative to prevent the chaotic situation that might prevail in Palestine.[5]

The possible hostile reaction in Arab Palestine was not the only problem facing the implementation of such a plan. The Foreign Office and Amman agreed that there was no need to declare that Transjordan was going to defy the League's decisions. Whatever the rumours that accompanied the talks in London or the long-standing knowledge of Abdullah's ambitions for a greater Transjordan, the Arab world had difficulty in discovering Abdullah's real intentions. Instead the Arab

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68852, E6008, Amman to FO, 8.5.48.
3. FO 371/68852, E6008, FO Minute, Walker, 11.5.48.
4. Interview with Monroe, September 1959, Monroe Papers.
5. FO 371/68367, E2046, Amman to FO, 11.2.48.

capitals talked about the occupation of the whole of Palestine.[1] As Kirkbride tells us in his memoirs, Azzam had frequently visited Abdullah to make sure that 'the Jordanian authorities did not fail to play the part assigned to them in the plan drawn [up] by the Arab League.'[2] For this purpose Azzam offered Glubb the appointment by the League of the post of CiC of the Arab forces in Palestine. Kirkbride and Glubb were convinced that the offer was made in 'bad faith' and in order to find a scapegoat for any future failure.[3] Thus, Azzam might have guessed Abdullah's real motives in entering Palestine, but for the sake of saving Palestine from the Jews he was prepared to support him, or for the sake of finding someone to blame in the future he promised the King he would stand behind him.[4]

The head of the Eastern Department, nevertheless, was aware of Abdullah's need to toe the general Arab line. Thus he favoured a close Iraqi-Transjordan cooperation in Arab Palestine.[5] A joint control of Arab Palestine by the two Hashemite kingdoms was encouraged by Musa Al-Alami as well.[6] Burrows and Al-Alami argued that the Iraqi cooperation was needed, firstly, as a facade for the Arab world (to indicate that Abdullah was not acting alone); secondly, it was believed in London that such a united force would be more welcome in Arab Palestine. Moreover, an Iraqi force in conjunction with the Arab Legion would have a better chance of maintaining order in the Arab areas.[7]

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1. FO 371/68369, E3366, Jedda to FO, 11.3.48; Goldner, W., 'The Role of Abdulla Ibn Hussein of Jordan in Arab Politics 1914-1951' (D. Phil. Thesis, Stanford University, 1954), pp.286-7.
2. Kirkbride, From the Wings, p.22.
3. Glubb, J.B., A Soldier with the Arabs, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), pp.84-85.
4. The first possibility is explored by Ad-Daly, Azzam, pp.233-35 and the second by Glubb, A Soldier, p.23, and Kirkbride, op.cit.
5. FO 371/68367, E2120, FO Minute, Burrows, 21.2.48.
6. FO 371/69369, E3371, Memo by Glubb, March 1948 and FO 371/68367, E2137, Amman to FO, 21.2.48.
7. FO 371/68367, E2120, FO Minute, Burrows, 21.2.48.

For the Foreign Office the need to prevent the creation of what it called 'a Mufti state' was not less important than installing Transjordan control in these areas.[1] Musa Alami conveyed to Alec Kirkbride the impression that was accepted in London, that if Abdullah entered Palestine the Syrians and the Mufti would together work against him.[2] Therefore, Kirkbride advocated close co-operation with Al-Qawqji, who was an Iraqi protegé and one of the Mufti's main rivals.[3] This attitude accounts for the ease with which Al-Qawqji entered Arab Palestine before May 15, in spite of the protests of Sir Alan Cunningham in Jerusalem.[4]

However, there were voices against the Iraqi-Transjordan joint operation. Glubb and Trott (in Jedda) were the two main opponents. Glubb was apprehensive of clashes with the Iraqis over the control over Arab Palestine. Both he and the High Commissioner asserted that the educated and wealthy classes in Arab Palestine were protagonists of the King and it was only the 'uneducated and lower classes' who supported the Mufti.[5] Thus there was no need for Iraqi participation. The representative in Jedda and the experts on Saudi Arabia feared the reaction of the Saudis to a strong Hashemite contingent acting in Palestine. In fact, Ibn Saud warned he might go as far as declaring war on Transjordan in the case of a separate Iraqi-Transjordan invasion.[6] In order to reinforce this threat, Ibn Saud encouraged volunteers from the Najd to leave for Palestine and assist the Arabs there.[7]

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1. FO 371/68364, E504, FO Minute, Beeley, 22.12.47.
2. FO 371/68367, E3371, Memo by Glubb, March 1948.
3. FO 371/68369, E3729, Amman to FO, 20.3.48.
4. FO 371/68369, HC (Jerusalem) to SoS for Colonies, 24.3.48.
5. FO 371/68369, E3371, Memo by Glubb, March, 1948.
6. FO 371/68369, E3366, Jedda to Amman, 11.3.48.
7. FO 371/68368, E2299, FO Minute, Buss, 13.2.48.

This clash of interests with the Saudis demonstrated to the British officials that unless Abdullah, at least, pretended to follow the general Arab line, new complications from unexpected angles would emerge. Since 1940 Saud had demanded adjustments to the northern borders of the Hejaz (annexation of Ma'an and Aqaba to Saudia).[1] Furthermore, he wanted the renunciation of Abdullah's 'rights' as a Sharif of Mecca, which Abdullah was unlikely to make publicly. Abdullah, quite probably, had never relinquished his desire to return to the Hejaz. In order to lessen Ibn Saud's suspicions, the Foreign Office gave vague promises to the Saudi ruler that it would work towards rectification of the Saudi-Transjordan border in return for Saudi consent to an Iraqi-Transjordan control of Palestine.[2] However, it was only in May 1948, when it became clear to Ibn Saud that most of the League members wished Abdullah to be the supreme commander of the operation in Palestine, that the Saudi King altered his attitude. Ibn Saud wrote to Abdullah: 'All my armies are at your disposal for the fight in Palestine'.[3]

The assessment of the prospects of Abdullah's policy had to include the reactions of the UN, the USA and the Jews. It seemed in London that there was no danger of UN opposition since it was the easiest way to enforce its decision from November 1947. It seems that members of the UNPC believed that Abdullah was 'playing his own game'.[4] Moreover, some of them even favoured the 'Transjordan' option.[5]

Bevin told Foreign Office officials that he was confident of

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68368, E2564, Wright to Mack, 27.2.48.
3. FO 371/68372, E5923, Jedda to FO, 6.5.48.
4. J.G. Granados, The Birth of Israel (New York: Knopf, 1948), p.190. Granados was a member of the UNSCOP (UNPC).
5. Granados, Israel, p.191.

American support as it promised the establishment of a Jewish state. He hoped his plan would even bring the Americans to pressure the Jews in the future state to give up a reasonable amount of their customs revenues to support the Transjordan economy.[1]

In fact, the US was informed at an early stage about the Transjordan government wishes. However, the Anglo-Transjordan agreement about Abdullah's plan was not fully disclosed.[2] In any case, the US supported the partition resolution and like the UNPC was pleased to see its implementation without the need to involve American forces or efforts: 'We should take no further initiative in implementing or aiding partition' recommended the Policy Planning Staff.[3] The Americans were nevertheless clear on one major point. They would not tolerate Transjordan intervention before the end of the Mandate. They warned the British that the US reaction could amount to the despatch of forces. Bevin and Attlee assured Marshall that the Transjordans would not enter Palestine.[4]

Given the British outlook, it is understandable why the Foreign Office viewed the Transjordanian contacts with the Jewish leadership favourably. Bevin was satisfied with Abu Al-Huda's assurances that the Legion would not enter Jewish areas unless the Jews invaded Arab areas. Mr. Michael Wright reported that King Abdullah was about to come to a de-facto agreement with the Jewish Agency that they would not encroach on each other's territory.[5] Mr. Hector McNeil, the minister of state in the Foreign Office in charge on contacts with the Jews, confirmed that the Jews would welcome the annexation of Arab Palestine to

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1. FO 371/68368, E2696, FO Minute, Burrows, 9.2.48.
2. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, UK Embassy in Washington to the SD, 5.1.48, p.535.
3. FRUS 48, Vol.5, January 1948 by the PPS, pp.550, 553.
4. FRUS 48, Douglas to SoS, 29.4.48.
5. FO 371/68367, E1980, FO Minute, Wright, 11.2.48.

Transjordan.[1] Moreover, according to the Ben-Gurion diaries, he went even further. Upon learning that the Jewish Agency knew about the secret meeting between Abu Al-Huda and Bevin he quite explicitly conveyed to Ben Gurion the idea that Britain would acquiesce with partition.[2]

Sharret told the State Department that he would prefer an agreement with Transjordan to a cease-fire. Marshall was the only person left in the State Department who believed that the Jews would lose the war, the others were confident that a prior Transjordan-Jewish agreement would determine its outcome.[3]

There was, however, a significant deterioration in the King's relations with the Jewish Agency during March-May 1948. During March 1948 some of the main Jewish protagonists of the Hashemite-Jewish Agency agreement were dissatisfied with the lack of clear commitment of Abdullah to reach an agreement with the Agency. They offered to delay the Mandate termination for a year and to look for a new agreement.[4]

Abdullah for his part felt that, after the successive Jewish achievements in the March-April civil war, he would have to reconsider his position, and when at the end of April the Jewish Agency offered to continue negotiations he refused owing to the publicity given to previous contacts. Abdullah had continued to insist publicly on a solution that offered only an autonomy to the Jews.[5]

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1. FO 371/68367, Goldman to Easterman, 4.2.48.
2. BGA Ben Gurion Diary 12.1.48, 19.1.48.
3. Ibid.
4. CZA S25/9383, Sasson Memo, March 1948. Sasson and Shimoni doubted whether Abdullah was generally aiming at dividing Palestine (S25/9664, Arab Department meeting, 22.4.48). Sasson even suspected a British plan to assist Abdullah to go as far as Haifa and Rafah in order to ensure an access to the sea (Ben Gurion, War Diary, 20.4.48, p.357).
5. FO 816/123, Amman to FO, 9.6.48.

Whereas before April 1948 it seemed that the negotiations were progressing towards a non-aggression agreement, at the beginning of April the two sides found themselves in deadlock owing to the King's insistence, publicly and privately, on his 'Autonomy Plan'.[1] Furthermore, Abdullah declared that he would desist from sending messages or negotiating until 'both sides were in a more reasonable mood'.[2]

Notwithstanding this deadlock, at the beginning of May a meeting took place between two senior Hagana and British Legion officers (Colonel Goldie and Major Crocker).[3] The two sides expressed their desire to prevent a war between the two armies.[4] The main outcome of this meeting was the Hagana realization that the Legion had no plans to go beyond occupying the Arab areas, even though it would have to participate in the Arab war effort. It was further understood that the Legion, as well as the Jewish forces, would try to decide the future of Jerusalem on the battlefield first.[5]

The British officers indicated that the few incidents of fighting that had already occurred between the Legion and the Hagana were the result of misunderstanding and, furthermore, that Abdullah's public declaration about his intention to go to war 'against the Zionist' was made only for Arab consumption.[6]

It should be remembered that by this time it was clear that Abdullah would enter Palestine as the supreme commander of the Arab forces. However, Kirkbride reported to the Foreign Secretary that the

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1. FO 371/68852, E5163, Amman to FO, 24.4.48.
2. CZA S25/1704, Sasson to Abdullah's chamber, 23.4.48, FO 371/68852, E5163, Amman to FO, 24.4.48.
3. Goldie, commander of the 1st Brigade and Crocker an operations officer, J. Lunt, Glubb Pasha (Harvill, 1984), p.140.
4. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 2.5.48, Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.140, FO 371/68852, E6008, Amman to FO, 8.5.48; FO Minute, Walker, 11.5.48; FO 800/477, FS 48/7, May 1948.
5. Glubb, A Soldier, p.107; Ben Gurion, War Diary, p.383, 2.5.48.
6. Ibid.

Office should only pay attention to the fact that: 'It is understood that the objective of these top secret negotiations is to define the areas of Palestine to be occupied by the two forces.[1] Bevin, upon learning of such an agreement, remarked that a good reason to retain the British combatant officers in the battlefield was that they would ensure that the Hagana-Legion understanding would be maintained.[2] He further wrote that 'I am reluctant to do anything which might prejudice the success of these negotiations, which appear to aim at avoiding hostilities between the Arabs and the Jews'.[3]

There are further indications that the Jewish Agency regarded the modus vivendi with Abdullah as an essential factor in successfully bringing about the creation of a Jewish state. Ben Gurion told the leaders of the Jewish Agency that the newly formed country would have immense difficulties in occupying the areas alloted to the Jews if the Legion was to go beyond the Arab areas.[4] Thus Ben Gurion made every possible effort to ensure that Abdullah stuck to his original scheme. In this context it is understable why Ben Gurion decided to send a letter to Abdullah denouncing the Jewish Agency's part in the massacre of Dir Yasin.[5]

The last political meeting between the Jewish Agency and the King took place on May 11, 1948. The Jews wanted to obtain the King's blessing for, and commitment to, the military arrangement and Abdullah sought to clarify his intentionsto the Jews.[6] Golda Meirson

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1. FO 800/477, FS 48/7, 13.5.48, and see a similar American impression in FO 371/68852, E6372, FO Minute, Bevin reporting a telegram from Marshall to US Embassy in London.
2. FO 371/68852, E6372, op.cit.
3. FO 800/477, FS 48/7, 13.5.48.
4. Reported in FO 371/68552, E5087, Kirkbride to Burrows, 15.4.48.
5. Ibid.
6. A. At-Tal, Karithat Filastine (The Palestine Disaster) (Cairo, 1959), p.67; Nevo, Abdullah, p.79; Z. Sherf, Shloshet Hayamin (The Three Days) (Tel-Aviv, 1959), p.63; and G. Meir, My Life (New York, 1975), pp.208-212.

met the King and was highly disappointed when Abdullah announced that the only way to stop the war was by the Jews consenting not to declare a state of their own and agreeing to stop immigration. In that case Transjordan would annex all of Palestine and the Jewish population would be represented in the Transjordan Parliament. Abdullah explained that he had taken this step since he was 'one out of five' (i.e. the Arab armies entering Palestine).[1]

Meirson rejected these proposals and urged the King to remain loyal to the first promise he had made to her in November 1947. The King according to various versions replied that he could not break a promise he had made to a woman.[2]

It seems that the two parties had no intentions of departing from the original understanding. Weizmann recalled that both sides left the last meeting with the impression, in spite of the divergence of opinions, that they had avoided a major clash between the two armies.[3] The Israelis who participated in the meeting reported that their impression was that Abdullah would look for ways to improve his position by extending somewhat his territory beyond the 29 November resolution but would not attempt to occupy the Jewish state.[4] American intelligence had reached the same conclusion at this time.[5]

Two days before the war broke out an incident occurred that could have provoked full-scale Jewish-Legion fighting. This was the Gush Eztion affair. The local Arab bands in the area imposed a siege on

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1. Ginzach Hamdina (Israeli Archives publication), May 1978, Minhelet Ha-A'm protoclim (The People's Assembly protocols), Meirson report to the Assembly, in 13.5.48.
2. Abidi, Jordan, p.27 and FO 371/68821, E8053, Amman to FO, 12.6.48.
3. FO 371/68821, E8052, FO to Amman, 13.6.48, reporting Weizmann declaration in Paris on the issue; see also E8053.
4. CZA, S25/5634, Arab department meeting, 13.5.48.
5. Truman Library, Clifford Papers, Box 13, Palestine ORE7-48.

these Jewish settlements (south of Jerusalem). According to the Israeli version the Legion units returning from the Negev assisted the local Arabs in the fighting. However, it seems that an Israeli pre-emptive attack on the Legion had precipitated the Legion action. According to American documents the Israelis ambushed the Legion convoy.[1] Some of the Hagana officers asked for a major operation against the Legion and Ben Gurion, it seems, tended to accept their suggestion, but in the meanwhile the settlements surrendered and fell into Arab hands.[2]

Sir Alec Kirkbride was pressed by the Foreign Office to find out in the last week before the war if any changes had occurred in Abdullah's plans. Kirkbride reported that Abdullah would not attack the Jewish state and that the British legation still hoped that Jerusalem would be excluded by a truce. The British Legion officers informed Kirkbride that a similar tendency to avoid clashes was implied in their meeting with the Hagana officers. Like Bevin, the British Minister in Amman relied on the British officers to restrain the King.[3]

The outcome of the first week of fighting indicated that, intentionally or out of necessity, and in the final analysis, the Legion operation did not constitute a breach of the promise given to Meirson in December 1947 and April 1948.

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that there was no written or binding agreement. The Legion attacks on the Jewish Potash plant and the Jewish Electricity project as well as the two armies' engagement in the bloody battle over Jerusalem seem to prove this point.

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1. The Israeli version in Minhelet Ha-A'm, Yadin report; American version in SD867 n.01/5-14 48, Jerusalem to SD, 14.5.48.
2. The defenders who surrendered were massacred by the local villagers. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 13.5.48, p.413.
3. FO 371/68852, E6008, Amman to FO, 8.5.48.

General Yadin, who was the active CoGS of the Israeli army, claimed that Ben Gurion's actions were not guided by such an understanding.[1] He was right in claiming that there was no binding agreement. This explains Ben Gurion's ambitions towards the West Bank. However, these ambitions did not materialize owing mainly to the Jewish-Hashemite understanding.

2. The British assumptions about the Arab war effort

Most officials in the Department shared the view that although the Arab leaders were meeting ostensibly to prepare for intervention in Palestine, they would not enter in the end.[2] The inability to gather precisely what was going on in the Arab summits contributed to the doubts about the seriousness of the Arab leaders' intentions to enter Palestine. Only on May 8 was the Foreign Office confident that an Arab invasion would take place.[3] Military intelligence in Jerusalem reported growing pressure on Abdullah throughout April, but did not deduce that invasion was inevitable.[4] However, on May 12, it was clear that the Legion was already involved in fighting. It attacked Jewish settlements on that day and was moving toward Jerusalem in preparation for a large-scale attack on the city's Jewish sectors.[5]

In the Arab leaders' meeting on the last day of April 1948, the precise course of the attack was agreed upon. In that meeting in Damascus, Abdullah agreed to enter Palestine with the Iraqis occupying Eastern Palestine and uniting with the forces coming from Lebanon and Syria.[6] According to reports from the British Legation in Amman,

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1. Interview to Al-Hamishmar, 17.4.83.
2. FO 371/68370, E5298, FO Minute, Balfour, 26.4.48.
3. FO 371/68372, E5918, Amman to FO, 8.5.48.
4. FO 371/68504, E5464, MI3 to Ministry of Defence, 23.4.48.
5. Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.734.
6. Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, p.288 (fn.1 - Iraqi parliamentary report on Palestine, p.194, 4.9.48).

Abdullah, in spite of this plan, had not altered his original course on which he had agreed with Glubb in March 1948. Glubb had stated at that time that the Legion objectives were Beersheba, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin and Tul Karem.[1] Kirkbride reported that although Abdullah would stop on the Hebron-Ramallah line, it was still unclear how he would proceed.[2]

Whereas the Foreign Office was in the dark about the Arab summit meetings, owing to Glubb's position they knew in advance the plans of the most able and potent of the Arab forces. Glubb was explicitly asked by the Foreign Office to continue serving his 'two masters', namely, the British and the Legion. Glubb agreed, as he thought that by 'back stairs' methods he could continue to give a large amount of help and information.[3]

In order to evaluate the significance of the role played by the Legion in the Palestine war it is important to consider the estimated strength of the parties involved in terms of manpower, equipment and ammunition. This examination is essential since it was done by the CoS and it elucidated some of the divisions of opinion that existed between the Foreign Office and the Army. It is notable that the CoS did not take into account the understanding between Bevin and Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, or the various contacts between the Jewish Agency and Abdullah.

Unlike the Eastern Department and the government in Jerusalem, the CoS committee had more confidence in the ability of the Arabs in Palestine to organize their forces and set up their own administration in the predominantly Arab areas.[4] The Eastern Department, on the other

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1. FO 371/68369, E3371, Glubb memo, March 1948.
2. FO 371/68852, E4681, Kirkbride to Burrows, 13.4.48.
3. FO 371/68369, E3371, Memo Glubb, March 1948.
4. DEFE 4/12, CoS(48)48, 1.4.48.

side, doubted the success of the local Arabs in confronting the Jews without significant Arab assistance.

Thus they had no faith in the ability of the local Arabs to fight for themselves and win the battles in the mixed towns.[1] The CoS underestimated the Jewish ability to launch attacks on their own. Nor did they anticipate a Jewish initiative before the end of the Mandate.[2] Owing to their confidence that the ALA would have been sufficient to occupy first the Arab areas and then, with the help of the Legion, push the Jewish population into the coastal area, they did not envisage an external Arab intervention.[3]

At the end of April the CoS had to admit their miscalculations. The local Arab forces proved to be an insignificant force in the struggle for Palestine.

The new constellation that emerged in the end of April 1948 necessitated a reassessment of the estimate Arab and Jewish forces which may become involved in the fighting. It seems that the Eastern Department was more accurate in its predictions, owing to a correct appreciation of the political motives and aspiration of the Arab armies. Thus, apart from estimations about the Legion ability, there were no significant discrepancies between the presumptions of the Army and those of the diplomats or experts. Both recognized, in May 1948, the predominance of the Jewish forces in Palestine and predicted that the Jewish forces would be even stronger and better equipped in the future.[4] The 'Times', as early as March 1948, reported that the Jews were on their way to a highly organized state which would succeed in

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68371, E5603, FO Memo, 2.5.48; FO 371/68504, E5464, MI3 to MoD, 23.4.48.

establishing a firm central control over the Jewish community, compulsory military service and a ban on foreign travel.[1] Incidentally, this was not exactly how things were viewed from the Jewish side. Ben Gurion feared that the lack of food and fuel and the demoralization in Jerusalem would endanger the existence of the Jewish state. Nevertheless, he believed that the state would come into being.[2]

As for the Arab side, it was evident that the Egyptians and the Legion would be the most important factors. The ALA, although it consisted of about 13,000 volunteers was in quite a miserable position and suffered from lack of food and medical supplies and maladministration.[3] Only half of the force eventually took part in the fighting, sustaining activity for two months and achieving virtually nothing.[4]

As was mentioned before, the Arab governments were reluctant to use all the forces at their disposal. The CoS realised that the preparations in the Arab countries were not serious. The Iraqis were unable to contribute any substantial force to the campaign. Internal security problems, mainly unrest in Kurdistan, allowed them to send only two battalions. Logistically, the Iraqis could maintain only one battalion in the field, but even this force was dependent on resources from either Syria or Transjordan. Thus the length of the period of sustained activity of Iraq depended on the goodwill of these two countries. Owing to their proximity to the battlefield the Syrians could maintain larger forces in the field for some weeks. However, they suffered from a lack of ammunition and lamentable maintenance. One

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1. Times, 13.1.48, 18.3.48, 24.3.48.
2. BGA, Meetings of the JA directives, 16.4.48, 24.4.48.
3. FO 371/68369, E3916, Damascus to FO, 27.3.48 - this information was based on a British national working in the Syrian Ministry of Defence.
4. FO 371/68822, E11049, Glubb's report on the Transjordan situation, 20.4.48.

might have anticipated a better performance from the Syrians, but this did not occur, probably owing to a lack of motivation and the small number of troops.[1]

The CoS prediction about the outcome of the war was based on purely military considerations without taking into account political factors. The CoS estimated that the 7,400 Legioneers would be able to stay in the field for eight months. Militarily speaking, it was reasonable to expect the well organised and equipped Legion with its mechanized regiments to fulfil these anticipations.[2] However, its ammunition supply depended on the British, who stopped supplying arms and ammunition in the early stages of the war. Secondly, the Legion was mainly destined for the struggle in Jerusalem and its outskirts, the rest being employed to control the cities of Eastern Palestine.[3]

The Saudis had no regular army and its irregular Bedouins had hardly any ammunition.[4] They were denied entrance to Transjordan and joined the Egyptian forces.

The CoS had little confidence in the ability of the Egyptian army. Although it could deploy a large number of troops for the longest time it had no experience of maintenance in the field. The military experts expected that the soldiers' morale outside Egypt would be very low. Furthermore, like the other armies, the Egyptian army suffered from a shortage of reserves of ammunition. The military adviser in the British Embassy in Cairo stated that the forces that were trained in Egypt 'hardly warrant consideration as a serious invading force'.[5]

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1. DEFE 4/12, CoS(48)56, 23.4.48.
2. FO 371/68822, E11049, TJ situation, 20.4.48. DEFE 4/12, op.cit.
3. Glubb, A Soldier, p.101; J. Lunt, Glubb Pasha (London: Harvill Press, 1984), p.139.
4. DEFE 4/12, CoS(48)56, 23.4.48.
5. FO 371/68368, E2353, Cairo to FO, 12.2.48.

It is notable that there was a major problem involved in trying to assess the impact of Egyptian participation on the Palestine campaign, namely, it was impossible to establish whether the Egyptians would participate at all. As late as April 1948, the Eastern Department did not anticipate Egyptian involvement. In fact, the Egyptians did not object to the existence of a Jewish state if partition was imposed by an International force, or as Chapman Andrews called it 'an international force majeure'.[1] The embassy's reports indicated Egyptian doubt about the success of the campaign. Yet the pressure from the other Arab countries was mounting, and if Egypt was to maintain its leading role in the Arab world, it had no other choice. Sir Ronald Campbell wished the British could prevented their participation, but admitted it would be in vain.[2] Al-Jaburi claimed that the Egyptian army wanted to participate, and already in April had sent Egyptian units to the border with Palestine.[3]

In May, the Egyptian intentions and preparations were less obscure. The news of the Legion entrance into Arab Palestine probably triggered Faruq's decision to participate in the fighting. The Egyptian premier claimed he needed the forces for internal security purposes, but was ignored.[4] Moreover, in April, the Rector of Al-Azhar and the Ulamma declared the war in Palestine 'Jihad', which led the embassy to assess that unless the Army participated in the war, the government would fall.[5] The Arab leaders flew from Damascus to Cairo to convince the Egyptian leaders.[6] In a meeting at the Zafran Palace

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1. FO 371/68531, E1290, Chapman-Andrews to FO, 28.1.48.
2. FO 371/68370, E5109, Cairo to FO, 24.4.48; interview with Sir Ronald Campbell.
3. Interview with Haidar Pasha, the Egyptian Defence Minister, 24.4.48, Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, p.219.
4. FO 371/68371, E5528, Campbell to FO, 29.4.48.
5. SD867 n.01/5-13-48, Cairo to SD, 13.5.48.
6. Al-Aref, Al-Nakbah, p.282-3.

the Arab League Council decided to accelerate the equipment of the Arab armies and grant the Legion E£1.5 million as the main Arab force.[2] Three days before the invasion the Egyptian Senate approved the intervention of the army.[3] The army demanded Parliamentary approval so as not to be the sole responsible body in the event of a defeat.

One can only agree with Sir Ronald Campbell's assertion that Egyptian involvement would have more effect on the internal situation in Egypt than on the war in Palestine.[4] On May 13 the Egyptian Senate declared an 'Etat de siège' to secure the Egyptian army's means of communication, supplies etc.[4] The embassy was concerned that this law would be abused in the future. After martial law was imposed Mahmud Nokrashi the premier was nominated military governor-general. He ordered general censorship and nominated military governors to certain areas.[5]

This was the situation on the Arab side. In terms of troops, the Jewish Agency could potentially mobilize the same number of soldiers as the Arab governments engaged in the fighting.[6] However, as Ben Gurion himself understood, the problem of the number of troops was not an important factor.[7] He told the Jewish Agency that the Jews had enough personnel - the problem was equipment. The Arab armies enjoyed the absence of a proper Jewish navy and airforce and, more important, the Hagana's lack of artillery. This situation changed during the

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1. Ibid.
2. Journal d'Egypt, 12.5.48.
3. FO 371/68370, E5109, Cairo to FO, 24.4.48.
4. FO 371/68372, E6251, Cairo to FO, 13.5.48.
5. FO 371/68372, E6307, Cairo to FO, 15.5.48.
6. According to the Defence Ministry estimation the Jews could deploy 50,000 armed men. This is roughly the number of Arabs deployed. According to the formal Israeli version Israel had 26,000 men and an equal number of reserves (DEFE 4/12, CoS(48)56, 23.4.48; Toldot, pp.27, 71-3.
7. BGA, the JA directive meetings, 1.2.48.

first truce.[1] Thus, until the first truce, the Arabs enjoyed some superiority owing to their air forces' ability to cause considerable damage, but this superiority became useless once the forces on the ground could not advance any further.

Thus, in many ways the British were backing the right horse. They were not assisting in enforcing partition, yet they were encouraging in implementation by approving Abdullah's programme. The British involvement in Abdullah's plans enabled the CoS to estimate accurately the outcome of the war, allowed the Foreign Office to control to some extent the development of the fighting, and granted the British Cabinet the opportunity to plan carefully the next stages in its policy towards the area. It is tempting to leave the analysis of British policy at this point and conclude that it was sheer pragmatism, or even opportunism, that facilitated such a British success. However, this would be an overstatement. The agreement with Abdullah should be considered in light of broader British interests in the Middle East. It was highly important for Bevin to signal to the Arab world that the evacuation of Palestine was not the beginning of British withdrawal from the Middle East. Bevin conceived the treaties with Iraq and Transjordan as substitutes for the loss of Palestine. However, if Palestine was to be shaped politically, it was necessary for Britain to devise ways of including the successors of Palestine in a general defence system covering the entire area.[2]

The main requirement of such a system, according to Bevin and the CoS, was a network of bases that could be manned at short notice in case of a war in the Middle East. In February 1948, it was hard to

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1. Toldot, p.27.
2. These ideas were expressed by Bevin in FO 371/68367, E1980, FO Minute, Bevin, 11.2.48.

envisage how a future Jewish state could be fitted into it. While the officials in the Eastern Department and Bevin accepted the state of Israel as a fait accompli, they showed little faith in the Jewish state. The new Israel was envisaged as a base for communist infiltration into the Middle East. Thus if any territory was important strategically, as the Negev was for Britain, it was preferable to see it in Transjordanian hands before the frontiers were shaped. Furthermore, the Office and the Secretary of State realised that the borders as defined in the UN resolution were to be altered according to the intentions and ability of the 'actors' involved. The Negev was not included in the Arab state.[1] Thus Bevin toyed with the idea that the borders would be reshaped. 'It is tempting to think that Transjordan might transgress the boundaries of the UN Jewish state to the extent of establishing a corridor across the Southern Negev, joining the existing Transjordan territory to the Mediterranean at Gaza. This would have immense strategic advantages for us, both in cutting the Jewish state, and therefore communist influence, off [from] the Red Sea'.[2]

Four main conclusions emerge from this section of the chapter. Bevin's arrangements with Abdullah prior to the war in Palestine were the basis on which British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was formulated. These arrangements guided the Eastern Department in its attitude towards the Bernadotte proposals and the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations. Secondly, the realistic British presumptions about the course of the war in Palestine enabled the Foreign Office to adjust itself with considerable ease to the new situation created by the establishment of the Jewish state. Thirdly, those British assumptions

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1. Sykes, Crossroads, pp.323-4; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, 4th ed. (Cornell University Press, 1980), pp.404-5.
2. FO 371/68368, E2696, FO Minute, Burrows, 9.2.48.

before the end of the Mandate facilitated the inclusion of Israel in the strategic British planning. Finally, this policy prevented British recognition of the existence of a Palestinian problem other than the humanitarian problem of the refugees. This attitude was not exclusive to the British but was shared by all the countries and powers involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

One might add another conclusion about Egypt's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The lack of enthusiasm on the Egyptian side for participating in the struggle to 'liberate Palestine', and the shelving of the Palestine problem until the dispute with Britain was solved, clarified the British tendency to see the Israeli-Egyptian dispute as one of minor importance. Indeed, until Nasser came to power it was impossible to regard it in any other way. Berque's assumption that the struggle against Zionism in 1948 was a fight against the ultimate Imperialism seems to be out of place.[1] The war in Palestine did not take the place of the struggle against the British presence in Egypt. Moreover, the pressure to enter Palestine came from Syria and Iraq and not from Egypt. As Marlow correctly remarked, the defeat in Palestine enabled the Egyptians to concentrate on issues more closely connected to their own national aspirations.[2] One has also to take into account also Faruq's personal ambitions.

C. British involvement in the War in Palestine (1948)

When the Arab operations in Palestine began and the last British soldiers were leaving the country, His Majesty's representatives in the various Arab capitals assured the Arab leaders of British diplomatic

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1. J. Berque, Egypt: Imperialism and Resolution, trans. J. Stewart (Faber and Faber, 1978), p.656.
2. J. Marlow, Anglo-Egyptian Relations, (London: The Crescent Press, 1954), p.330.

and political assistance. However, at an early stage, the Foreign Office stipulated its conditions for such co-operation; the Arab governments would inform the Office about their intentions in Palestine in such a way that would enable 'the friends of the Arab countries to defend' them.[1]

Only Lebanon informed the British of their intentions in answer to Bevin's inquiries.[2] Riad Al-Sulh assured HMG's representative in Beirut that the Lebanese army was merely playing a defensive and token role in the war. He expected a British initiative at an early stage, in favour of the Arabs.[3] However, the other Arab governments were interested more in military assistance. Diplomatic support had little importance in the Arab eyes, since it became clear that the UN or Security Council resolutions were unenforcable unless imposed by the Great Powers or accepted by both sides. The flow of arms to the three Arab countries which had treaties with Britain continued until the first truce was announced by the Security Council. Arab refusal to renew this truce brought an abrupt end to this supply until the end of hostilities in Palestine.[4]

Thus British involvement did not, and was not, intended to tip the balance in the war. The British wanted to preserve the new status quo that emerged after the first ten days of fighting. The way the political map of Palestine was shaped at the end of June 1948 was satisfactory as far as the Foreign Office was concerned. Any further Arab or Jewish attempts to change this map, by continued fighting, seemed to London to threaten British interests in the area.

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1. FO 371/68373, E6636, FO to Damascus, 19.5.48.
2. Apart from Transjordan which gave some information before the war.
3. FO 371/68373, E6692, Beirut to FO, 20.5.48.
4. The British stopped supplying arms and ammunition in the beginning of June. CAB 21/1922, CoS(48)June 1948.

During the fighting the British intervention was guided by the same principles as the evacuation process. That is, only when British installations or interests were under direct threat did Britain act firmly against the attacking side. The clash between the R.A.F. and Israeli Air Force in the last days of the war was an exceptional event and its significance will be examined in a different context later in this work.[1] British intervention intensified when the truce negotiations began and when UN mediation was attempted from July 1948 onwards.

1. From the beginning of the war to the first truce.

A week after the war between the Jews and the regular Arab armies broke out, the situation was as follows: the Syrians and the Iraqis were withdrawing from the U.N. Jewish areas, the Lebanese were on the defensive and would not enter Palestine, the Legion had tightened its siege on Jerusalem, while the Egyptian army had moved mainly in the U.N. Arab state. This situation was viewed favourably in London. The Legion had most of Arab Palestine while the U.N. resolution was implemented almost entirely, except for a small part of the Negev where there were no regular forces in territory recommended for the Jewish state.[2] Furthermore, since the Jews were in some Arab areas, most importantly in Western Galilee, officials in the Eastern Department envisaged a possible solution: Western Galilee would be Jewish, while the Negev would be restored to the Arabs. Thus, reasoned the officials in London, 'the two states would then be geographically cohesive'.[3] With these alterations in the map of the partition of Palestine, the Foreign Office accepted the U.N. resolution of November 1947.

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1. See the chapter on Anglo-Israeli relations.
2. FO 371/68373, E6694, Amman to FO, 21.5.48.
3. Ibid.

In general, the British policy was not to offer any comment to the Arab states. Only when the Arab actions endangered relations with the Americans, did the British deem it necessary to offer their advice.When the Egyptian bombing of Tel-Aviv was severely criticized in the U.S.A., HMG sent the following message to the Egyptians: 'We would suggest that the Arab governments should consider carefully the military advantages of bombing non-military targets'.[1] Likewise, the Foreign Office refused to allow the seizure of ships with ammunition going to Palestinian ports by the Egyptians. The Eastern Department recommended non-approval of such an Egyptian act: since, 'a civil war does not give belligerent rights at sea'.[2] However, it was more than just a legal concern. The Americans regarded the British as much as the Egyptians responsible for the free passage at sea.

As could be expected at that period, the British acted firmly when British life was in danger. This attitude applied to Jews and Arabs alike. The R.A.F. strip at Mafraq was used by the Iraqi air force, as was Amman R.A.F. airport by the Transjordanians. The Foreign Office felt unable to avoid the use of these airstrips by Arab forces,[3] thus leaving British personnel and equipment under direct threat.[4] A preemptive step was taken at the beginning of June 1948, when the Foreign Office issued a warning that Britain would shoot down aircraft attacking British installations.[5] The Office realized that a complicated situation could arise since an Iraqi attack from Amman could lead to a Jewish counter-attack, as did happen eventually. Moreover, any British reaction would be considered a biased intervention in the war.

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1. FO 371/68373, E6613, FO Minute, Burrows, 19.5.48.
2. FO 371/68372, E6362, Cairo to FO, 17.5.48.
3. FO 371/68373, E6494, Amman to FO, 19.5.48.
4. There were 350 men in the RAF bases in Mafraq and Amman (FO 371/68836, E410, Amman to FO, 19.12.47).
5. FO 371/68373, E6494, FO to Haifa, 5.6.48.

Predictable as it may have been, the British were still surprised when the R.A.F. camp in Amman was hit by a Jewish raid. At approximately the same time, the Egyptians attacked the British airfield at Rammat-David. In both cases, the British took a firm line and warned that they would not hesitate to retaliate.[1] However, they did not react when the Jews attacked once more, partly since they refused to deal directly with the Jewish State, and partly owing to Bevin's cautious attitude. The Foreign Secretary wanted to keep a low profile in this affair. Thus, in spite of the Air Ministry's and War Office's opposition the Foreign Office did not issue a formal warning.[2]

After the first week of fighting the Arabs were facing a Jewish offensive. By then it was clear that the joint Arab effort to save Palestine had failed. Thus, for the first time came an Arab appeal for a more substantial British involvement. The Iraqi Regent told the British ambassador in Baghdad that if the war were to be stopped by a great power or by the United Nations, Arab honour would be satisfied.[3] The Foreign Office in return suggested that the Arabs should agree to a truce. However, the trend in the Arab world was to continue the fighting. In Dara'a, the Arab leaders pressured Abdullah to involve the Arab Legion still further and, in particular, to get it to move against the Jewish state, an action regarded by Abdullah as insane.[4]

After a week of fighting the Legion had achieved most of its objectives. In order to preserve these objectives it was important to exert pressure on the Arabs to agree to a ceasefire. The continuation of the war from the Arab side depended on the supply of arms and

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1. FO 371/68374, E7368, Amman to FO, 1.6.48 and E7371, Haifa to FO, 2.6.48, E7681, FO Minute, 2.6.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/68373, E6722, Baghdad to FO, 22.5.48.
4. FO 371/68373, E6770, Amman to FO, 22.5.48.

ammunition; the only Power which could supply them was Great Britain. The Arab leaders and especially Azzam realized the decisive role Britain played in determining the outcome of the war. Encouraged by Britain's reluctance to follow the American example in recognizing the state of Israel, Azzam wrote to Bevin that now was the appropriate time to reach a comprehensive Anglo-Arab agreement.[1] Although Azzam did not mention the quid pro quo, namely British assistance in the war, it was clear that this was meant by that deal. The Syrians were even more desperate. The Syrian President asked through Abdullah for equipment and ammunition.[2] The British adamantly refused to comply with the Syrian request for arms, given the organized opposition by the latter to the British treaties with Iraq and Transjordan.[3] The British were willing to support only the Legion and, like Abdullah, waited anxiously for the United Nations to impose a general truce. However, the Legion plans for a swift implementation of Abdullah's ambitions were obstructed by the prolonged campaign over Jerusalem.

2. The war in Jerusalem.

The British did not consult Abdullah about the future of Jerusalem, mainly because the United Nations resolution granting the city a Corpus Separatum was supported by the Foreign Office. However, the United Nations' experts committee which was supposed to draft a paper on the issue failed to do so.[4] The High Commissioner then urged the Colonial Office to find some solution since 'It is unthinkable that Jerusalem should be left to become a cockpit of internecine strife and

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1. FO 371/68373, E6769, Amman to FO, 22.5.48.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68531, E1302, J. Martin (CO) to Wright, 27.1.48.

that the holy city should lapse into a pitched battlefield'.[1] However, the Foreign Office did not envisage fighting around the holy places and it seemed at the time (February 1948) that the status quo would remain, that is, the Jewish neighbourhoods would fall within the Jewish state while the Arab ones would come under a Legion occupation. Kirkbride supported this view and was convinced that both sides would exclude Jerusalem from the fighting.[2]

These British assumptions did not coincide with Abdullah's line of thought. The King was confident that by assuming the ancient role of his family, that is of protecting the holy places of Islam, he would be granted Arab recognition for the annexation of the Arab areas of Palestine. Moreover, he hoped to emerge as the guardian of the holy places of all the religions in the eyes of the world. This aspiration, expressed in front of Kirkbride in February 1948, did not impress the British.[3] Kirkbride thought the Legion was 'quite inadequate for such a task'.[4]

The importance of Jerusalem to both sides was fully realized by Bevin when he received a letter in the first days of the war from the King. Abdullah wrote that owing to his religious and national duties to the whole of Arab Palestine and Jerusalem he was doubtful whether he could 'do nothing' in the war.[5]

Bevin answered that if Abdullah looked for British support for a departure from his original scheme it would necessitate a reconsideration of the British position.[6] From an earlier note by Bevin it is clear that the Foreign Secretary had in fact meant to warn Abdullah

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1. FO 371/68531, E1302, Cunningham to J. Martin, 27.1.48.
2. FO 371/68852, E6008, Amman to FO, 8.5.48.
3. FO 371/68367, E2163, Amman to FO, 14.2.48.
4. FO 371/68852, E4667, Kirkbride to FO, 13.4.48; FO 371/68367, E2163, Amman to FO, 14.2.48.
5. FO 816/120, Amman to FO, 16.5.48.

that he would consider discontinuing the military and financial supply to the Legion.[1]

However, in May 1948 Kirkbride explained that Abdullah was forced to enter the battle over Jerusalem owing to the Jewish occupation of the Arab quarters of the city. Moreover, Kirkbride agreed with Abdullah that he could not simply reach the boundaries of the Jewish state and then remain inactive.[2] Thus, Abdullah could have felt that he had Kirkbride's understanding, if not support, for his action in Jerusalem.

The British were aware of the strength of the Jewish position in Jerusalem (owing to the large Jewish population in the city) and of the depth of the Jewish sentiment towards the city. The Foreign Office realized Ben Gurion's inability to consent to an agreement which would not include Jewish control over the Jewish quarters.[3] One British official even envisaged a coup d'état by the Irgun or Lehi in that case.[4] In any case it seems that Cunningham understood Abdullah's mind on the attitude towards Jerusalem better than anyone else. He was confident that neither the Transjordans nor any other Arab country could agree to internationalization.[5]

One question still remains unanswered. Why were Abdullah and the Jewish Agency not able to reach at least an understanding over partitioning of Jerusalem similar to the one they had reached over Eastern Palestine? It could not have been out of negligence; it seems unlikely that such an important issue escaped the mind of either Ben

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1. FO 816/120, Bevin to Abdullah, 17.5.48.
2. FO 816/120, Bevin to Abdullah, 15.5.48.
3. FO 816/120, Kirkbride to Bevin, 22.5.48.
4. Two-thirds of the population of Jerusalem was Jewish (Count Bernadotte report to the SC/UN A/648, p.8.
5. FO 371/68508, E6942, Jerusalem (Sherringham) to FO, 24.5.48.

Gurion or Abdullah. A more plausible explanation, which would also be only speculation, is that the two parties understood that the difference in opinion on this issue was too great and left it to be decided on the battlefield.

Like anywhere else in Palestine, the preservation of Jerusalem's special status depended on law and order. In April 1948, the clashes between Jews and Arabs were mainly on the roads into the city and in a short while they had turned into a fierce battle, each side aiming to capture the areas evacuated by the British.[1] By May 15, the Jews had established themselves in their own neighbourhoods and in some Arab quarters. The outbreak of fighting ended a short ceasefire achieved by the High Commissioner's efforts. The ceasefire was agreed upon by the Arab Higher Committee and the Jewish Agency. However, from May 15, the Arab partner turned to be the Arab Legion. It is notable that Cunningham appealed to the Cabinet to be allowed to evacuate his government, but was rejected.[2]

Military intelligence in Jerusalem asserted that the Jewish forces could seize Jerusalem with no great difficulty if they chose to do so.[3] However, the Hagana knew about Abdullah's intentions to capture the city and preferred to consolidate their positions in the first days of the battle.[4] Hence, in spite of the British intelligence estimations, the King was able to carry out his operation since he directed the bulk of the Legion force to the city.[5] Furthermore, he was assisted by an

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1. Cunningham Private Papers, Box 6, File I, a letter to Lloyd, 15.1.48.
2. FO 371/68371, E5670, Pearson (CO) to McAlpine (Bevin's private secretary), 1.5.48.
3. FO 371/68504, E5464, MI3 to MoD, 23.4.48.
4. Salomon Private Archive, intelligence report to the Jewish Agency executive, 14.4.48.
5. FO 371/68822, E11049, 'The Transjordan situation' by Glubb, 12.8.48.

Egyptian contingent that captured the southern approaches to Jerusalem.[1] Nevertheless, Abdullah was taking a great risk, as was pointed out to him and his government by the Legion officers. The Legion HQ held that if most of the Legion forces were directed towards the battle over Jerusalem, this would expose the rural areas between Hebron and Nablus,[2] to possible Jewish offensive. Moreover the Legion was worried over leaving these areas in the hands of the Iraqis and Egyptian forces already there.

However, Abdullah was determined to carry on with his plans. Owing to prior Jewish success in Jerusalem, Abdullah decided to launch his attack immediately after the British evacuated the city. By then, both sides had thrown the bulk of their forces into the battle for Jerusalem. At that stage, Abdullah informed the British about the course he was about to pursue. His main argument was that the disturbed situation in Jerusalem was obstructing him from carrying out his original plan.[3] At the outset of its offensive the Legion succeeded in keeping the old city and small parts of the new city. Thus, a week after the fighting had begun the city was de facto divided.

After the Legion's successes in Jerusalem, which culminated in the capture of the Jewish quarter in the old city, the position of the Legion became more and more problematic. Bevin realised that the best thing to do was to preserve the status quo. He suggested to the King that he put the holy city (places) under neutral administration in order to win over world public opinion and to agree to a cease fire.[4]

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1. Toldot, 191-203.
2. Kirkbride warned Abdullah that he was exposing Ramleh and Lyddah. FO 371/68506, E6564, Amman to FO, 19.5.48.
3. FO 371/68372, E6304, Amman to FO, 17.5.48.
4. FO 371/68508, E7115, Bevin to Amman, 28.5.48.

It was indeed priceless advice. The Jewish forces improved their positions, and the lines on both sides seemed to be fortified and able to resist further attacks. The fighting in Jerusalem, however, had left the Legion spread over 6000 square kilometers of the country and having to deal with policing operations while conducting a war against the Jewish forces in the city.[1]

In a letter to the Arab leaders Bevin went even further. He advocated that the Arabs should accept a permanent truce in Jerusalem.[2] Apparently, the participation of British officers in the fighting, within the old city, had embarrassed the Foreign Office.[3]

The Transjordans accepted the truce only too willingly. Nevertheless, it is notable that, in spite of Israeli successes, the Legion controlled the main supply routes into the city. Thus the Jews were completely 'cut off', apart from a rough new road, the 'Burma way' which was opened as a by-pass by the Jewish forces. The Legion also controlled the source of Jerusalem water supply (Ras Al-E'in) and the city's pumping station (Latrun). Hence, the Legion achieved part of its objectives in the war of Jerusalem. The ceasefire was, in fact, obtained after the Transjordans were convinced by the Foreign Office to open the road between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem which was the principle Jewish precondition for accepting the truce.[4]

During the first truce, it became apparent that Abdullah was satisfied with the results and agreed to the creation of the 'no man's land' areas between the two parties.[5] The new Jewish state needed this

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1. FO 371/68822, E11049, op.cit.
2. FO 371/68373, E6841, Amman to FO, 22.5.48; Bevin to ME posts, 26.5.48.
3. FO 371/68508, E7043, Balfour to Beaumont, 17.6.48.
4. FO 371/68509, E7374 and 7375, Jerusalem to FO, 1.6.48.
5. SC/UN official records, 3rd ed., Year supplement, A/648, p.9, 16.6.48.

agreement desperately, since it included the renewal of supplies to Jerusalem. However, the water supply was never resumed, in spite of the Security Council order to that effect.[1]

3. The first Truce.

Whereas, the Legion's main effort was directed towards Jerusalem, the other Arab armies operated in South and North Palestine. Those operations were ineffective and hardly changed the situation. The Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese forces had scarcely succeeded in crossing the Palestine frontiers. The Egyptian army caused serious trouble to the Hagana at the beginning of the fighting. However, by the end of May the Egyptian army had decided to take a static position north of Majdal, on the coast, with no intention of advancing any further.[2]

The Egyptian army seemed to have entered into a tacit non-interference pact with the Jewish settlements. The only settlement the Egyptians had occupied was astride the main road and thus they had no choice. In the main it was a case of live and let live.[3]

It is notable that the British had opposed an American proposal in the Security Council for an immediate ceasefire on May 17, quite probably since the Americans included a threat of sanctions under Article 39 of the UN charter. The British rejected the idea of imposing a truce at such an early stage. Cadogan on that occasion had told the Security Council that he had 'grave doubts about the wisdom and expediency of involving article 39 of the charter'.[4] He argued that it was impossible to indicate who the aggressor was. With British

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68822, E11049, 'The Transjordan situation' by Glubb, 12.8.48.
3. FO 371/68510, E7639, Amman to FO, 7.6.48.
4. J. Zasloff, Great Britain and Palestine (Munich, 1952), p.134; UN SC OR 3rd year, no.67, pp.2-4, draft resolution S/749.

support the Security Council agreed to comply with an Arab request to delay the resolution.[1]

Bevin explained to the Americans that it was Middle Eastern susceptibility to Soviet influence which caused him to oppose any measures taken against the Arab states.[2] Israeli writers claim that Britain advised the Arabs not to accept the Security Council call for a ceasefire, however, there is no evidence for this in the British documents surveyed for this work.[3] Nevertheless, it is possible that some British officials were encouraged by the initial Egyptian success and hoped that the Negev eventually would fall into Arab hands.

In any case, after a week of fighting the British not only sought to persuade the Arab side to accept a truce in Palestine, they even initiated a resolution of their own in the Security Council. This resolution called for a truce of four weeks. Furthermore, the resolution banned the introduction of fighting personnel or men of military age into the area and placed an embargo on the supply of arms for the duration of the truce.[4] Nevertheless, the Foreign Office had to consent to two amendments proposed by the Americans. The first was that the prohibition of the movement of fighting personnel and material should include all countries involved in the war (not only the local Arabs and Jews). Secondly, Israel could admit new immigrants of fighting age but could not train them.[5]

Thus, on May 29 the Security Council adopted a resolution calling

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1. G. Kirk, Survey of International Affairs, The Middle East, 1945-1950 (London: RIIA, 1954), p.272; CAB 129/31, part I, CP(49)10, 15.1.49, historical research.
2. FRUS 48, Douglas to Marshall, 25.5.48, p.1047.
3. Ben Gurion, War Diary, editorial note, p.422; Kimchi, Both Sides, pp.191-3; Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, pp.765, 767, 771.
4. F. Bernadotte, To Jerusalem (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p.21; FRUS 48, ASoS to London, 28.5.48, p.1070.
5. SC OR, 3rd year, supplement, S/801.

for a truce.[1] It should be remembered and emphasized that the Israelis had immediately accepted both resolutions initiated by the Americans and the British while the Arabs' acceptance was slow in coming.

The British attitude towards the Arab governments became somewhat harsher during the last week of May 1948. Whereas the British government opposed the imposition of sanctions by the United Nations, they were not, however, deterred from threatening the Arabs with the very same sanctions themselves.[2] Bevin gave the Arab leaders a clear ultimatum: if they would not agree to a ceasefire Britain would stop sending war material and withdraw British officers from the Legion.[3]

The Transjordans in particular could not but accept this British ultimatum. By the end of May, the ammunition of the Legion was running out. The Legion had only first and second line ammunition. Furthermore, the Egyptian authorities seized a ship loaded with ammunition belonging to Transjordan while it was on its way from Suez to Aqaba. This was an Egyptian sign of dismay at British refusal to supply arms to them.[4] The British army eventually agreed to replace it, but the United Nations embargo was imposed before this could be done.[5] Towards the end of the first truce, the Foreign Office made it clear that as long as the fighting continued in Palestine, HMG was unwilling to provide any war material for Arab armies engaged in the war in that country.[6]

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1. Ibid.
2. CAB 24/1922, CoS(48)125, 4.6.48; FO 371/68221, E9296, FO Minute, Beeley, 5.7.48, and see G. Goldstein, 'A Talk with Mr. Bevin', Zionist Review, 9.2.51, p.10.
3. FO 371/68373, E6841, Kirkbride to FO, 22.5.48.
4. FO 371/68373, E6800, Amman to FO, 23.5.48.
5. FO 371/68222, E11049, 'The Transjordan Situation', by Glubb, 12.8.48.
6. FO 371/68510, E7851, Sir O. Sargent to Sir L. Hollis (MoD) 11.6.48.

The main reason for this British determination to stop the fighting was the Foreign Office's prognosis for the course of the war. Abdullah, according to the Eastern Department's assessment, could eventually capture the whole of Jerusalem, but no other Arab successes were anticipated. On the contrary, gloomier prospects were predicted for the other Arab armies. The Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi forces were considered to be out of the game. It seemed that any Egyptian advance would cause the destruction of their army. Thus the only thing the Egyptian commanders could do was to order their units to dig in and thus cause a stalemate.[1]

One should not, however, forget the role played by the Americans. As Mr. Bevin pointed out: 'At the same time we have been in constant consultation with the US government with a view of trying to harmonise our policies and prevent any further sudden developments, like the US recognition of the Jewish state.'[2] The co-ordination of policy with the US was essential on the eve of the Berlin crisis; HMG could not allow a serious clash of interests to arise. The Jewish side desired a truce, hence Washington was pressing for one. There was a need to follow the American suit.

There were additional reasons for the British support for the ceasefire. From the British viewpoint Jerusalem was the most pressing problem and the Foreign Office hoped that during the truce the UN would set up an international enclave there.[3] Apart from Jerusalem, the British were satisfied with the way the frontiers had crystallized after almost a month of fighting (Jaffa, Acre and western Galilee under Jewish control; the Negev or most of it under Arab control). The

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1. FO 371/68373, E6897, Amman to FO, 22.5.48.
2. FO 371/68509, E7220, Bevin's draft note to the cabinet, 27.5.48.
3. Ibid.

Foreign Office asserted that if the Arabs had accepted the idea of a Jewish state at an early stage, they might have been able to claim considerable frontier changes.[1]

In the Foreign Office itself the idea of the inevitability of a Jewish state consolidated after Sir Hugh Dow had visited Palestine and Transjordan during the first truce. His conclusions were that a solution was impossible without some sort of a Jewish state.[2] Dow asserted that only King Abdullah would accept this fact. However, the King needed to protect himself from criticism by other Arab states; therefore, the solution must 'have the appearance of being to a large extent forced upon him (King Abdullah) against his will by an outside authority'.[3] Sir Hugh assessed that the Jews would not be defeated militarily or diplomatically. It seems that the envoy himself was not confident about his 'clear' solution. This could be deduced from his final suggestion. Britain should exert pressure on the different parties in two opposite ways: to pressure the Arabs 'to accept as large a Jewish state as possible, while at the same time exerting influence to persuade the Jews to accept the smallest possible state'.[4] For this purpose, Dow advocated that the recognition of the state of Israel should be held as a card against the Jews.

However, as long as the British could not persuade the Arab states that the war in Palestine was lost or, moreover, that there was a respectable solution for the situation, it was clear the fighting would go on. In order to overcome their 'lack of understanding' the Information and News Department in the Foreign Office had issued a

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1. FO 371/68374, E7887, Amman to FO, 9.6.48.
2. FO 371/68374, E7960, Sir H. Dow to FO, 9.6.48.
3. FO 371/68374, E7960, Sir H. Dow to the FO, 9.6.48.
4. Ibid.

series of comments and communiqués to the effect that 'we do not regard the Arab war as victorious'.[1]

Nevertheless, it was Bevin's ultimatum that played the decisive role in bringing about the Arab acceptance of the truce. During the discussions of the political committee of the League, the Egyptians and Transjordans were the main protagonists for accepting the Security Council proposal, while the Syrians and the Iraqis were the main opponents.[2] After a week of fighting the Syrians realised that Abdullah had deceived them by not fulfilling his role as a supreme commander of the Arab forces in Palestine. Ostensibly, the Iraqis took a similar viewpoint, namely that the lack of success in the first week was due to the shortcomings of the supreme commander. However, when the Regent learned that the Syrians asked for Taha Al-Hashimi as a supreme commander, he had to discredit the general as one who was 'a bad chief of the general staff, a bad minister of defence and a bad prime minister,'[3] in order not to act openly against Abdullah. The Iraqis were not prepared to replace the Hashemite bond by a coalition between Syria and Iraq (notwithstanding the Iraqi realisation that the war was lost). Ten days after the fighting had begun the weakness of the Arab forces supply system and their lack of sources of ammunition and stores made itself felt.

It is noticeable that the British Middle East Office did not concur with Bevin's decision to threaten the Arab governments with the cessation of arms supplies.[4] As in many other cases in the period under review, when the issue was the British attitude to the Arab

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1. FO 371/68374, E8322, FO Minute, Balfour, 14.6.48.
2. FO 371/68222, E11049, 'The Transjordan situation', by Glubb, 12.8.48.
3. FO 371/68373, E6722, Baghdad to FO, 20.5.48.
4. FO 371/68374, E9072, BMEO to FO, 5.7.48.

governments the BMEO found itself alone, amongst the diplomats, speaking for the Arab case. Sir J. Troutbeck was supported by the CoS who failed to see the advantages of the embargo. The complications arising from such an embargo embarrassed the CoS. They found it hard to disagree with an Iraqi appeal to renew the arms supply, since the embargo critically hampered the Iraqi air force's ability to act in the event of internal unrest in that country and in particular in Kurdistan.[1] However, a week after the Air Ministry confirmed the Iraqi order, it was cancelled due to Foreign Office pressure.[2]

The British embargo should be assessed against the background of the situation on the Israeli side. During the first truce, the Israelis had time to consolidate their position by receiving arms from the Eastern bloc and by turning the evacuated Arab areas into an integral part of the Jewish state.[3]

The Israelis utilized the time for purchasing necessary equipment. The first cannons arrived during this period.[4] During the truce the general recruitment was completed and supplies to Jerusalem were resumed.[5] Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate the extent of Israeli reinforcement. As Count Bernadotte himself noted in his report to the Security Council, the import of war material was being closely observed and, apart from the case of the 'Altalena', there was no evidence for any-large scale import of weapons, or for that matter, of fighting personnel.[6] Moreover, the Israeli reinforcement was balanced by further reinforcement of troops on the Arab side as more regular and irregular forces entered the country.[7]

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1. CAB 21/1922, CoS(48)125(0), 4.6.48.
2. Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, p.148.
3. Sykes, Crossroads, pp.354-55; BGA, Ben Gurion's diary, 5.6.48.
4. Toldot, pp.231-32, 28.5.48.
5. Toldot, Ben Gurion in a government meeting, p.239.
6. UN Papers, Count Bernadotte report, A/648, p.7 in ISA 2425/2.
7. UN Papers, op.cit., p.8.

Could the Arab acceptance of the first truce be regarded as another British success (the first one was preventing the Arab armies entering Palestine before May 15)? Bevin certainly felt it was an important British achievement. The Eastern Department was more cautious about this conclusion and advised the Foreign Secretary to omit this observation from a memorandum he prepared to the Cabinet.[1] Bevin certainly influenced Arab views, but it was also due to the situation in the battlefield, namely Transjordan's reluctance to advance into the Jewish state that caused a stalemate. Furthermore, the Egyptian difficulties on the Southern front, the inefficiency of the Syrian and Lebanese forces and the apathy of the Iraqi contingent had contributed greatly to the creation of the new situation.

4. Britain and the Bernadotte proposals.

On May 20, 1948, the Security Council appointed Count Folke Bernadotte, President of the Swedish Red Cross, as United Nations Mediator for Palestine. The General Assembly empowered the Mediator to co-operate with the Truce Commission (appointed in April that year) in observing the truce and in endeavouring to achieve a solution to the conflict.[1]

One writer claimed that the British offered the appointment of a mediator only when it was clear that the Arab armies were exhausted and in order to be able to save them.[2] While it stands to reason that Cadogan offered mediation as a means of solving the conflict and thus of saving the Arab armies, the British became involved with Bernadotte mainly due to their concern about the impact of his mission on the

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1. Lenczowski, World Affairs, p.408.
2. Sacher, Europe, p.524.

British position in the area. For this purpose they decided to appoint the British consul in Jerusalem, Sir Hugh Dow, as a special liaison with the Count's Headquarters.[1]

Bevin asserted that there were three possible lines of approach to the Palestine problem in June 1948. As he wrote to the Cabinet, Bernadotte's efforts could lead to a partition or they could facilitate the implementation of Bevin's plan (Provincial Autonomy). A third possibility was the annexation of central Palestine to Transjordan and the south to Egypt. The Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office preferred the last solution: 'We should see no objection to this (solution) provided it was the wish of the inhabitants there, and there might indeed be certain advantages from our point of view'.[2] In fact, Britain and Transjordan would have reaped all the benefits from such a solution. But they did not take into account the wishes or opinions of the local inhabitants.

There seems to be little doubt that Bernadotte was under strong British influence, as has been argued by some writers.[3] A close comparison between British presumptions about the development of the war and Bernadotte's second proposals brings us to the conclusion that the Mediator was striving for a Pax Britannica more than anything else. It is however, important to note that British thinking had little impact on the Count's first proposals which were mainly an outcome of Bernadotte's impression of the strength of the Arab

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1. FO 371/68509, E7220, Bevin's draft note to the Cabinet, 27.5.48.
2. Ibid.
3. Note in particular S. Persson, Mediation and Assassination: Count Bernadotte's mission to Palestine 1948 (Ithaca Press, 1979), p.193 and pp.297-313; Sacher, Europe, p.524; Kimchi, Both Sides, p.198; J.G. McDonald, My Mission to Israel (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951), p.20.

demands. Nor did they participate in the first round of the discussion.[1]

Ben Gurion, for one, was convinced that Bernadotte was a British agent and consequently rejected firmly any of the Count's proposals.[2] In fact, the Provisional Government of Israel as a whole showed little confidence in Bernadotte and treated him as an enemy. Sharret was apprehensive and more hostile to the Mediator's efforts than anybody else in the government.[3] The first Israeli representative to the United Nations, Eban, declared publicly that Israel did not trust the mediator and reiterated Ben Gurion's call for direct negotiations.[4] When the Count inquired about these Israeli declarations he was told by the Foreign Minister that Israel had never asked for the services of the Mediator.[5]

5. Bernadotte's first proposals.

Bernadotte's first suggestions were made in the end of June 1948.[6] The Count proposed that Palestine, as defined in the original Mandate entrusted to the UK in 1922 (that is including Transjordan), would form a union comprising two member states: one Arab, one Jewish. Within the boundaries of this union the Mediator suggested that the Negev would be given to the Arabs and the Western Galilee to the Jews. Jerusalem would be in the territory of the Arab state with administrative autonomy to the Jews. Haifa and Jaffa would be free ports, as would Lydda airport. The two states would form an economic, military and political union. The frontiers, according to this scheme, would be left for

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1. ISA 2424/20, Shiloah to Sharret, 25.6.48.
2. Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.281; Kimchi, op.cit., p.93.
3. Sharret Memo, 22.7.48, in ISA 2424/21.
4. ISA 2426/5, Sharret-Bernadotte conversation, 26.7.48.
5. ISA 2426/5, Sharret-Bernadotte conversation, 26.7.48.
6. Persson, Bernadotte, p.143.

negotiation. Immigration would be under the control of each member of the proposed union, and 'after two years either member would be entitled to request the Social and Economic council of the UN to review policy of the union (on this issue)'.[1] The Mediator suggested the prolongation of the truce to give time for both sides to consider and implement the proposals.[2]

Bevin and Bernadotte concurred on the principle of mutual Arab and Jewish acceptance of any solution.[3] Thus, as Sir A. Cadogan explained to the General Assembly the Mediator was not sent to implement the UN partition resolution which was unacceptable to the Arabs; on the contrary, it was an 'attempt to get away from the impossibility...of enforcing that resolution'.[4] However, the first proposals seemed to cause even more resentment than the November 1947 resolution. Both sides rejected it categorically. Thus, the mediator hastened to stress that 'these ideas were put forth with no intimation of finality'.[5]

The Foreign Office thought that the main fault with the first proposals was that they were too vague and unbinding and therefore disapproved by the Arabs. Azzam told the Count that the League was misled into believing that his proposals would not be influenced by any previous UN decisions and would be based on the political reality as it existed after the truce was implemented. The General Secretary of the Arab League claimed that neither condition was fulfilled. The first proposals were just another version of the partition resolution.[6]

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1. FO 371/68374, E8962, UN UK to FO, 1.7.48; Bernadotte, To Jerusalem, p.128; Count Bernadotte proposals in ISA 2424/20, 27.6.48; Persson, op.cit., p.145.
2. FO 371/68374, E8962, UN UK to FO, 1.7.48.
3. FO 371/68374, E8564, FO Minute, Wright, 24.6.48.
4. Bernadotte, To Jerusalem, p.171, (13.7.48).
5. Bernadotte, op.cit., p.154; answer to the Israeli government in ISA 2424/20, ibid.
6. Darzawa, A., Al-Qadiya Al-Filastiniya (The Palestine Problem), app.1, p.41 as qt. in Abd Al-Hadi, Al-Masala Al-Filastiniya wa Mashari' Al-Hulul Al-Siyasiya, 1934-74 (The Palestine question and the political solution) (Beirut, 1975), p.126.

Furthermore, according to the Political Committee of the League, the proposals were based on the 'false conception'[1] that there was a link between Transjordan and Palestine. Azzam argued that this was a Zionist conception and unacceptable even to the Transjordans themselves. At least in public, Azzam enjoyed the support of Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda in the Political Committee for this denial of the link between Transjordan and Palestine.[2]

The British could not accept a proposal which the had Arabs rejected. As the Head of the British Middle East Office put it: the Mediator should be impressed with the importance of trying to satisfy the Arabs that he could carry out his duties effectively; that is, to satisfy their demands.[3]

Moreover, Britain had to be clearer about its own attitude towards the Mediator's proposals. Namely, Britain had first to realise how the plan would affect its strategic position and then to determine what might be the reaction of both sides, in particular the Arab side. It is striking that both the Mediator and the Foreign Office tended to overlook the main source of Arab resentment. The Arabs were not prepared to accept the principle of the inevitability of a Jewish state. The Count himself was wrongly convinced in July that the Arabs, although unwillingly, would accept a Jewish state. He based his optimism on a conversation he had with Mahmud Nokrashi.[4]

6. The failure to achieve prolongation of the first truce.

The Foreign Office was determined to achieve a prolongation of the first truce as a conditio sine qua non for the success of the Bernadotte proposals. For that purpose intensive contacts began, the first

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1. Ibid.
2. Darzawa, p.44, qt. in Abd Al-Hadi, Al-Hulul, p.127.
3. FO 371/68375, E9216, BMEO to FO, 8.7.48.
4. Bernadotte, To Jerusalem, p.186.

of the kind since November 1947, between the Foreign Office and the Arab leaders. The Egyptian minister for foreign affairs doubted very much whether the Arabs would agree to an extension of the ceasefire. He told Sir Ronald Campbell in Cairo, at the time when the political committee of the League was convened, that there was a majority in the League against extending the ceasefire.[1]

In the beginning of July the Political Committee assembled in Cairo to discuss the prolongation of the first truce. The Transjordan Premier went with a brief from the King to achieve an extension of the truce at any price.[2] The Transjordans and the British Legation in Amman had known beforehand that the Egyptians were anxious about their military position and that the Iraqi generals had no illusions either about the strength of their forces or the overall ability of the Arab armies.[3] However, although anticipating Egyptian co-operation, Abu Al-Huda found in Cairo a bellicose Nokrashi frightened mainly by what the British Embassy there called the 'Cairo mob'. In the vote, Abu Al-Huda was in a minority of one in his opposition to the resumption of the fighting.[4]

The British Legation in Amman were annoyed with the way Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda presented the Transjordan case in Cairo. They expected him, at least, to inform the King of the mood in the committee and the impending war-like decisions. Thus, without his knowledge the King was commited to what the British minister in Amman called 'a suicidal step'.[5] In fact, the King had learned of the committee's decisions on the night before he had joined the fighting (8-9 July, 1948). The

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1. FO 371/68375, E9186, Cairo to FO, 7.7.48.
2. FO 371/68222, E11049, 'The Transjordan situation', by Glubb, 12.8.48.
3. FO 371/68222, E10325, Pirie Gordon to Burrows, 25.7.48.
4. FO 371/68222, E11409, op.cit., confirmed by reports from Cairo, FO 371/68375, E9217, Cairo to FO, 9.7.48.
5. FO 371/68822, E10325, Pirie-Gordon to Burrows, 25.7.48.

court historians of Abdullah claimed that the King had had previous assurances from the Arab leaders that they would agree to prolongation. Moreover, according to them, the Arab CoSs who had also convened in Cairo were in favour of prolongation.[1] Contrary to the King's wishes the Political Committee's decision to reject the Bernadotte proposal for a long truce was approved by the Transjordan cabinet.2 This was the first time since the war had begun that the Transjordanian government did not follow the king's policies. Similar decisions would follow during the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.

It seems that the Egyptian, Iraqi and Syrian leaders reluctantly voted in favour of resuming the fighting. There is little doubt that the situation in the battlefield justified the leaders' resentment at becoming engaged in another round of fighting and that, quite probably, they hoped that the United Nations would intervene in a short time to bring it to a halt.

The ambiguous Arab attitude towards the first truce was explained by Azzam's biographer as stemming from the Arab leaders' recognition that the operation had been so far successful and that the truce had only benefited the Jews.[3]

It was further felt, according to British and American interpretation, that Transjordan, because of British pressure, had pushed towards accepting the truce in the first place.[4] Furthermore, the Americans assessed that the Arab countries' intransigence was a reflection of the latter's disbelief in the chances of negotiations.[5]

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1. M. Mahdi, and S. Musa, Tarikh Al-Urdun fil Qurn Al-Ishrin (Jordan's history in the 20th century) (Amman, 1959), p.508.
2. FO 371/68222, E10325, op.cit.
3. Ad-Daly, Azzam, p.266.
4. SD 867 n.01/6-1548, Memo Ireland (Cairo) to SD, 14.6.48; 501BB Palestine/7-848, London to SD, 8.7.48.

The most plausible explanation is probably that it was Arab public opinion which frightened those leaders more than anything else - a long truce was tantamount to an admission of defeat.[1]

Nevertheless, the Foreign Office disregarded these internal Arab considerations. It was adamant in its refusal to resume the supply of arms to Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan if the truce was to be breached because of the Arabs.[2] Even reservations about this policy made by Harold Beeley, the Foreign Office's main expert on Palestine, were ignored. Beeley suggested supplying arms to the Legion before the truce was violated. He realised the desperate position of the Legion. During the truce, the Legion had ammunition for only five days. Beeley warned that unless the Legion was supplied with sufficient arms, there would be 'no chance for incorporating Arab Palestine into Transjordan'.[3] However, the Foreign Office did not accept his proposals or arguments, and it suggested to the Cabinet the stopping ofthe delivery of arms to these countries and the postponing of the next payment of the Legion subsidy.[4]

Glubb thought that the subsidy to the Legion was withheld for financial reasons; however, it was a purely political act. Michael Wright was determined to deny the Legion the next installment of the subsidy if the Arab armies resumed fighting.[5] Only when the Political Committee of the League decided in Aley to accept the second truce was the subsidy renewed.[6]

The British first learned about the Arab intention to resume

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1. Ibid.
1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68221, E9296, FO Minute, Beeley, 5.7.48.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/68825, E8867, FO Minute, Wright, 25.6.48.
6. FO 371/68825, E10129, FO Minute, Walker, 20.7.48.

fighting from their Embassy in Cairo. Gallad Bey, the Egyptian Minister of War, told Sir R. Campbell that the Arab armies would begin operations on July 10.[1]

Apart from stopping the supply of arms and withholding the Legion's subsidy, the Foreign Secretary issued a warning to the Arab leaders that a resumption of the fighting would end in the Security Council deciding to intervene against the Arab countries. Britain would then have to act under its obligations to the U.N. Secondly, the Americans would lift their embargo on arms supplies to Israel, while Britain could not assist the Arabs.[2]

In fact, the American President and his advisers wished to lift the embargo regardless of the Arab attitude. However, they encountered strong opposition from the State Department. As a compromise the White House and the State Department concurred in regarding Arab refusal to accept the truce as justifying such a course of action. In that case, the United States would have supported the invocation of Article 39 in Chapter 7 of the UN charter (imposition of sanctions).[3]

More than the ultimatum itself, it was Britain's decision to withhold arms supplies that had a decisive effect on Arab acceptance of the second truce.

7. Britain's strategic requirements and the Bernadotte proposals.

Notwithstanding the low probability of the Mediator's proposals being accepted by the parties, Britain had to assess the proposals independently, that is, the Foreign Office had to find out the best

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1. FO 371/68375, E9217, Cairo to FO, 9.7.48.
2. FO 371/68375, E9168, FO Minute, Bevin, 5.7.48.
3. FRUS 48, Clifford papers, memo by Clifford to a conference on Palestine, 24.3.48, p.755.

means of safeguarding Britain's strategic requirements in Palestine. Here lies the main difference between the Count's attitude and the Foreign Office posture. Whereas Bernadotte had a mandate from the Security Council to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Foreign Office, although agreeing with this objective, regarded the securing of British strategic requirements as Britain's main interest in the Mediator's mission.

Bernadotte considered three possibilities with regard to Arab Palestine: a separate Arab state, annexation of the Arab parts to Transjordan or division of the territory between the Arab countries. But when he found out that the Egyptian had no desire to keep the Gaza strip or any other part the last possibility was ruled out. Since most of the Arab world opposed the second possibility, Bernadotte tended to favour the first - a separate Arab state in Palestine.[1] However, British opposition to such a solution did not escape the Count's attention. The Foreign Office's Palestine experts did not anticipate an Arab agreement on the disposal of the Arab areas. Incorporation into Transjordan seemed to the Foreign Office to be the most practicable and favourable solution.[2]

Moreover, Bernadotte shared the Foreign Office's apprehension and hostility to the Mufti. When asked by Nokrashi in Cairo whether he would shake hands with the Mufti who was sitting in the next room, the Count replied: 'As I have shaken hands with Himmler, I don't mind shaking hands with the Mufti'.[3]

Whereas for Britain the future of Lydda and Haifa was looked at within the framework of strategical planning, the question of

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1. Bernadotte-Sharret conversation, ISA 2426/5, 10.8.48.
2. FO 371/68861, E11675, Beeley to Kirkbride, 3.9.48.
3. Sharret-Bernadotte conversation, in ISA 2426/5, 10.8.48.

Jerusalem's status was not. In mid-summer 1948, a divided Jerusalem or an internationalized city were two acceptable options for British policy-makers. However, the status of Haifa was of immense importance. We find that in the discussions between Bernadotte and the British representatives the question of Haifa was often raised by the British. An International Haifa would have enabled the British to use the port and would have prevented the Iraqis from blocking the flow of oil from Kirkuk. At this stage, the Foreign Office thought that this was preferable to any agreement with the Provisional Government of Israel.[1] This is a point of interest, since it indicated that at that time, Britain could not envisage how a Jewish state could fit into the pattern of its strategic policy in the area as a whole. The War Office was in full agreement with the Foreign Office on this issue. However, the War Office, unlike the Foreign Office, emphasized in its minutes from that period that this attitude would be subject to review in the light of political settlement, that is, one should not exclude the possibility of recognizing the Jewish state.[2]

An international enclave in Haifa would have solved Transjordan's need for an outlet to the Mediterranean. But it had raised other problems. A corridor to Haifa or to the other ports of Palestine, Jaffa or Gaza even if they were internationalized, would have been encircled by Jewish territory and would have constituted a serious additional commitment under the treaty with Transjordan. Thus, the British preferred to see all the Arab territories contiguous with Transjordan being incorporated within that state (including Gaza).

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1. FO 371/68374, FO Minute, Wright, 24.6.48 - American support for this position was also sought - FRUS 1948, Vol.5, part II, Douglas to Marshall, 18.6.48, p.1123.
2. FO 371/68374, E8564, FO Minute, Wright, 24.6.48.

This would have not only secured a safe access to the sea, but would also have also given the British the same privileges they enjoyed under the Anglo-Transjordan treaty. Thus, the main feature of British thinking, after learning of Bernadotte's first plan, was how to convince him to accept this solution.[1]

It should be remembered that the first Bernadotte proposals reversed the partition resolution. Thus, when we talk about the Arab areas under the Bernadotte proposals they include the Negev, since theGalilee was given to the Jews. The American representative to the UN, Philip Jessup, was one of the first to suggest this change in the partition resolution, and in American documents as well as in British writing at the time this formula was regarded as the 'Jessup principle'. However, at the time when the Bernadotte proposals were made American involvement was minimal and this principle only emerged as an American initiative during the Palestine Conciliation Commission discussions, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

It is notable that the Eastern Department believed that the first proposals should have included guarantees against Jewish expansionism.[2] The British had in mind mainly Anglo-American guarantees. The Department was confident that Arab opposition to the proposals could be met by promising them international guarantees, which could even be included in treaties with the Arab countries.

One clear conclusion can be drawn from this British attitude: the Foreign Office preferred partition to federation (as offered in the Mediator's first proposals) in June 1948. Partition would weaken the Jewish state, and secondly it would promise the incorporation of Arab

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68374, E8564, FO Minute, Wright, 24.6.48.

Palestine areas in Transjordan. Still, Bevin considered the first proposals more favourable to the Arabs than the UN partition resolution. Although the annexation of Western Galilee to the Jewish state was an economic gain for Israel, the Arab world would gain territorial integrity (from Damascus to Cairo through the West Bank and the Negev) from the Bernadotte plan.

Bevin shared Arab apprehension about Bernadotte's specific proposal regarding immigration policy. The clause enabled each party after two years to question the immigration policy of the other by referring the matter to the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations. He wrote in a Foreign Office minute: 'After having overcrowded their own country', the Jews would claim 'a right of immigration into Arab territories'.[1] Moreover, he understood Arab fears of an Arab-Jewish union. In fact, he asserted that this Arab fear would lead them to accept partition.

The success of the Bernadotte plan depended on some kind of recognition by the Arabs of Israel. Bevin was confident that Britain possessed the ability to reduce Arab opposition to an independent Jewish state.[2] Although Bevin did not mention it in his paper, he quite probably must have realised the difficult position Britain was in. How was it possible to convince the Arabs of the inevitability of a Jewish state, when Britain itself did not recognise it?

8. Bernadotte's second proposals.

Both sides rejected the first proposals. The Arabs rejected any form of recognition of the Jewish state. They feared that after two years the Jews would appeal to the United Nations for permission to

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1. FO 371/68375, E9168, FO Minute, Bevin, 5.7.48.
2. FO 371/68374, E8564, FO Minute, Wright, 24.6.48.

continue immigration. Moreover, the Arabs rejected the idea that the Jews should have any say in the affairs of the Arab state.[1]

According to Ben-Gurion's biographer, the Israeli premier's main objection was that he could not agree to a British sponsored plan.[2] The Israelis obviously rejected the idea of an Arab Jerusalem and the loss of the Negev. A disappointed Bevin told the British Cabinet that the Arabs had missed a golden opportunity, namely, Arab acceptance of the plan, in the face of Israeli refusal, would have made World public opinion more favourable to the Arab cause.[3]

However, more than anything else, the Israelis refused to consent to any final demarcation of lines before the end of the war. The Israeli Foreign Office was advised by John Kimchi that the armistice conditions would determine the peace conditions and not vice versa. Sharret agreed.[4]

Yet the Israelis realized that they could not, for economic reasons, maintain a large army in a war condition for a long time and thus were eager to use Bernadotte as a mediator for an armistice - but not for a peace agreement and only at a time convenient for them.[5]

Notwithstanding this realization, the Israeli refusal was adamant: 'The Provisional Government of Israel has noted with surprise that your suggestions appear to ignore the resolution of the General Assembly, November 29, 1947'.[6] Strangely enough, the League accused the Mediator of basing his proposal on that resolution.[7] Moreover, the PGI opposed the proposals since it found it difficult to digest that the Count had

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1. FO 371/68374, E9005, BMEO to FO, 4.7.48.
2. Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.821.
3. FO 371/68374, E9061, Cabinet conclusions, 1.7.48.
4. L. Kohn to Sharret, 22.7.48, ISA 2424/21.
5. Eytan to Sharret, 28.7.48, ISA 2424/21.
6. Sharret to Bernadotte, 5.7.48, ISA 2424/21.
7. See p.55.

not 'fully taken into account the outstanding facts of the situation in Palestine, namely, the effective establishment of the sovereign state of Israel within the area assigned to it in the Assembly resolution'. In general, Israel opposed the idea of an imposed solution, just as it opposed restriction on immigration.[1]

The total rejection by both sides forced the Mediator to look for another plan. This time he worked closely with British Middle East experts on the revised proposals. Contacts were made through the British Middle East Office in Cairo and the Embassy there.[2]

Transjordan was the only Arab state whose policy towards the Palestine problem corresponded with British strategic thinking. Thus by including Abdullah's scheme for the annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan in the Bernadotte second proposals the British could guarantee at least the approval of one Arab state. Whereas the Mediator, in his first proposals, talked about a greater Arab Palestine (enlargement of the independent Arab State), the British suggested the option of Greater Transjordan (alloting more territory to Abdullah). In the new constellation there was no room for an independent Arab Palestinian state.

Given the failure of Bernadotte's first proposals, and his intensive consultations with the British, it is not surprising that he (and the Americans) accepted this British formula for extricating the United Nations from the deadlock it was in. Hence, Bernadotte's main alteration of his previous proposals was a clear suggestion of the annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine to Transjordan.[3]

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1. Sharret to Bernadotte, 5.7.48, ISA 2424/21.
2. FO 371/68374, E9005, BMEO to FO, 4.7.48.
3. FO 371/68375, E9453, Cairo to FO, 12.7.48.

It took some time before Bernadotte resumed his attempts to mediate, owing to the continuation of hostilities. He also had to consider two new problems: the refugees and the demilitarization of Jerusalem. The Count urged the UN Assembly to have these problems on its agenda at its next session which was due to convene on September 21, 1948. For this session Bernadotte prepared his second proposals.[1] The following points were included in his second scheme. The Negev was defined as an Arab territory as it was in the previous proposals. The Count recommended the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan. Moreover, he added Ramleh and Lydda to the Transjordanian territory. Galilee was defined as Jewish territory as it was in the first proposals. There was a more specific reference to Haifa in the new plan. Although the city was to remain in Jewish hands, the port of Haifa, including the oil refineries and terminals, would be declared a free port with assurances of free access for interested Arab countries. Lydda airport was also declared a free port. Possibly the most unacceptable clause, as far as Abdullah was concerned, was the call for internationalization of Jerusalem.[2]

It is notable that ostensibly the disposition of Arab territories was left to the Arab states. However, the Mediator recommended: 'that in view of the historical connection and common interests of Transjordan and Palestine, there would be compelling reasons for merging the Arab territory of Palestine with the territory of Transjordan.'[3]

Bernadotte also added a clause on the refugees. They should have the right to return to their homes or to receive compensation if they chose not to return. In general, he suggested that a conciliation

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1. Zasloff, Great Britain, pp.149-50.
2. Zasloff, Great Britain, p.151.
3. Zasloff, op.cit., p.154.

commission would replace the Mediator.[1]

The Americans and the British had together worked out both a plan and a timetable for conveying to the Mediator the desirability of annexing Arab Palestine to Transjordan. The timetable included a week for persuading the Count to accept the Foreign Office ideas, and in fact that was all that was required to convince the Mediator. The experts on both sides estimated that another ten days would be needed to convince the Israelis and the Arab states, and then twenty days of lobbying to secure the approval of the Security Council.[2] Only the first stage was successfully carried out. A high American official was specially sent to Rhodes to convince the Count that the Greater Transjordan orientation was the only feasible alternative.[3] Troutbeck joined his American colleague a few days later to take part in a concerted effort. The American envoy reported: 'Two days were devoted to discussions of substance of what may eventually be called "the Bernadotte plan"'.[4]

The Foreign Secretary was convinced that the other stages would be as successful. Bevin explained to the Cabinet that he considered the first proposals unacceptable since they forced Britain to compromise Abdullah's position. Moreover, they could have been implemented only by the force of the Security Council, which would have meant facing the same problems as in November 1947.[5] It seems that although Bevin overcame the first difficulty, by altering the first proposals, he was left with the second dilemma unsolved. There was nothing new in the revised

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1. Zasloff, op.cit., UN Papers, A/638, 18.9.48 in p.151.
2. FRUS 48, Vol.5, part 2, Douglas to SoS, 1.9.48, p.1363; Persson, Bernadotte, 193; 273; 297-313.
3. FRUS 48, SoS to McClintock, 10.9.48, p.1387.
4. FRUS 48, Griffith to SoS, 15.9.48, p.1398.
5. CAB 128/13, CM(48), 8.7.48, Bevin.

proposals that could be of any help. Namely, there would still have been the need to implement even the second proposals with the force of the United Nations.

However, the introduction of the new proposals created an optimistic atmosphere, not only in the Foreign Office but also amongst most of the Cabinet members. The idea of changing Bernadotte's plan to the extent of incorporating Arab Palestine into Transjordan was strongly supported by the Ministry of Defence. The Minister himself argued at a Cabinet meeting that by these alterations the defence of the Commonwealth would be greatly eased. He made one reservation however - he considered the retention of Western Galilee by the Israelis as unfortunate from the strategic point of view.[1]

In the Foreign Office in London there were no voices of dissent about the desirability of a solution which the Superintending Under-Secretary of State called the 'Greater Transjordan solution'. The high officials realized the financial problems which would arise from the need of the Transjordans to protect a larger area and to provide for a new population, most of it refugees. However, Michael Wright was confident that help would come from International organizations and the US. Wright, unlike the representatives in the Middle East, conceived of Greater Transjordan as including the Gaza area and a strip between Gaza and Aqaba.[2]

The consensus in the Foreign Office did not extend to HMG representatives in the area. Notwithstanding his important role as liaison with the Count, the Head of the BMEO did not share the enthusiastic support of his colleagues to the Greater Transjordan concept.

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1. CAB 128/13, CM(48)48, Alexander, 8.7.48.
2. FO 371/68861, E12205, Wright to Amman, 17.9.48.

Troutbeck warned the Foreign Office that this option would mean larger British financial assistance and would lead Abdullah to reach an agreement with Israel behind the backs of the Arabs.[1]

The representative in Damascus asserted that a Greater Transjordan would not allay fears of Abdullah's future intentions. Syria would resent any increase in Abdullah's territory or prestige.[2]

It is notable that these two, Troutbeck and Broadmead, added that, reluctantly, they had to admit that the Arab world preferred the Transjordan solution to partition. In any case, even if the Arab world resented the idea, there was very little it could do, if only because of its endemic lack of unity. The Syrians disapproved completely and the Lebanese followed the Syrian lead. Iraq could not accept the solution publicly, as it had to resist any form of partition. The Egyptians and the Saudis were less interested in the whole problem and eventually acquiesced.[3]

Incidentally, the Transjordans, unlike the British, were more concerned about International reaction than the Arab response.[4] The Transjordanian Premier, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, was confident he could reduce Egyptian and Syrian opposition by giving them parts of Palestine (Egypt - part of the Negev, Syria - part of the Hula). As for Ibn Saud, his tacit understanding with Abdullah prior to the war in Palestine, reassured the Transjordans that this old enemy would hardly play a role in this question.[5]

The British and the Transjordanians agreed upon the tactics to be

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1. FO 371/68861, E11717, BMEO to FO, 6.9.48.
2. FO 371/68861, E11760, Damascus to FO, 7.9.48.
3. FO 371/68861, the file in general.
4. At least according to British documents, FO 371/68861, E11809, Kirkbride to FO, 8.9.48.
5. See p.32 .

followed. The Greater Transjordan solution should not either be declared nor advocated by either side since it would not help to abate Arab fears; on the contrary, it might have raised resentment. Time was the most favourable factor on the Transjordan side.[1]

9. The legacy of Bernadotte.

It is noteworthy that whatever Bevin, thought about the plan before Bernadotte's assassination, he had not viewed the proposals as a final plan.[2] In July, he and the Americans conceived the plan as a stabilising factor in the Middle East. While the Americans supported Bevin in his attempts to realise the Bernadotte plan, once the second Jewish refusal was received, the scheme was abandoned by the White House.[3] The Americans were more interested in the practical short-term objectives of Bernadotte's efforts; namely, the conclusion of a long-lived truce.[4] Furthermore, the US objected to the enforcement of the plan on the parties, whereas the principle of an imposed solution became more and more popular amongst British policy makers. This American position was argued for a long time before the assassination of the Count.[5]

However, the main American opposition stemmed from strong Jewish pressure on the President.[6] Nevertheless, both Truman and Marshall declared publicly that they saw the proposals as a basis for a settlement, thus confusing the Foreign Office for a while about the real American stand.[7] It became evident, later, that these declarations

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1. FO 371/68861, E11809, Kirkbride op.cit.
2. FO 371/68371, E9168, FO Minute, Bevin, 5.7.48.
3. Monroe, Britain's Moment, p.43.
4. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, Jessup to SoS, 30.6.48, p.1161.
5. Ibid.
6. FRUS 48, Clifford to Lovett, 29.9.48, p.1161.
7. FO 371/68651, E13813, Washington to FO, 25.10.48.

were part of Truman's election campaign. Moreover, the American attitude indicated a shift in US policy altogether. The next step by the Americans was to withdraw their support for the Anglo-Chinese resolution, proposing instead the consideration of imposing sanctions on Israel or Egypt if they did not comply with the ceasefire order.[1]

After Bernadotte's death the British launched a campaign to put across the idea that the Count's proposals should become a testament.[2] Bevin told the House of Commons: 'The best way for us to commemorate his death is to complete his work on the basis of the proposals he put forward just before his death'.[3] In this speech Bevin reversed his previous rejection of any proposal which was not accepted by the two parties (which was the basic British argument against partition). He added: 'We do not expect that either side will welcome these proposals in total, but the world cannot wait forever for the parties to agree'.[4]

It is notable that Bernadotte emphasised that he saw his role as only 'offering suggestions as the basis on which further discussions might take place', and that his suggestions were submitted 'with no intimation of preciseness or finality'. Moreover, there would be 'no question of their imposition'.[5]

On October 15, Bernadotte's proposals were put in front of the First Committee of the General Assembly.[6] The British delegation supported the proposals as a final UN peace plan without reservations. The Americans, however, described them as suggestions for a possible

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1. See p.106 in this chapter.
2. 'The Testament of Bernadotte', Economist, 25.9.48; 'The Testament of Bernadotte', New Statesman and Nation, 26.9.48.
3. Hansard Vol.456, col.899-900, 22.9.48.
4. Ibid.
5. Introductory statement to the first proposals, Bernadotte to Israeli Foreign Office, 27.6.48, ISA, 2424/20.
6. UN GA, Official Records 3rd Session, Supplement no.11, A/648, p.18.

basis for peace negotiations.[1] The Americans left it to the parties in the Palestine conflict to determine themselves future frontiers and their future relationship themselves, whereas Britain did not wish such negotiations to take place but rather wanted the two sides to accept the second proposals as a UN plan, replacing partition.

Although Bernadotte's successor, Dr. Bunche, like the British, held the mediator's proposals to be his 'sacrosanct will',[2] with hindsight, Bernadotte's plan was a futile diplomatic effort. The mediation was now in the hands of an American official, notwithstanding his subordination to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. British influence was restricted to the Israeli-Transjordan negotiations, while new Powers, namely the US, France and Turkey, had their say in the general conciliation efforts.

It seems that the main cause of British dismay with regard to the Bernadotte affair was their failure to place the Negev in Transjordanian hands, the main British strategic objective in the Palestinian context. By September 1948, however, most of the officials at the Eastern Department had given up this idea. The first voices of disbelief at Britain's prospects of retaining the Negev in Arab hands were heard from Cairo. Campbell doubted the validity of the Foreign Office argument that the Negev should remain Arab just because it was occupied by the Egyptians (this was the argument put by Sir A. Cadogan in front of the General Assembly, during the discussion of the Bernadotte plan). Campbell claimed that this 'could serve as a boomerang'.[3] At that time, Michael Wright in London disagreed and thought that both Egypt and Transjordan had justifiable claims to the Negev.[4]

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1. Kirk, Middle East, p.289.
2. Conversation between Bunche and Horowitz, BGA, Ben Gurion diary, 7.10.48.
3. FO 371/68641, E10241, Cairo to FO, 31.7.48.
4. FO 371/68641, E9552, FO to Cairo, 22.7.48.

10. The Ten Days War (9 July 48 - 19 July 48).

The renewal of fighting after the end of the first truce was held to be a disaster from the British point of view. The Foreign Office predicted that the Arabs would be unable to confront the Jews militarily; that is, from then on, a swift Israeli victory was expected. The Office was alarmed by this turn of events, since it meant a general Arab withdrawal, exposing in particular the Trans-jordanians in the centre of Palestine.[1]

As was the case in May 1948, the British presumptions were accurate. When the fighting was resumed on July 9, the Arabs were unsuccessful everywhere. A well-equipped Israeli army succeeded in capturing large Arab areas, mainly in Western Galilee, most important the town of Nazareth. This campaign was the last Syrian effort in the war and it resulted in a complete Syrian defeat. The other Arab forces which took part in the fighting, namely Al-Qawqji's forces and the Syrian and Lebanese armies were driven out of Palestine. The Iraqis, nevertheless, succeeded in preventing an Israeli force from occupying Jenin. During the fighting the Israeli air force, for the first time, bombarded Damascus from the air.[2]

Samir Ar-Rifai convinced Abdullah to call another meeting of the Political Committee of the League in Amman for July 12, presumably in order to try to persuade the other Arab leaders to agree to an extension of the truce. Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, the Transjordan Premier, supported this initiative, realising that the Arab Legion had shells and mortar ammunition sufficient only for a few more days. The Egyptians

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1. FO 371/68375, E9715, Amman to FO, 18.7.48.
2. FO 371/68822, E11049, Glubb's 'Transjordan situation', 12.8.48; Toldot, pp.240, 246, 283.

were highly suspicious of Transjordanian motives for convening this meeting. Barely four days had passed since the Political Committee's decision to resume fighting had been taken in Cairo, and the Egyptians saw no reason for reversing their attitude. In order to prevent the proposed conference, the Egyptian and Syrian governments made some tenuous promises to provide the necessary shells and it was decided to continue the fighting.[1]

Samir Ar-Rifai's initiative came at a very crucial moment for the Legion. Without reinforcements, the Legion could only succeed in confronting the Israelis where it had most of its forces, namely in Jerusalem and its surroundings. And indeed repeated Israeli attempts to occupy Latrun were successfully repelled.[2] However, certain Arab areas in the centre of Palestine were exposed to Israeli attacks with no substantial Arab force to protect them, and as a consequence Lydda and Ramleh fell into Israeli hands.

In Arab historiography this is undoubtedly the greatest crime committed by Glubb. Abdullah Al-Tal accused him of sending only one company to defend these two towns, while Al-Aref blamed him for a premature decision to quit the battlefield, and this allegation is supported by the Court Historian of the Hashemite kingdom.[3] At-Tal claims that there was a British plot to safeguard Tel Aviv, to damage the Egyptian army's chances of success and to prevent the Mufti from keeping his two strongholds in Arab territory.[4] Kirkbride explains in his memoirs that Glubb had decided that it was preferable to defend Latrun and Jerusalem instead of these two other towns.[5] However, even

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1. FO 371/68822, E10325, Pirie Gordon to Burrows, 25.7.48.
2. Toldot, p.263.
3. At-Tal, Karithat, p.245; Al-Aref, part 3, Al-Nakbah, pp.216-218; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.509.
4. At-Tal, op.cit., p.247-9.
5. Kirkbride, The Wings, p.44.

Musa and Mahdi affirm Glubb's statement made a month after the battle: 'From the very commencement of hostilities, I had told the Transjordan government that it was impossible for the Arab Legion to defend this area with the number available. The Government had agreed.'[1] British documents show that already on May 19, such a warning was issued by Glubb and Kirkbride.[2] Glubb remarked cynically that the Arabs had accepted the second truce after ten days of fighting only because they had a 'scapegoat' - the Legion and the loss of Lydda and Ramleh.

However, the main significance of the loss of these two Palestinian towns was that a large number of refugees were added to those who had already left, fled or had been evicted from the country.[3]

After the loss of Ramleh and Lydda, demonstrations against the legion took place in Nablus and As-Salt. Glubb was sent to attend an unpleasant interview with the King and the Council of Ministers during which it was made clear to him that his reports of shortage of ammunition were believed to be a part of British propaganda. At least this is Glubb's version of the conversation. Furthermore, Glubb claimed that the King had even told him that there was no need for him to remain in office, unless he wished to. After that meeting the demonstrations continued against Glubb personally and the British in general, as a result of the news of the withholding of the Legion's subsidy by the British Government. Glubb visited the front where he was received with contempt and hatred.[4]

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1. FO 371/68822, E11049, Glubb's 'Transjordan Situation', 12.8.48; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.509.
2. FO 371/68506, E6564, Amman to FO, 19.5.48.
3. At-Tal, op.cit., p.245; Kirkbride, op.cit., p.47. According to Glubb's biographer, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda and Glubb were agreed on the impossibility of defending Ramleh and Lydda. This was mainly due to the strength of the Jewish force. Lunt, Glubb, p.150.
4. FO 371/68822, E10325, Pirie-Gordon to Burrows, 25.7.48; Glubb, ibid., p.166.

The Legion suffered another major defeat in the area of Bab Al-Wad on July 12.[1] On that day, Glubb informed the Legation in Amman that his forces had ammunition for only one more day; thus he had no alternative but to decline any offers of a Legion offensive. Consequently, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda made another attempt to convince his colleagues in the Political Committee of the desperate nature of the situation. He flew to Aley to convene with the other members of the committee and succeeded in persuading them to accept the Security Council proposal for a second truce. The proposal was introduced by the Americans on July 15, 1948,[2] thus quite probably saving the Legion from a total collapse on the central front.[3] At the end of August the Legion found itself at close quarters with the Jewish army on a front of forty miles.[4]

11. The Second Truce.

Bernadotte was informed by the Arabs and Israelis of their acceptance of the truce on July 15.[5] Unlike the Security Council resolution which called for the first truce, this was an order and not an appeal. Therefore, both sides were risking sanctions.

It seems that Abu Al-Huda found it quite easy to persuade the other members of the political committee to comply with the Security Council order. The main Israeli successes during the Ten Days War were in the north of Palestine. The total defeat of the Syrian and Iraqi contingents and the inability of the Legion to launch any counter attack, enabled the Israelis to prepare themselves with all their

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1. Ibid.
2. Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.521.
3. FO 371/68822, E10325, op.cit.
4. FO 371/68822, E11049, Glubb's 'Transjordan situation', 12.8.48.
5. UN Papers, A/648, report of Count Bernadotte in ISA 2425/2.

strength for the decisive battle over the Negev, which took place during October-December 1948.[1] Although the Israelis had some difficulties in importing Second World War surplus material from the US and the Pacific, Mexico proved to be an adequate source for supplying the required material.[2] A number of qualitatively important personnel reached Israel during this period from Europe and the United States - the MAHAL. These were skilled and professional men who had served for long periods in their own armies.[3]

The further streams of refugees had caused strong hostility towards Britain in the Arab countries and in particular among the Arab population in Palestine.[4] Various telegrams from the Middle East posts during July, reported a growing trend of anti-British feeling in the Arab countries. The fact that Britain had not fulfilled its obligations under its treaties with the Arab states was seen as a betrayal. The Palestinians believed that Britain was behind Abdullah's decision not to attack the new part of Jerusalem. The main cause of the Arabs' resentment were the Jewish reinforcements during the first truce.[5]

The reports mentioned above point out that in many places, and in particular in Arab Palestine, Britain was more disliked than the USA. Bevin tended to ignore these reports as exaggerated. He genuinely believed that the main resentment after the defeat in Palestine was against the Americans.[6] It is difficult to judge whose appreciations were the right ones. However, it is noticeable that American financial and oil interests were hardly affected as a result of the bitterness.

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1. Toldot, pp.242-282.
2. Toldot, p.284.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68375, E9731, Amman to FO, 18.7.48.
5. FO 371/68375, E10252, BMEO to FO, 24.7.48 and E10078, Jerusalem to FO, 18.7.48.
6. CAB 128/13, CM(48)53, Bevin, 22.7.48.

This probably stemmed from the fact that not much was expected from the Americans, owing to the position they had taken in the past and to the belief in the immense influence which the Jewish lobby had on American foreign policy. In the British case, it was, however, a deep disappointment that characterized Arab reaction. Arab governments had had high hopes of Britain's ability to tip the balance. Moreover, according to Fadhil Jamali, Bevin promised the Arab leaders he would never agree to partition. Jamali told the Iraqi court in 1958, where he was the main defendant appearing before a revolutionary tribunal, that after the conclusion of the Portsmouth Treaty, the problem of Palestine was discussed and Bevin was adamantly against partition and the establishment of a Jewish state. Furthermore, he promised to arm 50,000 Palestinians and send more equipment to the Iraqi army that would be allowed to enter parts of Palestine evacuated by the British.[1]

Incidentally, the same allegations had been made by Nuri As-Said as early as August 1948. He then published a pamphlet called 'facts concerning recent affairs in Palestine' which appeared in the local Iraqi papers. As-Said claimed that he and Bevin had arrived at a working agreement on Palestine.[2] The basis of the agreement was similar to the one argued by Jamali. The Foreign Office record of the conversation which took place in January 1948, in London, did not imply any such agreement. In 1948 Jamali himself denied the existence of such an agreement in an interview to an Iraqi paper.[3] One writer claimed later that no British official recollects such an agreement.[4]

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1. Jamali's Defence speech 23.9.58, Makhkamat Al-Sha'b (People's court, Twenty-Third session), Al-Jalsa Al-Sadisa wa Ali'shrin, p.1093.
2. FO 371/68451, E11378, Richmond to Bevin, 25.8.48.
3. Interview with As-Shaa'b, 20.8.48.
4. C. Hollingworth, The Arabs and the West (London: Methuen and Co., 1952), p.15.

However, Abdullah believed that such an Anglo-Iraqi deal on Palestine was concluded. The King complained in a conversation with the British minister in Amman that the Iraqis were given precedence over Transjordan in the consultation about Palestine. In any case Bevin made no such promises to the Iraqis and had not discussed British policy towards Palestine with them.[1]

This affair has been covered here in detail since it sheds light on the feeling of the Arabs that before the war Britain had promised to do its utmost to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

However, at the time, this did not seem to be an important issue. The most pressing issue was the possibility of an Israeli attack on the Legion which lacked artillery and mortar ammunition. Kirkbride struggled to convince London that unless Britain intervened it would mean the collapse of British policy: 'The anti-British outbreaks which followed the fall of Lydda and Ramleh ... [are] an indication of what would happen following a major defeat of this force'.[2]

It is notable that the Legation in Amman shared the feelings of the Transjordanians about the ingratitude of the British. Kirkbride was disinclined to accept the Foreign Office argument that there was a need to check the Legion: 'The Transjordan government have complied with our wishes to the best of our ability, both as regards general conduct of the campaign and as regards the truce.'[3] Yet, complained the British representative, Britain had not restored the subsidy no renewed the supply of arms. This Transjordanian dismay was reflected in a letter from Abdullah to Bevin.[4]

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1. FO 371/68635, E1211, FO Minute, Beeley, 22.1.48.
2. FO 371/68822, E11049, Kirkbride to Bevin, 12.8.48.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68822, Abdullah to Bevin, 12.8.48.

In an answer to these allegation, the Head of the Eastern Department reiterated the commitments under the treaty of alliance, namely to protect Transjordan from an Israeli attack. However, he stressed that under Britain's UN obligations it could not directly supply war material to the Legion.[1] Thus, in order to soothe Transjordan indignation, Sir O. Sargent, the Permanent Under Secretary of State, came up with a new suggestion, namely, Britain would send war material to Transjordan to be held there under British control until further orders. The Foreign Office was reluctant to comply in this way with a similar Iraqi request, which indicates that Transjordan indeed had priority over Iraq. And this despite a specific request by the R.A.F. to apply the same methods to Iraq.[2] The British refused to supply the Iraqi army with equipment from Habania3

Sir O. Sargent realised that this action would call for discussion with the Americans. He hoped that the signs of 'Jewish aggression' would justify this action in American eyes.[4] The danger was of course that the American government might lift its ban on arms supplies to Israel. The State Department certainly regarded the Israeli attitude as intransigent in the months July-August 1948. It believed the rumours of an impending Israeli attack both in the south and in the center of Palestine.[5] The CIA, on the other hand, favoured a situation without any embargo since in that case no side could achieve a decisive victory and the US and the United Kingdom could determine developments.[6] The President was annoyed mainly by the Israeli seizure of the

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1. FO 371/68822, FO Minute, Burrows, 17.8.48.
2. CAB 21/1922, CoS(48)125(0), 4.6.48, FO 371/68860, Burrows to MoD, 8.9.48.
3. Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, p.149.
4. FO 371/68822, E11409, FO Minute, Sir O. Sargent, 18.8.48.
5. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, Jessup to SoS, 9.8.48, p.1298; McDonald to Truman, 24.8.48, p.1337.
6. FRUS 48, CIA report, 5.8.48, p.1280.

Government House in Jerusalem.[1] Thus the Foreign Office could carry out its plan.

In a further move to pacify Transjordan's resentment, the Foreign Office was willing to influence the War Office to let the Transjordan debt of £5 million stand another year (this debt was caused by the Transjordan government overdrawing on the British subsidy).[2]

However, there was nothing Britain could or would have done to refute allegations by other Arab states. Most of them maintained that the Transjordanians were obliged by their British connection to betray the Arab cause, and that Glubb obeyed the Foreign Office rather than the Transjordanian Government.[3] Thus, the Arab governments sought means of diminishing British influence on the Legion. One of these was to reduce the British element in the Legion. This policy was pursued particularly by the Iraqi army.[4] Thus the Iraqis during the second truce (19.7.-15.10.48), worked towards the unification of the Iraqi and the Transjordan armies.

Abdullah had already realised in May 1948 that once it was discovered that he had implemented the Arab League's plans only as far as they corresponded with his own schemes, his credibility as the supreme commander would be questioned. After the occupation of most of the Arab parts of Palestine he had no desire to continue the war. According to information given by the Turkish minister in Baghdad to the British embassy there, on the first day of the second truce Abdullah had asked Faruq and Ibn Saud to take over the post of titular commander in chief of the Arab armies. They both refused to comply

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1. FRUS 48, Jessup to SoS, 9.8.48, p.1298.
2. FO 371/68822, E11409, FO Minute, Burrows, 17.8.48.
3. At-Tal, Karithat, pp.255-58; Ad-Daly, Azzam, p.240; Glubb, A Soldier, p.191.
4. Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, 274-5.

with this request.[1] In fact, Abdullah was eager to end this phase of a united Arab effort. He was irritated by the continued friction with the other Arab armies in the area controlled by the Legion. The Egyptian commander in Hebron refused to obey Abdullah's orders and the Iraqi general Nur Al-Din did not fulfill the role of policing the area.[2]

In spite of the dispute with the Iraqis, it was still better for Abdullah to co-operate with them than with any other Arab army. Moreover, he looked for ways of showing his resentment of the British attitude. Finally, he feared an Israeli attack on the areas he held. For all these reasons, he entered into talks on unification with the Iraqi army. The news of a possible unification of the two armies caused considerable concern in London. It could have affected Glubb's and the British officers' position in the Legion, in particular since it was decided by the two sides that an Iraqi commander would stand at the top of the unified army.[3]

In the Iraqi-Transjordan talks, which took place in August 1948, it was agreed that both countries would act as independent units. This should have brought some relaxation in London. Nevertheless, the Legation in Amman was convinced that there was a serious threat to Britain's position in Transjordan. The Legation believed the rumours that the Iraqis and some Arab officers in the Legion were aiming at breaking British control over the Legion by replacing British subsidy by an Iraqi one and by compelling all British officers to resign, thus enabling the Legion to act freely in Palestine and open a new offensive.[4] However, it was learned from a public statement given by

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1. FO 371/68375, E9732, Baghdad to FO, 18.7.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/68376, E110207, FO Minute, Walker, 24.8.48.
4. FO 371/68376, E11518, Kirkbride to Bevin, 24.8.48.

the Iraqi Premier that Iraq could not help financially and that Iraq was not demanding the withdrawal of British officers. This did not mean that the Iraqis were not eager to resume fighting, on the contrary, the Iraqis relied on British assistance for such a move. A high official in the Foreign Office was annoyed by these Iraqi presumptions and expressed the hope that the Iraqis would soon be out of Palestine: 'If only the Russians would stir up some trouble in Kurdistan we should have no difficulties at all (in getting the Iraqis out of Palestine)'.[1]

In any case, although it was stated in Baghdad that the unification of the two armies was carried out under the command of an Iraqi general,[2] it had no effect on the position of the British officers in the Legion. The Iraqi-Transjordanian talks left matters very much as they were.[3] In a sense, the futility of the talks was a personal failure for Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, the Transjordan Premier who strongly supported them. From that moment he lost the confidence of the British Officers in the Legion.[4]

In September, the Iraqis, to the great annoyance of British officialdom in London, tried to convince the other Arab governments to attempt to reoccupy Jerusalem. Having serious problems at home (Kurds, student riots, etc.) the Iraqis wished the fighting in Palestine to continue for a while. Such an initiative (which would have meant the revoking of the truce) was regarded by Bevin as most dangerous. He believed that it would have ended in the occupation of the whole of Palestine by the Israelis. Thus, Bevin ordered his Ambassador to convey to the Regent that 'it is shocking that the Iraqi government should

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1. Ibid.
2. The former Iraqi CoGS, Salibi Saib Al-Jaburi.
3. FO 371/68376, E11284, Baghdad to FO, 26.8.48; E11194, Amman to FO, 25.8.48.
4. Ibid.

be willing to jeopardise the whole Arab position in Palestine and in the UN and with world opinion because they are afraid to tell the truth to the Baghdad mob'.[1] It was both British pressure and Arab helplessness that caused the failure of the Iraqi initiative. Hence, the Iraqi Premier returned home after his tour to the Arab capitals with no concrete agreement in his hands.[2]

12. British conclusions from the war in Palestine - September 1948.

Even before the campaign the future of the Negev took place, and before the formal end of the war in Palestine, the Eastern Department had tried to reassess and evaluate the effect the Palestine war had on the British position and on the stability of the Arab governments.

The department believed that most of the Arab leaders recognized the inevitability of a Jewish state, although they took no steps to prepare Arab public opinion for the final outcome of the war. Mr. Burrows thought that the population in the Arab countries was misled and cheated about the real situation in Palestine. The Department had no doubt that the main scapegoat would be Britain, who would be blamed for failing to supply arms when it was needed.[3]

By September 1948, the Transjordanian forces were no longer engaged in the fighting. The Transjordanian Ministers of Communication and Defence were instructed to submit to the Political Committee conditions for the Legion's continued participation in the war. Kirkbride explained that the conditions were phrased in such a way that

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1. FO 371/68376, E11462, Bevin to Baghdad, 2.9.48.
2. FO 371/68376, E11590, Amman to FO, 4.9.48; E11622, Baghdad to FO, 5.9.48.
3. FO 371/68379, E12211, FO Memo, Burrows, 'Effects of the Palestine situation on internal affairs throughout the Middle East', 8.9.48.

they would clearly be unacceptable to the League.[1] Transjordan was prepared to resume the fighting if all Arab states did so and if the League provided the Legion beforehand with all the equipment and ammunition it needed. Transjordan warned that it would withdraw unless their demands were fulfilled. Furthermore, it was insisted by Abdullah that no change would be introduced to the agreement by which each occupying army would administer its own territory. In that context, it should be noted that the Transjordan representative asked that no ALA units would be stationed in the Legion area. Finally, they argued for the division of number of refugees between Arab countries.[2] In November, Glubb told a meeting of the Transjordan Cabinet that no assistance from Egypt and Iraq could be expected, something which led Kirkbride to declare the war as finished.[3] An additional reason for Abdullah's attitude was the Egyptian manoeuvre to establish an All-Palestine government.[4]

In general, the military authorities in Britain were impressed by two facts: the inevitability of a Jewish state and the fighting ability of the Legion.[5] The Foreign Office was pleased by the stabilization of the Israeli-Transjordanian front. By September 1948, the front lines were established and maps delineating them had been signed by the two sides.[6]

However, the same could not have been said about the southern front. The Mediator found it impossible to establish front lines in the Negev. Much of it was wasteland with fortified Jewish settlements

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1. FO 371/68822, E11863, Kirkbride to Burrows, 6.9.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/68822, E14188, Amman to FO, 13.11.48; E14189, Kirkbride to FO, 3.11.48.
4. See Chapter 3.
5. FO 371/68822, E11049, FO Minute Burrows, 17.8.48.
6. Bernadotte report to the SC, A/648, p.15.

in the Northern part.[1] The Foreign Office anticipated an Israeli attack on the Southern Negev and Aqaba. Aqaba was considered by the Defence Ministry as a 'focal point in the strategical importance of Transjordan'.[2]

13. The Southern front.

The British found it difficult to predict the course of events on the southern front, as did all the other parties. In September, the representatives in Cairo could not assess whether Egypt was about to withdraw or to launch an offensive. Chapman Andrews wrote from Cairo that he was on his guard against an Egyptian agreement with Israel by which Israel would gain the Negev.[3] However, once again the British military intelligence in Jerusalem had the most accurate information at its disposal. The Military Intelligence officer there reported on the likelihood of an Israeli offensive on the Egyptians aimed at opening the lines of communication and establishing a political fait accompli in the Negev.[4]

It is worth noting that only over the Negev did British and Israeli interests clash. The CoS regarded Greater Transjordan as including the Negev or at least the Northern part of it.[5] They toyed with the idea that instead of Cyrenaica, the Negev and Gaza would be 'the main British Middle East military installation outside Egypt'.[6] However, the Navy ruled against such a possibility. Notwithstanding the Negev was regarded by everyone in London as an important

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68860, E11665, FO Minute, 2.9.48; JP(47)136, 24.10.47.
3. FO 371/69273, J5641, Chapman-Andrews to Wright, September 1948.
4. FO 371/68698, E13424, Jerusalem to FO, 16.10.48.3.
5. FO 371/68860, E12387, Burrows to Price (MoD), 25.9.48.
6. Ibid.

territorial corridor between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world.[1] While the Arab leaders had succeeded in forcing Abdullah to participate, against his will, in the 'Ten Days War', by September 1948 he was out of the game. Only once, during that month, was Abdullah tempted, in the absence of Abu Al-Huda and Glubb, to renounce the truce in Jerusalem, but was convinced not to do so by Kirkbride.[2] The main pressure came from Iraq. The Iraqis were attempting to induce the Egyptians to open a new offensive in the South. Nokrashi told Arab leaders at a League meeting in Alexandria in September 1948 that he refused to do anything that would involve a breach of the ceasefire. The Egyptian army would not attack any more, but just defend itself. Only the Transjordanians supported this stand.[3]

The Israelis had, in fact, spoken quite openly of their intentions in the Negev. Sharret said in a broadcast that if the fighting in the Negev continued, Israel would have the right to attack the Egyptians.[4]

The Foreign Office suspected that the Israeli allegations of the ineffectiveness of the second truce were intended to prepare the background for the operations in the North and the South. The Foreign Office felt that 'there is little we could do to discourage them'.[5] Beeley advocated not publishing the information about the Israeli preparations since it might induce the Arabs to start fighting; 'if there is to be fighting, it would be even worse for the Arabs than for the Jews to start it'.[6] The British information was gathered by air reconnaissance flights.[7]

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1. FO 371/68860, E14265, Chadwick, FO Minute, according to Colonel Charteris of MO4, 15.11.48; JPS, JP(48)108, 26.10.48.
2. FO 371/68689, E12762, Amman to FO, 30.9.48.
3. Al-Jaburi, Mikhnat, p.260.
4. ISA, Sharret on Israeli Radio, 5.8.48, ISA, 2426/5.
5. FO 371/68689, E11605, FO Minute, Beeley, 2.9.48; Haarez, 29.8.48; Davar, 29.8.48.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

One of the direct reasons for the Israeli offensive in the Negev was Bevin's intention to implement the Bernadotte scheme. The Legation of the PGI read Bevin's speech in the House of Commons after Bernadotte's assassination carefully, and pointed out to Jerusalem the following sentence (underlined by Dr. Eliash): 'it is our hope that the United Nations will lose no time in throwing the full weight of their authority behind Bernadotte's proposals'.[1] Ben Gurion shared the Israeli Foreign Office apprehension. He regarded the second truce as endangering Israel's political standing. He conceived of the truce as a path to peace but also as an approval for the 'invading Arab armies to stay in Palestine', while Jewish immigration was restricted. Furthermore, it seems that Ben Gurion was encouraged by intelligence reports on the worsening situation of the Egyptian army.[2] Finally, most of the Jewish settlements in the Negev were isolated and unless the Israeli forces acted they would have been starved into surrender or evacuation.[3]

In fact, the situation of the 21 Jewish settlements in the Negev was the Israeli explanation for the launching of their offensive in the Negev. The Egyptian location between Majdal and Faluja had cut off the 'Jewish Negev' from the rest of the Jewish land. The PGI had wanted to open an offensive in that area as early as the end of May, but the acceptance of the first truce compelled it to postpone its plans. Another attempt was foiled owing to the declaration of the second truce.[4] Hence, on October 15, the third and final attempt was carried out.

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1. Bevin in the HC, 22.9.48, Eliash to Ben Gurion in BGA, Ben Gurion diary, 8.9.48.
2. BGA, BG diary, 12.8.48.
3. Kimchi, Both Sides, p.238.
4. Toldot, pp.229, 279.

The Foreign Office was convinced that the quarrel over the Jewish supply convoys to those settlements served as a pretext for the campaign. In reality it was an operation to occupy the Negev.[1] The State Department shared this opinion. Mr. Robert Lovett believed the incident in which a Jewish food convoy was attacked was contrived.[2] There is little doubt that the development of the Israeli attack had proved that the operation went beyond safeguarding the free passage for the convoys. Moreover, as was noted earlier in this chapter, Ben Gurion decided that the whole of Western Palestine would be occupied if and when the partition scheme failed. He was convinced that the Jewish state would be able to maintain both the Negev and the Galilee.[3]

The Director of Egyptian Military Intelligence told the British Military Attaché that it was impossible to stop the Israeli advance. Indeed, in a short while, the Israelis succeeded in thrusting towards Beersheba, capturing the town and thus isolating the Egyptian troops in the Hebron area from the main Egyptian force in the Negev.[4] The British and the Egyptians believed that the next Israeli move would be an advance into the Gaza area, after their success in occupying the Negev plateau.[5] This presumption was reinforced by the Hagana radio announcement that the population of Gaza was leaving for Egypt since the Israelis expected to enter Gaza.[6] However, this was part of an Israeli decoy operation to divert attention away from their preparations to take over the Eastern and South-western parts of the Negev.[7]

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1. FO 371/68696, E14041, FO to UN UK Paris, 3.11.48.
2. According to intelligence reports, Lovett-Epstein conversation, 10.11.48, ISA 73/4.
3. BGA, Directorship meeting of JA, 1.2.48, Ben Gurion; BG diary, 8.9.48, 31.10.48.
4. FO 371/68689, E13489, Cairo to FO, 18.10.48.
5. FO 371/68689, E13440, Amman to FO, 18.10.48.
6. Ibid.
7. Toldot, p.349.

It is noticeable that the British took a very active part in the United Nations discussion on the war in the Negev. This stemmed from the immense importance attached to that area. All British territorial solutions for the Palestine problem, during the Mandate, from the Peel plan to the Morrison-Grady one, had excluded the Jews from the Negev. UNSCOP showed itself insensitive to British strategical needs in the Negev, by awarding the area to the Jewish state. The second Bernadotte proposal suggested dividing the Negev between Egypt and Transjordan, thereby cutting off the Jews from the Negev. Thus, for the first time the demand for an Arab Negev was supported by the UN. Moreover, the Bernadotte proposals also had an American blessing.

However, the rejection by both sides of the plan had caused a reversal in American policy. The State Department now veered towards the encouragement of a territorial settlement by negotiation, owing to the new situation created by the Israeli offensive. However, while the State Department had thought in terms of territorial exchange, that is, the Negev going to the Arabs and the Galilee to the Jews, the President intervened to include in addition to Galilee all the Negev areas already occupied by the Israelis which should remain in their hands.[1] Truman was in the midst of an election campaign in which the other candidate repudiated the Bernadotte programme, and so the President had to make a similar declaration.[2] One tends to agree with Forrestal's observation that in those days US policy was determined by the President's advisers, mainly Clifford and David Niles, who were moved mainly by domestic considerations rather than by national

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1. ISA 173/4, Luria to Epstein, 3.11.48; (Dr. Ginsburg's conversation with Lovett), 11.11.48, ISA 64/15; FRUS 48, Vol.5, part 2, Acting SoS to USUN Paris, 23.10.48, p.1508.
2. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, Acting SoS to SoS, 23.10.48, p.1507.

considerations. Nevertheless, Truman continued the same line after his election, as he wrote to President Weizmann: 'I remember well our conversation about the Negev, ... I agree fully with your estimate of the importance of that area to Israel, and I deplore any attempt to take it away from Israel'.[1]

Hence, the Foreign Office realised that whatever the Israelis succeeded in capturing in the Negev would be accepted by the US as Israeli territory. Therefore they concentrated their efforts on achieving a Security Council resolution forcing the Israelis to withdraw northwards by threat of sanctions. Once again this move was foiled when American support for it died.[2] This was the Anglo-Chinese resolution ordering Israeli withdrawal to the lines of October 14, and calling on the sides to begin negotiations on an armistice.[3]

In the meanwhile, Jewish forces succeeded in driving a wedge in the Egyptian lines, isolating two main groups within garrison posts. By the end of October, those two forces, were besieged by the Israelis.[4] During the first week of November the Egyptians began to withdraw leaving the besieged garrisons to their fate.

For the Foreign Office the situation could not have been worse. Three weeks had passed since the UN Security Council resolution had been accepted and the Israelis were in the same positions as before.[5] Furthermore, if the Israelis succeeded in capturing the Faluja area,

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1. I. Millis, The Forrestal Diaries (London: Cassel, 1952), p.327; and see H. Truman Memoirs Vol.2 (New York, 1956), pp.162-4.
2. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, Acting SoS to SoS (Marshall was at the time in London), 30.10.48, p.1533; SoS to Embassy in London, 22.11.48, p.1624.
3. British policy towards Israel (November 1947-May 1949), ISA 2412/26.
4. The one was Suweidan Menshiye which was captured by 9.11.48 and the other Faluja where about 400 soldiers were stationed. FO 371/68690, E14089, Amman to FO, 30.10.48.
5. FO 371/68690, E15378, Amman to FO, 29.11.48.

they would get hold of ammunition and equipment which could have endangered the remaining Arab armies.[1] Moreover, a Jewish thrust towards the Gulf of Aqaba began in the end of the month. This advance as far as Britain was concerned was 'an awkward situation' owing to the proximity of the Israelis to Aqaba.[2] However, there was little they could or would do. The Egyptian Ministry of Defence requested Iraqi and Tranjordan assistance, but neither army could spare any soldiers. The British on their side emphasized they would only intervene if Transjordan or Egyptian territory proper were invaded.[3]

In their despair the Egyptians, in particular the Palace, looked for ways of negotiating secretly with the Israelis. In November 1948 talks began with Alias Sasson, a representative of the Israeli Foreign Office. The Egyptians offered Israel a permanent armistice if Israel would agree to withdraw from the Arab parts of Palestine and consent to the annexation of the Southern Negev to Egypt. This proposal was rejected, but served as an opening to the armistice negotiations with Egypt.[4]

However, the troubles were not over. The Israelis occupied the eastern part of the Jerusalem-Lydda area. For the Foreign Office it seemed that as this was a clear-cut case of the Israelis moving into purely Arab lands, it could be used to convince the UN to take forceful actions against the Israelis.[5] The main issue for the Foreign Office was to prove the 'falsity' of Israeli propaganda that the 'battle for the Negev was fought almost entirely in the Jewish area'.[6] The

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1. Therefore a Legion expert was sent to demolish them in case the place should fall into the hands of the Israelis. FO 371/68690, E14977, Amman to FO, 22.11.48.
2. FO 371/68690, E15378, Amman to FO, 29.11.48.
3. FO 371/68689, E13669, Baghdad to FO, 22.10.48.
4. ISA 2425/7, Sharret report to the PGI, 4.11.48.
5. FO 371/68390, E14041, FO Minute, Balfour, 2.11.48.
6. Ibid.

Legion's response to the new Israeli offensive was to check by force any Israeli advances into areas previously held by the Egyptians, a task which it successfully fulfilled.[1] This Israeli advance into the Hebron area in November 1948, was seen as an indication that the Israelis harboured some hopes of capturing areas which were understood to be Abdullah's territory in the pre-war negotiations.[2] This was the interpretation adopted by the Legion and the Israeli advance alarmed the British for other reasons as well, since it coincided with Israeli threats to the Iraqi army in Eastern Palestine, and it was believed that the Israelis might even attack Jerusalem.[3] However, by the end of November it became evident that both sides desired a truce in Jerusalem.[4]

The Egyptians withdrew an earlier consent they had given for entering into negotiations for an Armistice and thus fresh fighting broke out in the Negev. The Israeli army threatened Gaza, captured the highway from Beersheba through Bir Asluj, and thrust across the Sinai border in the direction of El-Arish, hence threatening the Egyptian rear. The advance into purely Egyptian territory inevitably brought about an open clash with Britain. This clash will be dealt with in the context of Anglo-Israeli relations in 1948-1951, to which the last chapter of this work is devoted.

14. Conclusions

One can draw four major conclusions about British policy at that time. First, it seems that British policy during the war was

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1. FO 371/68390, E13440, Amman to FO, 18.10.48; E13592, Amman to FO, 20.10.48.
2. This subject is developed in the chapter on the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.
3. FO 371/68390, E15089, Burrows to UNUK NY, 25.11.48.
4. FO 371/68390, E15294, Jerusalem to FO, 29.11.48.

influenced by its posture towards Abdullah's territorial ambitions. Britain had adjusted itself to these ambitions in a pragmatic way which was typical of the conduct of policy by Mr. Bevin and the Foreign Office at that period. The Foreign Office preferred to adapt itself to the policies of its most loyal ally in the area than to oppose him, all the more so since, under the guidance of Mr. Bevin, it discovered that Abdullah's policy, in the long run, would best serve British strategic interests.

Secondly, at an early stage of the war, the Foreign Office recognized the inevitability of a Jewish state in Palestine and accepted partition as the only solution. However, the Foreign Office, and for that matter the military and War Office, were dissatisfied with proposed boundaries. Everything possible was done to wrest the Negev from Israeli hands and to annex it either to Transjordan or Egypt. This led to a deep British involvement in the discussions in the United Nations about the situation in the Negev, whereas it showed little, almost no, interest in the occurrences in the North of Palestine.[1]

Thirdly, given Israel's new strength as a result of its victory in the war and given the lack of any direct formal Anglo-Israeli contact, at the time, Britain hoped that only the Americans would exert pressure on Israel to accept a solution favourable to the British. However, the US was unwilling to do so, because of mainly domestic considerations. Despite the British disappointment on this particular score the hitherto strained relations between the two countries improved as a result of the American approval of the main feature of the new British

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1. At the end of October, Israeli forces attacked positions held by the ALA in Galilee. By that operation the Israelis completed the occupation of Galilee. The ALA was driven across the frontier into Lebanon. FO 371/68690, E13974, Beirut to FO, 29.10.48.

Palestine policy, namely the Greater Transjordan option. Fourthly, Britain's ability to determine the course of the war and influence was limited owing to the Britih desire to maintain its good relations with the Arab world.

Britain was acting in co-operation with the strongest Arab force engaged in the war and thus could direct and to some extent determine the course of the war. However, given the pragmatic nature of British foreign policy and mainly its ability to overcome past prejudices and emotions, it did not escape the attention of the Foreign Office that another strong, if not superior, military element had emerged in the area - the Israeli army.

This British pragmatism will be fully demonstrated in their attitude towards Israel, as the last chapter in this work will illustrate. Notwithstanding the fact that the two were on the brink of war in 1948, the period would end with British efforts to include Israel in its strategical organization in the Middle East.

CHAPTER TWO: The British attitude towards the Palestinian question.

The implications of the Greater Transjordan concept on the course and outcome of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 were dealt with in the previous chapter. It seems only natural to follow that study with an examination of British attitudes towards the two major consequences of that war, that is, the establishment of the state of Israel and the emergence of the Palestinian problem. This chapter will deal with the latter.

It is notable that no one talked about the Palestinian problem at that time (1948-1951). There was a clear distinction between the question of Palestine, namely, the territorial problem as well as the question of sovereignty, and the refugee problem, that is, the humanitarian aspect of the problem. The main implication of such an approach was that the Palestinians were not regarded as a nation or as a people who could be a side in this dispute. The main reason for this approach was the attitude of the parties involved in the conflict towards the concept of an independent Palestinian state next to a Jewish state. Such a state as offered by the UN resolution of November 1947 was ruled out by all the parties prior to the war in Palestine. Most of the Arab states and the Arab Palestinians demanded a unitary state in Palestine; whereas Transjordan with the consent of the British and the Jewish Agency contemplated the annexation of the areas alloted to the Arab Palestinians in that resolution. During the bilateral and multilateral negotiations that followed the Palestine war, the Arab governments tended to accept the principle of partition without recognizing the Jewish state.[1] As was mentioned in the previous chapter each Arab

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1. See the description of the Lausanne Conference.

country suspected the other of conspiring to annex the territories allotted to the Palestinians.

Owing to Israel's refusal to give up any territory it had occupied during the war, the only Arab countries left with control over Palestinian territory were Egypt and Transjordan. Hence, it is important to make the distinction and the differentiation between two categories of Palestinians. On the one hand there were the local inhabitants in the areas under Egyptian, Transjordan and Israeli control, and on the other the refugees. The question of sovereignty was determined by each of these countries, whereas the refugee problem was the subject for the multilateral discussions under the auspices of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). The Arabs and the Israelis were only too pleased to leave the problem of the refugees in the hands of the Western Powers (mainly the British and the Americans).

Thus, it seems that the researcher of the period will have to make the same distinction and look first at British policy towards the question of sovereignty of the Arab Palestine areas under Transjordan rule, and then examine the British concepts about the possible solution of the Palestine refugee problem. Such an analysis is essential not only for the student of British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also for the understanding of the emergence of the Palestinian problem in its modern form since 1967, when it became the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Two important facts should be mentioned in that context. Firstly, most of the Palestinians, be they refugees or local inhabitants, were under Transjordan rule or sovereignty. Hence, it is essential to study carefully British and Transjordan approaches to their future. Secondly, the Palestinians did not possess any political power or even proper means of representing their case. They enjoyed

very little support in the Arab World. The Arab League members had opposed the Transjordan annexation programme owing to their own territorial and national ambitions, with little interest, if any, in the fate of the Palestinians or their land.

The link between the British conceptions about the solution of the Palestine problem and the question of sovereignty of the Arab Palestinian areas seems to be quite obvious. By advocating the annexation of Central and Eastern Palestine to Transjordan, i.e., most of the areas allotted to the Arab Palestinians in the UN resolution of November 1948, on the one hand, and by accepting the inevitability of the Jewish state, on the other, Britain ruled out, as did the Israelis and the Transjordans, the possibility of an independent Palestinian state. Hence, with the exception of the Gaza strip, the question of sovereignty of the UN Arab Palestine was decided by the Transjordans and the British. These two governments aimed at solving the question by annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan. Bernadotte's proposals manifested the American and United Nations support for this formula, as did the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice agreement.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to the way that annexation was carried out by the Transjordans. Apparently, it was planned and executed by King Abdullah with some British intervention, mainly from the Legation in Amman. The principle British worry was Abdullah's eagerness to complete as soon as possible the formal annexation, or as it was called then, the unification, of the two banks of the river Jordan. Kirkbride pleaded with the King to delay, or at least slow down the process, until London succeeded in obtaining at least American, if not world-wide, de-jure recognition of the annexation, as well as securing the new enlarged kingdom against Israeli or Arab

counteractions. The Transjordanian premier and most of the ministers were as cautious as the British and tried to restrain the King in his eagerness to accelerate the process.

The second part of this chapter is an attempt to explore the connection between the concept of 'Greater Transjordan' and the attitude to the refugee problem. The linkage here is somewhat more complicated than the one related to the question of sovereignty, and therefore should be dealt with more carefully. It would be best elucidated by suggesting that the connection lies in the genuine British fear of an independent Palestinian state, as well as British perceptions about the role the Palestinians should play in the Greater Transjordan. One of the main consequences of annexation could have been the Palestinization of Transjordan. The resident Palestinians constituted half of the population of the unified state. With the refugees added to it, they composed three-quarters of the population. Integration could have meant equal representation in the Legislative system and even in the Executive. Indeed this was demanded by the local inhabitants of the West Bank at an early stage. These Palestinians, partly owing to economic motives and partly for political reasons, pushed for the completion of the unification as well as for a larger degree of representation and some would argue that what they had demanded was a larger degree of democratization. For the Legation in Amman it was seen as a serious threat to the autocratic rule of the Hashemites and ipso facto a danger to the whole British strategical build-up in the Middle East. Hence, the possibility of solving the refugee problem as a whole in the framework of Greater Transjordan was ruled out.

The best solution from the Arab and British point of view would have been repatriation of the refugees to their homes and compsensation

for those who did not wish to return. The Foreign Office was confident that it had achieved that goal when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to that effect (11.12.48). It was supported by the various people and organizations who put themselves forward as representatives of the Palestinians (like the Arab Refugee Congress, of which more will be said in the next chapter). The Americans were the main advocates of this solution. However, in the final analysis, they were reluctant to risk Israel's turning to the Eastern Block for the sake of obtaining the Israeli's consent to repatriate a substantial number of refugees.

The Israeli's adamant refusal to repatriate more than a tenth of the refugees, the British fear of the Palestinization of Transjordan and the Arab opposition to any form of resettlement are the background for the third and final part of this chapter. All the parties agreed to participate in a concerted effort to solve the problem in an international conference. It was part of the general agreement to discuss the territorial problems and the question of Jerusalem under the auspices of the PCC; so far the only attempt of that kind. The Lausanne conference was more than anything else a missed opportunity. The very fact that Israel and the Arabs were prepared to discuss these questions, after the Armistice agreement was solved, indicate that at least there was a readiness to change things. As far as Britain and the refugee problem was concerned, it should be remembered that the parties willingly left the problem in the hands of the Americans and the British. It was not left for an obligatory arbitration, but rather out of a hope that the Powers would accept the views of this side or the other. In short, the Powers and the PCC could have sought a political compromise between repatriation and resettlement or one which would combine both. Indeed at one stage, it looked as if things were

going in that direction. However, against probably the better judgement of the experienced British experts in the Foreign Office, the Americans lost their patience and tended to take the lead in solving the problem. The Americans introduced a new approach to the question. They suggested that the problem should be treated from the economic aspect and not from the political one.

Hence, Britain, somewhat reluctantly, followed the American 'business like' approach to the problem, namely it was not only conceived as a purely humanitarian question, but also as one that could be solved by a group of professional experts. Consequently, the Americans initiated the establishment of a technical team of experts (mainly Americans and British), aided by promises to provide Western financial assistance to all the countries which would share this attempt to find an 'economic solution' to the problem. The solution was to be a combination of resettlement and repatriation and was to be an integral part of a new 'Marshall plan' for the Middle Eastern area. Incidentally, it had the same aims as the Marshall plan - stabilization and a high standard of living as the best guarantee against Communist infiltration and Russian intervention.

Thus, one has to try to understand the British and American motives for this somewhat curious move: curious, since it seems hard to explain how an economic solution could have been introduced to a political problem. The results, as it will be attempted to show here, were catastrophic for the Palestinians, and in the long run, disastrous for the area as a whole.

Finally, it is notable that Britain did not possess the economic resources or ability either to take the lead from the Americans or to introduce purely British solutions to the problem.

A. Britain and the incorporation of Arab Palestine.

The methods and moves by which American, Jewish and United Nation's consent for the 'Greater Transjordan' formula was acquired, were dealt with intensively in the previous chapter. The aim here is to look at the policies concerning the implementation of the Anglo-Transjordan understanding and agreement on the future of the Arab areas of Palestine.

One has to differentiate between the British role and attitude towards the various stages of the integration process in 1948-50 (up to the declaration of the unification of the two banks of the river Jordan) and the joint Anglo-American effort to confront Arab opposition to the annexation of Eastern and Central Palestine to Transjordan. The former issue, namely British policy towards Abdullah's measures in the West Bank[1] and his relations with the Palestinian leadership there, was treated mainly in Amman by Sir Alec Kirkbride and the British Legation. Kirkbride enjoyed the King's trust as well as the ministers' confidence and thus London hardly intervened in its Minister's policies towards the process of incorporating the West Bank into Transjordan.

However, in London Arab reaction to Abdullah's policies was conceived as constituting a threat to British interests in the area and, in particular, to Britain's position in Transjordan. The Foreign Office tended to regard Egyptian and Syrian postures on this question as part of their struggle against British influence in the Arab World. Furthermore, Arab positions on this issue were looked at by the Eastern Department in the context of inter-Arab rivalries. Thus, Arab opposition to Abdullah's policies in Palestine was seen as part of the

1. The term is the first used towards the second half of 1949 by the Foreign Office and by the Jordanians.

rivalry within the Arab World between the Hashemites and the anti-Hashemite blocks, the latter becoming more and more anti-British. Hence, it was an issue of paramount importance to the policy makers in London. It is worth noticing that this was the first intra-member dispute of the League and that the problem was conceived by the League's Secretariat not only in terms of Arab opposition to the annexation but also that of the representation of the Palestinians in the League Council.[1]

1. The first stage - the dispute over the question of representation.

Prior to the war in Palestine and as a result of the co-ordination between Britain and Transjordan on the Palestine policy, Abdullah had prepared himself for the next stages of his scheme, regardless and without the knowledge of the other Arab states. His first inclination was to declare his non-recognition of the existing Palestinian bodies (like the Arab Higher Committee - AHC). However, Kirkbride succeeded in preventing such a step, by convincing the King to consult the Iraqis before taking this measure.[2] Nevertheless, Abdullah asserted, unlike Kirkbride, that an essential precondition for the success of his scheme was the elimination of any independent Palestinian representation; hence, his constant preoccupation with, and apprehension about, the AHC's moves and policies in the first half of 1948. Indeed, the AHC did decide to establish an administrative organization which would represent the Arab population in Palestine. Its head would have been a president and would have included, inter alia, a council and an executive committee.[3] Thus, in spite of Kirkbride's criticism, the King

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1. H.A. Hassouna, The League of Arab States and Regional disputes, Oceana Publications, N.Y. 1975, p.35.
2. FO 371/68365, E548, Amman to FO, 11.1.48.
3. As-Shaab 7.1.48.

deemed it necessary to state openly that he had claims to certain economic and strategic areas in Palestine.[1]

However, the AHC and, in particular, the Mufti lost the support of the Arab League during March-April 1948. Already in March differences of opinion had been apparent between the Mufti and the League about the establishment of a Palestine Government in Exile. The Mufti favoured the establishment of a shadow government on condition that the League would allow him to constitute it on the pattern of the AHC, implying that it would have consisted almost entirely of members of the Husseini Party.[2] The reason which prompted the Arab League to oppose the establishment of such a government were discussed in the previous chapter. In the main it was the result of the Arab states' disinclination to appoint the Mufti as the single cntrolling head of the Arab war effort in Palestine.

Thus, the establishment of the Government in Exile was a Palestinian initiative, notwithstanding the resentment of the League, as well of some members of the AHC, such as Dr. Hussein Khalidi and Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, who opposed this move. Jamal Al-Husseini, an eminent member of the AHC, believed that, once this government was established, the Arab states would no longer reject it. However, this member of the AHC failed in his endeavours to canvas support in the Arab capitals. The League's decision to appoint the Mufti as commander of the Jerusalem area alone had shelved the question of a Palestinian government until September 1948.[3] Nevertheless, the AHC retained some of its authority through the network of local defense National

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1. Cahiers de L'Orient Contemporain, 13, p.21, qt. in Goldner, p.287.
2. 'Al-Difaa', 7.1.48; Military Intelligence report to the JA, ISA 170/8, March 1948.
3. Qasmiya, Al-Qawqji, pp.129-32; ISA 170/8, Military Intelligence report, March 1948.

Committees which ran public and defense affairs in their respective localities. In the areas where Legion units were present, the members of these committees were pro-Hashemite and facilitated the takeover of Eastern Palestine by Abdullah.[1]

Thus, without the League's support, with limited financial resources, and with Abdullah having been appointed the commander of the forces liberating Palestine, the Palestinians could not have hoped to run their own affairs in the country. The Legion, on the other hand, was strengthening its control over the Arab areas during April-May 1948. Abdullah aimed at reducing the authority of the AHC and at convincing the local Palestinians of the desirability of linking their future to the Transjordanians.[2] Glubb himself toured the Palestine towns for that purpose.[3] By May 1948, Abdullah's popularity had undoubtedly risen in some areas of Palestine.[4]

Abdullah's first step once the Legion had taken some of the Arab areas of Palestine, was to appoint military governors for them. This was done, obviously, as a means of maintaining law and order, but it also helped the King to counteract talk of annexation.[5] A few days after the occupation, pressure was exerted on Palestinians in those areas to accept administrative appointments offered to them.[6]

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1. They were not the national committees established in 1936-1939 in the wake of the Arab Revolt in most of the Arab towns and villages. These were new committees concerned mainly with defence matters which gradually replaced the old National Committees; see A. Kayali, Palestine: A Modern History in A. London. pp.189-192; R. Sabai, A Political Study of the Arab-Jewish Conflict, the Arab Refugee Problem (A Case Study) (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1959), p.22.
2. Mahmud Al-Jaabri in Hebron and Rashid As-Shawa in Gaza, according to At-Tal, Karithat, pp.31-32; Nevo, Abdullah, pp.71-73.
3. Nevo, op.cit.
4. Glubb, A Soldier, p.66.
5. E. Wright, 'Abdullah's Jordan, 1947-1951', MEJ 5 (1951, pp.439-460).
6. FO 81/120, Kirkbride to Bevin, 18,5,48.

After four days of fighting the Legion entered Nablus, Kalkilia, Tul-Karem and Jenin, and expelled the ALA units which had been quartered there since the beginning of 1948.[1] In Tul-Karem the ALA was forced to withdraw under the threat of the Legion's arms.[2] Ostensibly, the ALA was ordered to withdraw in order to reinforce the Syrian forces engaged in the fighting in the North. However, it was done mainly in order to establish Legion rule in these towns.[3] Moreover, the Transjordans claimed that the ALA was looting Arab property.[4]

The former Transjordan premier, Ibrahim Hashim, was appointed military governor of all the parts of Palestine effectively occupied by the Arab Legion.[5] The Legation in Amman reported that this was a natural sequence of events, since it represented the effect Palestinian public opinion had on the Transjordan activities.[6] (Hashim was a Palestinian.) The chairman of the AHC Executive Committee greeted Abdullah's entry into Palestine and offered cooperation with the Legion in the battle over Jerusalem. However, Abdullah was determined to abolish this body. Thus, a week later the British Consul in Jerusalem reported that: 'All references to the Arab Higher Committee gave the impression that it is regarded as non existent'.[7] The Transjordanians decided to keep the National Committee in Jerusalem subordinated to the appointed military governor of the city, Abdullah At-Tal. Under his military administration, efforts were made towards establishing a pro-Hashemite cadre of new civil administration. At-Tal's next task

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1. FO 371/68373, E6493, Amman to FO, 18.5.48.
2. FO 371/68506, Amman to FO, 19.5.48; H. Badri, Al-Harb fi Ard As-Salam, (The war in the land of Peace) (Beirut, 1975), p.169.
3. Qasmiya, Al-Qawqji, p.201.
4. FO 816/120. Kirkbride to Bevin, 19.5.48.
5. FO 816/120, Kirkbride to Bevin, 20.5.48.
6. Ibid.
7. FO 371/68641, E7589, Jerusalem to FO, 25.5.48.

was to disband the remaining units of the ALA.[1]

At the same time that the Legion was carrying out the de-facto annexation of the West Bank, the Arab World continued to debate the question of the sovereignty of Palestine. Owing to the presence of Egyptian forces in the vicinity of Jerusalem and the Hebron area, the Egyptian government's policies carried an important weight in the League's discussions on the issue. The Egyptian government suggested a unitary state over all of Palestine as the ultimate objective of the war effort in Palestine. The Transjordan and Iraqi delegates in the League opposed this suggestion. But the League's Council accepted the Egyptian proposal and decided to impose military rule on the occupied territories until the inhabitants decide their future. In a sense this was a compromise between the two viewpoints.[2] The Transjordan premier, Abu Al-Huda, had little doubt that the inhabitants in the Transjordan controlled areas would be unanimous in asking for a union with Transjordan, because the Legion would take steps to ensure it. Bevin warned Abu Al-Huda of World Public Opinion and Arab reaction. But, according to Kirkbride, the premier was unmoved.[3] The Foreign Office shared Abdullah's desire to see the union realised in a short time, but feared Abdullah's inclination to accelerate the process so fast.

Abu Al-Huda's confidence and Abdullah's determination were reinforced by the publication of Bernadotte's second proposals. The revised proposals recommended that there were compelling reasons for merging the Arab territory of Palestine with the territory of Transjordan.[4] These new proposals helped to soothe the Foreign

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1. A.M. Al-Husseini, Khaqaia a'n Filastine (facts about Palestine), Maktab Al-Hayaa Al-A'rabia Al-Ula Al-filastinian (Cairo: AHC publications, 1957), p.94; FO 371/68641, op.cit.
2. FO 371/68374, E7209, Amman to FO, 30.5.48.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 816/142, Bevin to Amman, 18.12.48.

Office's apprehensions and gave Abdullah's action in Arab Palestine international legitimacy.[1] Bernadotte and Abdullah concurred on the inevitability of a Jewish state. Moreover, the Transjordan premier promised the Count that 'Transjordan would never oppose a decision (sic) by UN General Assembly, if the other Arab countries would do so'.[2] More important from Abdullah's point of view was Bernadotte's conclusion that the Arab solution of the Palestine problem, a unitary Arab state, had become unrealistic.[3] Nevertheless, the Foreign Office pointed out to Abdullah that Bernadotte was merely making a proposal, not an unequivocal recommendation. Indeed, Bernadotte's proposals were not as categorical as the Foreign Office wished them to be. Therefore, Kirkbride was instructed to tell Abdullah that 'everything should be done to prevent the proclamation of an Arab government of Palestine. The United Kingdom would help him to that purpose'.[4]

Abdullah himself realized that notwithstanding Bernadotte's position much was left to be desired with regard to the consolidation of his rule over Arab Palestine. Thus he sought further and stronger affirmation of British support for his policy. This was granted to him by a letter from Bevin in which British support for the Greater Transjordan option was reiterated: 'an extension of Transjordan to cover the Arab areas of Palestine and Jerusalem and ... the integrity of the expanded Transjordan would be assured by terms of Anglo-Transjordan alliance treaty'.[5]

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1. FO 371/68374, E7209, Amman to FO, 30.5.48.
2. Persson, Bernadotte, p.192 qt. Till Jerusalem (Suanstorm Manuscript), p.172.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68861, E11809, Wright to Kirkbride, 19.9.48.
5. FO 371/68375, E9618, Bevin to Kirkbride, 7.7.48.

The reiteration of British obligations under the alliance treaty was issued in July 1948, and was of immense importance to the King. It came at a time when the League began discussing the future of the Arab areas of Palestine.

2. The All-Palestine Government.

In July 1948, the Political Committee of the Arab League met in Cairo to discuss the prolongation of the first truce. The Arab members by then had become suspicious about Abdullah's intentions in Palestine. In a step aimed at curtailing the King's ambitions, the Political Committee decided to establish a temporary Civil Administration in Palestine directly responsible to the League. This Administration was to concern itself with purely civic affairs. The jurisdiction of the Administration was extended to all areas of Palestine occupied by the Arab armies in the past, present and future. The League had further suggested the establishment of a government that would be at the top of this Administration.[1]

The proposed government would be assisted by a Council. Both bodies, the Council and the Government, would be guided by decisions and directives of the Arab League Council or the Political Committee. The Council attached to the Administration would deal with social, financial and agricultural affairs in Palestine.[2] Thus, the League attempted to cover all aspects of life in the future Palestinian state.

It is notable that the League Council had decided already in April 1948 to hand over Palestine to 'its owners so that they may rule it in the way they wish'.[3] That decision also warned that 'should any Arab

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1. At-Tal, Karithat, p.342; Dearden A, Jordan (London: Robert Hale, 1958), p.75.
2. FO 371/68641, E9552, Cairo to FO, 12.7.48.
3. Hassouna, Arab League, p.34: this writer based his information on the minutes of the 12th ordinary session of the League's Council (March 1950) when these resolutions were reaffirmed.

state violate this decision, it shall be considered as having repudiated its obligations as well as the provisions of the Pact'.[1]

The Transjordanian representative, Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, approved the proposal without referring the question to Amman. Therefore, he did not represent accurately the Transjordanian posture and caused further deterioration in his own position in Transjordan and his relations with the King.[2] Kirkbride complained that by this, Abu Al-Huda diminished the King's chances of obtaining the Arab areas of Palestine.[3] It seems, in hindsight, that Abu Al-Huda supported the Greater Transjordan concept as much as the British and the King did. But for tactical reasons the premier believed it was better to toe the general Arab line while quietly carrying out the annexation. After all, the other members of the League's sincerity could have been suspected when they supported the Civil Administration proposal, as much as Abdullah was.[4]

Thus Abdullah was forced to accept the decision. He could not come out publicly and openly against the League. However, he decided to try to confront the League's decision by sending with Abu Al-Huda two Palestinian representatives, implying by this move that he and not the proposed Administration represented the Arab Palestinians living under his rule.[5] Furthermore, the King raised the issue of who were the 'real representatives of Palestine in the League, claiming that the Palestinian case was now represented by the Transjordanian delegation in the Political Committee.[6]

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/68822, E10325, Amman to FO, 25.7.48. The Political Committee consisted of the premiers and foreign ministers of the Arab states.
3. FO 371/68822, E10325, Amman to FO, 25.7.48.
4. Ad-Daly, Azzam, p.233.
5. FO 371/68222, E10325, Amman to FO, 25.7.48.
6. Nevo, Abdullah, p.99.

At that point, Abdullah's motives and goals in the Palestine war were revealed to the Arab leaders, and from then on a festering suspicion developed between the Arab states and Transjordan, and especially between Egypt and that country. The Egyptians, determined to block Hashemite annexation, announced in September 1948 their plans for a separate government in exile, to be called the 'All-Palestine Government' with its seat in Gaza.[1]

Azzam Pasha, the Secretary General of the League, explained to British Middle East officials that this government was the one suggested by the Political Committee Civil Administration proposal mentioned above. It is notable that British reports from Cairo gave the impression that Azzam did not seriously believe that this move would prevent Abdullah from annexing the West Bank. Azzam supported the Egyptian initiative, since it seemed to satisfy most of the members of the League. Moreover, he told the British officials that it was a necessary step to bring order in the areas of Palestine under Egyptian control.[2] The Secretary General claimed that such a decision would strengthen the League's position in the UN. Azzam realized that Britain's main fear was about the role which the Mufti might have played in that Government. The Mufti had been elected as president of an Egyptian sponsored 'National Palestine Council' attached to the government. Azzam promised the head of the BMEO that the Mufti would remain in Egypt and exercise his influence from there.[3] He explained to a senior British diplomat that if the Palestine problem could be solved in six months time he would join those who wished 'to cut the

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1. FO 371/68376, E12392, Beirut to FO, 20.9.48.
2. FO 371/68641, E12527, BMEO to FO, 24.9.48.
3. Ibid.

Mufti's throat', but since it would not be solved for ten years at least, the Mufti could still be useful.[1]

Hence, there is little doubt that Azzam wished to reduce the importance of the whole affair. Azzam anticipated Abdullah's reaction and therefore told American journalists that it was a temporary move; one writer claimed that Azzam even tried to stop the declaration.[2] However, the foreign minister designate of the All-Palestine government had already informed the press of its establishment.[3] Within two weeks the government was recognized by Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and even Afghanistan. The Arab League invited all the other Arab States to follow suit.[4]

Had the whole affair been confined to a mere declaration by the League, the British Foreign Office would have accepted its Cairo Embassy's tendency to belittle it. However, the wide recognition of the government throughout the Arab World alarmed it. The new development necessitated a careful examination of the consequences for British interests as well as those of Transjordan.

Thus, the Foreign Office tried to analyse the motives of the various Arab states for supporting the initiative, rather than study the League's policy itself. It should be remembered that the League carried very little political weight in the eyes of the British.[5] The Foreign Office concluded that the support came because those countries wanted to placate Arab public opinion and, secondly, because they wished to safeguard the Arab juridical position, i.e., the claim for sovereignty over the whole of Palestine. Some officials also believed

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1. FO 371/68861, E12277, Cairo to FO, 20.9.48.
2. New York Times, 29.9.48; Goldner, Abdullah, p.292.
3. Al-Ahram, 26.9.48.
4. FO 816/142, Bevin to Amman, 18.12.48.
5. See Chapter 1.

it was done in order to prevent any Arab government from recognizing Israel. Thus, what the Arab governments were thought to have in mind was the same pattern of exile government as used by the Allies in the Second World War (Polish, Czech, etc.)[1] Kirkbride, in his memoirs, stated that it was a move against Abdullah on account of his British contacts and his success in the Palestine war. He understood it more as an anti-Hashemite act, that is, as part of Egypt's rivalry with the Hashemites for the leadership of the Arab World. Both he and Glubb understood the actions against Abdullah as an Egyptian-Syrian plot against the King.[2] It seems that the Foreign Secretary's explanation for the Arab motives for supporting the government is the most acceptable one. He saw the All-Palestine government as a 'counter move' to the Bernadotte proposals.[3] Abidi, Plascov and General Badri share this view and accept it as the best explanation for the Arab motives.[4]

Abdullah no doubt regarded it as an attempt to discredit him and to undermine his position in Arab Palestine. He immediately declared: 'I shall fight against this measure with all my power'.[5] At-Tal claimed that the Transjordan representative who participated in the Political Committee session had approved the decision, although this was denied later in Amman.[6] In his memoirs, King Abdullah argued that he did not object in principle to the Government but rather found the timing and composition ill advised.[7] As he wrote to Riad Al-Sulh:

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1. FO 371/68376, E12392, Beirut to FO, 20.9.48.
2. Kirkbride, Wings, p.57-58; Glubb, A Soldier, 190, 192.
3. FO 816/142, Bevin to Amman, 18.12.48.
4. Abidi, Jordan, pp.52-53; A. Plascov, The Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, 1948-57 (London: Frank Cass, 1981), p.7; Badri, Harb, p.304.
5. Goldner, Abdullah, p.292, qt. Cahiers, 16, p.219; Radio Ramallah, 21.9.48. qt. in Nevo, Abdullah p.99.
6. At-Tal, Karithat, p.343.
7. I. Abdullah, King of Jordan, My Memoirs completed (London: Longman, 1978), p.24.

'This action meant the acceptance and execution of partition'.[1]

The British realised that the establishment of a Palestine Government increased the difficulties of Abdullah's position, as well as their own, in the Arab countries. It followed that if many Arab countries recognized the new government, Britain and Transjordan could either wait for its collapse or Abdullah could claim sovereignty over the whole of Palestine. The latter was a claim he could withdraw later (this was done by the Soviet controlled North Korea which in 1948 claimed sovereignty over the whole of Korea). Such a course was suggested by the British Legation in Beirut, but was rejected by the Foreign Office on the grounds that it would make it impossible for the United Nations to guarantee the Israel-Transjordan borders because it reopened the issue of sovereignty. Furthermore, it would have prevented the US government from recognizing Transjordan and would have caused complication regarding the validity of the Anglo-Transjordan treaty.[2] Abdullah, as could have been anticipated, initially wanted to follow that course and, for instance, had asked the Coptic Bishop of Jerusalem to proclaim him King of the city.[3] However, he was advised by the British that he would do best to ignore the government altogether.[4]

Nevertheless, the Foreign Office could not have remained unconcerned. It was alarmed by news from Amman that the declaration of the Gaza Government had been followed by intensive anti-Hashemite action, instigated by the Egyptians, in Hebron and Beit Lehem. In the main

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1. Abdullah, op.cit., p.12.
2. FO 371/68376, E12392, Beirut to FO, 20.9.48.
3. FO 371/68376, E12392, Beirut to FO, 20.9.48.
4. Times, 17.11.48.
5. Kirkbride, Wings, p.58. The Copts represented Arabism and Christianity.

this had amounted to the distribution of arms to Abdullah's opponents, organized in a group called the Army Holy War (Al-Jihad Al-Muqadas).[1]

The Eastern Department was particularly worried about the Iraqi posture. If the Iraqis had cooperated with the new government, the position of Transjordan would have become extremely difficult. The Iraqis supported the government initially, but heavy pressure was exerted by the British government to get them to reverse their decision. Two months elapsed before the Iraqi position became more clear. In the meanwhile Abdullah threatened that he would re-consider his membership in the League and his participation in the war if the Iraqis recognized the Palestine Government.[2] The latter threat was meaningless, however, since by that time (October 1948), Abdullah was already out of the war. As for the Iraqis, throughout the short life of the government, they had been supporting it publicly and then condemning it privately in conversations with the King.[3]

Hence, the first official move by the Foreign Office was to deplore the establishment of the government.[4] Then, it was conveyed to the United States that Bernadotte's report advised against a separate Arab State. The Foreign Office did not have to take pains in convincing the State Department that the League's claim for the whole of Palestine would have undesirable implications. British representatives were instructed to take every possible action to discourage any Arab government from recognizing the new government. They were to convey to the Arab governments that HMG regarded the Gaza government as 'ill timed and that any such proposal seems open to all objections', mainly

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1. FO 816/129, Kirkbride to Bevin, 29.5.48.
2. FO 816/130, Kirkbride to Bevin, 4.10.48.
3. FO 816/130, Kirkbride to Bevin, 12.10.48.
4. FO 371/68641, E12526, Jedda to FO, 26.9.48.

owing to the Mufti's influence in Palestine affairs which would precipitate a Jewish claim for the whole of Palestine and possibly Transjordan as well. The British representatives were to claim that Israel, in that case, would be forced to adopt the Revisionist plan.[1] Furthermore, they were advised to take the following line: on the one hand, they should explain that a separate Arab state would not be covered by existing British treaties, and on the other, they should argue that the state would not be economically viable which would make its absorption into the Jewish state inevitable.[2] Whereas, the last argument certainly could have had an effect, it is hard to see how the threat not to include the state in British defence system could have won any support.

The Foreign Office decided to recruit the Americans for the task. The State Department was asked to make a specific approach to the Arab governments on this issue. The Department, although doubtful about supporting annexation, co-operated with the British, since it saw its action as part of its support for the Bernadotte scheme.[3] It was in this time that the Palestine Government ceased to play any important role. Not so much because of this concentrated effort but rather owing to the uneasy alliance between the Mufti and the Egyptians, on the one hand, and Abdullah's own pressure, on the other, that tipped the scales. It would be useful to elaborate on the circumstances in which the Gaza Government disappeared.

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1. FO 371/68861, E11809, Wright to Cairo, 19.9.48. That is, implementing fully the Zionist aim of creating a Jewish state all over Mandatory Palestine. An aim accepted by the American Zionist Organization in November 1942 after it had been presented to them by Ben Gurion. This offer of Ben Gurion made in the Biltmore in New York became the official Zionist policy until the Jewish Agency accepted the partition plan in November 1947. See Lenczowski, Middle East, p.399.
2. FO 371/68641, E12502, CRO to Commonwealth governments, 9.10.48.
3. FRUS 48, London to Washington, 29.9.48.

In this affair, the Mufti undoubtedly acted as an Egyptian protegé, although he and the Egyptian government did not see eye to eye. They shared a common objective in their attempt to prevent the annexation of Arab Palestine.[1] Thus, although most of the government's designate members were Mufti supporters, it had no power at all and depended entirely on the Egyptians for funds, supplies and protection.[2] In December 1948, the Government withdrew to Cairo, a move that was intended to consolidate Egyptian control over the Mufti.[3] The Mufti himself claimed that he acted independently of the Egyptian government in the Gaza government.[4] In any case the two sides' inability to cooperate was one of the main reasons for the failure of the Gaza government.

Moreover, the defeat of the Egyptians in the Negev forced some members of the government to move out of Gaza to other Arab capitals. Some returned to Jordan hoping to be forgiven by the King. Abdullah tried to convince and induce by bribes the proposed head of the Government, Hilmi Pasha, to take his former position in the Transjordan administration, but failed to do so.[5] He was more successful with most of the other members, who resigned from the government and joined the Transjordan administration in the West Bank.[6]

Thus the whole affair was soon over and proved to be a farce; Abdullah was now 'justified' in replacing the Mufti with a candidate of his own.[7] He prohibited the designate foreign minister of the govern-

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1. Plascov, Refugees, p.8; Goldner, Abdullah, p.291; Kirkbride, Wings, p.57; Glubb, A Soldier, p.190.
2. Glubb, op.cit., p.217.
3. Al-Husseini, Filastin, p.87.
4 Ibid.
5. Hilmi was the first military governor of Jerusalem and was replaced by At-Tal, Goldner, Abdullah, p.291, Plascov, Refugees, pp.7-9.
6. Nevo, Abdullah, p.100; Plascov, op. cit.
7. Sheikh Husam Ad-Din Jarallah.

ment to come to the West Bank and canvass for support and finally, in the beginning of October, he organized a Congress of Palestinians in Amman to voice opposition and repudiate the All-Palestine Government.[1]

One has to differentiate between the implications and conclusions drawn by the various writers from this episode, benefiting from the perspective of time, and the immediate reaction and assessment of the British Foreign Office and the Transjordans. Whereas, in hindsight, it seems that the creation of the government brought the division of opinion between the Arab governments on the Palestinian problem into the open, namely the Arab governments had been manipulating and exploiting the question of the Palestinian representation for their own purposes, for the Foreign Office, however, it was an indication of the strength of the Mufti, and for Abdullah it was a proof that Transjordan had been outbid by the other Arab governments and that he had, therefore, to accelerate the path of annexation.[2]

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, one could argue that at that time the Mufti was an Egyptian protegé. It is notable, however, that the Foreign Office did not view his position in that way. The Office's assumption about the growing power of the Mufti was based on information gathered by the British Embassy in Cairo about the discussions that preceded the establishment of the All-Palestine Government. To their astonishment, the officials of the Eastern Department learned that during the meeting of the Political Committee in Aley in July 1948, the Egyptian delegation joined the Hashemites in their opposition to the Syrian-Lebanese proposal to appoint the Mufti

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1. FO 816/130, Kirkbride to Bevin, 4.10.48. After the government withdrew to Cairo, it became in 1952, a department in the Arab League.
2. Plascov, Refugees, p.8-9; Nevo, Abdullah, p.101; Badri, Harb, p.306.

as head of the Palestine Government.[1] Hence, in spite of the Mufti's contacts in Egypt, the Department believed that he held an important independent position. Moreover, the Foreign Office conceived him as the major stumbling block in the way of Egyptian-Transjordan rapprochement. Namely, without the Mufti's interference, it seemed to the Office, that Faruq and Abdullah could have reached an agreement on the partition of Arab Palestine and by that implementing the Bernadotte proposals (which left the issue of the Arab territories in the hands of the Arab states).[2]

The Foreign Office anticipated a positive attitude from Egypt owing to what the Office thought was the Egyptian government's growing fear of the Mufti's increasing influence in Palestine.[3] The Foreign Office and in particular Mr. Bevin could not comprehend, throughout the period in question, the lack of understanding between the two countries on this issue. They tended to attribute it to personal animosity between the two rulers.[4] In fact, Michael Wright attempted to convince the Americans that the issue was the Mufti and not the Palestine Government. He implied the existence of a school of thought, within the Eastern Department, which was prepared to give some legitimacy to the All-Palestine Government if it would replace the former AHC.[5] The crux of the matter was, however, that the British could not have agreed to any body that would put in doubt the right of Transjordan to annex parts of Palestine, by its very existence.

In the beginning of October 1948, Abdullah was advised by the Foreign Office to approach the Egyptians and try to reach an agreement

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1. FO 371/68382, E12098, Amman to FO, 15.9.48.
2. FO 371/68641, E12502, FO to Amman, 28.9.48.
3. Ibid.
4. See p.291
5. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part2, US Embassy in London to SoS, 7.10.48, p.1463.

on Arab Palestine. Abdullah rejected this British suggestion for two reasons. Firstly, the King was convinced that Egypt would use the démarche against him and accuse him of accepting partition. Secondly, Abdullah understood Egyptian sponsorship of the Mufti as a means of indirect rule in Palestine preferable to direct annexation.[1] Thus the king's disinclination to cooperate with Faruq had upset the hopes of the Foreign Office of bringing a thaw in Egyptian-Transjordan relations, and by that of reducing the influence of the Mufti. Hence, the Office had to accept Abdullah's concept that the best way to confront any moves by the Mufti was to endorse the immediate implementation of the principles of annexation of Arab Palestine in the Bernadotte plan. Notwithstanding, the Office continued its independent struggle against the Mufti and instructed its representatives in the area to 'take such actions as they may find possible to prevent the growth of the Mufti's influence in Palestine'.[2]

The success in inducing Bernadotte to include the annexation of Arab Palestine to Transjordan removed the last international obstacle to the implementation of Abdullah's scheme. The King was left with the problem of facing Arab reaction and countering possible opposition in Palestine. Glubb reported, in the end of September, that he found widespread feeling amongst the Palestinians in support of annexation.[3] However, Kirkbride thought that Glubb was overestimating the desire of the Palestinians for union with Transjordan and underestimating the influence of the Mufti.[4] Kirkbride believed the Legion was able to consolidate its control over UN Arab Palestine, if Israel were deterred

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1. FO 816/130, Kirkbride to Bevin, 2.10.48.
2. FO 816/129, Bevin to Kirkbride, 28.9.48.
3. FO 816/129, Glubb memo in Kirkbride to Bevin, 30.9.48.
4. FO 816/130, Kirkbride to Burrows, 6.10.48.

from attacking the Transjordans and if the Iraqis and the Egyptians were forced to withdraw as a result of an Israeli offensive in the Negev.[1]

The Foreign Office was confident that the Legion would effectively control the Arab areas. However, the British were concerned about the implication of Arab resentment to Abdullah's action on their position and interests in the Arab World. It is notable that this episode coincided with Britain's attempts to conclude defence treaties with as many Arab states as possible. The atmosphere in the Arab capitals had not changed for the better and in many aspects had worsened. The Lebanese premier demanded that Abdullah telegraph to the United Nations that Transjordan did not accept union with any part of Palestine.[2] The Egyptians and the Syrians had sent similar protests throughout September, not only publicly, but even privately to the King, which indicated that it was not done just for domestic consumption, but also out of genuine resentment. However, the developing Israeli offensive in the South had put the Egyptians in dire straits and Faruq and Mahmud Nokrashi hoped to obtain some assistance from Abdullah. Consequently, the Political Committee of the League avoided the subject altogether in its session during November 1948.[3]

This new development led Kirkbride to the conclusion that there was no need to fear Arab reaction, since no other solution to the Palestine problem seemed to emerge from the League or any of the other Arab governments.[4] It is notable that in December 1948, the parties involved in the conflict were still convinced that it was up to the

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 816/131, Kirkbride to Bevin, 19.10.48.
3. FO 816/133, Kirkbride to Bevin, 13.11.48.
4. FO 816/134, Kirkbride to Bevin, 6.12.48.

United Nations to decide upon the future of Palestine. Whether the decisions would be accepted as obliging or as imposing a solution was another matter.

3. The Palestinian Congresses.

The Amman Congress was an immediate reaction to the proclamation of the Gaza government. Abdullah hoped to show the Arab World that he was able to convene a meeting with more representatives of the refugee community than the Egyptians had in Gaza.[1] He, therefore, invited only representatives from the refugees. According to one writer, those who attended the Congress were forced to do so.[2] Abdullah attempted to manifest, in this Congress, the resentment of the refugees against the All-Palestine Government and their inclination to grant him the right to represent them.[3] The Congress was part of a wholesale campaign of appeals and petitions by refugees thanking the King for 'redeeming' Palestine and asking him to take the responsibility for the Palestinians. Even a critical writer as Plascov conceded that: 'contrary to the widely held belief outside Jordan, these various representations did reflect the feeling of a large segment of the population'.[4] Thus, the Congress called for the continuation of the fighting in Palestine, appealed to the UN for justice and repudiated the validity of the Gaza Government.[5]

The relative calm with which the Amman Congress had passed, convinced Abdullah that he could proceed with the annexation.[6] Hence, one

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1. Only 75 representatives attended the meeting in Gaza.
2. An interview with Nimr Hawari by Plascov, in Plascov, Refugees, p.11.
3. Radio Ramallah, 16.10.48.
4. Plascov, op.cit., p.11; unfortunately this observation is not based on any reference.
5. Al-Ahram, 2.10.48.
6. Nevo, Abdullah, p.109.

should view the Congress not merely as a tactical reaction to the establishment of the All-Palestine Government, but rather a stage, one out of three main stages, on the way to unification. The Congress was followed by one in Jericho, and the last stage was the declaration on the union of the two banks of the River Jordan.

Abidi tends to perceive the Congress in a different context. According to his analysis, Abdullah convened the refugees in Amman out of fear that Israel might recognise the All-Palestine Government.[1] Kirkbride, for one, was apprehensive of such a development. He assessed that the Israelis preferred a small non-viable state in Palestine.[2] However, the Israeli line of thinking evolved differently. During September 1948, Ben Gurion believed and tried to persuade his colleagues in the Government that Israel should and could annex the West Bank. To his Cabinet members, the Premier explained that it would be an ample Israeli reaction to the strangulation of Jerusalem by the Transjordans (in spite of the truce, the Legion did not resume the water supply to the Jewish quarters).[3] In his diary, Ben Gurion developed the theory that without Bevin's 'emotional inhibitions' the West would have realised that Israel had the right to the whole of the Palestine Mandate territory.[4] However, the Provisional Government of Israel ruled against Ben-Gurion's suggestion of carrying out such an operation (feasible as it was from the military point of view). The main core of opposition came from the Israeli Foreign Office. Its experts on Arab affairs predicted, already in July, that Abdullah would convene a meeting of representatives from Palestine, and suggested that

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1. Abidi, Jordan, p.53.
2. FO 816/134, Kirkbride to Bevin, 6.12.48.
3. D. Ben-Gurion, Medinat Israel Ha-Mechudeshet (The restored state of Israel), 5th edition (Tel-Aviv: Davar, 1969), p.288.
4. BGA, Ben-Gurion diary, 8.9.48.

Israel would not object to this development. The Office recommended that 'We should concentrate our policy not on the Arab League but on Abdullah and Arab Palestine'.[1] Later, during 1949-1951, Sharret played with the idea of supporting an independent Arab Palestine, even if the price was severing the links with the King.[2]

In the meanwhile, Abdullah, who was more worried about the League's reaction for the time being, played with the idea of setting up his own Palestine government in Nablus, but preferred eventually to continue with gradual annexation.[3] There was a need now to obtain the recognition of the inhabitants of Eastern Palestine themselves for the union (after securing some recognition from the refugees in the Amman Congress).

The King could not have chosen a more propitious time. The Egyptian débacle in the South occupied both Egyptian and Israeli attention. The Bernadotte proposals granted a tacit consent for his plans by the United Nations and the West. Moreover, the news from Gaza was encouraging. The Mufti was forced to withdraw to Egypt, under the threat of arrest and Nokrashi promised the British embassy in Cairo that by that act the Egyptian government ensured that the Gaza Government would not be provocative.[4]

Some writers have mentioned that Abdullah, after the Amman Congress and as a result of its success, had demanded that the British extend the treaty rights to the newly added territory.[5] However, there

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1. ISA, IFO Memo, 27.7.48, ISA 2424/21.
2. ISA 63/4, Sharret to Shitrit 18.8.48; ISA 2444/19, Sharret's directive to the Israeli delegation in Lausanne, 25.7.49.
3. E. Wright, Abdullah, p.446. fn.99.
4. FO 141/1256, Conversation between Chapman-Andrews and Nokrashi, in Chapman-Andrews to Nokrashi, 11.10.48.
5. Dearden, Jordan, p.84; Kirkbride, Wings, p.99.

was no reason for the King to exert any kind of pressure on the British to that end, since, as was mentioned before, the extension of the treaty rights was precisely the argument used by the Foreign Office in favour of annexation, as early as February 1948.[1] Yet, throughout 1948, Kirkbride deemed it necessary to confirm and re-confirm that Abdullah was pursuing the right policy. In his book, Kirkbride claimed that the outcome of the Palestine war was the last proof needed to convince the British that this was indeed the right direction. After the war, asserted Kirkbride, everyone was convinced that 'no amount of misleading propaganda could conceal the fact that the Arab success ... was an illusion and that, at least for the time being, the creation of an independent Arab state of Palestine was not practical'.[2]

Plascov maintained that the next step in the King's scheme, the Jericho Congress, was intended to convince Britain and the US that Abdullah was not imposing his will on the Palestinians.[3] This assumption coincides with Abidi's explanation for the motives behind the Amman Congress.[4] However, as was the case with the Amman Congress, it appears that Abdullah had no reason to fear an unfavourable British reaction to his plans. British documents, since January 1948, indicate that the Foreign Office did not make the will of the Palestinians to go along with Abdullah's scheme a condition for the success of the annexation. Furthermore, British and American approval were granted long before December 1948.

The second Congress was convened, as a means of placating Arab opposition and in order to safeguard the continuation of the annexation

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1. See chapter one.
2. Kirkbride, op.cit., p.66.
3. Plascov, Refugees, p.12.
4. Abidi, Jordan, p.53.

process. Abdullah wanted a public Palestinian approval for his next steps towards the union of the two banks of the Jordan. He suggested Jericho as the venue in order to create the impression of spontaneity on the part of the Palestinians. The Congress was called by the Executive of the Amman Congress. This executive was told by the King that he would like the Jericho Congress to carry resolutions acclaiming him as King of Palestine and to accept tacitly the existence of a Jewish state.[1]

The prior preparations for the Congress, aimed in the main to ensure high attendance, were entrusted to the Military Governor of the region occupied by the Legion. He was allowed to use threats if deemed necessary.[2] For that purpose, the Military Governor organized and co-ordinated the activity and the communication between the various military commanders, Legion officers and agents of the Court. The broadcasts from Ramallah and Amman concentrated on creating the impression of spontaneous support for the Congresses.[3] According to At-Tal, Glubb took an intensive part in the ground-work and preparations for the congress, by touring the areas and talking to Legion Officers.[4] Kirkbride's reports indicated that the Legation had known beforehand about these measures and indeed co-operated with the King.[5] Abdullah and the designate chairman, Mohmad Al-Jabri, decided on the Congress's resolutions in advance.[6]

Notwithstanding these careful preparations, there was quite overt opposition to the Congress. The supporters of the Mufti organized a

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1. FO 816/142, Political Report - Palestine, 6.12.48.
2. Ibid.
3. Nevo, Abdullah, p.110.
4. At-Tal, Karithat, p.375.
5. FO 816/142, Political Report, op.cit.
6. Ibid.

meeting in Beir Zeit and Ramallah expressing opposition and attempted to send delegates to disrupt the Congress, but these were arrested.[1] It seems that Abdullah wanted some opposition delegates to come to the Congress to give it a democratic 'flavour'.[2] At-Tal claimed that Abdullah's opponents had agreed to participate because they wanted to influence the resolutions and ease the pressure from the authorities on them.[3]

In terms of attendance the Congress was a success (3000 attended). As far as fair representation is concerned, the question is more complicated. Kirkbride believed that the Congress was fairly representative of Arab Palestine. However, the mayors of the important towns did not attend, apart from Jaabri the Mayor of Hebron and the chairman of the Congress.[4]

Abdullah, quite probably, regretted the permission he had given to some opponents to attend the Congress, since he rejected the resolutions of the Congress and instructed the redrafting of the resolutions, after they had already been broadcast on Radio Ramallah. The revised draft was broadcast on Near East Radio (N.E.R. Sharq Al-Adna).[5] In the end of December, yet another version was publicized. The first called for the union of Mandatory Palestine with Transjordan and recognized Abdullah as the constitutional King of Palestine, as a preliminary stage to an all-Arab unification. The revised draft omitted references, made in the original resolutions, to the right of the refugees to

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1. This group was called the 'Munadilin', based in Ramallah which succeeded in distributing leaflets in the Congress. FO 816/142, Political Report.
2. Plascov, Refugees, p.13.
3. At-Tal, Karithat, p.376.
4. FO 816/142, Political Report Palestine, 6.12.48.
5. The original draft was on the air, in Radio Ramallah, before the King had succeeded in preventing it. Hence the revised draft was broadcasted by N.E.R., Nevo, Abdullah, p.113-114.

their homes, and did not mention the call on the Arab countries to complete the task of liberating Palestine. Instead, it laid the foundations for the new constitutional and administrative organizations of the 'Arab Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan', and it repudiated the AHC and the Gaza Government. The war in Palestine was not mentioned, nor was there any implication that the incorporation of the Arab parts of Palestine were a stage on the road to a pan-Arab union. The first draft can be found in At-Tal's memoirs, in the formal Jordanian version of Musa and Mahdi and in Abidi's book. Whereas the full text of the second draft (broadcast on N.E.R.) can be found in Nevo's book.[1] The whole subject was widely dealt with by these sources and others. For the sake of this study, it is important to emphasize that the Foreign Office, even if it did realize the existence of different versions, nevertheless did not consider it an important matter.[2] Yet, there are indications that Kirkbride knew about the various drafts. His report on the Congress was a combination of the two drafts and his main conclusions were that Abdullah would not be proclaimed King of Palestine (as the original resolutions called upon him to do), and that the Congress intended to remove the settlement of the Palestine problem from the hands of the League and to authorize Abdullah to effect a settlement on behalf of the Arab Palestinians.[3] The last conclusion appeared in the revised draft.

Supporting congresses were held in Beirut and Tripoli throughout December 1948.[4] In Jerusalem a group of eminent Palestinians held the

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1. The original text in At-Tal, Karithat, p.378; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.536 and Abidi, Jordan, 54-55. The revised text in Nevo, op.cit., p.114 (dealt with also in J. Nevo, 'Abdullah and the Arabs of Palestine', Winner Library Bulletin Vol.13, No.45/46 (1978), p.60; and the detailed account in Plascov, Refugees, pp.13-14.
2. FO 816/142, Kirkbride to Bevin, Political Report, 6.12.48.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Jerusalem Arab Congress, declaring the right of the people of Jerusalem to decide their own destiny. However, it called upon the Legion to remain in the city until it was saved.[1]

Whereas almost all the League state members, apart from Yemen, had condemned the Jericho Congress, the individual reaction of each state varied in its scope and purpose. The Egyptian reaction went as far as sending some arms and ammunition to the pro-Mufti elements in the Jerusalem area, accompanied by one of the Husseins, which were captured a short while after their arrival in Palestine.[2] The Iraqis, on the other hand, had sent three eminent Iraqi statesmen (in fact, they were all former premiers of Iraq - Nuri As-Sa'id, Jamal Baban and Jamal Madfai') to persuade the King not to bring the Jericho conclusions for discussion and possibly confirmation by the Transjordanian Parliament.[3] As was the case with the Iraqi reaction to the Gaza Government, the Iraqis pursued a twofold policy. Publicly, they joined the other Arab governments in the severe criticism of Abdullah's action; privately, As-Sa'id, who went to Amman in a private capacity, told the British he believed the Arab World should thank Abdullah instead of criticizing him.[4]

The Egyptian government found themselves in an extremely difficult position. On the one hand they deemed it necessary to protest against independent Transjordan policy on Palestine, and on the other, the Egyptians could not envisage a way out of the debacle of their army in the Negev, without the help of the Arab Legion. Furthermore, the Egyptians were seriously considering the possibility of concluding an

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1. FO 371/75329, E2672, Dow to FO, 18.2.49.
2. FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 13.12.48. Yemen supported Abdullah, since he helped the Immam Ahmed after the assassination of his predecessor. (Aden to Amman, 24.12.48).
3. FO 141/1247, Baghdad to Amman (1/1642), 16.12.48; FO 816/142, Baghdad to FO, 15.12.48.
4. FO 816/142, Baghdad to Amman, 24.12.48.

Armistice with the Israelis; however, they had no desire to be the only Arab country embarking on such a path. Hence, a united front with Abdullah was still desired from their point of view. That is probably why eminent Egyptian personalities, like Karim Thabet and Prince Muhammad Ali, criticized Faruq's condemnation of the annexation in private discussions with the British.[1] Notwithstanding these doubts, publicly the only voices that were heard from Cairo were those of criticism and condemnation. These attacks were intensified during December 1948. The Ullema of Jerusalem and Al-Azhar commenced a battle of 'Fatwas' between themselves with regard to Abdullah's right to represent the Palestinians.[2] Consequently, Abdullah utilized 'his anger' over the Egyptian action to repatriate the Egyptian forces from Eastern Palestine as he planned to do.[3]

In this context it is important to mention that throughout 1949 and 1950 refugee delegations from Gaza asked for the annexation of the strip to Egypt and were refused.[4] This Egyptian policy, far more than the Gaza Government, helped to keep the Palestinian issue alive. It is notable that Bevin, at that time, felt that the existence of both the Gaza Government and the Jericho Congress called for a comparison between the two bodies. He suggested to Kirkbride to stress the point that the 'Jericho Congress, although attacked by the Arab states is without doubt just as representative and influential as the Gaza Government, if not more so'.[5] In fact, Bevin believed that the Gaza Government was unrepresentative and not statesmanlike, whereas the

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1. FO 816/142, Campbell to Kirkbride, 17.12.48.
2. FO 816/134, Amman to FO, 14.12.48.
3. FO 816/142, Baghdad to Amman, 24.12.48: a conversation between Mack and Abdullah.
4. FO 371/80398, 17.3.50, Cairo to Eastern Department.
5. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 18.12.48.

Jericho Congress was realistic.[1]

Sir Alec Kirkbride claimed that the Arab reaction had an adverse effect on Abdullah's actions in the Arab parts of Palestine. The Minister in Amman argued that the abuse that was released by Egypt following the Jericho Congress had the effect of hardening Public Opinion in Transjordan in favour of union with Arab Palestine.[2] Moreover, the CoS assured the Foreign Office that the Arab states posedno threat whatsoever to the Transjordans; their armies were either not fit or occupied in Palestine and 'had healthy respect for the strength of the Arab Legion'.[3]

Notwithstanding these assurances, Kirkbride was alarmed by Abdullah's eagerness to bring about an early implementation of the Congress' decisions. The King wanted a short and fast process of formal annexation. Abdullah told his Premier that he had been advised by 'foreign quarters' to push ahead with the implementation. The King claimed that he was advised by Wells Stabler, the American representative in Amman, and Dr. Bunche, the Acting Mediator, to present the world with an accomplished fact in Palestine.[4] We only have Abdullah's testament for these declarations. Nevertheless, Kirkbride advised the King not to push ahead with the annexation, since it was going to take place anyway.[5] Whereas Plascov is right in asserting that Britain feared the League's reaction to the formal union, this did not apply to Kirkbride's motives.[6] Kirkbride was aware of the Council of Ministers'

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/75273, E407, Monthly report, December, 1948, 31.1.49.
3. FO 371/68832, E16137, CoS (48) 144, 20.12.48: review of the size and shape of the Legion for 1949/1950.
4. FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 17.12.48 - talk with Stabler; Kirkbride to Bevin, 28.12.48. - talk with Bunche.
5. FRUS 48, Stabler (Amman) to Acting SoS, 6.12.48, p.1648.
6. Plascov, Refugees, p.28.

refusal to go any further than acceptance of the decision of the Jericho meeting.[1]

Kirkbride attributed the postponement of the immediate implementation of the decision to his own influence. However, he complained that his influence was 'showing signs of wear and tear after its excessive use during the last months'.[2] The reality was that a new situation was developing in Transjordan. The Council of Ministers emerged as an independent force, sometimes co-operating with the King, and sometimes opposing him. The King's unsuccessful attempts to find a Premier who was prepared to pursue his policy towards the Israeli-Jordanian agreement, regardless of their opinions, accentuated the growing importance of the Council of Ministers. This phenomenon was more apparent during the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations, where Kirkbride felt that he was fulfilling the role of mediator between the King and his ministers; usually, tending to support the ministers, rather than the King. The ministers, quite probably, showed more realism in their politics and their views seemed to correspond with those of HMG. Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda and Kirkbride did not oppose the annexation, but thought that Abdullah was accelerating the whole process too much. Abu Al-Huda threatened to resign, since he believed, as did some British officials in the Eastern Department, that Transjordan could reach an agreement with Egypt. Kirkbride himself advocated only a de facto annexation, as long as there was hope for an agreement with Egypt.[3] Faruq's adviser claimed that Egypt only minded the acclamation of Abdullah as King of Palestine and not the annexation.[4]

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1. FO 371/75273, E407, Monthly Report, December 1948.
2. FO 816/142, Kirkbride to Bevin, 28.12.48.
3. FO 816/142; Amman to FO, 17.12.48.
4. Karim Thabet in FO 816/142, Campbell to Kirkbride, 17.12.48.

Bevin was highly alarmed by the news of the disagreement between Abdullah and his ministers. He requested Kirkbride not to inform the State Department about this dispute, since it might have hindered American support for the idea of a united Jordan.[1] The King, incidentally, was supported in his desire for a rapid and formal annexation by a handful of Palestinian leaders who wished to see the Cabinet and Parliament re-elected as a result of the union, thus hoping for a larger Palestinian representation in these bodies.[2]

Whether Kirkbride was right in asserting that the Arab reaction to the Jericho Congress had increased the support for Abdullah in Arab Palestine is difficult to assess; there is little doubt that the King wanted to create the impression that this indeed was the case. The Jericho Congress was followed by one staged in Ramallah which supported the Jericho decisions. Another one was held in Nablus and proclaimed Abdullah monarch of Palestine.[3]

Abdullah was confident enough to proceed with the annexation, owing, inter alia, to the Iraqi delegation's promises that Iraq would not only object to a proposal to expel Transjordan from the League, but would make sure that this issue would not be discussed. Neither would it agree to the Gaza Government operating in territory under Iraqi occupation.[4] It should be remembered that rumours were circulating about an Egyptian-Syrian initiative to oust Transjordan from the Arab League.[5]

The Egyptian objection to the annexation of Arab Palestine had its impact on the position held by the British representatives on this

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1. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 15.12.48.
2. FO 816/134, Kirkbride to Burrows, 15.12.48.
3. FO 371/75273, Eliot, Monthly report, December 1948, 31.1.49.
4. FO 371/75273, E407, Monthly report, December 1948, 31.1.49.
5. New York Times, 12.12.48; 14.12.48.

question. Hence, a dispute on Britain's policy towards the Palestine problem developed throughout 1949, between Sir Hugh Dow in Jerusalem and the head of BMEO, Sir John Troutbeck. Dow claimed that there was no alternative to the handing over to Transjordan of the major part of Palestine.[1] It was indeed perceived that way by the Foreign Office. However, Dow deemed it necessary to stress this point in a letter to Wright, since he was angered by Troutbeck's allegations that Abdullah was a 'land grabber'.[2] Troutbeck warned that the consequence would be a greater Israel rather than a Greater Transjordan. He was supported by Campbell who argued that a Greater Transjordan was not more viable than a smaller one.[3] Dow asserted that Britain would have been 'gravely embarrassed' if Abdullah did not want that area. An independent Arab state in Palestine was not viable, in the eyes of the Consul-General of Jerusalem, since it would be dominated by the Mufti who was 'an improbable enemy both to us and the Jews'.[4] Thus, he concluded: 'We ought to be thankful that Abdullah is a land grabber'.[5] Most of the Eastern Department officials agreed to this approach adopted by Dow, which became the main feature of British Palestine policy in the beginning of the 1950s. The deterioration of Anglo-Egyptian relations had increased Transjordan's importance for Britain.[6]

Bevin was asked to throw his weight into this matter. Kirkbride pleaded with him to give renewed assurances and guidance to Abdullah. He maintained that British support was more essential than Arab acceptance of the annexation. It seems that Abdullah was indeed left all

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1. FO 371/75064, E3763, Dow to Wright, 15.3.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 816/142, Troutbeck to Kirkbride, 22.12.48; Campbell to Kirkbride, 28.12.48.
4. FO 371/75064, E3763, op.cit..
5. Ibid.
6. FO 371/75064, FO Minute, Walker, 20.3.49.

alone in the Arab world, since he had not consulted or even brought up to date the Iraqis, his natural allies.[1] Bevin consent to Abdullah's activities following the Jericho Congress was conditional on the Foreign Secretary's request that they would not be on the lines of the original Jericho resolutions. Namely, Bevin warned the King that Britain would not support him, if he were aiming at the union of all Palestine and Transjordan, instead of annexation of the areas allotted to the Arabs in the partition resolution.[2]

As for the Egyptian-Transjordan dispute, Bevin failed to see any reason why the two parties could not reach a working agreement.[3] Bevin's optimism was based on encouraging accounts coming in from Cairo, where Ahmad Khashaba Pasha, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, suggested division of the Negev between the two countries as a solution for the Palestine problem, and obtained the Lebanese blessing for such a formula.[4] Kirkbride dismissed Khashaba's proposal as a 'dictate', whereas Campbell warned Bevin that HMG was embarking on the wrong horse, if it chose to support Abdullah over annexation.[5] Furthermore, Khashaba suggested that Bevin should be the midwife for such a solution, a role Bevin gladly assumed.[6]

One doubts whether Egypt in the beginning of 1949 possessed any serious territorial ambitions with regard to the Negev. Karim Thabet's explanation, given at the time to Campbell, is reasonable and sheds some light on Egypt's motives. Thabet argued that the Egyptians needed to stay in the Negev and Gaza as: 'a justification to the people of Egypt for their sacrifices in the fighting'.[7]

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1. FO 816/142, Baghdad to Amman, 13.12.48.
2. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 1.1.49.
3. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 23.12.48.
4. FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 20.12.48; Beirut to Amman, 19.12.48.
5. FO 816/142, Campbell to Kirkbride, 22.12.48.
6. FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 16.12.48.
7. FO 816/142, Campbell to Kirkbride, 17.12.48.

There was an additional pressing issue which compelled Bevin to intervene personally in this Transjordan-Egypt dispute. It was British officers of the Legion who had assumed command over Hebron from the Egyptians. In fact, by force of arms the British officers expelled the Egyptians, and Campbell in Cairo remarked that it was most 'unfortunate' to send British officers for such a task.[1]

However, as was mentioned before, Abdullah showed no inclination to compromise with the Egyptians, after he had accomplished in the West Bank most of his territorial ambitions. Furthermore, the British despatches from Cairo and the BMEO give the impression that the League was more concerned and exasperated by Abdullah's contacts with the Israelis, and not so much by the annexation.[2] The League members were willing to acquiesce to the existence of a Greater Transjordan. Azzam had probably privately not opposed the annexation, and the Iraqis at that period had not shown any strong resentment towards the idea. It is difficult to envisage what would have happened if Transjordan were to be expelled owing to the annexation. What is clear, however, is that a threat of expulsion was enough to deter the Transjordanian government from concluding a peace with Israel, but not sufficient to prevent an annexation.

Hence, Bevin was probably right in reminding the King and Kirkbride that the Israeli and American reactions to the annexation were as important as the Arab reaction. Abdullah, no doubt, conceived the situation in that way and thus intensified his efforts to reach an agreement with Israel; in the main, aiming at achieving an Armistice that would perpetuate Transjordanian rule over Arab Palestine.[3]

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1. FO 371/68698, E13559, Jerusalem (MI Officer) to FO (Department of MI), 20.10.48; FO 371/75332, E4284, Jerusalem to FO, 2.4.49, E4626, Cairo to FO, 6.4.49.
2. See the chapter on Israeli-Jordanian negotiations and in Ad-Daly, Azzam, pp.399-423, a chapter entitled 'Negotiations with the Devil'.
3. See Chapter 4.

The American posture was somewhat more complicated than the British Foreign Office had probably anticipated. The Americans (the President and the State Department) differentiated between recognition of Transjordan and recognition of the annexation of Arab Palestine. Whereas, the Americans were willing to grant a de jure recognition to Transjordan, they were only prepared to give a de facto recognition to the annexation. In August 1948, the Americans declared their support for a de jure recognition in Transjordan, provided Abdullah cooperated with the Count Bernadotte, and accepted the conditions of the second truce.[1] Later, throughout 1949, it was understood, by both the Foreign Office and the State Department, that a de jure recognition depended on a similar recognition by both powers of Israel.

However, the Americans refused to acknowledge and give their formal blessing to annexation. They believed that the best solution to the Palestine question was a settlement by which Israel would retain Galilee and the Arabs the Negev. They objected to unilateral actions, like annexation, that changed the territorial situation without any agreement being concluded between the parties. The State Department's Near East division, in particular, was apprehensive that Abdullah's action would be reciprocated by a unilateral Israeli annexation of the Arab parts of Palestine it had occupied during the 1948 war. The Americans had also expressed concern about Abdullah's position in the Arab World following an annexation.[2]

British pressure on the Americans to support and argue for the incorporation of Arab Palestine in Transjordan increased during December 1948.[3] The State Department replied that it would only

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1. FRUS 48, Memo by SoS to President, 30.8.48, p.1359.
2. FRUS 48, Memo by Satterthwaite, 1.10.48, p.1445.
3. Ibid.

support territorial changes by an agreement between the parties.[1] American reluctance, at that point, was, quite probably, the result of a desire to await an Israeli decision about their own attitude towards this issue. Nevertheless, the Americans, although supporting the idea of Greater Transjordan, did not consent to give their formal blessing unless it was part of an agreement.

The serious conflict which developed between Britain and Israel in the Gulf of Aqaba and over the Israeli penetration into the Sinai, had prevented American recognition of Transjordan. However, the State Department was, by then, convinced that the best solution for the Eastern parts of Palestine was indeed the incorporation of these parts into Transjordan.[2] The Congressional (informal) support was obtained after Britain's de facto recognition of Israel.[3] In June 1949, the Americans went even further. Dean Rusk told Michael Wright that the US agreed that Jordan would proclaim the union, provided it would not hinder a final settlement;[4] namely, no action would be taken before the Palestine Conciliation Commission had completed its work. Thus, American and British views coincided once more. However, the Americans did not deem it necessary to grant a de jure recognition to the annexation, owing to the State Department's fear of alienating the other Arab governments. For that reason, it refused to accede to Abdullah's desire to visit the United States in August 1949.[5] The final American communication on the issue was made during the Middle East conference of the State Department in Istanbul, in the end of 1949. One of the

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1. FRUS 48, Acting SoS to US embassy in London, 14.12.48, p.1669.
2. FRUS 49, Vol.6, A meeting between Lovett and Samir ar-Rifa'i, 12.1.49, p.648.
3. Ibid.
4. FRUS 48, Jessup to Rusk, 1.6.49, pp.1081-82.
5. FRUS 48, SoS to Jordan, 4.8.49, p.1284.

conclusions of that conference was that the US accept the annexation of Arab Palestine, on condition that Arab Palestinians have fair representation in the Jordanian Parliament and Legislature.[1]

The Foreign Office had little reason to be annoyed at the conduct of Abdullah's policy in the West Bank. The implementation of the Jericho decisions was carried out systematically from March 1949 onwards, and according to Abdullah's version of the resolutions, not the original ones. An extraordinary decree laid down details of administrative procedures and made various heads of departments in Palestine responsible to the relevant ministry in Amman.[2] The fact that the formal annexation only started in March 1949 was due to two main reasons. The first was Kirkbride's success in postponing the execution of the Jericho decisions and secondly, most of the ministers and the Premier disliked Abdullah's tendency to accelerate the process of unification.

B. From the Armistice with Israel to the formal union (March 1949 - March 1950)

The Armistice with Israel was poorly received by the Palestinians. It was believed to be part of Abdullah's plan to give up more Palestinian territory to Israel. The Iraqi rank and file stationed in Palestine had certainly held these views and attempted to get it across. Consequently, a delegation from Samaria, the area controlled by the Iraqis, came to Amman to protest against the Armistice.[3] At-Tal, as well, helped to encourage these feelings of resentment, by

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1. FRUS 48, Istanbul Conference (Agreed Conclusions) (26.11-29.11.49), p.171.
2. FO 371/75273, E4646, Monthly Report, March 1949, 4.4.49 - the decree was issued in 16.3.49.
3. FO 371/75273, E5609, Monthly Report April 1949, 2.5.49.

stating that an advisor to the King had told him that the Israelis would not fulfil their part in the Armistice. The Israelis were given, as a result of the agreement, an area in the West Bank comprising the villages and 35,000 inhabitants.[1]

However, there was a genuine reason for resentment, owing to the attitude of the Israelis towards the villages under their control; in some cases villagers who sought refuge during the war in the areas adjacent to their villages were not allowed to return, although the Mixed Armistice Committee had instructed the Israelis to facilitate their repatriation, and in other cases, the Mukhtars (heads) of the villages had been bribed and sent to their fellow-villagers to spread the word that they would be maltreated on the Israeli side and that they would do better to remain under Hashemite rule.[2] These groups of refugees claimed that they should have been consulted and represented in the Armistice negotiations. In April 1949 they had set up a committee which urged the King to arrange free passage for the land owners and re-examine the Armistice map.[3]

In the Arab World 'front', it seems that the British took upon themselves most of the propaganda work needed to placate Arab mistrust of Abdullah.[4] The Eastern Department suggested to the British representatives in the Arab capitals adopting a line which would release the

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1. This was reported by the American representative in Amman. A detailed analysis of both the armistice and the Shunneh agreement can be found in the chapter on the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations. The US source, FRUS 49, Vol.6, Stabler to SoS, 8.4.49, pp.900-901.
2. The inhabitants of Wadi Fuq'ins were driven out by the Israelis, as well as 1200 villagers from Baqa Al-Ghariya. FO 371/75279, E13468, Glubb Memo to Kirkbride, 25.10.49; FO 371/75329, E12432, Monthly report from Jerusalem, September 1949. The circulation of rumours in order to prevent the return of some villagers were initiated by Dayan, ISA 2431/6, Dayan to Ben Gurion, 11.8.49.
3. Al-Majali, Hazza, Mudhakarat, Jerusalem, 1960, pp.90-92; Plascov, Refugees, p.15.
4. FO 371/75278, E6817, Damascus to FO, 30.5.49.

British from responsibility for conducting or even influencing Transjordan's policy.[1] It appeared to be quite an impossible line. Even if the Arab World was convinced of Abdullah's independent policy, which was very unlikely, it would still resent his policies for what they were. Secondly, Britain had already justified the incorporation of Arab Palestine into Transjordan, in a letter the British government addressed to the various Arab governments, in an attempt to persuade them to accept Bernadotte's second proposals. In one of the paragraphs of that letter it was stated that HMG did not view the union as a threat to any Arab country. The letter only implicitly gave British assurances of restricting Abdullah in his ambitions, that is, of not moving from the union to the Greater Syria plan.[2]

During 1949, the King and his government were acting in two somewhat contradictory directions in their attitude towards the Palestinians. On the one hand, leading Palestinians were allowed to resume their activities in the field of commerce, finance and politics. Palestinian papers were permitted to reappear and some political activity was taking place.[3] On the other hand, further steps were taken to abolish the Palestinian identity of these areas. Two ordinances were passed by the government. The first provided for the appointment of civil administration officials and the second granted Transjordan passports and nationality to all Arab Palestinians.[4] Moreover, the Egyptians handed over their civil administration in

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1. Ibid.
2. The relevant paragraph was mentioned in a letter from Broadmead to the FO, in FO 371/75278, E6817.
3. For instance, the various chambers of commerce formed a new legal Palestine chamber of Commerce. The paper 'Filastine' which had appeared during the Mandate in Jaffa, reappeared in February 1949, in Amman. FO 371/75273, E3399, Monthly Report, February 1949, 2.3.49.
4. FO 371/75273, E3399, op.cit.

Bethlehem and Hebron to Transjordan officials.[1] By the former act, the Transjordanians, in fact, had terminated the military governorship over the area. The Governor General assumed responsibility of the former High Commissioner of Palestine.

This process culminated in May 1949 whence the Transjordan Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to all diplomatic representatives in Amman to correct the name of the country to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Furthermore, the Premier resigned in order to form a new Council of Ministers that would include three West Bank ministers.[2] The platform of the new government, as could have been anticipated, dealt mainly with the union of the two banks.[3]

The Consul General in Jerusalem was aware of the fact that three appointed Palestinian ministers were not regarded by the population as representatives.[4] The Consul reported that these ministers were busier arguing about their diminutive salaries than in dealing with the affairs of the Palestinian community. Nevertheless, the Legation in Amman believed that the Transjordans went as far as they could with regard to the representation of the Palestinians in the administration.

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1. FO 371/75279, E5391, Amman to FO, 30.4.49.
2. They were Ruhi Al-Hadi (Foreign Affairs), Khulusi Al-Khairi (Trade and Agriculture) Musa Nasir (Communication). In August, Ragheb Nashashibi was added as Minister for the refugees. General Riley, the Chairman of the MAC believed that the three posts were granted in order to compensate for the loss of the Triangle. FO 371/75329, E12432, Jerusalem to FO, Monthly report, September 1949; FO 371/82702, E1011/1, Annual Report, Jordan for 1949, 2.1.50, IS A2431/6, Biran to IFO, 2.9.49.
3. Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.538.
4. FO 371/75329, E12432, Jerusalem to FO, Monthly report, September 1949; Musa Nasir was the founder of Bir Zeit University, thus it was rather misleading of the Consul to conclude that he did nothing for the Palestinian cause (conversation with Mr. Hourani).

1. The troublesome summer of 1949 and new perceptions about the Palestinians.

By May 1949, the Legation had formulated their views about the role and importance of the Palestinian factor in the new Jordanian Kingdom. It was not, to say the least, a favourable impression. It is notable that at the same time the Foreign Office in London was formulating its own policy towards the problem of the refugees, most of them situated in camps in Jordan. The Legation in Amman was mainly concerned with the question of how to integrate the local inhabitants of the West Bank (as separate from the refugees) into the future state. Notwithstanding this distinction between these two groups, any thoughts and perceptions about the desirability of incorporating the West Bank population into the administration and politics of the Hashemite Kingdom, had implications about the policy towards the massive number of refugees living in that area. This is best demonstrated by examining the numbers concerned. The Eastern Bank population was 450,000 local inhabitants (half of them Palestinians) and 400,000 resided in the West Bank. According to British reports there were about 94,000 refugees in the East and about 394,000 in the West Bank.[1] Democratization and fair representation of such a population would have turned Jordan into a Palestinian state.

The Legation in Amman agreed with the Jordanian authorities that the population in Arab Palestine was becoming 'prone to subversive influence'.[2] These assumptions were accentuated by rumours of a pending coup d'état in Transjordan. Already in March 1949, a plot to assassinate Abdullah was discovered. A mine was put where the royal car usually passed. The perpetrators were Palestinians sent by the

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1. FO 371/82703, E1013/1, Legation Report for December 1949, 2.1.50.
2. FO 371/75273, E8261, Monthly report, June 1949, 12.7.49.

former Mufti.[1] However, a more serious development occurred in May 1949, when a British national, advising the Defence Ministry in Damascus, reported the possible participation of At-Tal and the Syrians in such a coup.[2]

It is noticeable that the British representative in Amman did not think much of these rumours. Dow in Jerusalem pointed out that At-Tal could not stage a coup since the forces loyal to the King were under British commanders.[3] Nevertheless, the rumours persisted to prevail and were taken seriously by the French representatives in Jerusalem who warned their British colleagues.[4] Notwithstanding the initial British scepticism, the Legation in Amman had little doubt that the Palestinians were potentially susceptible to being used by the Egyptians, the Syrians and even the Saudis to overthrow Abdullah. In the main, the British suspected it would have been done by installing the former Mufti as ruler of an independent Palestinian state.[5] One piece of evidence brought by Kirkbride to prove the existence of such a possibility was a report of the alleged intentions of the Saudis to invite Haj Amin Al-Husseini as guest of honour to the World Muslim Congress in Mecca. However, it was never confirmed by the Embassy in Jedda.[6]

If not everybody in the Foreign Office was convinced of the credibility of these reports and rumours, the King certainly took them for granted. Hence, he replaced Abdullah At-Tal as a Mutasarif (Governor) of Jerusalem. At-Tal's memoirs do create the impression that he was not on the best of terms with his British colleagues, therefore, it is of little surprise that the British had a major part in his removal.[7]

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1. FO 371/75273, E4646, Monthly report March 1949, 4.4.49.
2. FO 371/75275, E5952, Damascus to FO, 27.4.49.
3. FO 371/75275, E6034, Paris to FO, 12.5.49.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/75048, E8989, Amman to FO, 19.7.49.
6. FO 371/75048, E9344, Jedda to FO, July 1949.
7. A letter from Hussein Saraj to Abdullah Al-Tal, 26.2.49, in At-Tal, Karithat, p.542.

The replacement of At-Tal was the beginning of a short period of economic and political unrest in Arab Palestine. On the whole, Kirkbride was dissatisfied with Abdullah's conduct during these months. He doubted whether the replacement of At-Tal would have helped to solve the problems of Arab Palestine, which he regarded as being mainly economic ones.[1] Kirkbride put the blame on the short-sighted policy of the economic administration of the country. The Arab Palestine Chamber of Commerce had no facilities for obtaining import licences. This indicated that the economic administration was subordinated to the officials in Amman who enjoyed an export-import monopoly.[2] The Jordanian government promised £2 million to cover imports, for the year 1949. However, only part of it became available a situation which caused widespread dissatisfaction. Consequently, the Palestinian merchants had to rely on re-exports from Jordan, which due to officials in Amman with vested interests, had kept prices in Arab Palestine approximately 25% higher than in Jordan.[3] Thus, the commercial circles, in fact, became a driving force behind the Jordanian government's action aimed at abolishing the customs and passport facilities between the two banks.[4]

The annexation of Arab Palestine had reduced its economic level to that prevailing at that time in Transjordan proper. Consequently, the standard of living in Arab Palestine was lower than the one that prevailed under the Mandate. Kirkbride warned that unless some measure of economic prosperity could be restored, serious political unrest 'may be expected'.[5]

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1. Fo 371/75273, E8261, Report, June 1949, 12.7.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/75329, E13636, Monthly report from Jerusalem for October 1949, 5.11.49.
4. Ibid.
5. For instance, reduction on expenditure on health and education was expected to be by 80%, CAB 134/501/ME (O)(W.P.) 6, 27.5.49.

It is notable that Transjordan was still in a state of primitive rural economy and low standard of living (owing mainly to limited economic resources). Incorporation of Arab Palestine did not improve the level of economic activity in Transjordan, but rather reduced the level in the West Bank. Kirkbride believed that only a 'miracle' like the discovery of oil, could have saved the Transjordans from an economic disaster which would have led to Abdullah's downfall.[1] The Middle East Official Committee had more practical solutions in mind. It advised the government to work for the inclusion of Transjordan in the investigations of the International Bank, and suggested that a British commissioner be appointed for development affairs in Transjordan in order to reaffirm British control and supervision over the Transjordan economy. The last proposal was accepted by Abdullah.[2]

The economic problem was mainly created by an unwise financial policy. The annual British subsidy was only for the Legion's maintenance and thus was not much of a help. Furthermore, the redemption against Sterling of Palestine currency Board notes brought in by the refugees (which was equal to the annual British subsidy) was rapidly exhausted.[3] Cutting off Palestinian trade from the Mediterranean had also seriously affected the economic growth.

However, the political discontent had its own roots, not necessarily economic as Kirkbride saw it. First, as was mentioned earlier, there was the unrest caused by the loss of land to Israel (to such an

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1. CAB 134/501/ME (O)(W.P.) 6, 27.5.49.
2. CAB 134/501, ME(O)(49) - Middle East Official Committee, 21.3.49.
3. British annual assistance was £2 million and £3 Million for 1949/50, the sum brought by refugees was £2 million. CAB 134/501 ME (O)(W.P.) 6, 27.5.49; CAB 134/152. Final report by the Economic Survey Mission, 'An approach to Economic Development in the Middle East', Appx. 2, p.8. see on the ESM in Chapter 3.

extent that King Abdullah was advised not to tour Samaria, as he wished to do, during the months May-July 1949).[1] In that atmosphere, it seems that the Legation in Amman tended to identify Palestinian opposition with Communist instigations; both Communist and Mufti influences were reported to be thriving in Samaria. These cells of Communist activity were regarded as a potential network for the return of the former Mufti.[2] The Legation in Amman suspected that Ahmad Khalil, the Governor of Samaria (and the leader of the Jordanian Liberal party) was associated with the former Mufti's 'Kifah' organization which was said to be gaining power.[3]

It seems that the main cause of unrest and dissatisfaction was not so much the result of Communist or former Mufti influence or activity, but was rather the fruit of local resentment and opposition to certain measures taken by the Jordanian government.[4] Some discontent appeared when Felah Madaha handed over the governorship to Ragheb Nashashibi. Nashashibi's first action was to ban the Ba'ath party (advocating a union between two independent states) leaving the Liberal Party (supporting the union) as the only legal party in Arab Palestine.[5] Nashashibi disappointed a lot of Palestinians who believed that he might be granted a position similar to that of a leader of a quasi-autonomous state.[6] It should be noted that the resentment did not constitute a real threat to the Transjordans, its manifestation was mainly through the Filastin paper, which was suspended whenever it

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1. FO 371/75273, E8261, Report for June, 12.7.49.
2. FO 371/81904, E1018/5, Glubb to FO, 20.4.50.
3. FO 371/75273, E8261, op.cit.
4. FO 371/75329, E15042, Summary for Arab Palestine, November 1949, 5.12.49: The Liberal Party merged with the Jordanian Nahda Party and adopted the Greater Syria plan.
5. FO 371/75329, op.cit.
6. FO 371/75329, E13636, Summary for Arab Palestine, October, 1949, 5.11.49.

appeared to the Jordanian authorities to be going too far in its criticism.[1]

Notwithstanding its relatively marginal effect on the position of the Hashemites, the economic problems and the signs of resentment shown by some segments of the Palestinian population had an enormous implication on the perception of the future political role the Palestinians were to play in the Jordanian Kingdom. When the date of the formal union came nearer, it became clear that proportional representation would have given the Palestinian members a majority of seats (two to one, in fact). This was avoided by the decision to create a parity in both houses of Parliament.[2]

The date of the formal union was set for the 1st of May, 1950. However, the Legation in Amman, in concurrence with the King, suggested forwarding the act of Union to April 1950. The main reason, according to Kirkbride was to prevent a 'Palestinian plot'.[3] The nature of this 'plot' was to try to subject the new Council of Ministers to the responsibility of the Parliament. This was a suggestion made by two Palestinian ministers in the government.[4] Thus, in order to prevent attempts of this kind, it was decided to bring forward the date of the union and the opening of Parliament. This all happened a few months after the period we are discussing here, but was, quite probably, a result of that summer of discontent. The Palestinian delegates elected to the new Parliament were suspected of being prone to Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian influence, and were therefore regarded as potential opponents of the Union.

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Khulsi Al-Khairi and Musa Nasir. The de facto annexation was completed in March 1949. In April 1950, elections to a new Parliament and Government were held and they were followed by the formal declaration of union.

In this context it might be worthwhile to bring two quotations relating to the possible role the Palestinians might have in the Jordanian state. The first is from the period after the elections of April 1950 and before the declaration of the union and was given by Kirkbride as an explanation for forwarding the date of the formal union: 'The Palestinians love to deal in a form of political bargaining closely akin to blackmail and although the indulging in this pastime has brought them nothing but trouble in the past, they must needs (sic) make another attempt at the opening of Parliament'.[1] The second was made by Glubb, a few months earlier, with regard to the possible role of the Palestinians. Glubb claimed that the Palestinians were maintaining 'intellectual snobbery' and a high degree of 'dislike of foreigners, particularly the West'. In politics they were 'corrupted' often using 'intrigues against one another', and most important of all their educated elite was anti-British.[2]

2. The Israeli reaction.

The tacit Israeli consent to the annexation of Arab Palestine, given in the Armistice agreement, to Transjordan prevailed through the troublesome year of 1949. The British and the Israelis even went further. Mr. Bevin and Dr. Eliash, the Israeli representative in London, agreed in their talk in July 1949 that what was left of Arab Palestine could not stand by itself. Nevertheless, the Israelis were not prepared to go as far as denouncing the Biltmore programme, as suggested by Sir Knox Helm.[3] Israel was still suspected by the Foreign Office of harbouring ambitions towards Arab Palestine, and Israeli

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1. FO 371/82704, ET 1081/61, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 28.4.50.
2. FO 816/154, The situation in Jordan by Glubb, 15.10.49.
3. FO 371/75206, E9789, FO Minute, Sherringham, 5.8.49; that is regarding the West Bank as part of Israel.

statements of the kind given by Dr. Eliash were not sufficient as far as the British were concerned. Hence, the Foreign Office believed that the best guarantee against Israel was first incorporating Arab Palestine and only then reaching an understanding with the Israelis. Thus, avoiding the creation of a situation which would be an open invitation for Israel to expand.[1]

The Israelis stated quite clearly what they believed to be a threatening situation for them. This was the possible extension of the Anglo-Transjordan treaty to Arab Palestine and the establishment of British bases there. The State Department believed that in such a case the Israelis might seize upon more territories and reach the Jordan River in a matter of a few days before the British could or would act. Only then, predicted the State Department would Britain launch a counter-attack in order to honour its treaty with Jordan. But even then, it would not be an effective operation, since Britain had limited resources in the area, and in any case it would divide British public opinion and bring sharp reaction from large segments of American public opinion. Therefore, Acheson was advised by the State Department to tell Bevin that he could not rely on American support for all consequences of such an act. Past record had suggested that Israel had more influence on the US than vice versa, remarked one official in the State Department.[2] Thus it seems the Americans anticipated that a serious crisis would develop as a result of the extension of the treay to Arab Palestine.

However, the situation was viewed less drastically by the British and the Israelis. Through the good offices of Sir Knox Helm in Tel-Aviv the Israelis and the British reached an understanding on this

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1. FO 371/75072, E9043, ME conference, 21.7.49.
2. FRUS 49, Vol.6, ASoS to SoS, 12.6.49, p.1126.

issue. Helm obtained Bevin's approval for promising the Israelis that no British military bases would be established on the West Bank. Nevertheless, he stressed in a conversation with Sharret that the extension of the treaty was a purely British affair. Helm further explained that in the event of a war in the Middle East or immediate threat, Britain might reconsider its promise.[1] The Israelis were satisfied and did not demand any further concessions. In fact, a British concession on this issue would have been a damaging precedent and a sign of weakness on the British side. Finally, it is notable that at least in the Israeli Foreign Ministry the extension of the treaty was perceived as a deterrence against further expansion.[2]

Clarification of the British position and correct appreciation of the Israeli stand and intentions were essential for Abdullah before continuing with the process of integration. Thus, the King could now proceed with the annexation. In his visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah, the King decided to make some use of Raghed Nashashibi's services. Nashashibi was asked if he could take over the office of a minister for refugee affairs, a post which he accepted, and he joined the government.[3] However, in the intermediate time, until the Ministry of Refugees was set up, he served as the Governor General of Arab Palestine.

Before 1949 was over, Abdullah had still to face bitter criticism from the Arab League. With great reluctance he agreed that Transjordan would be represented in the Arab League meeting. Abu Al-Huda, the Jordanian representative in the meeting, consented to the participation

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1. ISA 36/12, Helm-Sharret conversation, 30.12.49; ISA 38/12, Comay to Eliash, 26.12.49.
2. ISA 38/8, note on extension of Anglo-Transjordan treaty to Western Palestine, 2.2.50.
3. FO 371/75273, E10169, Monthly report July, 15.8.49; FO 371/82703, E1013/1, Legation report for December 1949, 2.1.50.

of an independent Palestinian representative in that meeting, a move which brought upon him the King's wrath. Abdullah sent a message to the League that all the representatives in the Jordanian delegation were of Palestinian origin and therefore there was no need for an independent Palestinian delegation.[1]

The delegations of Syria and Iraq opposed a Saudi-Egyptian proposal for the creation of yet another All-Palestine government. The motion was defeated, but the King felt threatened once again. He wrote to Bevin that any delay in uniting Arab Palestine with Transjordan 'is dangerous'.[2] Hence, if any other Arab government was to set up a Palestinian state, Transjordan would announce the formal union of the two banks immediately and hold elections covering the whole area, after having dissolved the Transjordan Parliament. The Eastern Department was very much against such a precipitating move by the King, that is, before the subject of Palestine would be discussed at the United Nations (following the conclusion of the Palestine Conciliation Commission report).[3] However, Kirkbride appreciated that on this issue Britain should not and could not alter the Transjordan stand.[4]

In any event, Abdullah preferred, for the time being, to confine himself to actions rather than declarations. In the end of 1949, he received another letter from Bevin which encouraged him and which indicated that, altogether, Britain was behind him. Bevin spoke about the annexation question as a long term commitment by Britain to Transjordan: 'HMG have always viewed with disfavour the establishment of a separate government for Arab Palestine'.[5]

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1. FO 371/75273, E11283, Report August 1949, 6.9.49.
2. FO 371/75279, E12317, Amman to FO (Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda to Bevin) 10.10.49.
3. See p.169
4. FO 371/75279, E12317, Kirkbride to Bevin, 10.10.49.
5. FO 371/75279, Bevin to Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda, 18.10.49.

In December 1949, the posts of Governor General and his deputy, as well as those of the local commissioners were abolished and their authority invested in the Ministry of Interior. A director of the West Bank administration was appointed, Jamal Touqan, and he was heading an identical administrative system to that which existed in the East. (Namely, heads of departments corresponded with their respective ministers in Amman).[1] Musa and Mahdi asserted that this was done 'with the view of removing the differences between the inhabitants of both banks'.[2] However, it seems that this act was less significant than the publication of new legislation, in the same month, which confirmed the rumours that the anticipated political union was about to be declared. The new legislation dissolved the Jordanian Parliament and doubled the number of representatives in the lower house so that it included twenty new members from the West Bank and added ten West Bank senators to the upper house. Furthermore, it ammended the nationality laws to the effect of making all Palestinians in Jordan, Jordanian nationals.[3]

After succeeding in granting American and Israeli consent to the Transjordan policy in Arab Palestine, the Foreign Office strived to induce the United Nations institutions to accept the new fait accompli. It appears that the Transjordans, at least, were confident that owing to the support of the USA and the UK they would succeed in obtaining the General Assembly's approval for the annexation. However, the task of representing the problem to the General Assembly was entrusted to the hands of a new factor in the conflict, the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC).

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1. FO 371/82176, E1013/1, Summary of events in Arab Palestine in December 1949; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, 532.
2. Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.538.
3. FO 371/82176, E1013/1, Summary of events in Arab Palestine in December 1949.

3. The Palestine Conciliation Commission and the Lausanne Conference.

The failure of the General Assembly in Paris, in September 1948 to agree upon the Bernadotte plan owing to the refusal of both sides to comply with it and due to American reservations about it, ended in a new initiative by the United Nations to replace the mediator by a mediating body.[1] This body consisted of a French, Turkish and American delegates. The PCC was charged by the General Assembly, under resolution of December 11, 1948, with facilitating final settlement of all issues outstanding between Israel and the Arab states. After a preliminary meeting in Geneva, the PCC was due to set itself up in Jerusalem. The initial effort was to be confined to an attempt to bring the parties to direct negotiations. In March 1949, the PCC published its first progress report, in which it declared its intention to establish its headquarters in Government House in Jerusalem, and deal mainly with the future of the city. The general aspects of the conflict were still discussed in Rhodes, under the framework of the Armistice negotiations, by the Acting Mediator, Dr. Bunche. During its stay in the Middle East, the PCC held two important conferences. One was with the Israeli members of cabinet in Jerusalem and the other in Beirut with the representatives of the Arab countries.[2]

In the conference in Beirut the PCC succeeded in obtaining Arab acceptance of an all Arab-Israeli negotiations, in a neutral place with separate adjournments and indirect talks. In Jerusalem, the Israelis agreed to this proposal and it was Ben-Gurion's suggestion that Lausanne should be the venue for the discussions.[3]

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1. J.B. Schechtman, The Arab Refugee Problem (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p.21.
2. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Burdet (Amman) to SoS, 2.3.49., p.786.
3. ISA 2441/1, Sasson to Eytan, 9.3.48. Sasson offered Geneva as the venue for a peace conference, under the auspices of the PCC with the methods of Rhodes, then Ben Gurion suggested Lausanne, meeting PCC with Ben Gurion, 7.4.49.

The talks in Lausanne were, in many ways, the natural consequence of the Armistice talks in Rhodes. Before the conference was convened, the second progress report of the PCC was submitted to the UN. This report summarized the Arab and Israeli attitudes to the refugee problem.[1] The negotiations in Lausanne dragged on wearily, throughout the summer of 1949, neither side being prepared to make proposals acceptable to the other side, even as a basis for negotiations. The Arabs refused to discuss general settlement, before Israel agreed to the return of the refugees. Hence, the third progress report, submitted in June 1949, defined the commission's main problem as linking together negotiations on refugees and territorial questions. The Arab delegations were giving priority to the refugee problem and the Israelis to the territorial questions.[2]

In July 1949, the territorial question was abandoned and the PCC was left with the Jerusalem question and the refugee problem to deal with. The Americans, at that point, felt it was useless to continue the negotiations, before the stalemate over the refugee problem was solved.[3] By August 1949, the only agreement to emerge from the PCC was an Arab-Israeli understanding on frozen funds, and Israeli consent to unify Palestinian refugee families already in Israel.[4] A final attempt to make some progress was made in August. The Arabs demanded that the 1947 partition map be accepted by Israel, and agreed to the American principle that Israel could have Galilee, instead of the Negev as granted in the original resolution, and that any territory Israel would

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1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, editorial note, p.895, second progress report of PCC (5.4-9.4.49).
2. FO 371/82506, E1015/9, Annual report, Israel, for 1949, 1.11.50.
3. FRUS 49, Vol.6, McGhee to SoS, 13.7.49, p.1219, (501BB Palestine/7-1349)
4. FRUS 49, Tel. Rockwell to SoS, 11.8.49. (501BB Palestine/8-1149).

gain out of the 1947 map, Israel should compensate the Arab countries for it.[1]

The main American proposal to the PCC was the 'Jessup Principle'. The principle of exchange of territory by which Israel would retain Galilee and the Arabs the Negev. It was first suggested by Ambassador-at-Large and member of the US delegation to the UN, Philip Jessup. The Government of Israel refused to heed any such ideas and preferred the status quo, even at the price of preventing a chance for a territorial settlement. Incidently, the Arab states prefered impasse to peace in which Israel was not forced to withdraw.[2] Notwithstanding the similarity between the Arab propositions and the State Department's principles of a settlement (the 'Jessup Principle'), it should be remembered that American ideas of territorial compensation were always tentative and were never insisted upon.[3] The Turkish representative on the PCC (after a conversation with the Foreign Office) tried to suggest the handing over of the Negev to the Arabs, again on the line of the Jessup principle, and the French suggested trusteeship over the Galilee as the best solution.[4] However, by venturing their own proposals, the three members of the commission departed from the task of conciliation which was entrusted to them by the General Assembly, and furthermore, were about to confront the same problems and difficulties, which the late Mediator had to confront, while trying to impose a solution on the two parties. In fact, when these difficulties were realised by the Americans, the State Department recommended that the PCC be replaced by an individual, like an Agent-General, but withdrew the suggestion owing

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1. FRUS 49, Rockwell to SoS, 11.8.49.
2. FO 371/75439, E12371, 12.9.49.
3. FRUS 49, SoS to US Embassy in London, 13.7.39 and McGhee to SoS, 17.4.49, p.1223.
4. FRUS 49, Porter to SoS, 5.8.49, p.1286.

to British opposition.[1]

Thus, at the end of August 1949, the Americans felt that the PCC had failed and there was no use in continuing its work. Whereas M. de Boisanger, the French representative, who was a candidate for the directorship of the Near Eastern Department in the French Foreign Ministry, saw the PCC as his own personal project and strove to prolong its life as long as possible. The Americans desired, as much as did King Abdullah, to transfer the debate to the UN General Assembly, where they hoped to impose some kind of a vague solution on the parties, and the King sought final approval for the annexation of the West Bank.[2]

The Lausanne Conference ended in September 1949 without any progress, and the PCC resumed its negotiation in Lake Success, New York, the next month. Under American guidance, it hoped to move from conciliation to mediation, that is, that the PCC would submit its own proposals.[3] Hence it sought to prove its credibility by introducing its own peace plan. The Commission's members believed that they should first tackle the problem of Jerusalem and thus presented their scheme for the internationalization of the city.[4] However, by the time the PCC adjourned to Lake Success, the Israeli Government informed the Commission (28.10.49) that it saw no use in continuing an indirect dialogue through the PCC, and in spite of the General Assembly approval of the PCC's plan for the internationalization of Jerusalem, Israel retaliated by moving governmental offices from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem and declared it to be the capital of Israel. Notwithstanding these Israeli actions, Israel professed its readiness to negotiate with any

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1. FRUS 49, Circular telegram, SoS to Diplomatic offices, 16.8.49, p.1317.
2. Yediot Achronot, Sasson letters (March 1972), Sasson to Sharret, 14.8.49.
3. ISA 2402/9, Report on the PCC by the IFO.
4. See Chapter 4 (Israeli-Jordanian negotiations).

Arab government prepared to do so.[1]

The PCC survived until the later part of the 1950s, however, it seems safe to conclude that by August 1949, it was declared a failure and its discussions throughout 1950-51, some of which will be referred to later in this work, were impractical and were aimed mainly at achieving an agreement over Jerusalem. By that time, the priority was given to the bilateral negotiations, in particular the Israeli-Jordanian ones.[2]

4. The failure of the PCC.

In more than one way the Lausanne conference was a rare opportunity in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The mere readiness of the parties to go beyond the de-facto arrangements achieved in the Armistice negotiations was a hopeful sign in itself. The conference itself was opened in a productive manner. The Arab and the Israeli delegations agreed upon the 1947 partition map as the basis for territorial talks.[3] Thus, both delegations signed a protocol with the 1947 map attached to it. Eighteen months later the Israelis claimed they had agreed to sign the May 1949 protocol as a gesture to help break the deadlock and had no intention of yielding territory.[4]

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1. ISA 2402/9, Report on PCC, 1951 (no specific date is given).
2. In January 1950 the PCC resumed its discussions in Geneva. However, the deadlock continued. Throughout 1950 a common basis for negotiations was sought and not found. In July 1950 the PCC moved to Jerusalem and in September 1950 it admitted failure in its report to the UN. The activity then moved to the General Assembly. In July 1951, the PCC resumed its efforts and tried to convene a conference in Paris. The conference was officially opened in September 1951. The PCC presented a comprehensive peace plan, but the Arab World by then was in no mood to consider any agreement with Israel. The conference failed but the UN maintained the PCC until the late 1950s, concentrating its efforts on specific issues relating to the Arab refugees. Information gathered from Gabay, Refugees, pp.314, 342, 449, 521-2.
3. FRUS 49, Ethridge to SoS, 12.5.49, p.988.
4. FO 371/82197, E1011/73, Helm to Furlonge, 8.12.50.

Notwithstanding this reverse in Israel's policy, it was the only, and so far the last time that the partition plan was accepted as a basis for negotiations by both sides. It is notable that the Arab delegates, apart from Iraq, had consented in Beirut (March 1949) to enter peace negotiations, after Israeli agreement to deal with the refugee question as the first item.[1]

The Israelis missed an opportunity owing to their decision to allow the conference to fail in spite of the positive reports by the Israeli delegate about private bilateral negotiations. The Arab delegates were unable to turn their private promises into public declarations and the Jordanians prevented any Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Lausanne.[2] Furthermore, the Arab governments did not reap the fruits of the American pressure on Israel. Before advocating the ill-advised economic solution to the refugee problem, the Americans succeeded in obtaining political concessions from the Israel, which were never taken seriously by the Arab side. (This particular issue will be elaborated in the next chapter).

From its outset the Israelis resented the idea of the PCC as much as they had objected to Bernadotte. This attitude was bitterly criticized, at the time, by Sasson, who wrote to the General Director of the IFO: 'I understand that in our attitude towards the Conciliation Commission, we are not displaying too much interest in it and are not taking any initiative as far as it is concerned'. Sasson asserted that this was 'a risky attitude and Israel should support such an initiative'.[3]

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1. D. Kaplan, The Arab Refugees: An Abnormal Problem (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1959), p.159.
2. The Israelis financed the Palestinian delegations which came from Ramallah in order to negotiate directly with the Israelis. However, the Jordanians resented this move and closed the offices of that delegation. Interview with Aziz Shadeh; FO 371/75329, E124423, Jerusalem to FO, September 1049.
3. ISA 2444/1, Sasson to Eytan, 3.9.49.

The British Foreign Office believed that Israel showed readiness to negotiate even through the PCC, however was advised by its Legation in Tel-Aviv that, in practice, Israel was only willing to negotiate bilaterally with the Arab states in order not to ruin the chances for an Israeli-Jordanian peace.[1] Ben-Gurion's memoirs confirm this British appreciation.[2] There is no direct evidence for this claim, but there is little doubt that the Foreign Office agreed with Ben-Gurion's assumption that 'the key for peace with the Arab world (is) our consent for the annexation of the Arab part of Western Palestine to Abdullah'.[3] Moreover, the Israelis rendered it useless to continue the PCC work owing to the Arab refusal to negotiate directly.

Yet, Israel co-operated with the PCC to some extent. Partly, since it preferred discussions in Lausanne on a general debate in the United Nations (very similar to the British point of view[4]); but mainly Israel hoped to facilitate its admission to the UN through participation in the PCC (the vote of France was in particular important in that sense).[5]

The Arabs insisted, overtly, on negotiating en bloc with the Israelis. While most of the heads of the Arab delegations met the Israelis privately out of court and reached various agreements, neither side could later adhere publicly to these unofficial agreements.[6] In general, Ben Gurion preferred bilateral negotiations outside the framework of the PCC, and indeed Israeli-Syrian negotiations on peace were

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1. FO 371/81911/1. FO Minute, Furlonge, 5.6.50; FO 371/82179, E1015/83, Tel Aviv to FO, 14.8.50.
2. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 2.1.49, p.921.
3. Ibid.
4. ISA 2444/19, Briefing by Sharret to the Israeli delegation in Lausanne, 25.7.49.
5. ISA 2444/1, Eban to Sharret 30.4.49. This is also mentioned in S. Hadawi, Bitter Harvest (New York: The New World Press, 1967), p.165 and in A. Eban, My Country (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), p.67.
6. FRUS 49, Ethridge to SoS, 9.4.49 and Ethridge to SoS, 8.6.49, p.1096.

conducted without the UN knowledge and to some extent were obscure to the Israeli Foreign Office.[1]

Furthermore, it is quite probable that Ben Gurion consented to Eban's assertion that there 'is no need to 'run after the peace ... Armistice is enough, if we 'run after' the peace - the Arabs will demand a price - the borders or the refugees (concession on...), or both of them'.[2] Eban suggested waiting a few years. Notwithstanding these views, Israel made an effort at bilateral negotiations, outside the framework of the UN, but peace was not a priority, as was manifested both in the case of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations in 1949 and the Israeli-Egyptian talks in 1949 and 1954.[3] More regretful was the Israeli and Arab concurrence (Jordan, Egypt and Syria) not to raise the question of the refugees in those bilateral negotiations, and furthermore the Israeli refusal to deal with it in an indirect manner.

Elias Sasson who headed the Israeli delegation with Reuben Shiloah saw the absence of joint meetings of the delegations as had been the case in Rhodes, as the main reason for the conference's failure. He also assumed that the representatives of France, US and Turkey were attempting to utilize their participation in the conference for strengthening their countries' position in the Arab World.[4] The latter explanation of Sasson seems weak, since those countries had better means and opportunities for improving relations with the Arab World. It is more likely that those representatives sought the furthering of their own careers in these talks.

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 16.6.49, p.922; N. Lorch, Korot Milchemet Ha-A'zmaut (The Independence War) (Ramat Gan, 1963), pp.536-538.
2. Ben Gurion, op.cit., 14.7.49.
3. See the chapter on Israeli-Jordan negotiations (Chapter 4).
4. Yediot, Sasson to Sharret, 1.8.49.

5. Britain's attitude towards the PCC.

Ernest Bevin told the British Cabinet in January 1949 that the creation of the PCC did not require any British initiative, unless it was to try to bring Egypt and Transjordan together on the question of the Negev.[1] In that sense, Bevin saw the PCC in very much the same way as he saw Bernadotte's endeavours; namely, as a means of protecting British strategical interests in the area. Yet, there was no comparison between the energy and efforts invested by the Foreign Office in the Bernadotte affair and the low profile kept with regard to the PCC discussions. This was first of all due to the PCC's concentration on the refugee problem and leaving aside the territorial questions. Secondly, as 1949 passed, Israel was less and less conceived of as an enemy, even by Bevin, and thus its keeping of the Negev was not regarded any more as a serious threat to British positions in the area. Finally, the tacit understanding between Israel and Jordan, reached by the first half of 1949, was regarded as the best guarantee for British interests in Palestine, and even, and this was acceptable in some circles in Israel and Jordan, as a means of ending the conflict, or at least of bringing it to a low profile. (These issues will be discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters).

Bevin added another argument against British participation in the PCC. When Marshall suggested, in October 1948, that Britain would be a member of the PCC, the Foreign Secretary rejected the idea. He explained to the Secretary of State that whereas American membership was derived from its participation in the Truce Commission,[2] Britain

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1. CAB 129/31, Part I, CP(49) 15.1.49, Bevin on Palestine; FO 371/75334, E358, Bevin to Sir Oliver Franks (Washington), 11.1.49.
2. The US, French and Belgian Consuls were members of the Council which supervised the truce in Palestine.

had no locus standi to serve in the commission. Furthermore, if Britain had participated, at home it would seem like coming back to Palestine.[1] Dow suggested that he or Troutbeck would be sent to Geneva to act as advisors to the Commission. The Consul in Jerusalem attached immense importance to the PCC's coming to Jerusalem, as a means of preventing an Israeli take-over of the city.[2] However, the Foreign Office was disinclined to enter into direct confrontation with the PCC.[3]

However, the Foreign Office had ensured that the Turkish delegate would represent faithfully the Office's views. Indeed, the Turkish government promised not to commit itself to anything before consulting the Foreign Office.[4] It is possible that Britain showed more sympathy towards Turkey's aspiration to be part of NATO, although Lord Bullock tells us that both the Americans and the British were disinclined to include the Turks in NATO, at that stage.[5]

The Foreign Office kept a watchful eye on the possible American candidate for the PCC. The Office was appalled by the State Department intention to appoint Mr. Kennan, who was known to the Office from his service in Japan as a 'drunkard and quarrelsome'. Truman was convinced by the British protestations and appointed Mr. Ethridge, who was regarded as 'pro-British'.[6]

In fact, the British newspapers, like the Times, predicted very little success for the PCC and advised that the Americans and the

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1. FRUS 48, Vol.5, Part 2, Memo of conversation, Bevin-Marshall, 4.10.48, p.1450.
2. FO 371/75346, E203, Dow to FO, 5.1.49.
3. FO 371/75346, E298, Dow to FO and FO to Dow, 8.1.49.
4. FO 371/75346, E32, Ankara to FO, 22.12.48.
5. See Bullock, Bevin, pp.643; 645.
6. FO 371/75346, E157, Washington to FO, 4.1.49; E166, FO Minute, 29.12.48.; E676, Washington to FO, 14.11.48.

British should rather impose their own settlement on the parties.[7] Notwithstanding these views, the Office had never pressed for the abolition of the body, even when in 1950 its futility became apparent. Michael Wright believed there was always a need for conciliatory machinery, and in particular for one controlled by the Americans. Wright and other officials in the Office believed that the creation of the PCC enabled Britain and the USA to serve as mediators, even if they did not overtly declare their role. The French role was conceived as a marginal one. Contrary to the Jordanian wishes, the British did not want to transfer the debate to the General Assembly, before American-British proposals for peace were accepted by the parties, or even imposed on the parties.[1]

However, the most important British effort towards the PCC was the introduction of a comprehensive British peace plan. This eight-point plan, from the point of view of this analysis, is essential in understanding British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, we decided apart from bringing the programme in its entirety in an appendix, to give the gist of the plan here, and to refer to it again in each of the next chapters since it related to all the themes under review in this work. Nevertheless, from the Foreign Office's point of view, the most important points in the plan were connected with the Greater Transjordan concept. Thus, it is suggested here to view the introduction of a British peace plan as part and parcel of the British effort to obtain UN approval for the annexation of the West Bank to Transjordan.

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1. Leader in The Times, 21.1.49.
2. FO 371/81922, E10213, FO Minute by Wright, 22.9.50 contrary to the American and Jordanian point of view which saw the GA as the best forum for solving the conflict.

6. The UN, Britain and the question of Arab Palestine.

In the final analysis, the Palestine Conciliation Commission dealt chiefly with the refugee question and the Jerusalem problem. Nevertheless, when this body was established it was charged by the General Assembly with facilitating a comprehensive peace settlement.[1] Although it was not clear whether or not the PCC would introduce its own peace plan, once the members of the Commission submitted tentative proposals to the two sides, it was felt in London that Britain should do the same. It was the first coherent British peace plan presented to the UN and the area since Bevin's Provincial Autonomy Plan of 1947.

The plan called for the acceptance of the refugees by both sides in proportions to be determined by them. In its second and third points the Foreign Office accepted the Gaza proposal, of which more will be said in the next chapter. The proposal suggested the annexation of the Gaza strip to Israel with its refugee population in return for an Israeli territorial compensation elsewhere in Palestine.[2]

The fourth suggested that this territorial compensation would be the transfer of the Negev to Egypt and Jordan. The Israelis were offered free passage through the Negev to the Red Sea.[3]

The fifth point proposed a free port in Haifa, and the sixth the administrative division of Jerusalem between Israel and Jordan in an arrangement which would put the Holy Places under international supervision. The final point talked about a joint Arab-Israeli project to exploit the waters of the rivers Yarmuk and Jordan.[4]

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1. CAB 129/31, Part I, CP(49)10, 15.1.49.
2. FO 371/75351, E9, Ankara to FO, 11.5.49; FO 371/75436, E582, FO to Ankara, 11.1.49.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

The seventh point of this plan was the most important one and it read as follows: 'Central Arab Palestine should be formally incorporated into Jordan.[1] This plan was presented to the three member states of the PCC and was brought into discussion with the other PCC proposals and suffered the same fate, namely, it was never turned into a formal peace proposal by the PCC.[2] It is possible that when the PCC finally introduced its peace plan in the end of 1951 these British points had some bearing to the PCC proposal.

Thus, neither the PCC nor the parties involved had ever discussed properly this British plan (it is doubtful if the Arabs or the Israelis even knew about it). The PCC felt unable to produce any territorial settlement and thus followed, in September 1949, the American lead in suggesting that political issues should be shelved for the time being in favour of an economic and technical approach to the refugee problem.[3] Namely, the Americans suggested that the territorial status quo should remain and only be altered according to the solutions proposed for the refugee problem.

This state of affairs naturally suited the Foreign Office. Consequently, the Office prepared an outline of its Palestine policy, based on the eight-point plan. The principal point in this outline was the realization, at the earliest possible moment, of the formal union between Central Arab Palestine and Jordan.[4] Moreover, the British by utilising and somewhat exaggerating the troubled situation in Arab Palestine, succeeded in persuading the Americans that the uncertainty

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1. FO 371/75354/ E10201, Ankara to FO, 11.8.49.
2. FO 371/75351, E9735, FO Minute, by Beith, US-UK consultation for a settlement in Palestine July-August 1949.
3. FO 371/75353, E12800, FO Memo, 'The Palestine question', Sherringham, 14.10.49.
4. FO 371/75067, E13727, FO Minute, November 1949.

and disquiet there might have affected the stability of the whole area; and that only annexation would bring stability and help to solve the refugee problem.[1]

Hence, as far as the British, the Americans and the Israelis were concerned, the claims for an independent Palestinian entity were all over and done with for at least the next 15 years.

C. The Formal Union and its aftermath (March 1950-July 1951)

With this more favourable atmosphere the Jordanian authorities' apprehensions and sense of uncertainty were reduced and it seemed that all the obstacles in the way of fulfilling the King's ambitions were removed. The period of unrest in the West Bank was over, for the time being, in the main due to some economic measures which were taken and had improved the position of the local inhabitants. One of them was to deny local merchants licenses for imports from Syria and Lebanon in order to encourage small industries in the West Bank.[2] This, of course, caused a considerable opposition from Palestinian merchants who had to move to Amman,[3] thus, increasing the city's importance as a trading centre. However, the general trend, then, was positive economically, and even the merchants, notwithstanding their initial resentment, were pressing for the abolition of custom control on the river, which was granted in November 1949.[4]

The Eastern Department now recommended a unilateral unification of

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/75273, E13975, Report on October 1949, 7.11.49.
3. It was decided to assign only a third of the import allocations to the Palestinian merchants, FO 371/82703, E1013/1, Legation report for December 1949, 2.1.50.
4. FO 371/82716, E1013/1, Summary of events in Arab Palestine, December 1949.

the two banks by Jordan, that is, without waiting for an Arab consent for the move, or a General Assembly decision on the issue. By that time, Israeli personalities like Sasson, and American diplomats like Hare had expressed their support for the union in conversations with the British.[1]

The elections and the formal union were due in April 1950. In the first four months of that year, differences of administration were gradually disappearing and it was reported by the British Legation in Amman that Palestinians on both sides of the Jordan wished to be represented in the Legislative system.[2] However, the Jordanian authorities reported signs of agitation in the West Bank to boycott the elections. This forced Abdullah to promise, as a counter-measure, that the next government would be responsible to a constitution and not to him, as was demanded by two Palestinian ministers.[3] Kirkbride himself was warning against the 'colonization' of the East Bank by Palestinians, namely controlling the economic as well as the political life of the state; leaving the Hashemites with a control mainly over the army (and even this was doubtful according to a Legation report, which stated that in the entrance examination for the Legion there were 40 candidates from the East and 300 from the West).[4]

1. American reaction

The Foreign Office failed in securing an American and French de-jure recognition for the union, but concluded that both countries

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1. FO 371/82719, ET1081/62, British ambassador in Ankara to FO, 3.5.50; FO 371/75356, E14782, Record of discussions between Wright and State Department, 4.11.49.
2. FO 371/75277, FO to Amman, 13.12.49.
3. Khulusi Al Khairi and Nasir, FO 371/82719, ET1081/16, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 28.4.50.
4. FO 371/82703, E1013/1, Legation report for December 1949, 2.1.50.

would undoubtedly accept the new situation.[1] The State Department's Near East Affairs' division was less than pleased about the British recognition of the union. It stressed in a despatch to the British Embassy in Washington its known position that such an act entitled Israel to annex all the territories it had occupied and that it would lead to a freeze of the territorial status quo. Moreover, the Americans believed that this British recognition amounted to acknowledgement of the partition of Jerusalem and an admission of the failure of the PCC.[2] These were all valid points; nonetheless, the British a month later secured in the Tripartite Declaration an American and French recognition of the territorial status quo of the Middle East. For the Foreign Office this declaration was tantamount to American de jure recognition of the union.[3]

2. The Arab reaction

The Arab League has already deliberated on the issue a few days before the formal union was announced. The Egyptians succeeded in persuading the League Council to invite Ahmad Hilmi, the former head of

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1. FO 371/82719, ET1081/67, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 25.5.50, E1081/68, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 6.6.50.
2. FRUS 50, Vol.5, Hare-Burrows conversation, 24.4.50, p.871.
3. The draft for the joint declaration was provided during the Anglo-American discussions in London in May 1950. The declaration was published on May 25, 1950. It promised the three powers' commitment to arms control in the area by supplying arms only for self-defence and internal security purposes. The three powers promised to prevent change by force of frontiers within or outside the framework of the UN. Finally, it asked the Middle Eastern Countries to give assurances not to undertake aggressive actions against other states. The reluctance of most of the countries in the area, apart from Jordan and Israel, to give these last assurances, implied that the declaration remained as an act aimed at coordinating the Western powers' activity in the area as well as excluding Russian intervention in the Middle East. FO 371/81908, Bi-partite discussions, May 1950; see also Bullock, Bevin, p.776; and H.L. Roberts and P.A. Wilson, Britain and the US: Problems in Co-operation (Oxford: RIIA, 1953), p.183.

the Palestine Government and now the head of a Palestine department in the League. The Palestinian delegate proposed as he did a year earlier to discuss what he called the violation by Jordan of the League's decision from April 1948 to hand over Palestine to its inhabitants.[1] Abdullah had sent the Jordanian minister in Cairo to attend the meeting, implying by this that he saw the whole discussion as unimportant.[2]

Following the Union Egypt requested the adjourning of the Political Committee, raising the issue of the April 1948 resolution. The Jordanian representative claimed that this was now a question of Jordanian sovereignty and could not be forced on Jordan.[3] However, the Committee decided unanimously, with the exception of Jordan, that the Jordanian action was a violation of the April 1948 resolution.[4] The League Council was due to meet in June 1950 to decide what, if any, sanctions should be taken against Jordan.

In the meanwhile, the Egyptian press attacked Abdullah, by capitalizing on the publication of At-Tal's memoirs. A newly elected Egyptian government declared in April 1950 its intention to oppose the union. At-Tal's brother and the former Jordanian minister in Saudi Arabia joined this campaign in some Egyptian newspapers.[5]

At that moment, the Iraqis came to the assistance of their Hashemite kin. This action was co-ordinated with the British Minister

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1. Hassouna, Arab League, p.34-36.
2. FO 371/82703, E1013/4, Legation Report for March 1950, 1.4.50.
3. Hassouna, Arab League, 7th meeting of League Council, 12.6.50, p.36.
4. Hassouna, op.cit., League Council meeting, 15.5.50, p.36.
5. FO 371/82703, E1013/4, Legation Report for March 1950, 1.4.50; Le Progrès Egyptien, published Ahmad At-Tal allegation of maltreatment of Palestinians in the West Bank (7.4.50.) Al-Assas (Cairo) reported that the Ulemma of Al-Azhar demanded that the Arab League would investigate At-Tal's allegations. Al-Mokattem (11.4.50) published the story of Mohadad Fahmy Hashem the Jordanian minister in Jedda claiming that Abdullah wanted to invade Saudi Arabia and annex the Hejaz.

of State, Kenneth Younger. The Iraqi premier succeeded in watering down the League's resistance, whereas the British restrained Abdullah from making any provocative announcements. Nuri As-Said, out of an official position, supported the union in his newspaper, and the Iraqi government when asked refused to give financial support to any attempt to re-establish an All-Palestine Government.[1] More important than anything else the Iraqis supported the Jordanians in the League. The Iraqi delegation succeeded in preventing the expulsion of Jordan from the League by introducing a compromise. The Jordanian minister declared that Jordan would hold Arab Palestine as trust until a final settlement of the Palestine problem. This was, in fact, proposed by Salh Jabr and Nuri As-Said to the King and he refused, so, quite probably, the Jordanian delegate's declaration was made without prior consultation with the King.[2]

It is notable that Azzam already in May 1950 promised the Head of the British Middle East Office that Jordan would not be expelled, and all the League needed was a decision to save its face, and thus all Abdullah had to do was in fact give a declaration on the lines suggested by Nuri As-Said and Salh Jabr in order to satisfy public opinion. By that, the status of the West Bank would be similar to that of the Gaza strip.[3]

Kirkbride assured the Foreign Office that the whole affair had helped to heal the breach between the King and his ministers which emerged as a result of the negotiations with Israel, and that it had hardly any effect on the attitudes of the Palestinians towards the

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1. FO 371/82719, ET1081/59, Mack to Younger, 28.4.50.
2. Hassouna Arab League 40; FO 371/82713, ES10398/2, Amman to FO, 27.5.50.
3. FO 371/82719, E1081/57, BMEO to FO, 6.5.50.

union.[1] However, he, and in particular Glubb, were still convinced that most of the Palestinians were susceptible to Communism. The Arab Legion HQ reported that the former Mufti's efforts to join forces with the Communists in Jordan failed for the time being. The Communist party was declared illegal and most of its leaders were arrested. Kirkbride warned that its influence would rise once again if the country went through an economic crisis.[2]

However, this was not the real problem as far as the Palestinians and the British Legation were concerned, as Kirkbride came to admit in the end of 1950. The crux of the matter was that Kirkbride's influence was reduced and affected as a result of the union. He wrote to the Head of the Eastern Department, 'You do realize that we are in a throes of revolution here'.[3] Kirkbride referred to the struggle between the Legislation with its political minded Palestinians and the Executive (namely the King and his ministers). As Kirkbride saw it, the Executive lost the preliminary encounters for two reasons: the impatience of the King which led him to go off brutally rather than diplomatically; secondly, the Premier, Abu Al-Huda gave up the struggle owing to his dispute with the King.[4] Consequently, Kirkbride's own influence declined and he was unable to exercise much influence on either side, mainly owing to what he called the negative Palestinian attitude to all British suggestions. Moreover, Kirkbride complained that the Palestinians were 'people with whom I never worked before'.[5] Kirkbride's solution was to form a new government with smaller number of Palestinian ministers, otherwise warned the minister in Amman,

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1. FO 371/82703, E1013/4, Legation report for March 1950, 1.4.50.
2. FO 371/82704, E1016/4, HQ Arab Legion, 8.8.50; FO 371/82706, ET1014/1, Kirkbride to Younger 27.7.50.
3. FO 371/82716, E1053/2, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 30.11.50.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/82716, E1053/2, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 30.11.50.

Jordan would collapse and the place would be abandoned and be divided by its neighbors. Thus, a British edifice built during the last 26 years would be lost, concluded Kirkbride.[1] Furlonge and most of the officials in the Eastern Department believed it was a matter or time and eventually the Palestinians would see things the same way as the King did.[2]

In the final analysis, Kirkbride's predictions and apprehensions proved to be exaggerated. Nevertheless, from a Hashemite point of view there was certainly a danger of Palestinization of the unified state. Hence, Abu Al-Huda's promise given prior to the election to form a new enlightened legislative system was not carried out, at least not according to the Palestinian jurists' wishes. The new system was a mixture of Mandatory laws with new Jordanian martial law regulations. In August 1950, Kirkbride took another precaution against Palestinization and warned the King that the position of the chief administrator of the West Bank (Jamal Toukan) was granting the area a quasi-autonomous position. Thus, the post was abolished and the various departments in the West Bank dealt directly with Amman.[3]

In the conclusion of his annual report for 1950, Kirkbride noted that the agitation against the unification and the elections was fostered by followers of Haj Amin Al-Husseini, aided by some Arab states and Communism.[4]

However, in spite of these warnings and precautions, the Palestinians seemed to gain from the elections. In theory, the seats in both houses were divided equally between representatives from both halves of

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., Furlonge to Kirkbride, 23.11.50.
3. FO 371/82706, ET1017/2, Kirkbride to Bevin, 2.8.50.
4. FO 371/91788, E1011/1, Annual Report Jordan, 31.1.51.

the kingdom, but, in practice, persons from the West Bank dominated the Houses since several Eastern constituencies were represented by Palestinians.

By the end of that year, the union had the tacit recognition of most countries (apart from the Arab League) and a de jure recognition of the UK.[1]

In December 1950, Kirkbride came to the conclusion that the presence of representatives from the West Bank in Parliament 'was affecting this institution profoundly and that the King and his ministers could no longer depend on an obedient legislature as they had done in the past'.[2] The first ever anti-British statements were made at the Parliament. This was somewhat changed when the new Premier Said Al-Mufti took measures to reduce 'the House to a more subdued frame of mind'.[3]

In the period preceeding the assassination of Abdullah, the Legation in Amman followed closely the activities of the former Mufti. In May-June 1951, he moved from Cairo to Syria to act against the Hashemite Kingdom and instigate disturbances in the West Bank and remained in Syria with other former members of the All-Palestine Government.[4] Kirkbride would hold the former Mufti and the Palestinians in general responsible for Abdullah's assassination.[5]

To sum up, in spite of the problem caused by the Palestinization of Jordan, the main feature and aim of the British Palestine policy in the post-Mandatory period was achieved. Its loyal ally in the Middle

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/91788, E1011/1, Annual Report Jordan, 31.1.51.
4. FO 371/91796, E10389/1, Kirkbride to FO, 17.5.51; E10389/2, Damascus to FO, 19.5.51.
5. See the last pages of Chapter 4.

East had fulfilled his territorial ambitions, which coincided with British strategical interests and with what was believed by the Foreign Office to be the beginning of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. What began as an act to prevent a larger Jewish state turned into into almost a crusade against an independent Palestinian state by the British, the Jordanians and the Israelis. The short term fruits of this policy were evident, they included an Israeli-Jordanian modus vivendi with merely verbal protestation from the League, and implicit UN and American approval. Moreover, they ensured the strengthening of Abdullah and justification for his rule and existence as protecting British interests in Palestine. They succeeded in preventing what seemed to be a hostile state to Britain and a Communist stronghold, or alternatively the turning of Jordan to such a state, namely, a Palestinian state.[1] Jordan was saved for the time being as a British bastion and the West Bank as a 'problem' only re-emerged long after the British had left the area, as did the refugee problem, so closely connected with the 'Palestine Question'.

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1. This fear of a Communist stronghold as part of a Russian grand design was common throughout the 1950s. See for instance W. Laquer, 'The Appeal of Communism in the Middle East', MEJ (Winter 1955).

CHAPTER THREE: British Policy towards the Refugee Problem

If one could venture and describe British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in the post-1948 era as affected by what could be called the 'Palestine Syndrome', the best manifestation for this behaviour could be found in the British attitude towards the refugees and their political future. By the 'Syndrome' we mean the effect the Mandatory years had on the British readiness to be involved directly in the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine which had cost so many British lives and so much effort in the Mandatory period.

The British, like all the other parties involved in this conflict, were reluctant to reap this bitter harvest of the Arab Jewish conflict. There was a strong British inclination not to be entangled in the attempts to solve the refugee problem. The Foreign Office felt that whatever Britain had done in the past in terms of offering solutions, it was always portrayed in the final analysis as taking a biased line against one or the other parties in the conflict.

However, there were contradictory British interests at stake that did not allow such a British complacency towards the refugee problem. Owing to the large number of refugees in Greater Transjordan, the refugee problem was an internal Jordanian dilemma. As was pointed out before in this work, and as will be stressed again, any Jordanian problem became a British problem owing to the British involvement in that country.

Hence, while Britain was disinclined to be involved in the deliberations and negotiations on the question, and declined an offer to take part in the Conciliation Commission, it had to maintain some level of involvement in order to safeguard its own interests and position in Jordan, as well as in the Middle East as a whole.

The absence of clear policy in London had left the scene to the inexperienced Americans. The State Department, and in particular Robert McGhee, believed in an 'economic' approach to the problem. McGhee's vision was based on the hope of introducing a 'Marshall Plan' to the Middle East; that is, he advocated Western assistance to the countries affected by the war in Palestine as a means of achieving a high standard of living and stability in the area, and thus protecting it from the infiltration of Communism and Russian intervention. The resettlement of the refugees (partly in Israel and mostly in the Arab World) was to be an integral part of that scheme.

A combination of resettlement and repatriation was the most sensible compromise, once the idea of an independent Palestinian state was abandoned. However, this was true only if those terms were understood in the purely political sense, as indeed they were conceived by the Arabs and the Israelis. But for the Americans, these terms were part of the economic terminology they introduced to the area. An economic solution was something the British, owing to their limited resources, could not offer, and was a concept they resented, due to their political expertise and knowledge of the Arab World.

It is not intended here to play down the Arab and Israeli responsibility for the problem. However, it is noticeable that a political solution was sought by the parties in Lausanne, with British blessing, probably the first and so far the last attempt of that kind. The failure to bridge the gap between the Israeli and the Arab delegates resulted in British acquiescence in the American viewpoint, so that eventually the Economic Survey Mission, composed of American and British experts, was set up to find a solution. Hence the political hurdle was never overcome, let alone approached, for a long time. The Economic Survey Mission's report perpetuated the <u>status quo</u> by which

relief was never properly replaced by a long term resettlement programme or repatriation, a situation, so it seems, convenient to everybody concerned as in the back of their minds they probably hoped that the problem would somehow wither away.

The British role was thus reduced to ensuring that two possible solutions would not be introduced: either the concept of a separate Palestinian state or the resettlement of most of the refugees in Jordan. However, in practice, Britain's involvement became deeper and deeper, in particular from 1949 and onwards. British pragmatism and its ad hoc policy resulted in British first following the American lead and then, for a while, playing an even more important rôle than the Americans. The American need to consult the British had brought the appointment of British officials to all the important rôles connected with the refugee problem. One might even say that the temptation to play an active rôle was immense.

A. The responsibility for the creation of the problem.

The British attitude towards the solution of the refugee question was no doubt influenced by their view about the responsibility and causes of the Palestinian flight. Bevin publicly blamed it all on the Jewish side without being able to refer to any specific cases, but just tackled the problem in general terms.[1] Was this the common British reaction? It seems somewhat difficult to answer this question owing to an ambiguous attitude shown by the Foreign Office towards the problem.

Two years after the exodus the Foreign Office assessed that the Arab flight was caused by the 'not unnatural belief' that they would be

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1. Bevin in the House of Commons, 26.1.49 (col.931).

'exterminated' if they remained where they were.[1] On the other hand, the British backed Near East Radio (Sharq Al-Adna) directed the blame on the AHC for encouraging the exodus in the cases of Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem.[2]

The crux of the matter is that the Foreign Office paid little attention to specific cases and tended to blame the Arabs as well as the Jews for causing the problem. For the pragmatic British diplomats this was a necessary approach, since only by these means could the problem be treated. For that purpose, the Office even admitted British responsibility for the creation of the problem. As the formal historian of Chatham House at the time explained, the British tended to regard the question as one of the many refugee problems which emerged after the Second World War. He pointed out that once the Korean War was over, the refugee problem there overshadowed the Palestinian refugee question.[3]

Finally, on this point it would be interesting to note what The Times had to say on this issue at the time. The paper stated that HMG shared the responsibility for the problem in the eyes of the world, owing to 'its part in bringing about the plight of the refugees and for not seeking with all speed to help them'.[4]

B. Perceptions about the refugees.

Movement of refugees started in January 1948. Families moved to Amman in anticipation of troubles. This first wave brought with it considerable funds to the Transjordanian Capital, but Kirkbride remarked that they also caused an increase in rents and the cost of

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1. FO 371/82182, E1017/9 FO Minute, Thirkell, May 1950.
2. ISA 36/15, Monitoring Service 3.4.48.
3. Kirk, Middle East, p.316.
4. Times 9.8.48.

food-stuffs.[1] By February, panic continued to increase throughout the Arab middle class in Palestine and the High Commissioner reported a steady exodus of those who could afford to leave.[2] Kirkbride considered this group to be an anti-British element which 'did not fail to affect the political atmosphere of Transjordan for the worse'.[3] He especially noted the Communist instigation amongst the refugees.[4]

In April 1948, following the Dir Yasin massacre, a further influx of refugees entered Transjordan and the West Bank in 'an ever more bitter frame of mind'.[5]

The flow of refugees reached its peak after the fall of Lydda and Ramleh. The population of Amman was doubled in a few weeks, and by August 1948, the number of refugees exceeded the native inhabitants of the city.[6] Glubb shared Kirkbride's apprehensions. He reported that this refugee element 'is seething with discontent and contains many Communist, Jewish and other spies and agents provocateurs'[7] - an inaccurate description, to say the least, but nevertheless representative of Glubb's feelings and conceptions about the refugees. Part of this impression was created owing to the fact that by the end of the British Mandate in Palestine, only the poorer refugees got as far as Arab Palestine and Transjordan, while the richer left for Lebanon, Syria and Iraq where they found employment and accommodation.[8] On the other hand, it should be remembered that about 85% of the refugees, in October 1948, were estimated to be children under 15, pregnant and

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1. FO 371/75272, E768, Transjordan Annual Review 1948, Kirkbride, 17.1.48.
2. FO 371/68366, E1906, UK dele. UN to FO, 9.2.48.
3. FO 371/75272, E768, op.cit.
4. FO 371/75273, E407, Monthly report, December 1948, 31.1.49.
5. FO 371/25272, E768, op.cit.
6. FO 371/68822, E11049, 'The Transjordan Situation', by Glubb, 12.8.48.
7. Ibid.
8. S.G. Thicknesse, Arab Refugees, RIIA, October 1949, p.7: this group constituted 1% of the total figure.

nursing mothers, people over 60, and the infirm.[1] Thus, Glubb and Kirkbride could only have been thinking in terms of the potential danger. (In 1949, this estimate was reduced to about 60%)[2]

It is notable that Wright, in London, on the whole shared Kirkbride's and Glubb's apprehensions and regarded the refugees as having an 'unsettling effect' wherever they were located.[3] Other officials in the Eastern Department believed that the refugees were used by the Egyptians and Syrians as agents provocateurs.[4] In any case, the perceptions were not different from those about the local Palestinian population which were mentioned in the previous chapter.[5] One could only add that the Transjordans regarded the refugees in the same manner. A mixture of contempt for the uprooted Palestinians and displeasure with the general Palestinian attitude to Abdullah characterized Transjordan's attitude to the Palestinians.[6] Furthermore, this attitude was not unique to Transjordan. The Iraqis and the Syrians were also treating the refugees as a security risk. The Syrian security services established a special division to deal with the refugees as did the Iraqi Ministry of Defence.[7]

Some of the fears connected with the Palestinians were moderated towards the end of 1949. In his annual report for that year, Kirkbride remarked that although in the earlier part of the year, the presence in Jordan of a large number of Palestinians (refugees and locals) 'had a

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1. Statistics provided by Gower of American Red Cross, Sir Raphael Cliento (UN refugee expert) and UNICEF in Thicknesse, op.cit., p.10.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 48, memo of conversation Wright-Lewis Jones, 13.4.49, p.907.
4. FO 371/75332, E4510, Beith, FO Minute, 31.3.49.
5. See Chapter 2.
6. Plascov, Refugees, pp.34-35 and fn.17 on p.34, interview with Kirkbride.
7. ISA 2444/19, IFO report, February 1949.

disturbing effect on the life and economy of the country', he noted, in the later part of the year, 'a marked tendency of Palestinian refugees and others to establish themselves and their businesses at Amman and elsewhere and to settle down, bringing new and often better methods of agriculture, business and handicrafts'.[1] Notwithstanding, the refugees in the camps, who by conservative estimates made up a total of 150,000 in Jordan, were generally regarded as a breeding ground for Communism, and a serious threat to Jordan's survival.[2]

C. Britain's efforts towards repatriation.

Since most of the refugees fled while Britain was still responsible for law and order, there were attempts by Arab governments to facilitate the return of them through Britain. The Foreign Office and the British Army were asked by the Syrian Minister of Interior to safeguard the return of the refugees from Tiberias and Haifa. Michael Wright answered that Palestine was no longer under British control after the 15th of May, but that, if it was possible to repatriate them before that date, Britain would assist. However, no further approach on this issue was made before May 15th.[3]

Throughout 1948, British position on the refugees question was similar to the American and UN point of view. The British and the Americans influenced, and some would even say dictated to, the UN mediator on the questions of territorial arrangement and sovereignty owing to the importance they had attached to that aspect of the question. The gravity of the refugee problem, however, was not yet fully realized and was overshadowed by other problems. Furthermore, it was regarded

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1. FO 371/82702, E1011/1. Annual report for Jordan for 1949.
2. Thicknesse, Refugees, p.8 fn.4, p.9, fn.1.
3. FO 371/68371, E5684, Damascus to FO, 3.5.48.

basically as a humanitarian question. This was probably why the powers allowed Bernadotte to give the lead on this aspect of the Palestine question. It was precisely the humanitarian aspects of the question which convinced Bernadotte to adopt the Arab viewpoint that those refugees who wished to do so should be repatriated to their former homes and the others compensated.[1] This approach was adopted by his successor, Dr. Bunche, and by the Americans and the British. The result was the 11th paragraph in the UN General Assembly resolution (of December 1948) which called for peace negotiations between the Arab States and Israel. The 11th Paragraph stipulated that 'the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date'.[2] Incidentally, Bernadotte's successor asserted that most of the refugees did not wish to return, owing to the destruction of the villages by Israel and the lack of employment possibilities for middle class, was thus thinking mainly of a gesture by Israel of taking a certain number back. This view was shared by Mr. Burrows, the Head of the Eastern Department.[3] However, in the early encounters with Bernadotte the Israelis had already made it clear that Israel would not allow the return of the refugees, not only for security reasons, as was

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1. Persson, Bernadotte, pp.287, 308. In his first proposals, the Count, for what Persson calls 'unknown reasons' inserted, at the last moment, a clause calling for the recognition of the right of 'residents of Palestine' to return. In his second proposals he defined the right of 'Arab Refugees' to return. In June, when the Count was not convinced of the Arab position, some AHC officials indicated to him that repatriation meant tacit recognition of Israel. Letter from E.N. Koussa to Bernadotte, UN archives, DAG 3, in Persson, Bernadotte, p.183, fn.6).
2. UN resolution, 194 (III), 11.12.48.
3. Bernadotte suggested that Israel would facilitate a mass repatration during the second truce or at least the return of the Haifa and Jaffa refugees. But Israel refused on security grounds. ISA 2427/9, Reply of the PGI to CB, 1.8.48; Comay to Sharret, 23.9.48; Burrows view in FO 371/68379, E1211, FO Minute, Burrows, 8.9.49.

repeatedly claimed by Israeli representatives in the various forums of the UN, but also in order to retain the favourable demographic situation created by the war in Palestine.[1]

From 1949 onwards, no one in the Foreign Office considered a total repatriation as a feasible solution. The formula was now based on combination of resettlement and repatriation as long term settlement, on the one hand, and providing relief and employment as a short term solution, on the other. It is notable that the Arab states unanimously voted against the UN General Assembly resolution, and it was only in the spring of 1949 that they began to invoke Paragraph II.

The PCC, at first, notified Israel that at least 650,000 refugees should be repatriated to Arab Palestine and Israel.[2] However, neither the PCC, nor the FO could provide evidence to the effect of how many refugees wished to return. For instance, the PCC estimated that the skilled workers and small land owners would not wish to return, fearing that only a small compensation awaited them in Israel. Whereas, those in the urban sector would wish to return.[3] (Most of the refugees were agricultural workers).

The simplest way was, of course, to conduct a census. McGhee brought up the idea in April 1949, asserting that most of the refugees wished to return.[4] The SD believed it was possible to conduct a census. However, the PCC secretariat informed the Israeli government that: 'It is doubtless impossible at the present to ask the refugees which of them wish and which do not wish to return home'. The PCC regarded this as 'superfluous' with regard to those coming from the

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1. Haarez, 3.5.49.
2. Note from PCC Secretariat on the Israeli paper on refugees, 28.3.49, ISA 38/11.
3. 2444/19, IFO memo, 1.7.49.
4. CAB 134/501, meeting McGhee Wright, ME(O)10, 13.4.49.

parts of Palestine which were to remain Arab.[1] The absence of such a census rendered the question unanswered, and hence the contradictory assessments of the issue.

D. Britain, the PCC and the refugee question.

British policy from 1949 onwards with regard to the PCC consisted mainly of conveying to the Americans, at the various meetings between the State Department and the Foreign Office, their ideas about the best settlement for the conflict, including their suggestions for solving the refugee problem. From the start of the PCC efforts the British favoured an arrangement which combined resettlement and repatriation. This was the gist of the first point in the Eight Points Plan mentioned in the previous chapter.[2]

The main British interest centred on the question of where the refugees would be resettled. Throughout 1949, and during the Anglo-American negotiations on this question, it became apparent that the Foreign Office favoured the resettlement of the refugees in Iraq and Syria. At the same time the British urged the Americans to exert pressure on Israel to repatriate the rest.[3] The American pressure produced, in the final analysis, some effect on the Israelis. However, it was altogether too inconsistent a pressure, and, furthermore, it was not reciprocated by British pressure on the Iraqis and Syrians to accept the principle of resettlement. The only country Britain could have pressed to resettle the refugees was Jordan. However, as was pointed out below, this was the last thing the Foreign Office wished to

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1. 38/11, ISA, op.cit.
2. FO 371/82179, E1015/80, A meeting between the FO and the Pcc, 18.7.50.
3. This theme will be developed in the following pages.

do, since, it feared the Palestinization of Greater Transjordan as much as Abdullah.

Hence from the moment it became apparent that the PCC was unable to provide the Middle East with a solution to the refugee problem, the Foreign Office believed that a combination of resettlement and repatriation was the only solution. This was accepted both in London and Amman.[1] As had often been the case, the only criticism on this policy was heard from the British Middle East Office in Cairo. Troutbeck had reservations, not so much on the principle of combined resettlement and repatriation, as much as on the Foreign Office's failure, in his opinion, to appreciate the priority given by the Arab World to the refugee question. He predicted that without solving this problem an Arab-Israeli agreement was impossible.[2] History would judge whether Troutbeck's assessment was correct in the long run. However during the period under review, Arab-Israeli arrangements (not peace agreement) were achieved only through bilateral negotiations. Only two subjects were dealt with in a multilateral fashion, the refugee problem and the internationalization of Jerusalem, with no results whatsoever. Had the refugee problem been one of the topics in the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations, the responsibility of solving the problem would have lain, in the final analysis, in the hands of both countries and, to some extent, in Britain's. However, all these parties preferred to exclude that problem from their negotiations.

The outcome was an ambiguous attitude towards the Israeli position on this matter. 'The Times' disclosed some of this ambivalency by condemning Israel for inhuman action, while also admitting compelling

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1. FO 371/75436, E10285, FO Memorandum, 16.8.49; FO 371/75388, E8347, Glubb memo, and Amman remarks, Amman to FO, 2.7.49.
2. FO 371/75454, E3302, Troutbeck to Bevin, 9.3.49.

and logical motives behind this behaviour.[1] Ostensibly, Israel was blamed for its policy. However, privately, the Foreign Office even informed the Israelis that it regarded resettlement as the only solution (in particular in Syria and Iraq), provided Israel would accept some refugees as a token of goodwill.[2]

To sum up, one could say that British policy was aimed at maintaining the PCC as the main forum for negotiations on the refugee problem. The Foreign Office hoped that the PCC would serve as a mediating body through which the US and the UK would transfer their ideas and solutions to the parties. Britain had not wish to make the issue into a topic in the bilateral negotiations (in particular the Israeli-Jordan one), neither was there any desire to bring it back to the General Assembly before any Anglo-American understanding was achieved.

1. The Arabs and the Israelis and the refugee question in the Lausanne conference.

As was mentioned earlier, the Israelis insisted on a peace settlement before solving the refugee problem. This was the official, as well as the unofficial, Israeli line during the Lausanne conference. The Israeli insistence on a peace settlement first was not a tactical move. The Foreign Office and the PCC had wrongly regarded this Israeli posture as tactical.[3] It was highly important for the Israelis to obtain recognition from the Arab World first and thereby to weaken the Arab demand for repatriation.[4] Israel had never accepted paragraph II of the UN December 1948 resolution, or in turn, it had never approved

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1. Times, 7.7.49.
2. ISA 36/10, Beith-Bentwich conversation, 4.7.49.
3. FRUS 50, Vol.5, memo by Office of UN Political and Security Affairs, 3.1.50, p.661.
4. ISA 36/13, Comay to Eylat, 28.9.48.

of the interpretation which claimed that this paragraph suggested repatriation as the only solution. Abba Eban argued in front of the Ad-Hoc Political Committee of the United Nations that paragraph five of that resolution which called for a peace settlement by agreement and negotiations was inseparably linked to paragraph II.[1] This continued to be the Israeli line throughout the 1950s.

It seems that the first American delegate and chairman of the PCC, Mark Ethridge, was first more annoyed at the Arab behaviour than by the Israelis. Ethridge noted that the Arab delegations were privately declaring their intention to resettle the refugees, while refusing to do so publicly (including Jordan).[2] In fact, we know from British reports that as early as March 1949, the Arab delegates had privately shown quite a flexible attitude towards the problem. In Beirut, they drew a distinction between refugees from areas awarded to the Arabs and those from areas allotted to the Jews under the partition resolution. As for the former, Israel's withdrawal would solve the problem, the other refugees could be compensated by indemnities.[3] This line did not change until the end of 1952. During the Arab League's meetings in 1951 the Egyptian and Jordanian delegations held several talks about the refugees. The Egyptians seemed anxious somehow to get rid of the Gaza strip and concurred with the Jordanians on the need to reintegrate the refugees without surrendering the claim for repatriation.[4]

The Americans introduced the new term 'reintegration' as a means of overcoming Arab sentivity over the term 'resettlement'. In the period under review the Arabs seemed to differentiate between the two

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1. Schechtman, Refugees, pp.22-23.
2. FRUS 49, Ethridge to SoS, 9.5.49, p.988.
3. FO 371/75454, E3927, Beirut to FO, 25.3.49.
4. FO 371/91793, ET10316/1, Kirkbride to FO (Furlonge), 10.2.51.

terms, although it could be argued that in practice there is hardly any difference between them. It is possible that this was even realised by the Arab side, but it was necessary for the sake of public consumption to make the distinction.

This contradictory Arab attitude was manifested clearly in the evidence brought in Plascov's book:

> 'The Government (of Jordan) pursued a two-sided policy with regard to the refugees' political status. It wanted to effect the political integration of the refugees, doing away with any notion of Palestinian separatism. ... On the other hand, in order to ensure the permanent economic and general responsibility of the international community for the refugees, it had to preserve the refugees' exclusive status in the eyes of the outside world'.[1]

In Lausanne this ambiguous Arab attitude was accentuated by the limited amount of authority granted to the Arab delegations.[2]

However, in the final analysis, the American representative in the PCC held the Israelis responsible for the failure to reach an agreement on the refugees.[3] It is notable however, that, in private, Sasson and the Egyptian delegate, Abd Al-Muni'm Mustafa had reached an agreement on the principle of resettlement.[4] Sasson told the Israeli Foreign Minister, in his letters from Lausanne, that he had reached similar understandings with the Syrian and Lebanese delegates.[5] Sasson had learned that these overtures were made with the full approval of the respective governments. The Americans were aware of this development, and according to Sasson this was one of the reasons for their pressure on Israel to make concessions on the refugee question.[6]

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1. Plascov, Refugees, p.44.
2. ISA 38/11, PCC meeting with the Israeli delegation, Eytan report, 11.6.49.
3. FRUS 49, Ethridge to SoS, 8.649., p.1096
4. Yediot, Sasson to Sharret, 1.8.49.
5. Yediot, Sasson to Sharret, 21.8.49.
6. Yediot, Sasson to Sharret, 26.8.49.

Don Peretz, who wrote about the Israeli attitudes to the refugee problem, noted correctly that the Arab consent to sign the May 1949 protocol was a tacit recognition of the state of Israel. He claimed that this was realised by the Israelis who were thus prepared to make some concessions on the refugee question.[1] However, as will be indicated in this chapter, else it was the American pressure more than anything that bore upon Israel to show some flexibility on this issue.

2. The Gaza Proposal

The Gaza proposal, by which Israel should take over the Gaza area, and with it the responsibility for the existing population and the Arab refugees (estimated to be 230,000 by the Foreign Office[2]), was first introduced by the Israelis during a discussion with Mark Ethridge, the American representative on the PCC.[3] After learning that Ethridge had a prior Egyptian indication of their willingness to relinquish the area, the Israeli cabinet, at the end of a long debate, voted to accept the Gaza-Rafah strip with its population.[4] American documents give the impression that Ethridge was the first to raise the proposals in a talk with Eytan.[5] However, the British and Israeli documents provide sufficient evidence for the fact that the Israelis were the authors of the proposal.[6] It is important to establish the source of this proposal correctly since it indicated that, notwithstanding the Israelis' adamant refusal to allow repatriation and the preparations it made to

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1. Peretz Don, Israel and the Palestine Arabs (Washington: The Middle East Institute, 1958), p.43.
2. FO 371/75333, E7648, 16.6.49.
3. ISA 224/26, conversation of Young Roosevelt and Eban, 22.6.49 and ISA 2444/1, Eban-Ethridge conversation, 30.4.49.
4. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Herlitz-McDonald conversation, 31.5.49, p.1076 (501BB. Palestine/5-3149).
5. Ibid.
6. FO 371/75333, E7648, FO Minute, 16.6.49. cf. fn.3 this page.

avoid such a possibility,[1] there were circumstances in which Israel was prepared to accept the responsibility for a large number of refugees.

The State Department did not insist initially on the Gaza proposal. However, after it had received an assessment from its embassy in Cairo that the Egyptians might accept the offer if they were to be given territorial compensation, the Americans regarded the proposal as the key for solving the refugee problem;[2] all the more so since the State Department was still loyal to the idea of exchange of territory as a basis for a solution. The Americans hoped that Britain would participate in concerted pressure on both sides to agree to the proposal.[3]

The Foreign Office had to face some difficulties and divergence of opinions before formulating its policy on this matter. The Office learned about the offer from Sir Knox Helm in Tel Aviv. The British Embassy in Cairo assessed that, contrary to the American appreciation, the Egyptians would reject the principle of bargaining territory against refugees.[4]

Both assessments were incomplete. When the Egyptians were informed about the proposals their initial tendency was to show willingness to discuss the issue. However, after three days, probably owing to pressure from the Palace on the Egyptian government, the latter rejected the proposal.[5] The Head of the BMEO, Sir John Troutbeck, believed that the Egyptian favoured the proposal and wished the

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1. See p.209
2. FRUS 49, Vol.6, SoS to American Embassy/London, 25.6.49, p.1129 (501 MA./6-2549).
3. FRUS 49, Ethridge to Rusk, 15.6.49, p.1137 (501BB.Palestine/6-1549).
4. FO 371/75333, E7648, op.cit.
5. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Memo talk, Eylat-McGhee, 25.7.49, p.1248 (en)(867n.50/7-2549).

Israelis to keep the area, but feared the implication of an open agreement with Israel.[1] He reported that the Egyptians could not even resettle 13,000 refugees who had succeeded in getting as far as Egypt itself, and had moved them back to the Strip.[2] In 1949, the Egyptians told the Jordanians in a League meeting that they were anxious somehow to get rid of the strip which had already been regarded as a breeding ground for Communism in 1948.[3]

The Eastern Department, at first tended to accept the Israeli offer and warned the Egyptian government that if they did not agree, they themselves would have to be responsible for all the refugees living there.[4] Campbell still claimed that it was not a fair quid pro quo unless such a transaction was part of a general settlement.[5] The Foreign Office, on the other hand, had received optimistic reports from Tel Aviv that the Israelis would not rule out the exchange of territory in order to induce the Egyptians to agree to that arrangement.[6] It is notable that in the first half of 1949 the Anglo-Israeli relations were still strained and the British hoped that in exchange for the Strip, Galilee, Ramleh, Lydda and the Jerusalem corridor, the Israelis would concede the strategically important Negev.[7]

Campbell claimed that the Egyptians should not be forced to give up the only reward they obtained from the war in Palestine, and was

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1. See chapter 5.
2. FO 371/75438, E10383, BMEO to FO(MES), 31.8.49; see also Al-Misri 24.4.49 qt. in FO 371/73461, J7772, WA, 31.9.49.
3. See Egyptian complaints in FO 371/73460, J6065, WA, 21.7.49.
4. FO 371/75051, E8512, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49.
5. The isssue was raised in the Foreign Office's Middle East conference in London, see FO 371/75072, E9044, UK ME conference, 22.7.49.
6. FO 371/75333, E7648, FO Minute, 16.6.49.
7. Ibid.

supported by Dow in Jerusalem who predicted that the Gaza refugees would become slave labour in the Israeli Defence Forces service (sic).[1] Campbell won the day, not so much owing to his own arguments but rather due to Kirkbride's intervention. As was mentioned earlier, Kirkbride served as a watchdog. The Minister in Amman objected to the principle of territorial compensation for Israel in return for repatriation, and thus stated that it was desirable that Gaza should be retained by the Egyptians in order to consolidate Transjordan's rights over the West Bank.[2]

Hence, the Foreign Office agreed that its ambassador in Egypt would mention the subject, as part of the concerted Anglo-American effort, but at the same time declared its reluctance to exert pressure on the Egyptians. Owing to Kirkbride's and Campbell's objections, the Foreign Office conveyed a new formula: Egypt should keep the Gaza Strip and Israel should repatriate 150,000 refugees.[3] The American Secretary of State was bewildered by the news. He wrote to the American Ambassador in London that he found it hard be believe that the Foreign Office proposed that Egypt would assume responsibility for the refugees in the Gaza Strip in the light of what the State Department knew about Egypt's problems in absorbing more population and its attitude to the Palestinian refugees in general.[4] However, by now the Egyptian reaction was cool and uncooperative.[5]

The Israelis, on their part, submitted the proposal to the PCC. The Commission had generally accepted it with some reservations. The Commission asserted, as did the Foreign Office and the State Department

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1. FO 371/75072, E9044, UK ME conference, 22.7.49.
2. FO 371/75332, E5533, Amman to FO 30.4.49.
3. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Tele from US Embassy in UK to SD, 28.6.49, p.1180 (501MA. Palestine/6-2549).
4. FRUS 49, SoS to US Embassy in UK, 30.6.49, p.1192 (501MA. Palestine/6-2549).
5. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Cairo to SD, 7.7.49, p.1195 (fn.2)(867n.01/7-7219).

ment, that Israel should provide territorial compensation somewhere else, and demanded safeguards by Israel for the future treatment of refugees in the Gaza Strip. They should be permitted to go to any part of Israel where they had property or special interests.[1] The Israeli delegation declared that if the Arabs rejected the offer, it would not commit itself on the numbers of refugees to be repatriated. The Arab delegations demanded immediate return of the refugees who wished to do so to Israeli-held territory.[2]

The writer, Don Peretz, blames the Commission for transferring each side's claims without comment. However, British documents prove that the Commission did indeed comment.[3] The Gaza proposal died because the Israelis had offered a new proposal and the Egyptians stipulated their own conditions. The Egyptian delegation, in meeting with the Economic Survey Mission, declared that Israel should first allow a portion of Gaza refugees to settle in the Negev.[4] By 1950, the Foreign Office believed that Egypt wanted to keep the refugees unemployed and unsettled as a bargaining counter for political negotiations with Israel on the future of the strip.[5]

E. The American pressure and its outcome.

In order to appreciate correctly to what extent an opportunity was missed in 1949 with regard to the refugee problem, it is important to recollect the initial Israeli stand on this issue. The Israelis saw the exodus as part of possible exchange of population (as incidentally was offered by the Peel commission and the Labour Party Congress in

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1. FO 371/75067, E13727, FO Minute, November 1949.
2. UN GA OR (4th session), Ad-hoc Committee, Annex, Vol.2, pp.5-9 (doc.A/927).
3. Peretz, Israel, p.41.
4. FO 371/73461, J7772, WA, 31.9.49.
5. FO 371/82247, E1825/138, Knight to Evans, 12.6.50.

1945). The Israelis regarded the refugees after the war as a potential fifth column, if repatriated, and an additional economic burden which might have restricted the ability of Israel to absorb Jewish refugees.[1] The Israelis were not content with words alone and took some measures took some measures to prevent mass repatriation. Apart from deterring the refugees from returning, the Israeli cabinet decided to turn the Arab villages under their control, which were abandoned or where the inhabitants had been evicted, either into cultivated areas or into no-man's-land in order to prevent repatriation.[2]

Given this Israeli viewpoint and preparation, it is, even today, surprising that it eventually agreed to take back 100,000 refugees. The Israelis were happy to enlarge their territory, even if the price was the responsibility for 250,000 refugees as was the case with the Gaza proposal. However, it was precisely this line of thinking which had eventually put the Israelis in difficulties. As was mentioned earlier, the Israelis stated that unless the Egyptians approved the Gaza proposal, Israel was prepared to repatriate only a small number of refugees. The State Department and the Foreign Office found it an unconvincing argument. How could Israel claim its ability to absorb 250,000 refugees with the Gaza Strip and in the same breath it declared it could hardly repatriate any, without territorial compensation.[3] This Israeli attitude brought about the beginning of American pressure on Israel to change its policy.

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1. ISA 2445/3, report on the possible settlement for the refugee problem, Weitz, Lief and Danin, undated. See also Kaplan, Refugees, 156 and E.H. Buehrig, The UN and the Palestinian refugees (Indiana University Press, 1971), p.13.
2. All in all 286 villages fell into this category: 179 in Jewish territory and 107 in the areas allotted to the Arabs, Israeli cabinet meeting in Ben-Gurion's office, 18.8.49 in ISA 2444/19.
3. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Ethridge to Rusk, 15.6.49, p.1137 (501 BB. Palestine/6-1549); FO 371/74436, E10083, FO to UKUN, 2.9.49.

President Truman, after the failure of the Gaza proposal, sent a special envoy, General Hildring, to put across to the Israelis the President's concern about Israel's attitude.[1] This was coupled by an unprecedentedly sharp telegram to Ben Gurion, in which the Israeli Premier was warned that the US government would reverse its attitude towards the Israelis if Israel did not alter its position on the refugee question.[2] The Israeli Foreign Office believed the US pressure to be just for the purposes of placating world public opinion.[3] However, the US pressure grew and with it the alarm in Israel. The State Department was convinced by Ethridge that the Israeli position on refugees was the main reason for the stalemate in Lausanne.[4] Hence there was some change, when the Israelis consented to allow reunion of families (in the broader definition of the term 'family', according to the the Arab concept).[5] The Israeli reports talked about a total number of 25,000 refugees which had come back legally and illegally.[6] The Americans were still not satisfied. In order to underline their misgivings they conditioned a promised loan to Israel of $100 million from the Import-Export Bank on Israel's altering its posture.[7] Another note was sent by Truman, this time to President Weizmann, in which the American President blamed the Israelis for an uncompromising attitude while the Arabs came to the PCC with the object of achieving peace.[8]

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1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Hildring to SoS, 25.7.49, p.1249 (501 BB. Palestine/7-2549).
2. ISA 38/11, Truman to Ben-Gurion, 29.5.49.
3. ISA 2444/19, the Information department, memo, 13.4.49.
4. Ethridge influenced the state department on this issue throughout 1949. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Ethridge to SoS, 12.6.49, p.1124.
5. FRUS 49, Tele. Porter to SoS, 28.7.49 (501BB. Palestine/7-2849).
6. ISA 36/10, Comay to Eliash, 29.4.49.
7. FRUS 49, Vol.6, McGhee to SoS, 19.7.49, p.1237 (501 BB. Palestine/7-1349.
8. FRUS 49, Truman to Weizmann, 13.8.49, p.1300 (501 BB. Palestine/8-1549.

These last two measures were published and were viewed with alarm by the Israeli press and Knesset.[1]

The American position was that maximum repatriation was required of Israel to the areas which were allotted to the Arabs. The State Department reasoned with the Israelis that the Congress would not agree to finance the resettlement when it had already agreed to the Marshall Plan and NATO. Moreover, resettlement was not feasible without a large measure of repatriation.[2]

The British learned about a new Israeli offer from Helm.[3] At the end of August it was leaked through an American correspondent that the Israeli government had communicated to the State Department a definite figure of 100,000 refugees which they were prepared to accept as part of a general peace agreement. Israel kept the right to resettle those refugees wherever it deemed suitable. Publicly, the Israeli Foreign Minister announced in the Knesset that if the Arab delegations were prepared for peace negotiations with Israel the refugee problem would be the first to be discussed. Sharret won the support of the Knesset for his proposal.[4]

The PCC considered the Israeli offer unsatisfactory, as did the Arab delegates.[5] They demanded repatriation of all refugees and compensation to those who did not wish to return. The Arabs claimed that the Israeli proposal contradicted the UN GA resolution of December 1948.[6] As a compromise, the Commission suggested a mixture of resettlement and repatriation as the principal basis for solution. The

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1. Peretz, Israel, pp.44-50 (Haarez, Hazofeh); Divrei Yemei Haknesset (Knesset Diary, 1.8.49, pp.1195-1196, 1216-1236, Schechtman, Refugees, p.38.
2. ISA 36/10, Comay to Eliash, 29.4.49.
3. FO 371/75206, E9789, FO Minute, Sherringham, 5.8.49.
4. FO 371/75190, E9756, Tel-Aviv to FO, 8.8.49.
5. UN GA A3922, UNPC 4th progress report (9.6.-15.9.49).
6. Ibid.

Jordanian and Syrian governments stated they would be able to receive those refugees who did not wish to be repatriated. Privately, the Foreign Office learned that those governments agreed to the inevitability of a general resettlements programme.[1] The Americans had similar information and that was why they believed the Israeli offer to be inadequate. McGhee was confident that if Israel were to repatriate 250,000 refugees, the Syrians, the Jordanians and the Iraqis could come to the fore and commit themselves publicly to resettlement.[2] The Israelis claimed that demographically, absorbing more than 100,000 would have been suicidal for the Jewish state, since with the additional 150,000 Arabs already living in Israel this would have increased the Arab population to 250,000.[3]

Secretary Acheson believed that Israel had allowed domestic public opinion to develop in such a way that any concessions on refugees were impossible.[4] On the other hand, the American consul in Jerusalem was surprised about the Israeli press's relatively moderate reaction.[5]

When the Israeli offer was made, Anglo-Israeli relations were such as to convince the Israeli Foreign Office that it could turn to the British Foreign Office for advice and support. The Israeli ambassador requested British mediation on the question of the 100,000; however, the Foreign Office was reluctant to exert any pressure on the Arabs on this issue. The Office found the Israeli proposal inadequate and unreasonable in view of Israel's previous consent to absorb the Gaza

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6. FO 371/75436, E10083, FO Minute, 16.8.49.
1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, memo by Rusk, 28.7.49 8501 BB. Palestine/7-2849, p.1262.
2. On May 15, 1948, there were 655,000 Jews in Israel (Government of Israel, Facts about Israel, 1958.
3. FRUS 49, circular tele. SoS to Diplomatic offices, 16.8.49, p.1317 (501 BB. Palestine/8-1649).
4. FRUS 49, Burdet to SoS, 16.8.49, p.1320 (867n 48/8-1649).

refugees.[1] Notwithstanding this reservation, the British position by then was basically closer to the Israeli understanding of the problem, seeing resettlement as the main means of solving the problem. But this was never fully conveyed to the Arab governments.[2]

Where the British position diverged from the American one was in the Foreign Office's conviction that American pressure was fruitful. In August 1949, the Office formed the impression that Israel's attitude towards the refugees had improved owing to the American pressure. Both the Office and The Times believed Israel was preparing vast areas in Eastern Galilee and the Negev as reception areas for the refugees. The Times correspondent in Israel interviewed the designated staff for these areas.[3]

However, this period of Israel's forthcoming attitude towards the refugees was short. With the flow of Jewish refugees from Arab countries in 1950-51, Israel claimed it could not increase the number of the Arab population it its territory.

Hence internal criticism within Israel, and the Arab refusal, caused the Israeli government to prevaricate even on this limited offer. The American position on the refugee problem at this time was in fact that Israel should implement the UN resolution of December 11th, 1948, whereas the Foreign Office, from the outset, supported the idea of combining repatriation and resettlement. It should be emphasized that the State Department believed that most of the refugees did not wish to return. In any case, once the second Israeli offer was

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1. FO 371/75436, E10083, FO UNUK 2.9.49, FO 371/75437, E10474, W. Strang, FO Minute, 25.8.49.
2. See the FO plans for resettlement in this chapter.
3. Hernes, Times, 1.8.49, FO 371/75436, E9822, Information memo, 1.8.49.

rejected by the Arabs, the Americans were disinclined to exert further pressure on Israel. The Americans decided to introduce a new solution to the problem by treating the whole question as an economic problem.

F. The Economic Approach.

With the onset of cold and rainy weather around the middle of October 1948, feeding and accommodation, as well as health services became a serious problem. Bunche reported to the General Assembly that it was of the highest importance to provide work and activity for the refugees in order to occupy their attention. The first external relief came from UNICEF and the IRC (International Red Cross). They were soon followed by the League of Red Cross Societies and World Council of Churches.[1] In order to integrate the work of relief the UN established its disaster relief HQ in Beirut which was usually referred to as the UN Relief Project for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR). This project was supported and financed by a special fund that was disbursed by the director of UNRPR.[2] This particular course was sought by the UN owing to the surprising refusal by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to take care of the refugees.[3]

A year later, the British representative in the ESM (Economic Survey Mission) would note that, apart from the corruption which prevailed within the UNRPR machinery, it was altogether a 'tactical error' to let the UNRPR step in, in the first place. According to Sir Desmond Morton, the Arab governments at first rejected the UN involvement and were willing to solve the problem by themselves. However, 'they soon

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1. UN GA, Bunche Report (document A3689, 18.10.48).
2. Buehrig, The UN, p.5.
3. It was Bernadotte's suggestion. The IRO replied that it had priorities (other refugee problems) and limited resources. Bernadotte's last report, 16.9.48, ISA 2427/9.

realised the heaven-sent opportunity this afforded them in the political field of declaring that the refugee problem was not their responsibility'.[1] That is, according to Morton, the UN involvement aimed basically at cooperation with the Arab governments. However, the Arab governments had soon relinquished any responsibility on their part to the refugees, and held the UN as the sole responsible authority for the welfare of the refugees. The FO had not accepted this assumption and could not recall any such move on the part of the Arabs.[2] Indeed, there is no evidence to that effect from the documents viewed for the purpose of this work.

The UNRPR fund was mainly financed by the Americans. Originally $32m had been allocated to maintain the refugees, but only $22m was received. A joint resolution of both Houses authorized the appropriation of $16m for relief. However, the Congress informed the State Department that it would not allow more funds unless other contributions were made and Israel made more concessions.[3] There then followed the futile American pressure which has been discussed above. Without American contributions, it became evident that the fund would not be able to provide for the refugees beyond the end of 1949.[4] Moreover, the voluntary organizations became restive by the end of the first half of 1949 and talked about packing up before the end of the year, rather than risk losing their prestige if funds ran out in the winter. Owing to the grave situation at the end of July 1949, there was again talk of employing the IRO as co-ordinating body. The issue was brought up by Edmonds the British representative in the IRO, who urged the FO, during

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1. FO 371/75447, Beirut to FO, 21.11.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 49, vol.6, Memo to SoS (the decision was taken in March 1949), 4.8.49, p.1282 (501BB. Palestine; FO 371/75051, E8512, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49; Times, 30.8.59.
4. FO 371/75051, E8512, op.cit.

its Middle East Conference to transfer the responsibility for relief to the IRO. As the Americans and the British contributed 80% of the IRO budget, thereby, so Edmonds argued, Britain would have direct control. He warned the FO that resettlement would never solve the problem of the urban sector, only relief.[1] Edmonds was supported by two other foreign office officials, Beith and Mayhew. However, the Treasury made it clear that British contribution would only be towards resettlement, not relief. The Treasury had the support of Mr. Clement Attlee and the British representative in the Middle East. They added that it was wrong to 'change horses in midstream', by risking a gap in the arrival of supplies.[2] Wright concluded that Britain's contribution towards relief would only be given to Transjordan. Although Bevin urged for a more general approach on relief the Foreign Office accepted Wright's conclusion.[3]

The Americans at least had the ability to increase their contribution to the IRO budget if it were necessary; the British did not. Indeed this was both the main British handicap and advantage at the same time; an economic solution of any kind would not involve them to a large extent owing to their financial disabilities. The British had already exhausted their overseas expenditures which were planned to be invested in the Nile Water schemes, the Iraqi irrigation plans and development in Persia.[4]

Nevertheless, the IRO had shown its capability to cope with refugee problems and was no doubt the best qualified organization to do so. Yet, owing tho the Treasury's objections the Foreign Office could not suggest the IRO. Therefore, the Office looked for a new

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1. FO 371/75072, E9044, FO ME conference, 22.7.49.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75051, E8512, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49.

organization that would combine relief and development projects.[1] The formulation of these Foreign Office ideas precipitated the creation of the Economic Survey Mission and no doubt affected the American decision to introduce an economic solution. However, the issue of the IRO was raised once more as will be seen in the following pages.

Thus by the end of August 1949, there was no source which would have financed the UNRPR fund for 1949/1950. That could have meant the cessation of relief for the refugees. This stalemate in the relief operations particularly alarmed the newly assigned US co-ordinator for refugee matters in the State Department, Robert McGhee. He warned Acheson that such a situation would be exploited by the Communists, and that, in his view, the only way of avoiding this was by introducing general development schemes which would precede a political solution.[2] This view was accepted by the State Department, which long before August 1949 held the view that the absence of a territorial settlement should not have prevented the development and implementation of ways for resolving the refugee problem.

The Foreign Office regarded these ideas favourably and in general they corresponded with London's views, and particularly Bevin's aspirations for raising the standard of living in the area as the best means of preventing communist penetration. The idea of sending a survey mission to explore the possibility of combining resettlement with development was raised in the Anglo-American talks in August 1949. However, the Foreign Office did not fail to warn their American counterparts repeatedly that such an outline was impossible owing to the political complications.[3]

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1. FO 371/75437, E10651, FO Minute, 23.8.49.
2. FRUS 49, vol.6, McGhee to SoS, 13.7.49., p.121 (501BB. Palestine/7-1349).
3. FO 371/75436 (August 1949); 75437 (August 1949) and 75438 (September, 1949).

McGhee gave the gist of his concept in front of the Young Democratic Club in November 1949. He viewed the refugee problem mainly as an economic problem, one which was caused by economic dislocations arising from the Palestine hostilities which were preventing political relaxation. The return of the refugees or their integration were, for McGhee, economic solutions. He favoured the idea of an economic survey mission, since he believed that an outstanding and experienced American could cope with the challenge and would find a formula for solving the technical part of the problem.[1]

Unlike the British, the inexperienced McGhee (in Middle Eastern affairs) overlooked the political complications and anticipated troubles somewhere else. He told his listeners that there were three preconditions to the political success of the schemes. First, the Arab countries would have to relax restrictive legislation which inhibited foreign commercial operations and private investment. Secondly, those governments should initiate fiscal reforms. Finally, they should begin with agrarian reforms.[2]

It seems that Truman hesitated before approving the initiative. McGhee had to struggle in order to convince the President that the Economic Survey Mission (ESM) would not commit the US to any line of action. The survey by itself was to be a help to those countries which would be prepared to absorb refugees. Thus, it was agreed that the American representative in the PCC would urge the commission to appoint the ESM, to be chaired by an American with two deputies, British and French.[3] This decision was already contemplated in July 1949.

On August 23, the PCC decided to implement the GA resolution of

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1. FO 371/75046, E11420, McGhee in front of the Young Democratic Club, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 9.11.49
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 49, Vol.6, McGhee to SoS, 13.7.49., p.1219 (501BB.Palestine/7-1349

11.12.48 by establishing an economic mission as a subsidiary body under its authority. The mission was charged with studying the economic situation in the countries affected by the war in Palestine and looking for solutions for the problem of development programmes required for overcoming the economic dislocations created by the war. Furthermore, it was given the authority to recommend on ways of facilitating the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and payment of compensation pursuant to the provisions of the UN resolution from December 1948. (In fact, resettlement was first not mentioned directly, but as a result of repatriation). Finally, the ESM was asked to look for measures of promoting economic conditions conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in the area. The chairman was to be an American and his deputies British, Turkish and French.[1]

The mission was rapidly constituted and went to the Middle East in September 1949 and established its headquarters in Beirut. Mr. Gordon Clapp, chairman of the board of directors of Tennessee Valley authority, accepted the appointment as the Mission's chairman. The Foreign Office suggested that Clapp and his British deputy, Sir Desmond Morton would be responsible to their governments and not to the United Nations.[2] However, the American government dreaded such a direct responsibility, and the overall authority was given to the UN. McGhee explained that the US had no direct financial interest in the area, thus Congress would only grant contribution to the United Nations, not to individual states.[3] Thus this was a weak argument, as was proved in 1952 when the Congress was prepared to grant assistance to any country

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1. FO 816/153 and UN GA, document A/992, 4th progress report of ESM (9.6-15.9.49), 22.9.49.
2. This was supported by the Cabinet, CAB 134/501, (49)(0)10, 13.4.49.
3. CAB 134/501, meeting McGhee-Wright, 13.4.49

willing to absorb refugees.[1] The Foreign Office, on the other hand, warned the State Department that throwing the question of resettlement and financial assistance into the hands of the UN, and allowing the organization to administer the whole project, would remove the project 'from the practical sphere of technical and financial assistance' and throw it 'into UN politics with all that that would imply in delay, inefficiency and Soviet intrigues'.[2]

Even before the interim report of the Mission was submitted to the PCC, and long before the idea of such a survey task was conceived, the Foreign Office had its doubts about the economic approach. The Eastern Department warned that the outcome of the economic approach would be a freezing of the territorial situation. Indeed, in hindsight, the office's warning was correct. Nevertheless, it was also the mere preoccupation with the refugee question that perpetuated the territorial status quo. Incidentally, the American Embassy in London had voiced a similar criticism.[3] The possibility of consolidating the territorial status quo was not a marginal issue as far as the Foreign Office was concerned. It meant weakening the British aspirations for the Negev, which finally withered away only in the begining of 1950.[4]

There were other problems as well. The Foreign Office was apprehensive that McGhee's ideas about new development schemes would hamper

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1. See the last pages in this chapter.
2. CAB 134/501, FO to Washington, 13.4.49.
3. FRUS 49, Vol. 6, Tel. 3351, London, 23.8.49, 501 BB Palestine, EN p.1327; and also some officials in the SO warned against bypassing the political problem in Cross (A. SoS for Congressional retentions), to McGhee, 26.8.49, p.1333.
4. FO 371/7547, E10651, FO Minute, Beith, 23.8.49; Interview with Sir John Beith.

the work of the BMEO in promoting already existing programmes,and thus demanded priority for the latter.[1]

It is important to emphasize that Britain did not have anything positive to suggest as an alternative to the American approach. The Foreign Office was convinced that there was no need for further territorial changes. However, it had to admit that the political approach had got nowhere. At least the principle, and it seems in hindsight the main lines of a better approach were clearer to the Foreign Office. That is the solution could only be a combination of the two approaches, the political and the economic.[2] However, the British were unwilling, and maybe unable, to exert pressure on the Arab side to accept this formula, which was accepted for a while, in principle, by the Israelis. Moreover, by September 1949, the Foreign Office had come to realise that politically resettlement was more feasible than repatriation, because repatriation in large numbers would leave the Jordanians to resettle the refugees left in their own state. Thus it suggested to the State Department that they concentrate on resettlement.[3] However, this did not fit the 'pure' economic approach of McGhee. Both McGhee and Clapp believed that only after assessing the economic capabilities of each country (including Israel), could the ESM would determine the number of refugees it could absorb. This assessment was to be made by 'an authorative technical study'.[4]

The Americans were not deterred and the ESM began its work. The SD, owing to Ethridge's reports, believed that, in a matter of weeks,

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1. CAB 134/501, (0)(49)1, FO to Washington, 13.4.49
2. FO 371/75438, E11179, FO Minute, Thirkell 16.9.49.
3. FO 371/75438, Washington to FO, 14.9.49
4. CCP (PCC) final report of the UN ESM for the Middle East.

both Israel and Arab approval for such a scheme would be obtained.[1] In fact, the Israeli media treated the ESM in very much the same way as the Foreign Office. It was approved of, but with more than a modicum of scepticism.[2] It is notable that when it was proposed that a British member should join the group, the Israeli delegations at first were opposed on the grounds that Britain would be biased and partial to the Arab viewpoint. But later they explained that notwithstanding this would not prevent Israel from cooperating with the ESM.[3] The Arab states, apart from Iraq, were willing, although reluctantly, to consult and meet with the mission.[4] The mission had little difficulty in approaching the Jordanians and the Egyptians. Owing to British pressure on Syria and Iraq the latter cooperated with the mission and later agreed to receive it. Although the Americans pressured the British to use their influence in Iraq, Morton and Clapp understood their weak position vis à vis Iraq, since that country did not participate in the PCC's efforts and was not inclined to cooperate. However, the Foreign Office envisaged the largest resettlement possibilities in Iraq and, in spite of Morton's reservations, the mission visited Iraq.[5] As for the Syrians, they announced their willingness to participate in preparing relief programmes with the assistance of the ESM. Publicly, Syrians refused to mention resettlement, but privately they told Sir Desmond that, with the right finance, it could be accepted.[6]

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1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Memo McGhee, 18.5.49, p.1022-23 (501 BB. Palestine/5-1649.
2. Haarez, Davar, Ha-Boker, 26.8.49, it was also approved by the Israeli government. FRUS 49.
3. ISA 2444/1, Ethridge-Eban conversation, 30.4.49; Times, 30.8.48.
4. New York Times, 30.9.49.
5. FO 371/75441, E11922, Damascus to FO, 30.9.49; FO371/75439, E11296, Beirut to FO, 15.9.49
6. FO 371/75442, Tel-Aviv (Morton) to FO, 10.10.49

The Foreign Office assessed that, in general, the mission was suspected by the Arab governments since the members were from countries which supported the partition resolution and thus it was regarded as pro-Israeli.[1]

1. British involvement in the Survey Mission

Owing to Morton's active role in the preparations for the ESM interim report, British involvement was greater than initially intended. It is notable that the American Embassy in Cairo had little doubt about Morton's dominance. They reported that Morton had got Clapp 'under his thumb'.[2] Indeed, British and American documents give this impression, as the following survey will attempt to prove.

A few weeks after the mission started its work, Morton reported that the mission had the collaboration of the Arab governments for schemes of employment and relief, pending a permanent agreement on resettlement or repatriation. Clapp and Morton suggested that finance, in whole or in part, should come from external and local sources. They wanted FO help to allay Arab fears about the ESM.[3] The Foreign Office warned that these intial conclusions indicated a tendency to avoid completely the political isssues and concentrate on temporary relief works; an attitude that might defeat the purpose for which the mission was set up for. Thus the Office hoped 'that the work of the mission will bring the Arab states to admit that the refugee problem could only be finally solved by a large scale resettlement in addition to repatriation'. The Office warned that unless relief was linked to resettlement, it would be impossible to secure funds either from the British Treasury or other countries; 'the Arab states have therefore to

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1. FO 371/75439, E11563, Washington to FO, 23.9.49.
2. FO 371/75449, E14290, Beirut to FO, 26.12.49.
3. FO 371/75439, E11297, FO (Strang) to Morton, 16.9.49.

be brought around to the idea of resettlement before the mission report is made public and any glossing over this aspect in talks with them is likely to lead to charges of bad faith and even of rejection of the Mission's recommendations in toto'.[1]

The State Department saw Clapp's and Morton's suggestions as a tactical move and believed that their views were in accordance with the FO; they told the British ambassador in Washington that the US did not intend the mission to dodge the issue of resettlement.[2]

However, Morton and Clapp complained that the terms of reference given to the mission by the PCC were proving something of a handicap. First, since the mission was tainted at birth with some of the odium acquired by the PCC, Morton believed that if emphasis was put on economic development and not on solving the refugee problem by resettlement, the ESM report would sound better in Arab ears. This meant revision of the ESM terms of references. Namely, what Clapp and Morton wanted was a public declaration that economic assistance to Arab countries did not depend on their willingness to resettle the refugees.[3]

Eventually, Clapp and Morton had their way. The SD was convinced since it was concerned about delay in finding resources for relief. Any mentioning in the ESM report of general resettlement would have led to a long debate in the General Assembly, whereas the SD wished to accelerate the process. The Foreign Office went even further. It suggested that the ESM would entrust the responsibility for relief to the hands of a new organization dealing solely with Arab refugees. Thus, it was a British suggestion to establish a UN work and relief

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/75439, E11563, Washington to FO, 23.9.49.
3. FO 371/75439, E11580, Beirut to FO, 23.9.49.

agency (UNWRA).[1] Further more, this suggestion, once accepted, meant that the ESM produced a solution aimed solely at providing relief, and not resettlement, for the refugees.

In this way, the Foreign Office was suddenly not only engaged in the economic approach but also giving the lead, in spite of Dow's warnings that Jews and Arabs alike wanted a political solution. It would not work, asserted Dow; Lord Wavell tried it in India, with the net result that Britain had to abandon India in August 1947 instead of June 1948.[2]

In any case, in the negotiations with the Arab governments the word resettlement was not mentioned publicly and the talks concentrated on relief works.[3] Morton reported that the ESM had found means to introduce the question of resettlement both in Syria and Jordan. However, the Mission could not publish the fact and it did not come to any practical implementation.[4]

In its negotiations with Israel, the Mission main aim was to obtain Israeli acquiescence to paying compensation. The Israelis refused and rejected Morton's suggestion to use the German property in Israel amounting to £20 Million for that purpose.[5]

Given all these problems, Morton suggested that the ESM would not refer to any political aspects in its interim report and advocated a short term organization to deal with relief which would be divorced from the unpopular PCC and disassociated from the UN Secretariat.[6] Morton was no doubt the life and soul of the ESM interim and final report.

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1. FO 371/75440, E11830, FO Minute, Sherringham, 4.10.49.
2. He added that Adam Smith's 'Economic man' was not oriental, FO 371/75440, E11869, Dow to FO, 23.9.49.
3. FO 371/75441, E11917, Morton to FO, 1.10.49.
4. FO 371/75441, E11918, Morton to FO, 1.10.49.
5. Ibid.
6. FO 371/75443, E12543, Morton to FO, 17.10.49.

Given those problems, some officials had once again proposed employing the IRO. The arguments against the IRO were, on the face of it, only financial. The organization was controlled and financed by the US and the UK. The Treasury again invoked Attlee's help and the Premier ruled that some less expensive means of solving the problem should be found (the funds spent on Arab refugees relief were one third of what the UN had invested in IRO projects in Europe).[1]

A bold FO official suggested tackling the Treasury by insisting upon employing the IRO on the Palestine relief project, otherwise the only alternative was to be chaos and the political and moral ignominy of leaving people to starve.[2] Thus once more it was clear that a solution had not yet been found.

Towards the end of October 1949, the SD introduced new ideas, which alarmed the British to a large extent. The SD suggested entrusting the long range development schemes in the hands of an American Near Eastern Development Institute (NEDI), while UNRPR would continue to deal with relief. Needless to say that the FO understood this to be the end of the BMEO. Moreover they were convinced that the Arab governments would never accept it.[3]

Morton and Clapp opposed the American proposals, whereas their French colleague did not reject them.[4] As could be anticipated the fiercest opposition came from the BMEO.[5] The FO had to come up with an alternative. First, it was pointed out to the SD that the best way of dealing with the problem was by creating national development boards.

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1. FO 371/75443, E12578, New York to FO, 18.10.49
2. FO 371/75443, Boothby, 26.10.49
3. FO 371/75444, E12666, FO Minute, Sherringham, 21.10.49
4. FO 371/75444, E12669, Beirut to FO, 20.10.49.
5. FO 371/75444, BMEO to FO, 20.1.49.

The idea originated from the standard treaty draft with the Arab states proposed by the Foreign Office in the 1940s. The board would advise each government how to present applications for external assistance and finance and how to select development programmes and would supervise the execution of projects. This was supposed to give Arab governments a sense of independence.[1]

The Foreign Office won the day by suggesting that the interim report should deal merely with relief and public works, and, more important from the British point of view, there was no mention of long-term development, but rather an adoption of the FO idea of national development boards. A final point was made clear - relief work would not be in the refugee camps or for the camps as the Americans first understood it, but rather focussed on major public works.[2] Ironically, the outcome was that the refugees were used as a cheap labour force to improve communications and transport, notably in Jordan, while the camps were left in a deteriorating state. The reports were written solely by Morton and Clapp in the latter's bedroom for fear of 'Jewish and Trygve Lie's spies'.[3]

2. The Interim Report

After two months of work the ESM submitted its report to the PCC in November 1949. Although everyone had to await the final report, the initial and interim report was sufficient to indicate that the economic approach was doomed to fail. Its main feature was the proposal to substitute constructive work for philanthropic work.[4]

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1. FO 371/75444, E12861, Beirut to FO, 24.10.49.
2. FO 371/75445, E13239, FO Minute, Burrows.
3. FO 371/75446, E13650, Morton to FO, 8.11.49.
4. ISA 2444/1, resolution 302 (IV) assistance to Palestine refugees, 8.12.49, the report also appears as an annex in Buehrig, The UN, Appx. 2., p.193, and in FO371/75446, E13588, ESM report 10.11.49.

The mission stated that as long as the political stalemate continued, there was little hope for repatriation or a large scale resettlement. It pointed out that so far relief had prevented catastrophe. But it also recommended that resources should be directed towards resettlement and that responsibility should be transferred to the local governments. The Mission noted the need for a census in order to decrease the number of persons receiving relief. It was believed that a considerable number of fictitious refugees could be excluded. The census was also needed for organizing the employment of the refugees.[1]

The ESM reiterated the call for financial assistance for the Arab states in order to encourage development schemes. Finally the report discussed the potential opportunities for useful and productive work to improve and reclaim the land, increase the supply and use of water, strengthen and extend road systems and improve sanitation and shelter.[2] In short, it proposed public works in order to raise the standard of living, the usual formula for preventing communist penetration. But nothing practical was mentioned in that direction. A date was stated for the Public Works programme to begin in April 1950. While relief would be supplied by the UN until the end of that year, the responsibility would then fall on the Arab governments. The principal product of the report was its last recommendation: the establishment of an Agency to direct the work-relief programme and replace the UNRPR. This was UNWRA (United Nations Work and Relief Agency). Altogether it was estimated that $35.5m were required for UNWRA's budget.[3]

The Foreign Office was pleased with the report. It anticipated troubles only from the clause which advocated reduction of the number

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

of relief rations from 940,000 to 660.000. The Arabs would probably reject it, predicted the Eastern Department. Thus the FO warned the Arab governments of its contents before publication. Furthermore, it was thought that Israel had been let off lightly, mainly becauserepatriation was not mentioned.[1]

The Foreign Office believed that the next step should be an Anglo-American initiative to offer their help in selecting development schemes and in obtaining finance. Moreover, now that the danger of a competiting American development organization d;sappeared for a while, it was deemed essential to enlarge the BMEO and instruct it to work out programmes 'to the point of specification and calls for tenders'.[2] By its ad-hoc policy the Foreign Office was about to be dragged again, by its own initiative, into a deeper involvement in the Middle East which was only prevented by a lack of resources.[3]

Only Troutbeck spotted a staggering miscalculation. The report suggested relief work which would employ 80,000 refugees. What about the others, asked the Head of BMEO, or rather what about the majority of the refugees? He warned that Jordan would be faced with insoluble problem and could not survive. Troutbeck suggested that the IRO would provide for all the refugees. From the point of view of the officialdom in London he had entered the discussion much too late.[4]

At the end of 1949, the Americans held a Middle East conference of consisting of their representives in the area and of the Department's experts in the city of Istanbul. One of the many items of the agenda was the interim report. Almost everybody at the conference displayed great dissatisfaction with it. The agreed conclusion of the conference

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1. FO 371/75446, E13588, FO to Washington, 10.11.49; FO to Cairo, 19.11.49.
2. FO 371/75446, E13650, FO Minute Burrows, 10.11.49
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75446, E13701, Troutbeck to FO, 12.11.49.

read as follows: The problem of the interim report would be its implementation, which in the conference's view [was] 'handicapped at [the] start in certain states because of ESM's connection with the PCC and the Palestine problem'.[1] The Conference hoped that UNWRA would be disassociated from the PCC. This was possible, but it is strange that the American Middle East experts believed in practice that they could take the UNWRA project out of the context of the Palestine problem. In fact, they even recommended separating the pilot projects, at least in the public mind, from refugees and the PCC;[2] thus regarding UNWRA as purely a development project. Needless to say, such a concept departed from the terms of reference of the ESM, but fitted in with the ideas of Clapp and McGhee.

The Americans privately conveyed their own, unpublicized, conclusion to the report, ignoring once again the political aspect of the problem. Apparently, the Americans were most impressed by the possibilities of resettling refugees in Iraq. The Foreign Office (and the Israeli Foreign Office), saw it as the only desirable solution in the final analysis.[3] However, since London was not even prepared to discuss the issue with the Iraqis, it was never made public. The Foreign Office's ideas about resettlement will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in the context of the American aspirations, it is notable that the Office had fully realised that the Iraqi government was adamant in its refusal 'to go along with projects of integration'.[4]

The American interest in Iraq, and not in Jordan, coupled with McGhee's support for the incorporation of Arab Palestine in Transjordan

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1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Istanbul conference, 26.11-29.11.49, Agreed conclusions, p.173 (867 n.01/12-2849).
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/75055, E14210, Baghdad to FO, 11.11.49, BGA, Ben Gurion diary, 26.10.48.
4. Ibid.

(he saw it as an important step towards solving the problem of the refugees), calmed down any apprehension the Office had been harbouring, as a result of the establishment of the ESM. Notwithstanding its negative appreciation about the Mission's success, it was at least evident that it would not affect British interest, or undermine the foundations of British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict - the greater Transjordan concept.

Not every one in the Office was that cynical about the refugee problem, there were quite a few who believed that the interim report was an indication that the final report would include a suggestion for a transition from relief to resettlement.[1] In fact, this was quite probable, not a result of a cynical approach but rather as the fruit of the absence of clear ideas or policy towards the refugee question. In such cases what remained for the Office to do was to provide its officials with a vague guideline that in general suggested a combination of repatriation and resettlement.

3. The final report.

The final report, both in letter and spirit, indicated the mission's admission of its failure to solve the refugee problem by purely economic methods. 'Economic development cannot of itself (sic) make peace' conceded the Mission since 'where the political will to peace is lacking' economic solution had little meaning.[2] As one writer had put it, the Mission finally, after contemplating the past, 'saw politics as the scourge of the Middle East'.[3] The report discussed academically

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1. FO 371/75056, E15031, FO Minute, 28.11.48.
2. UN GA, Final Report of ESM, 28.12.49, part I, p.2.
3. Buehrig, The UN, p.34.

the long-range economic development prospects in the Middle East, and it noted in particular that Israel and Egypt should be left out of this effort since Israel had already begun to develop irrigation and to 'employ modern agriculture methods, while possessing the scientific infrastructure required for development.[1] The report also excluded Egypt because the 'knowledge and skill available in that country are already on a high level'.[2]

As regards other Arab countries, the Mission had hardly anything new to offer. It excluded the possibility of large short-term projects in Syria, Jordan and Iraq, owing to the lack of capital, skills and research facilities, as well as of governmental organisation and administrative infrastructure. Instead it suggested pilot projects for those countries and Lebanon, aimed mainly at the improvement of the exploitation of water resources. The Mission further adopted the British notion of advising the Arab governments to establish a National Development Board.[3]

As was the case with the interim repport, this was neither the important, nor at least the practical aspect of the report. On the technical level, the Mission recommended the curtailment of the United Nations relief operations and their gradual replacement by a programme of public works which it was hoped would improve the productivity of the area through absorption of unemployed refugees. The British idea of a relief and work agency was adopted. However it was not a reformed IRO but a new organization to be established on or after April 1, 1950. This agency would direct the proposed programmes of relief and public works. The agency should have full autonomy and would make its own

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1. UN GA, Final Report, op.cit., p.3.
2. Ibid.
3. UN GA, Final Report, op.cit., p.12.

decision, whether tactical or long-term ones.[1] This project was to continue until the end of June 1951 and would then be reexamined by the General Assembly. This might provide the opportunity to remove 400,000 refugees from the relief rolls. It is notable that neither the figure or the timetable were adhered to.[2]

The report was widely condemned both in Israel and in the Arab countries. In Israel, even those newspapers which welcomed the establishment of the Mission bitterly criticised the report. The press argued that the report encouraged Arab intransigence and did not emphasize resettlement. The Arab Palestine Press expressed dissatisfaction with the projects which would prejudice a final settlement and furthermore, the press was annoyed that the report did not fix responsibility on Israel.[3]

The Egyptian delegation to the UN attempted to amend the UN joint resolution based on the ESM's final report, with the view of preventing the reduction of the ration strength and generally increasing the amount and duration of the UN relief for refugees. The British and the American delegations opposed those amendments and stated that savings were aimed to assist the refugees by providing work for them.[4]

As soon as the final report was published, the Foreign Office felt that UNWRA, very much their own creation, would endanger their position. It was feared that UNWRA would have advisory functions of planning development and preparing applications for an external existence. The Office preferred the IRO to be concerned with these functions since the British enjoyed a prominent position there, while they had little

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1. Ibid.
2. This was repeated from the interim report, UN GA, pp.17-22.
3. FO 371/75329, EI2423, Dow to FO, Palestine Survey Affairs for September 1949; EI3636, Dow to FO, survey for October 1949.
4. FO 371/75449, EI4428, FO to Cairo, 2.12.49.

say in the proposed UNWRA. For this reason, the Foreign Office succeeded in altering the Treasury's previous objections to the IRO handling relief projects. It was realised in London that in such a case a specialised UN agency would not indulge in long-term development schemes.[1] However, the British soon found out that the State Department did not share their views this time and had developed very negative views on the IRO. The SD was apprehensive of the past preoccupation of the organisation with Jewish affairs and regarded it as unsuitable to carry out relief work under Clapp's recommendation. Furthermore, the SD feared that employment of the IRO would not appeal to the Congress, which would support the recommendation only if it was presented as part of a long term development scheme which would eventually lead to a settlement of the Palestine problem.[2] The FO, on the other hand, did not want the establishment of a relief organization, i.e. UNWRA, to lead to long-term development schemes. The FO claimed that a creation of a new agency dealing with long-term development would reduce the chance of cooperation with the Arab governments who would suspect that development was imposed on them, as well as from increasing administrative expenses and manpower, and would result in delaying the execution of works.[3]

This was no doubt a genuine British point of view, emerging from their experience and contacts with the Arab governments who opposed the American line. Nevertheless, the British also had other, more important, reasons for their objections to UNWRA's assumption of the role of a development organization. It would have severely affected the work

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1. FO 371/75449, E14332, FO to Beirut (Morton), 29.11.49. The Treasury hoped that a new IRO would commit the UK to a lesser contribution.
2. FO 371/ 75448, EI4139, FO Minute, 23.11.49.
3. FO 371/ 75449, E14332, FO to Beirut (Morton), 29.11.49.

and the position of the BMEO if the UN were to step in. Moreover, the British had exerted an important influence through the work of the national development boards in Iraq and Jordan and had no desire to lose this position. As mentioned earlier, the final report adopted this British suggestion despite American opposition; this was due to the dominant role of Sir Desmond Morton in drafting the report and his admirable representation of the views of the FO.

The British also had their way in convincing the Americans that only an American national could be a suitable director of the proposed agency. But they did not succeed in conveying to the Americans the importance of including representatives of the ME countries in the advisory Council attached to UNWRA.[1]

The only consideration weighing with the British was the American view that some reference to a long-term agency was necessary if they were to obtain funds directly from Congress after the end of UNWRA's existence due in June 1951. However, the FO believed that mention of any other organisation after 1951 would remove the stimulus to Arab governments to take over responsibility themselves.[2] This has indeed been the case over the last 30 years: UNWRA continues to exist, and the Arab countries, partly for political reasons, have never assumed responsibility.

It is notable that the ESM's final report had analysed the relationship between water, land and people in the area and pointed out that water was the key economic factor in the region. In the light of this analysis, it concluded that Syria and Iraq were the countries where the greatest possibilites of development existed and where an

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1. FO 371/75449, EI4244, FO to New York, 5.12.49. The Iraqis suggested Sir Edward Spears as a candidate in FO 3741/75450, E14676, UN to FO, 7.12.49.
2. FO 371/75449, E14459, FO to Beirut (Morton), 3.12.49.

increase of population on a large scale could be envisaged. Jordan, Arab Palestine and Israel's development were potentially limited owing the the inadequacy of their water supply. Clapp saw the main obstacle to the development as the lack of capital. He differentiated between the long-term possibilites in Iraq and Syria and the short term pilot demonstration projects in Jordan (the Wadi Zerka), Arab Palestine (Wadi Quilt) and Syria (Orontes valley). They were aimed at demonstrating to the Arab governments 'the methods of economic development' and thus to lead the way to long-term development.[1]

Before continuing with the chronological sequence of events it is important to elucidate the line of thinking within the Foreign Office with regard to resettlement schemes.

6. The Foreign Office Resettlement Schemes

The most important feature of the resettlement schemes was the number of refugees each country was believed to be able to absorb. Hence, the estimation of the total number of refugees played a decisive role in the attempts of all the parties involved to justify their policies and suggestions for solutions. In Palestine itself, the only formal census was that of 1931, and even the findings of this one were questioned.[2] Since a proper census was not conducted in 1948-1950, this work could only throw the British estimate into this controversial issue. In 1949, before the ESM report was published, the British delegation at the UN declared its intention of stopping the battle of figures and stated the Office's estimate that the numbers given by the Israelis were too low and that the UNRPR and Arab figures were

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1. FO 371/75452, E15402, Clapp final report-conversation in the Foreign Office with Clapp and Morton, 20.12.49.
2. Thicknesse, Refugees, p.5.

inflated. Against these the Office gave a figure of between 660,000 and 700,000.[1] After Clapp's report was completed, the Office stopped its own estimates and accepted ESM's estimates. From then on it adhered to the annual information given by UNWRA.[2]

The Foreign Offcie tended to accept resettlement as the main solution after the Permanent Under Secretary of State, Strang, visited the Middle East in June-July 1949 in order to assess the changes in the area. He was finally convinced that Israel would not allow the return of those refugees who wished to do so.[3]

Bevin presented a guideline to the Foreign Office Middle East conference of July 1949, based on Strang's findings. The Foreign Secretary told the meeting that the refugees should be resettled in Syria, Jordan and Iraq.[4] On the basis of this guideline the Foreign Office prepared four main resettlement programmes. They were related to three regions in the Middle East and one in North Africa. The ESM was very much affected by the directions given in this outline. As was the case with the Mission's findings, the Office worked out only the technical details and left aside the political implications. Thus, they were as irrelevant politically as the Clapp report. However, unlike Clapp the Foreign Office never published its findings owing to the absence of a political solution to accompany them. They served only as an internal guide to the FO officials who were instructed to seek a political solution, namely, resettlement in Iraq and Syria, and, to

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1. FO 371/75436, E10083, FO to UN UK delegation, 2.9.49; FO371/75437, FO Minute, Sherringham, 23.8.49.
2. Clapp reported 750,000 refugees and UNWRA about 850,000 in 1951 after cutting the rations of an estimated number of 100,000 who were considered not to be refugees; in September 1951, the figure of 1,000,000 was reported, whereas Israel still spoke of 750,000. (UNWRA report September 1951, supp. no.16, document A/1905 and ISA 2402/9, report by Shamai Cahana 1951.
3. FO 371/75067, E8752, W. Strang tour to the M.E., 4.7.49.
4. FO 371/75072, E9043, UK ME conference, 21.7.49.

some extent, in Jordan. It is notable that, as in the case of the ESM suggestions, the implementation of these ideas would have prevented the continued plight of life in the camps for most refugees.

Bevin asked the British representatives in the area to stimulate the Arab countries to agree to resettlement; although not to specific plans unless the initiative came from the Arab governments, as with Husni Zaim in Syria.[1] Wright translated Bevin's tentative ideas into more practical terms and told the Middle East Official Committee that the main targets for resettlement were Syria and Iraq. This position changed only in 1951 when Iraq became less feasible and Syria was put forward by the Office as the most suitable country.[2]

1.Syria.

The British representative in Damascus told the Middle East conference of the FO that the new ruler of Syria, Colonel Husni Zaim, was prepared to settle at least 120,000 refugees in Syria if outside financial assistance was given.[3] The British experts on the subject reported to the conference that about 150,000 refugees could be resettled there.[4] The American representative in Syria was told by Zaim that he was ready to absorb 250,000 refugees. The American Ambassador declared that the sincerity of Zaim was unquestionable 'if for no other reason than his awareness that the Palestine problem stand in the way (sic) realisation many of his dreams'.[5] Zaim's main 'dream' was American military supply.

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1. FO 371/75072, E9044, UK ME conference, 22.7.49.
2. CAB 134/501, ME(O)(49), 13.4.49.; ME(O)(49)27, 10.8.49.
3. FO 371/75072, E9044, op.cit.
4. Ibid.
5. FRUS 49, Vol.6 Tele. Keley to SoS, 14.7.49, p.1226 (867n 48/7-1449).

Zaim had previously offered to remove the Druze from Southern Syria (they numbered about 40,000) into the Gezira area. He had contemplated the same area as suitable for the refugees. The BMEO estimated that 1¾ million acres of rain fed land was waiting to be developed there.[1] Zaim declared that the only obstacle was finance. The French and the British offered some funds if the Syrian ruler would make a public declaration. Bevin and Wright believed that most funds should come from the French owing to their past and present interest in the Levant.[2] The French, on their part, were convinced that Zaim's offer was genuine, but conversation with them never passed the departmental level. The French officials claimed that they did not regard the scheme to resettle refugees in the Gezira district as a means of restoring their political influence, though they wished to regain some cultural and economic ties. Wright accepted this French explanation and the French were not asked again to cover the finance of the plan.[3] Apart from the Gezira area, the FO envisaged large scale resettlement in the Orontes Valley island of Latakia as well as in the Euphrates Valley near Dair Az-Zor.[4] However, the number to remember is 150,000 as was accepted by the Clapp mission.

The main difficulties envisaged were political. And it was soon realised that Zaim's suggestion was unique and that after his fall, the Syrians were unwilling to discuss the Gezira project. In 1951, Nazem Kudsi offered the large scale resettlement of refugees on state lands in Syria and suggested early consultation with experts. He wanted assurance that funds would be available to the whole of any plan that

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1. FO 371/75072, E9044, FO ME conference, 22.7.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/75051, E11183, FO Minute, Burrows, 12.9.49.
4. Thicknesse, Refugees, p.47.

might be started. This was a possibility, but Kudsi himself did not stay long enough in power to prove whether his proposals were genuine.[1]

2. Iraq

Ever since 1911, British reports and surveys had noted that 'Iraq possesses perhaps the best long-range prospects for the development of agriculture of any of the Middle East countries'.[2] Given the large percentage of agricultural workers among the refugees, it is no wonder that both Clapp and the British were so attracted by the idea of resettling most of them in Iraq.

The Eastern Department thought that Bevin himself should pull his weight in order to convince the Iraqis to absorb at least 100,000 refugees, though they believed that the country could actually resettle 200,000. Bevin had to be brought in since the Iraqis refused to discuss such possibilities. The Iraqis told the Foreign Secretary that any land that became available under the irrigation schemes was required for the Iraqi and Bedouin peasants.[3] The Department found this an unconvincing argument since there were vast areas to be developed which would suffice for both categories. According to the Department, apart from political difficulties, the main problem was finance. The Foreign Office pinned its hopes on the revenues from the oil royalties. Ironically, at the time when resettlement schemes were discussed and ideas formulated in the Office (July-August 1949), royalties depended on the negotiations between IPC and the Iraqi

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1. FO 371/91401, EE1821/44 Knight to FO, 12.3.51.
2. Thicknesse, Refugees. p.51.
3. 75438, E11150, FO to Baghdad, 15.9.49 and 75051, E8512, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49. The Iraqi Parliament consisted of rich land-owners who objected to a land reform which resettlement would have necessitated. See M. Ionides, Divide and Lose (London: Geoffery Bles, 1960), pp.119-123.

government, which were in deadlock throughout 1949.[1] Notwithstanding, the Eastern Department claimed the Iraqis had large enough Sterling accounts, which were released at that point, to finance the project. Furthermore, it was pointed out that Iraq was badly in need of agricultural workers.[2]

The British were urged by the Americans, and in particular McGhee, to exert pressure on Iraq, which McGhee saw as the main stumbling block in the way of resettlement. The British Ambassador conveyed the following message from Bevin to the Iraqi Government: 'The Iraqi government would be failing in their responsibilities as Arabs and as Middle East government if they try to wash their hands of this grave human problem'.[3] American threats to condition the International Bank loan to Iraq on the willingness of the government to discuss the issue with the ESM, coupled with Bevin's note, probably convinced the Iraqis to discuss the matter with the British. However, the British Ambassador in Iraq, Sir Henry Mack, insisted from the outset that financial inducements would not be enough in the Iraqi case.[4] At the end of the day, the issue of refugees was hardly discussed when the Clapp mission came to Baghdad. And when the Mission wanted to return after the publication of the report, they were not welcomed in the Iraqi capital.

The issue of resettlement in Iraq was once more raised in connection with the possible exchange of Iraqi Jews with the refugees. It was first discussed in September 1949. Nuri Al Said told the British Ambassador and then the ESM that he had plans for exchanging the Jewish

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1. FO 371/75136, E8537, Brief for SoS talk with Iraqi Ambassador, 11.7.49.
2. CAB 134/501, ME 900(49)10, meeting McGhee-Wright, 13.4.49.
3. FO 371/75438, E11150, op.cit.
4. Ibid.

inhabitants of Iraq for Palestinians, but he admitted that it was a difficult operation. There were 180,000 Jews in Iraq, 120,000 of whom were in Baghdad. Many were men of wealth and position and included members of Parliament. He doubted their willingness to go to Israel, even if he offered them, as he claimed he wanted to, the opportunity to take their wealth with them and to be compensated for their real estate. The Embassy doubted Nuri As-Said's sincerity on this point and thought it was beyond Iraq's administrative capability to carry it out.[1] The Iraqi Right Wing press was enthusiastic about the idea, since they saw the Jewish population as a fifth column operating on behalf of Israel.[2] Nuri As-Said told the British Ambassador that he would like all the Jews to go, and for Palestinians of equal knowledge and character to be selected in their place.[3]

The British representative in the Middle East, unlike the Office, totally rejected the idea: the BMEO believed that Iraq had everything to lose by it, since it would be like 'exchanging the managing directors of I.C.I. for small shopkeepers from Peckham.'[4] The other argument was that the exchange would turn into an expulsion of Iraqi Jews. The ME Secretariat initially approved the idea: thus the Foreign Office's high ranking officials decided neither to encourage nor to discourage such a possibility.[5] Nuri As-Said's tentative ideas were mentioned to him again in May 1950 when the Iraqi Jews began leaving Iraq, without their property or capital. However, at that point Nuri As-Said did not want to discuss the matter.[6] For Britain, in essence,

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1. FO 371/75446, E13568, Baghdad to MES, 28.10.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/75444, E12637, Baghdad to FO, 18.10.49.
4. FO 371/75152, E11795, BMEO to FO, 22.9.49.
5. FO 371/75152, E13370, FO Minute, 3.11.49.
6. FO 371/82239, EE1823/20, FO to Baghdad, 31.5.50.

it was just another way to pay for and to facilitate the resettlement of most of the refugees in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, the majority of the refugees remained in the Gaza strip and Arab Palestine.

3. Jordan.

The R.I.I.A. had prepared a special report on possibilities of resettlement for the benefit of the discussion in the Foreign Office.[1] This report envisaged the resettlement of 50,000 to 55,000 refugees in Arab Palestine and Eastern Jordan.[2] Morton believed Jordan could absorb at least 100,000 refugees, while Abdullah told the ESM that they should forget about Iraq as a potential home for the refugees since the Iraqis would never agree to it and the refugees would never go that far.[3] However, the decisive voice was that of Kirkbride. He argued that Jordan could not absorb the 400,000 refugees on its soil and that only a fraction could be settled in villages in the East Bank of the Kingdom.[4] Kirkbride worked out a plan with Raghed Nashashibi, the Minister for Refugee Affairs, that each Jordanian village would take refugees equivalent to 10% of the population of that village.[5] This number could never have reached more than 50,000.

However, the FO, although it accepted Kirkbride's reservations, wanted some demonstration by Jordan of its effort towards resettlement. For this purpose, the Treasury gave Jordan a £1 million loan as a contribution towards resettling 40,000 to 65,000 refugees.[6] The

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1. FO 371/75436, E10043, FO Minute, Burrows, 12.8.49; see also Thicknesse, Refugees.
2. Thicknesse, Refugees, pp.33-34.
3. FO 371/75439, E11376, FO Minute, Morton, 16.9.49; 75440, E11785, FO Minute Sherringham, 30.9.49.
4. FO 371/82706, ET1017/2, Kirkbride to Bevin, 2.8.50.
5. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Tel. Stabler to SoS, 23.7.49, p.1247 (867n O/7-2349).
6. FRUS 49, memo of conversation (Jones) 13.4.49, p.907 (867n. 48/4-2149).

Americans were told that, in a matter of four to five years, another 70,000 could be settled at a cost of £8 million.[1] Neither sum could have represented a serious financial contribution, the amounts needed were in tens if not hundreds of millions.[2] The £1 million loan was enough to settle 7000 refugees.[3] It seems that, in the end, 100,000 refugees was the agreed limit. This number was conveyed officially by the Jordanians to the ESM and the PCC.[4]

The Americans raised the question of the attitudes of Jordan and Israel to the refugees, someething which had never been discussed by the Foreign Office. Jordan not only controlled the largest number of refugees but was the only Arab country dealing with Israel. Yet the issue was never raised in the bilateral negotiations. The SD believed that this was owing to the wide gap between the parties and to the refugees' distrust of Abdullah.[5] The explanation, however, lies somewhere else. It was highly convenient for both the Israelis and the Jordanians to leave the issue to multilateral talks in Lausanne, and then to leave the ESM to find solutions. Israel (both the IFO and Ben-Gurion) supported the British view that most refugees should be settled in Iraq while the Jordanians wanted them in Syria.[6] Abdullah quite probably thought that he could absorb more and also control them. A high ranking SD official had already warned McGhee in August 1949 that the ESM would bypass the political aspects of the problem

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1. Ibid.
2. The US estimated the total cost of repatriation and resettlement to be $267.5 million in three years of which $160 million was for resettlement in Jordan and Syria (McGhee memo in FRUS 49, vol.6 pp.984-987, 4.5.49. (867n. 48/5-949).
3. CAB 134/501 (49)(W.P.) 6,27.5.49.
4. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Bevin to American ASoS, 12.6.49, p.1123 (501 BB Palestine/6-1249).
5. FRUS 50, Vol.5, Palmer to SoS, 9.9.50 (357AC/9-950).
6. See ISA 2444/19, IFO memoranda.

by ignoring the fact that neither the Arabs nor the Israelis were doing anything towards solving the problem themselves and therefore committing the US and other countries to make further contributions towards relief and development.[1]

It is notable that, in terms of agricultural resettlement, Jordan did not offer ready made facilities for rapid resettlement. The only permanent agriculture was in the Jordan valley, at least according to British estimates. The FO was assisted by Mr. M.G. Ionides, formerly development director to the Mandatory Government of Transjordan, who had prepared a report on the resources of Transjordan and who had already recommended a general irrigation programme in 1938. The plan was thus revived, and it was believed that a British loan should be given for that purpose.[2] The Jordanians estimated that 100,000 could be resettled there in a few years.[3] However, Morton suggested, and the Foreign Office agreed, in spite of Kirkbride's objections, that the project would be financed by the future agency which was supposedly emerging from the ESM report.[4] Kirkbride first claimed that the Jordanian government would oppose allowing the control or execution of development schemes to be vested in somebody other than the government concerned. A month later it was agreed that it was better not to use the British loan for that purpose.[5]

Thus, by 1950 UNRWA, took over responsibility for the resettlement programme. Kirkbride reported at the end of that year that not even one refugee was settled and that the number of destitute refugees

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1. FRUS 49, Vol.6, Gross (ASoS) to McGhee, 26.8.49. p.1333 (501BB Palestine/8-2649).
2. CAB 134/501, ME(O)(W.P.)6, 27.5.49. and Ionides, M.G., 'Refugees and the Jordan', Spectator, November 19, 1948.
3. FO 371/75051, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49.
4. FO 371/75448, E14075, Amman to FO, 22.11.49.
5. FO 371/75443, E12385, Amman to FO, 13.10.49.

was actually increasing owing to the inability of UNWRA to prevent the deterioration in the situation.[1] Thus, Kirkbride suggested once more, and this time the Foreign Office accepted, that the administration of funds available from UNWRA should be placed entirely in the hands of the Jordanians. Henry Knight, the British representative in UNWRA, reported that Jordan was eager to finish relief and start integration.[2]

UNWRA came up with another idea for resettlement in the Sherra district, near Maan. The Jordanian Premier objected to the new proposal. Psychologically, he claimed, it was too far from Palestine. The Jordanian government was reluctant to distribute the refugees outside the camps 'unless it was compensated for land'.[3] Hence, by the end of 1951, not even one refugee had been resettled. However, Kirkbride had noted satisfactorily that relief work had improved communication in the West Bank. By the end of 1951, £250,000 of the loan had been spent. Kirkbride believed that it was only because of a lack of any large tracts of fertile land that had already been utilized that there was no chance of direct resettlement (unless sweet water sources could be developed in the Jordan Valley).[4] But the BMEO had never accepted Kirkbride's explanation, it noted that not even the abandoned Jewish land in the West Bank was used or cultivated for resettlement.[5]

The crux of the matter was that the Jordan Valley project was doomed to fail because of the inseparable connection between the river's sources and the political situation. That is, the project, as Ionides had indicated, depended on the Jordan river water supply. Only if an Israeli-Jordanian agreement could have been achieved on the

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1. FO 371/91788, E1011/1, Annual Report, Jordan for 1950, 3.1.51.
2. FO 371/91401, E1821/41, FO Minute, Younger, 3.3.51.
3. FO 371/91217, E1821/48, Amman to MES, 26.2.51.
4. FO 371/91217, E1821/61, Kirkbride to Morrison, 7.4.51.
5. FO 371/91217, E1821/65, BMEO to Morrison, 21.4.51.

exploitation of water, or indeed on the refugee problem as a whole, would this have been possible. Without such an agreement, Jordan's claim for the river's water was conceived as a casus belli in Israel.

There is another episode which is connected with the resettlement possibilities in Jordan and should be mentioned. This was Musa Alami's project. After the end of hostilities in Palestine, Alami possessed some £160,000 out of the balance of the former Arab Development Society (a body attached to the Arab League and aimed at helping the Palestinian villagers).[1] The original ADS plan of building model villages in Palestine was revived by Alami, who hoped to utilize the remaining budget of the ADS for that purpose.[2] The former Head of the Eastern Department, Furlonge, tells us that Alami, unlike the Foreign Office or the Clapp Mission 'found himself unable to accept the thesis... that the refugees could not remain where they were and must move again'.[3] Neither was he convinced by their arguments about the 'impossibility of large-scale resettlement in Transjordan or the Jordan Valley'.[4] He found an area near to Jericho suitable for a pilot project.[5]

The Foreign Office was impressed by Alami's determination, and the Department suggested that the British should assist him. Alami wrote to the British Council in Jerusalem asking for help since he was being obstructed by Jordanian ministers, even though the Jordanian government had decided in June 1949 to appropriate 20,000 dunams for

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1. C. Furlonge, Palestine is my Country (London: John Murray, 1969), pp.137; 157-58.
2. Furlonge, op.cit.
3. Furlonge, op cit.
4. Furlonge, op.cit.
5. The largest concentration of refugees was in the Jordan Valley around Jericho, 35,000 according to Ad-Difa and 65,000 according to Al-Baath, 28.1.49.

cultivable land for resettlement. The currency controller in Jordan, a Briton called Colonel Kendrick, was probably instructed by the government not to allow Alami to convert his money to Sterling in order to purchase equipment and materials for the project.[1] Alami refused to hand over the ADS money to the Jordanian government and this was probably the source of his problems.[2] However, British support was never given, mainly because the Treasury found his scheme uneconomic.[3] Moreover, the Treasury was reluctant to release sterling for Alami, in principal this was given only to governments.[4]

The Times paid tribute to Alami, but the Treasury was unmoved. In January 1950, Alami told his British advisors that he would devote his life to fighting Britain.[5] However, he eventually devoted it to developing a model village instead.

4. The Gaza Refugees

In many respects the situation in Gaza was worse than anywhere else. The whole area had a normal population of 105,000, plus an additional 230,000 refugees.[6] Moreover, as the Head of the BMEO pointed out, Egyptian assistance for relief, let alone resettlement, could be ruled out owing to what he called 'the mutual hatred'.[7]

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1. FO 371/75439, E11303, FO Minute, Sherringham, 21.9.49.
2. Furlonge, Palestine, p.159.
3. FO 371/75441, E12157, Treasury to FO, 4.10.49.
4. FO 371/75444, E12619, Treasury to FO, 19.10.49.
5. The Times 2.1.50; Sir Murdoch MacDonald (engineering company assisting Alami) to the FO and Colonel Newcomb to the FO, 3.1.50. in FO 371/75452, EI4942. Two writers mentioned that only 500 families of refugees had been integrated into the economy of Jordan by 1952, in the pilot project of Musa Alami. See Kinross, Lord, 'The Maturing state of Jordan', Listener, 25.8.52 and Cecil Hourani, 'Experimental Village in the Jordan Valley', MEJ Vol.5, (Autumn 1951), pp.497-450.
6. Thicknesse, Refugees, p.35.
7. FO 371/75072, E9044, UK ME conference, 22.7.49.

After the Gaza proposal was dropped, the American ambassador in Cairo started what seems to have been a local initiative of his own in September 1950 in order to try to convince the Egyptian government to settle some of the Gaza refugees in the Sinai, but with little success.[1]

The ESM final report realised that there were no resettlement potentials in Egypt. The Foreign Office was less worried about the fate of those refugees; or, at least, it did not find their situation worse than that of the other groups of refugees. It was Troutbeck in Cairo who warned the Office that Egypt would eventually blame Britain for having to carry the burden of 230,000 refugees. As he conceived it the only solution to this problem was to move them out of Gaza. The SD expert on Arab refugees' affairs, Gardiner, told Troutbeck that most of them would like to go to Arab Palestine or Transjordan.[2] The head of the BMEO supported this idea and tried to persuade the office to support General Riley in negotiating this option with the Jordanians.[3] Kirkbride was alarmed and 'appalled' at the prospect of another 200,000 refugees in Jordan. The result, he warned the Office in an angry letter, would be that a poor settled population of about 300,000 would carry the burden of twice the number of an additional refugee population.[4] The Foreign Office hastened to assure its Minister in Amman that it preferred this population to remain in Egypt. It is notable that Iraq and Syria were not mentioned in connection with the Gaza refugees.[5]

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1. FRUS 50, Vol.5, Tel. Caffery to SD (SoS) 12.9.50 p.1000 (320.2.AA/9-1250).
2. FO 371/74447, E13821, BMEO to FO 15.11.49.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/74447, E13195, Amman to FO, 17.11.49. It is notable that Nashashibi, the Jordanian Minister for Refugee Affairs, published an appeal to all refugees to come to Jordan Al-Yom (Jaffa) 14.3.49; on the other hand, Filastine reported that Jordan did not allow refugees to work in its territory.
5. FO 371/74445, E13944, FO Minute, 18.11.49.

5. Other Possibilities

The Foreign Office inquired through the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices about the possibilities of settling Arab refugees in South America, Australia and Northern Africa. However, apart from the possibility of employing refugees in the ex-Italian colonies, no other option was truly explored. The BMEO opposed the idea although it admitted that 50,000 refugees could be employed in Cyrenaica. However, it feared the consequences as the local population was only 75,000.[1]

F. Britain, the US and UNWRA

Discussion on the resettlement possibilities was cut short when the US and Britain reached an understanding on concentrating on short-term programmes rather than long-range development schemes. The two governments accepted what the final Clapp report admitted when it wrote that the hope of realising 'several large development projects' could not materialise mainly because 'the region is not ready for resettlement' and that to press forward on such a course is to pursue folly and frustration and thereby delay sound economic growth'.[2] Nevertheless, it was understood that the relief work suggested could lead to development, as was affirmed in the interim report.

The main difficulty, as far as Britain was concerned, was persuading the treasury to provide the finance for the necessary British contribution. This financial predicament characterized every exclusively Anglo-American action in the Middle East. In other words, although the British succeeded in convincing the Americans that after

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1. FO 371/75072, E9044, UK ME conference, 22.7.49.
2. ESM final report.

the establishment of UNWRA, discussions (and probably decisions) on the refugee problem would be conducted in New York between the SD and the FO only, they were unable to provide the required minimum contribution to justify such a decisive role.[1]

Thus, in December 1949, Michael Wright left for New York to work out the detailed method of establishing UNWRA. The two delegations reached an understanding that the new agency would not be administered by the UN secretariat, would not include 'Slav' or other 'undesirable' membership and would comprise only British, American, French and Turkish members. It was agreed that the British contribution would be in non-convertible sterling. The Chancellor was willing to agree to a contribution of £1.25 million. The Treasury, in spite of Foreign Office protests, felt it could not ask the Chancellor for more. Bevin interfered and ruled that the £1.25 million was sufficient. This fell short of the American expectations. The SD realised that Congress would only cover 50% of UNWRA's budget, which left governments other than the US or UK to contribute $21 million;[2] the Treasury was unmoved. One official there told the FO that 'any further contribution to the relief of the refugees would add to the main impediment to British economic recovery.' Attlee supported the Treasury and approved a contribution only towards resettlement, not relief.[3]

Howver, public opinion and Congress pressure persisted, and, by April 1950, it became apparent that even the French were willing to contribute more than the British.[4] Bevin interfered once more, this

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1. FO 371/75447, E14033, Burrows to Wright, 23.11.49.
   FO 371/75448, E14155, Wright to FO, 24.11.49.
2. FO 371/75452, E15406, FO Minute, 29.12.49.
3. FO 371/75452, E15442, FO Minute, 8.12.49.
4. The French were willing to give $3 million, FRUS 50, Vol.5, Geneva to SD, 18.4.50 (357AC/4-1850), p.860.

time by exerting pressure on the drained Treasury, and by May 1950, Britain announced its willingness to contribute $7 million.[1] Now the American President could proceed and sign into law the US contribution ($27.5 million).[2]

Furthermore, the two Foreign Offices agreed on the appointment of General Kennedy as director of UNWRA, in spite of initial US objections to the appointment of an American national (Kennedy was in fact of a Canadian origin). Sir Henry Knight was chosen as the British representative on the advisory commission, playing a similar part to that of Morton in the Clapp Mission. The agency's headquarters were to be in Beirut. The British representative warned his government from the outset that UNWRA's main difficulty would be finance.[3] There were two main possibilities for obtaining funds for UNWRA. One was the American point Four scheme and the other was compensation money from Israel.

1. Point Four.

As could have been expected, the Arab governments were more forthcoming towards the idea of receiving money for development per se than for relief and resettlement purposes. In the latter case there were too many political implications involved. For this reason, the Americans made it clear throughout 1950 that the Point Four money (Truman asked Congress to allocate $50 million for foreign aid) would not be used for solving the refugee problem. In any case, the money allocated to the Middle East at that time under the framework of the

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1. FO371/82445/EE1825/39,FO Minute, 12.4.50, SD asked for $13.5, otherwise Congress would not approve. Bevin pressed the Treasury for $9 million, but the Chancellor only accepted $7 million.
2. FRUS 50, vol.5 5.6.50, Editorial note, p.921.
3. FO 371/82244, EEI825/62, Sir H. Knight to Evans (MES), 10.3.50.

programme was insignificant.[1]

It is notable that the British did not favour the idea of introducing the Point Four programme to the area. The unenthusiastic approach of the British to this programme stemmed from the desire of the Americans, in spite of warnings from the British, to entrust the aid to the Arab League. 'American Point Four is tending to become rather a nuisance politically' wrote one of the Eastern Department officials.[2] They should have realised, claimed the former Head of the African Department, that 'it is useless to negotiate with the Arab League', which did not like to be 'side-tracked from more amusing political activities.'[3]

2. Political Complications

Sir Henry Knight had also warned the Foreign Office that apart from the financial difficulties, he anticipated trouble from the need to negotiate with uncooperative Arab governemnts 'who will try to divert us onto the political issues to obtain their own private advantages'.[4] Knight was worried by the low opinion of the Secretary General of the UN concerning Kennedy's political experience and ability to negotiate with the Arab governments.[5]

Hence, the Foreign Office had to work out a guideline for Knight in order to prepare him for the negotiations with the Arab governments. Publicly, it was suggested by the FO that the Agency should emphasise that it was not concerned with the political aspects of the refugee

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1. Israel was to receive $100,000; Jordan, $50,000; Syria, $150,000; Iraq, $200,000 see FRUS 50 ASoS to Diplomatic Offices, 12.9.50, p.280.
2. FO 371/91217, E11345/1, FO Minute, Evans 17.1.51.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/82444. E1825/62, Knight to Evans, 10.3.50.
5. FO 371/82243, EE1825/43, UN UK to FO. 21.2.50.

problem, or of the Palestine settlement as a whole. Privately, the Arab governments should be advised that without a political settlement, the Agency could not succeed in the long run.[1]

It was unrealistic, according to the Middle East Secretariat, to imagine that a political settlement would include massive repatriation. Even if Israel had agreed, there was no living space for the refugees. Resettlement within the framework of long-term development undertaken by the Arab governments themselves was seen by the Foreign Office as the only solution. Moreover, it was suggested that those governments should be told that no funds would be available after June 1951 and that 'it is therefore essential that Arab statesmen should plan on the assumption that at the end of that period the refugees would be entirely in their charge'.[2]

The same line was pursued in September 1950, just before UNWRA's report was published and there was a possibility of an overall debate in the General Assembly. The Foreign Office had concluded that it was not in the best interest of the refugees to return to Israel and that the only solution was resettlement.[3] Nevertheless, it was agreed with the SD that a UN resolution would only call generally for peace, that there would be no reference to the political aspects of the refugee problem, and that only fund raising should be mentioned.[4]

The Arab reaction came in June 1950 in the form of a communiqué from the Arab League to the effect that its Political Comittee agreed to co-operate with UNWRA without prejudice to the right of the refugees

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1. FO 371/82445, EE1825188, FO Minute, Evans 14.3.50.
2. FO 371/82445,EE 1825/88, FO Minute Evans, 14.3.50.
3. FO 371/82197,E 10110/60, Wright conversation with Aras (Turkish representative in PCC), 27.9.50.
4. FO 371/82197, E10110/64, Washington to FO, 11.1.50.

to return. This was conveyed both officially and unofficially.[1]

It was at about this time that the question of compensation seemed to some British and American officials to be an even more feasible solution than the long-term resettlement. Whereas for the Americans compensation was another 'economic' solution, the Foreign Office regarded it as a political means to bring about resettlement.

3. The Question of Compensation

Britain had raised the question of compensation owing to its difficulty in contributing its share to UNWRA's budget. The possibility of an Israeli compensation was mentioned by the Foreign Office as early as April 1949 when it suggested to the SD that Israel should make a direct contribution to the PCC.[2] In the course of conversation with the ESM, the Israeli government re-affirmed its position that compensation should be considered as part of a general peace settlement, together with the question of reparations for war damages. The ESM was of the opinion that Israel should agree to separate a general peace settlement from the principle of payment of compensation for abandoned property.[3] In other words, for the ESM, it was essentially not merely a financial problem, but rather a moral one as well as political. An early compensation would give the refugees incentive to choose resettlement as the best solution. The ESM had in mind an Israeli contribution of 10% to 50% of the lump sum of compensation.[4]

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1. FO 371/82247, E1825/141, Knight to Evans, 19.6.50.
2. CAB 134/501, FO to Washington, 15.4.49 in ME(O)(49)1.
3. FO 371/75450, E14610, FO Minute, 3.12.49.
4. Ibid.

Notwithstanding the Israeli opposition, the FO was asked by its representative in the UN to find out for them the working estimate of the value of Arab land held by Israel.[1] This act of optimism was derived from information given by the PCC, now convened in Geneva, that Israel had accepted the principle of compensation of refugees for land abandoned by them. It was coupled with a communiqué from the commission that Israel was willing to accept within the territory under its control an Arab population of 250,000, and that Jordan and Syria were willing to resettle the rest.[2] In July 1950, the Israeli's announced their willingness to pay compensation for immovable property only as part of a general settlement, and within the limit of their financial capacity. The Foreign Office believed that if the Israelis were prepared to discuss this issue separately a big obstacle would be removed from the way to a general settlement.[3]

In fact, what the Foreign Office had hoped to achieve was a financial compensation for Jordan, therefore it suggested that only refugees living in Jordan would be entitled to liquidate their property in Israel. This was also done in order to temper criticism in Jordan over an agreement with Israel.[4] Incidentally, owing to technical problems, the Foreign Office was in favour, of compensating the large land owners first. Dow remarked that, although he appreciated the difficulties of obtaining compensation for all the refugees, it would be a folly to compensate those who had sold their land in the past to the Jews. The SD was also against this.[5]

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1. FO 371/82195, E10110/2, Beith to UK, Geneva, 1.2.50.
2. Press release PAL/COMM/18.30.1.50. Information Centre Geneva, UN Europe Office qt. in FO 371/62195, E101101/2, op.cit.
3. FO 371/82196, E110110/26, FO to Washington, 12.7.50; FO 371/81922, E1023/11, FO Minute, 22.9.50.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/23, FO Minute, 2.3.50.
5. FO 371/82196, E10110, Dow to FO, 20.7.50.

However, the FO felt that rich refugees would have more influence with the Arab governments and could hasten a settlement; whereas the SD, on humanitarian grounds, preferred that compensation should go to the poorer refugees.[1]

In any case, the Israeli position had not changed throughout 1950. The Foreign Office was angered by the Israeli attitude, since it believed it to be the main stumbling block to an agreement. It was prepared now to make an effort to convince the Arab states to give up the idea of repatriation altogether, if Israel were to consent to compensation.[2] In fact, the FO preferred compensation as a means of solving the problem rather than the ideas put forward by Riley and Bunche about the cession of territory from Israel to Jordan in order to resettle refugees there.[3] Ostensibly, it was argued that compensation was the major bone of contention in the conflict. However, it can be suspected that Kirkbride's objections to enlarging the refugee population in Jordan played a decisive role in the FO's view. In February 1950, the Americans considered putting pressure on Israel for that purpose; but gave up, after assessing that it would not change the Arab point of view.[4]

4. Employment of Arab refugees.

The failure of the resettlement project produced a new formula provided in the final report of the ESM: the UNWRA budget would help the Arab refugees to help themselves by putting them to work on public projects which the Mission recommended as beneficial to the economies

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1. FO 371/82196, E10110/32, Washington to FO, 24.7.50.
2. FO 371/82196, E10110/40, FO Minute, Oliver, 17.8.50.
3. FO 371/82196, E10110/42, FO Minute, Furlonge, 17.8.50.
4. FRUS 50, Vol.5, SoS to US representative in PCC, Geneva, 7.2.50, p.728, (357 AC/2-750).

countries surrounding Palestine. However, most of the Arab countries refused to comply with the UNWRA's suggestions that, after the end of their contracts, skilled refugees would acquire the nationality of the countries they were in. This applied to Egypt, the Persian Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, while the Iraqis were only prepared to accept a small number.[1] Meanwhile the BMEO was making an effort to find employment for the refugees in Middle East but with little success.[2]

As for the relief works themselves, there was little progress, owing to the refugees' feelings on the subject. In various camps strikes broke out in protest against the implementation of works projects which were regarded as leading the refugees away from repatriation.[3] This attitude was reflected in the Palestine Arab press which expressed doubts over the ESM's temporary settlement projects which might have prejudiced a final settlement favourable to the refugees.[4] Altogether, as one of the British officials working for UNWRA summed it up, the attitude of the refugees was 'cool and somewhat mistrusting'.[5] The refugees, instead of being made more self-supporting, were paradoxically made more dependent, since the UN became their employer as well as their provider. As the UNWRA report concluded, the UN was held by the refugee as responsible for his past and present misfortune and his for future fate.[6]

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1. FO 371/82199, E1821/3; E1821/7; E1821/8, January-February 1950.
2. FO 371/82240, E1823/26, BMEO to MES, 27.6.50.
3. FRUS 50, Vol.5, Beirut to SD, 16.5.50, p.813 (320.2.AA/5-1650).
4. FO 371/75239, E12423, Dow to FO, summary, September 1949.
5. FO 371/82196, E1052/15, Vogel Memo, 4.9.50.
6. UNWRA report (A/1905), OR of GA, 5th Session, Suppl. no.19, pp.56-59 (A/14510) Res. 1.

5. The UNWRA Interim Report and the Reintegration Fund.

By November 1950, the time of the publication of the first UNWRA report, the Foreign Office was following the American lead reluctantly, since it was realised in London that economic inducements were of less and less significance in the case of the Arab refugees. The Arab governments felt that the refugee question was their strongest political card. McGhee did not accept this theory and this was probably why the Americans were still seeking economic solutions throughout 1951 and 1952. Hence, contrary to British expectations, the report did ask the General Assembly to grant UNWRA power to arrange resettlement.[1]

It is notable that the FO believed that there was hope for a change of mood on the Arab Side that would have facilitated resettlement.[2] The Office, as well as the PCC, saw a way out by limiting compensation to resettlement. In other words, Israel's readiness to compensate would, or could, have led to Arab acceptance of resettlement.[3] However, this link was not mentioned in the interim report which dealt only with the hardships encountered by the Agency in finding employment. The report recommended that relief would therefore continue until the end of 1951. The Agency stated that the main reasons for its failure to find employment were, firstly, the increase in the number of relief recipients to 950,000 (against the PCC estimate of 750,000), and secondly, the lack of co-operation on behalf of the Arab governments. The reports assessed that this attitude was the result of a misunderstanding of UNWRA's purpose. Finally, UNWRA complained that the contribution to its budget was below the amount recommended by the

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1. FO 371/81922, E1023/10, FO Minute 22.9.50.
2. Ibid.
3. ISA 2445/1, 30.8.50, the head of the international organizations department to the Foreign Secretary.

ESM and asked for further contributions. The report suggested a budget of $50 million for future activities. It was recommended that the money would be put into a reintegration fund which would aim to rehabilitate refugees and move them from the relief rolls.[1] $20 million dollars were required for relief, and $30 million for reintegration of the refugees in the Arab countries, for the period from July 1951 to June 1952.[2]

On the basis of this report, the Ad-Hoc Political Committee of the UN began its deliberations on the refugee problem. In those discussions Britain defended the methods hitherto employed for financing the UNWRA projects voluntarily and rejected suggestions to transfer to an assessment system which might have opened the way to undesirable elements who could pay and then demand political fruits (i.e. the Soviet Union).[3] Hence, at the end of November, the British, the French, the Americans and the Turks tabled a draft resolution instructing the establishment of a reintegration fund with a budget of $50 million, on a voluntary basis. The resolution was approved after a Pakistani amendment was added to the effect that the new resolution reaffirmed the December 11, 1948 resolution, namely that it was without prejudice to the principle of repatriation.[4] As the New York Times remarked, reintegration was definitely a political term.[5] As was pointed out earlier, it was not considered to be similar to resettlement. However, the bridging of the gap between reintegration and repatriation was still the main obstacle.

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1. UNWRA report, pp.12-13.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 50, Vol.5, Austin to SoS, 2.11.50, p.1041-2 (320/14-250).
4. UN OR of GA, 5th Session, A-H/PC DC/A/AC/38/L28/res. 1. 7.11.50; The US as in previous times, agreed to contribute half the required sum, the British were ready to provide £10 million; Israel, 50,000 to £1 million, and the Arab states, £6 million.
5. New York Times, 26.12.50.

6. The American and British Points of View.

UNWRA's report no doubt diverged from the terms of reference granted to it by the ESM. It was mainly a compromise between the American and the British understanding about the best solution. As Lord Macdonald told the Ad-Hoc committee, Britain believed that as a result of psychological barriers and economic problems, it could not suggest the repatriation of the refugees unless it was part of a general peace settlement.[1] The American position on the refugee question had never changed, only the willingness to exert pressure on Israel to accept repatriation had declined. The Americans had told the Israelis on many occasions that they supported the basic principle of repatriation and compensation for those who did not wish to return.[2] Thus one might say, almost ironically, that the Americans had accepted the Arab view, whereas the British supported the Israeli concept. Hence re-integration without prejudice to repatriation was the new magic formula, nothwithstanding that it differed little from previous solutions, and that each side could, and did, interpret it as it wished.

American pressure was practiced only once more in 1950. In March that year the Knesset was about to pass legislation to allow the Alien Property Custodian in Israel to sell Arab refugees' property. American pressure delayed the execution of such procedures until May 1951.[3]

At the beginning of 1951, the State Department demanded a more clear-cut British suggestion on resettlement. It was conveyed to them

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1. Reported in ISA 2445/1, research memo., 29.10.50.
2. FRUS 50 Vol.5, memo Rockwell (in charge of Israel and Jordan affairs in the SD) 29.8.50, p.984 (320/8-2950).
3. New York Times, 9.3.50; FRUS 50, Vol.5, US embassy in Israel to SD, 19.4.50, p.792, fn.3 (784.Ao/4-1950).

by the Foreign Office that the British had Syria mainly in mind as a country offering the most promising opening for permanent resettlement of large numbers of refugees. There was a belief that the US enjoyed a considerable influence in Syria and could thus implement a large scale programme there.[1] The Americans were prepared once more to explore resettlement possibilities. Once more they had put the emphasis on providing Syria with experts and surveyors. The FO claimed that financial assistance would have been more of an inducement. It argued that the Arab world had seen enough surveys and technical assistance without much capital flow.[2] The Americans accepted this concept and energetically hastened to formulate a new solution.

7. Financial assistance

The British, quite probably, lost interest in the problem in the second half of 1951, and it seems that the financial and political aspects of the problem were then dealt with by the Americans without much consideration from their partners in the PCC or Britain.[3] Following their determination to provide financial assistance (capital), the Americans told the Israelis and the Arab governments that they would ask Congress to grant, under a new Foreign Aid bill $50 million for the Arab refugees. The Americans had refused a British request to see the bill before it was introduced to Congress.[4] This finance was to be administered through the UN agencies.[5] The new American concept was that the US government would negotiate bilaterally with the Middle East

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1. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, FO to Washington, 25.10.51.
2. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, FO to Washington, 25.10.51.
3. FO 371/91182, E1022/9, Rapp to Bowker, 6.7.51.
4. FO 371/91185, E1024/23, Washington to FO, 22.5.51.
5. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, Franks to Bevin, 19.5.51.

countries and would offer financial assistance for resettlement (half of the finance was intended for relief and the other half for resettlement). The Americans excluded everyone but themselves and the countries concerned from dealing with resettlement.[1] This included the refugee office formed by the PCC under a UN resolution in May 1951.[2]

It is doubtful whether the British had a greater appreciation of the American 'business approach' than they had for the 'economic approach'. However, there was at least an American recognition of the importance of encouraging resettlement. It should be remembered that UNWRA was about to turn into an integration agency and was supposed to transfer the responsibility of feeding the refugees to the Arab governments. Hence, the American new initiative had precisely the opposite effect. UNWRA was turning into a permanent relief agency while the Americans took upon themselves the resettlement issue. The Foreign Office would not allow the Americans to have bilateral agreement with Jordan, but otherwise welcomed the initiative. It was seen as part of a new American drive for a greater involvement in Middle East affairs which was apparent in June-July 1951.[3]

However, in order to overcome Congress's lack of enthusiasm about an exclusive financial American role, the State Department hoped that Britain would contribute more money to UNWRA. The Department claimed that Congress would not authorise the American government to grant the $50 million without a British contribution of a third of this figure. This time the Treasury, as well as the Foreign Office, believed that it could go no further without knowing how funds granted so far were used. The Treasury was horrified at the prospect of inflating the

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1. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, Greenhill to Furlonge, 19.6.51.
2. Formed in 22.5.51 in FO371/91367, E1071/69.
3. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, Kirkbride to Greenhill, 1.6.51.

budget of this 'impractical' body (i.e. UNWRA).[1] In any case, Burrows in Washington assured the Foreign Office that it was all for the sake of public opinion to show that the burden was shared by Britain, but otherwise the US would act independently.[2] Furthermore, Britain was fully occupied with securing Jordan's economy. The year 1950 proved to be one of Jordan's worst years. The enormous burden of the refugee population and the loss of Palestine as a market had a damaging effect on the economy of the country. The Jordanians drew heavily on their sterling balances in order to fill the gap between income and expenditure.[3]

8. UNWRA Annual Report 1951

The Jordanians as well as the British must have derived satisfaction from UNWRA's annual report for 1951 which was published in September of that year. It concluded that refugees should be given work only in countries of greater economic possibilities (the report specifically noted that Jordan and Lebanon were not such countries).[4] In general, the report indicated that not much progress had been made on resettlement and that the number of refugees in the camps had increased. There was a tendency to move from the villages and the towns into the camps.[5] It is notable that, by the second half of 1951, UNWRA began building mud huts which became a familiar characteristic of the camps to the present day.

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1. FO 371/91185, E1024/24, Burrows to Bowker, 22.5.51.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/91788, E1011/1, Annual report for Jordan, 1950, 3.1.51.
4. UNWRA annual report for 1951, A/905, Supp. 16, September 1951, p.67.
5. UNWRA, p.28.

9. Blandford Scheme

General Kennedy was replaced by the Head of the Advisory Commission attached to UNWRA, Blandford. In October 1951, Blandford decided to take a more active role in resettlement and asked the UN for $200 million for such purposes for a period of three years. For some obscure reason, Blandford believed that there was a change in the Arab mood; otherwise it is difficult to understand why he thought he could succeed where others had failed by using the same methods. It is possible that Blandford was encouraged by the hints from Syria, in April 1951, which were mentioned earlier in this chapter of the willingness of Damascus to resettle refugees.[1] Moreover, the League was confusing everyone by communicating its willingness to co-operate in resettling refugees in accordance with the UN resolution of December 1950, while berating the UN for having failed to carry out the provisions of the resolution of December 1948 (calling for repatriation).[2]

However, the main backing for Blandford came from the American President and Congress. In May 1951, i.e. five months before Blandford suggested his scheme, the funds for such a scheme were in fact provided by the US. Truman announced a new programme of foreign aid, both economic and military. This was part of a new initiative to stop Russian penetration of the Middle East and what was seen in Washington as an attempt to create instability in the area.[3] To that end, the President recommended $415 million in military aid to Greece, Turkey and Iran and a portion of this was also intended to the Middle East

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1. James Blandford was the US representative on the Advisory Council of UNWRA.
2. FO 371/(i401/E1825/57, BMEO to MES, 28.3.51.
3. FO 371/91217, E11345/14, Washington to FO, 25.5.51. Presidential statement.

(Greece and Turkey were included in the ERP).[1] The Arab states and Israel were to receive $23.5 million each and $50 million was allocated for the refugees, all out of the $125 million bill.[2]

The Americans tried once more to introduce their own 'BMEO' and were, as before, confronted by sharp British opposition. The US treasury wanted a 'super-ambassador' to coordinate the financial and military aid incurred in the new bill.[3] The Americans gave up this idea after British protests.

On the basis of this aid, Blandford negotiated a resettlement scheme in Sinai, three in Syria and one in Jordan. He suggested financial aid on the bilateral level to those countries, an arrangement that was not favoured by either the SD or the FO.[4] However, neither office ruled out the principle if it should be accepted by the Arab governments. Blandford and Knight then suggested that UNWRA'S activities in Syria and Lebanon should cease, and the agency should be allowed to work only in Jordan and concentrate on relief.[5] As might have been anticipated, this offer was immediately endorsed by the British and the Jordanians. However, this offer never materialized owing to Blandford's preoccupation with his ideas about resettlement. This means that as long as he was director of UNWRA he did not wish to strip the Agency of its pretentions of bringing about resettlement. He succeeded in obtaining the full support of the SD to such an extent that what was probably the last chance to solve the problem was ignored. In November 1951, under the framework of the Paris Conference

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/91217, E11345/18, FO Minute Evans, 16.6.51.
3. FO 371/91217, E11345/20, Rapp to Foreign Office (Evans), 9.6.51.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/91217, E11345/22, Rapp to Evans, 26.6.51.

(under the aegis of the PCC),[1] Sharret announced Israel's willingness to negotiate bilaterally on compensation.[2] By that time, the State Department was disinclined to give Israel a loan to finance such compensation.[3] The Americans wanted to concentrate on immediate resettlement, not on compensation.

The Foreign Office welcomed the idea of economic aid but resented the political ambitions of UNWRA and its energetic director. The momentum was kept up, to some extent by the last effort by the PCC to resume its interest in the refugee problem - after dealing mainly with the question of Jerusalem - but with results similar to those previously obtained.[4]

Blandford proposed initially to resettle about 250,000 refugees by building small villages for them.[5] He then altered his plans slightly and suggested the resettlement of 150,000 families. The Observer noted with satisfaction that Blandford proposed to transfer the refugees from Jordan and to resettle them in Syria and Iraq.[6] The Arab League decided to call for the resettlement of the refugees near the borders until the day they could return.[7]

Blandford's suggestions were indirectly endorsed by the PCC's final report. However, the Arab press from that period manifested the Arab bitterness and resentment towards the various reports of the PCC, and to UNWRA and SD proposals.[8] The Deputy General Secretary of the

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1. See the chapter on Arab-Israeli negotiations.
2. FO 371/91367, E1071/56, FO Minute, Oliver, 3.11.51, this came as a reaction to the PCC initiative.
3. Ibid.
4. Buehrig, The UN. pp.18-21.
5. New York Times, 21.6.51.
6. A. Plascov, 'The Palestinians of Jordan's Borders' in R. Owen, ed., Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine, St. Antony's Series (Macmillan, 1982), p.225.
7. Observer, 27.1.52.
8. Al-Ahram, 13.12.51, Barda, 15.12.51.

League called Blandford's scheme a pro-Zionist one.[1] Nuri As-Said in Iraq criticized the plan bitterly, and the Lebanese government notified the UN that it would accept only finance for direct relief.[2]

In the years that followed, UNWRA tried to introduce other resettlement schemes like the one suggested in May 1952 for the resettlement of refugees in Sinai and Al-Arish, only to be abandoned for lack of water resources.[3] In the years 1953-56, UNWRA concentrated on resettlement in the Yarmuk Valley in order to move the refugees away from the West Bank. In that period it was suggested by some Israeli cabinet members that the reparations from Germany could be linked with compensation, but the proposal was voted against.[4] The mood of the refugees apparently became more and more bitter, as the General Consul of HMG had put it in November 1954; now the refugees did not want either to resettle, or to work or to return to Israel.[5] Ironically, in 1959, the same large-scale development schemes that were suggested since 1949 were re-introduced and, as anticipated, were rejected by the Arab governments.[6] UNWRA's annual reports after this time put the blame on the Arab governments.

H. Conclusions

Sir Desmond Morton told the Foreign Office that the main link between the ESM interim and final reports lay in the fact that the existence of the refugee problem merely accentuated an already existing profound problem. Clapp, at the same meeting, was convinced that if

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1. Al-Haiat, 22.12.51.
2. Filastine, 22.12.51, Al-Nahar, 1.1.52.
3. ISA 2445/1, Israeli Embassy to the British FO, 25.3.51.
4. Weitz to Sharret 10.7.51 in ISA 2445/1.
5. Biran to the General Director of IFO, 19.11.51 in ISA 2445/1.
6. Kaplan, Refugees, p.9-10 and p.175; Buehrig, The UN, p.6.

'no refugee problem existed, the Survey Mission, in considering economic development of the Middle East, would nevertheless have made the same approach and come to the same conclusions'.[1] The crux of the matter was that this might have been an important discovery had the refugee problem been an economic and not a political one. McGhee gave the other side of the coin of the same approach: 'existing tensions in the area cannot be relieved unless these countries can be assisted in their programmes of economic development'. The problem of the refugees, therefore 'cannot be solved unless there are more opportunities for settlement and useful employment'.[2]

Indeed for Clapp, integration schemes were seen as means of introducing American economic ideas; namely the importance of economic stability as a guarantee against communism. McGhee was the main protagonist of these ideas. His views originated from what he saw in Europe. For him the solution of the refugee problem was an opportunity to introduce an overall development schemes to the whole area based on the same principles as the European Recovery Programme: that is, economic and social development was the best guarantee for stability and, thereby, the best safeguard against communist penetration.[3] However, these efforts were frustrated by the British through Morton's insistence and owing to the necessity of concentrating first on relief while leaving development for future consideration between the two powers. Thus the British had accepted the economic approach only as far as relief was concerned, and not as a formula for solving the refugee problem.

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1. FO 371/75452, E15407, FO Minute, meeting with Clapp and Morton, 20.12.49.
2. FO 371/91217, E11345/24, SD information bulletin, no.653, 20.7.51.
3. See McGhee in FO371/75054, E14782, 11.12.49.

As a direct consequence of the war in Palestine, the resident population of Transjordan was raised from 400,000 to 800,000; and there were also 400,000 refugees under the Hashemite control. The Foreign Office had to secure Jordan's viability owing to its alliance with Britain and its strategic importance to the United Kingdom. Resettlement of the refugees in Jordan would have turned it into a Palestinian state. On the other hand, the continued presence of that population as refugees was an impossible economic and financial burden for the Kingdom. Hence, by focusing the attention of the UN and the Americans on the need to fund the relief and maintenance of the refugees, on the one hand, and advocating the resettlement of most of them in Syria and Iraq, on the other, the Foreign Office hoped to save Jordan. In this, the British point of view was closer to the Israeli concept than to the Americans or the other members of the PCC. The British despaired of the Americans' ability to pressure Israel into repatriation, and by 1950 were convinced that this was not practical, not only because of Israeli objections but also because of the lack of living space in Israel.

Relief prevented the refugees from starving and from a further deterioration of their situation. However, it also prevented a permanent solution. Some writers blame the UN for treating the problem only from the humanitarian aspect, and trying to solve it by economic means.[1] The UN, however, had very little to do with it, it was mainly the American ideas and Britain's reluctant acquiescence that produced the economic solutions. Moreover, the repeated reference to the UN resolution of December 11, 1948 and the reiteration, owing to American

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1. Kaplan, Refugees, p.8; Schechtman, Refugees, p.43; Buehrig, The UN, p.6.

insistence, that any solution would not prejudice the right of the refugees to return, intensified the refugees' hopes of return, if and when a political solution could be introduced.

It is notable that the ESM had nourished the ambition of solving the conflict as a whole. On this it is worthwhile to recall the comments of Buehrig: 'Discrepancy between the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the terms of reference of the ESM calls for comment. The struggle between the incompatible communities in Palestine was a political question for which the Survey Mission was instructed to find an economic answer'.[1] The author remarked correctly that even the ESM final report admitted this discrepancy: 'economic development cannot in itself make peace ... where the political will to peace is lacking.'[2]

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1. Buehrig, Refugees, p.33.
2. Buehrig, op.cit., p.34.

CHAPTER FOUR: British attitude towards the Israeli-Jordanian negotiators.

The two main ingredients of British policy towards the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations were the realization of the need to ensure Israeli agreement to the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan and the recognition that a renewed Israeli-Hashemite understanding would help to solve the Palestine problem. Furthermore, it was characterized by a constant effort to maintain a balance between retaining a dominant position in the Arab World on the one hand and opening a new leaf in its relations with Israel, on the other. With hindsight, it seems that the British position was not a unique one. Any other power that tried to maintain and cultivate good relations with Israel and its Arab neighbours, and at the same time attempted to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, was faced with the same dilemma.

Kirkbride's problem was of a different nature altogether. The British minister's immense influence on the King was one of the main reasons for Britain's unhesitating reliance on Transjordan's loyalty. Kirkbride enjoyed the King's confidence and, as was emphasized in the introduction to this work, was a party to all his domestic and external decisions and plans. However, despite Kirkbride's influence on Abdullah, the king had a major ambition the full import of which he failed to disclose to the British minister. This was Abdullah's determination to conclude a formal peace treaty with Israel. Although Kirkbride approved of the need to reach a tacit agreement with the Jewish Agency, prior to the war in Palestine, he disliked Abdullah's methods of dealing with the Agency. That is, he resented the direct negotiations with Jewish representatives, and preferred the direct contact.

Kirkbride's view on the desirability and nature of the negotiations changed several times during the talks. His dissatisfaction with the King's conduct was particularly strong when even he felt he was being kept in the dark by the king with regard to the talks. However, there were, of course, other reasons for Kirkbride's oscillating attitude towards the negotiations that shall be touched on later in this chapter.

Pragmatism was the main feature of British policy towards the negotiations. However, there were two basic principles that served as general guidelines for all the British departments and personalities dealing with the negotiations. The first was the need to protect the greater Transjordan state from any external and internal enemies. The second was that attempts should be made to end to hostilities between Arab and in Israelis. The conflict was conceived as mainly an Israeli-Jordanian dispute over boundaries and territory. Solving the outstanding problems between these two countries seemed to most officials in the Foreign office to be the best way to dissolve the deadlock. That is, the conflict was not seen as a struggle between two ideologies or national movements, but between two states that had many interests in common. This must have affected British beliefs about the gravity of the conflict and the chances of solving it.

We must remember that as the Cold War developed, Britain's desire to secure Israel's and Jordan's loyalty to NATO added a new element in British policy towards the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.

In addition to describing these general factors determining British policy, the chapter will also distinguish positions adopted by Britain at various phases of the negotiations.

For the sake of analysis we may divide the negotiations into three phases. During the first period, from July 1948 to March 1949, while Bernadotte's initiative was still alive the British tried to check the King's tendency to seek a formal peace with Israel. The Foreign Office at the time favoured an imposed solution to the conflict. Only when this initiative failed, did the Office give its blessing to the attempt to conclude an armistice between the two countries.

The second phase, from March 1949 to March 1950, was marked by the two states' attempt to conclude a proper peace treaty. Its main feature was Kirkbride's effort to maintain a balance between the King who wanted to conlude a peace treaty with Israel, on the one hand, and his ministers, who were reluctant to defy the Arab League on the other.

The last stage began in March 1950 and ended with the King's assassination in July 1951. Israel was by then regarded as a pro-western state by Britain, and the Foreign office no longer saw any urgency in concluding a formal peace treaty, but rather looked for ways of consolidating the 1947 modus vivendi, which was kept until 1967.

Finally, one should not underestimate the genuine effort made by both Jordan and Israel to conclude a peace treaty. The years 1948-1951 were unique in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.During this period Israeli officials were frequent visitors in Amman and helped to lay the foundation for a long-term understanding between the two countries which held until 1977. However, separate Israeli-Jordanian negotiations prevented any serious confrontation with other important factors in the conflict, most crucially, the Palestinian refugee problem.

A. The path to a permanent armistice, July 1948-March 1949.

I. The preliminary contacts, June-July 1948.

Abdullah had already achieved most of his aims in Palestine by the end of the first week of fighting. Thus, he had only reluctantly continued the military effort, out of the need to toe the general Arab line, and owing to his wish to decide the battle over Jerusalem. Hence, at a very early stage, the King found a way of conveying to the Israelis his desire to renew the pre-war understanding in spite of the continuation of the war.[1]

There was a genuine desire in Israel to end hostilities, even prior to the first truce. For that purpose, the Israelis consulted the State Department about ways to negotiate peace with the Arab states. They stipulated one main precondition - that these talks would not involve British mediation.[2] Thus information about these first moves can be gathered mostly from American and Israeli documents. Abdullah, for his part, did not inform the British of these initial contacts in June 1948.[3]

In June 1948, these contacts took place in the American Consulate in Jerusalem. The two local commanders met there and American officials were convinced that a sincere desire for peace existed on both sides. In these talks, Abdullah delivered a promise not to allow large scale operations against the Israelis.[4]

The low profile of the Foreign Office during these contacts was due to the lack of any formal Anglo-Iraeli relations. Nevertheless, it seems, according to Israeli documents, that unofficially, the Foreign

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1. C2A, S/25 9390, L. Khon to Ben Gurion, 19.5.48.
2. ISA, 2083/6, Epstein to Shertock, 27.5.48.
3. Ibid.
4. FRUS 48, Jerusalem to SoS, 8.6.48, p.1105.

office conveyed to the Israelis its support for an Israeli-Hashemite rapprochement.[1]

Officially, however, the Foreign Office was backing the main diplomatic initiative in the area, namely the Bernadotte proposal, which aimed at imposing a solution on the sides, and did not place much hope on an understanding between them. Nevertheless, it was possible that even Bernadotte himself, believed that a prior consent between Israel and Transjordan on certain outstanding problems, would facilitate the success of his plan.[2]

It seems that the British minister in Amman had more at stake as a result of such a direct Israeli-Transjordanian approach. In July 1948, Abdullah notified Kirkbride about his intention to conclude a peace treaty with Israel in order to be able to withdraw from the fighting.[3] Kirkbride reported that Abdullah intended to approach Bernadotte for that purpose, which in his mind (Kirkbride's) was the attitude of a 'frightened and selfish man'.[4]

It is notable that, unlike Kirkbride, London found no fault with the King's conduct and like Bernadotte praised him for accepting the mediator's second set of proposals as well as for his readiness to prolong the truce as advised by Bevin.[5]

Kirkbride explained that he doubted Abdullah's ability to survive both external and internal opposition.[6] As would become clear throughout 1949-1950, Kirkbride was mainly worried about domestic opposition

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1. ISA 2180/17, Eban to Shertock, 9.6.48; ISA 2382/8, Goldmann to Shertock, 9.6.48; ISA 2180/21, Epstein to Shertock, 28.6.48. Conversations with Harold Beeley and Hector McNeil.
2. See chapter 1, and Bernadotte to Jerusalem, p.196.
3. FO 371/68375, E9169, Kirkbride to Bevin, 7.7.48.
4 Ibid.
5. See chapter 1
6. FO 371/68375, E9169, Kirkbride to Bevin, 7.7.48.

that could damage the integrity of the Kingdom. He was less apprehensive of Arab opposition: after all he supported a concept basing British policy in the Middle East on the Hashemites.[1] Most important of all, it seems that Kirkbride was annoyed by the fact that for the first time in his long stay in Transjordan he was not a party to a major feature of the King's foreign policy.[2] One is more doubtful about Kirkbride's concern about the King's tendency not to inform his government. Kirkbride himself tried to convince the Foreign Office to base its Arab policy on absolute monarchs like Abdullah, since such rulers were able to impose their will on their ministers.[3]

The outcome of this situation was that Kirkbride sided with Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda the Transjordanian premier. The latter, who was more of a pan-Arabist than the King, had opposed any independent Transjordanian policy towards Israel. Thus, Kirkbride had lost the complete confidence of one centre of power and was trying to win the allegiance of another. By the end of 1951, the British minister would regret this move as will be indicated later.

However, Kirkbride still enjoyed some influence on the king and, together with the premier, forced the King to pursue a twofold policy towards Israel. The talks with Israel were conducted on two levels - official and unofficial. The official one was public and was conducted by emissaries of the government while the private, unofficial, negotiations were between the King's private advisers and special Israeli envoys.

Abdullah depended for his survival on Britain and was thus reluctant to openly pursue a policy which he believed would be unacceptable

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1. FO 371/68382, E8103, FO Minute, Cable, 16.3.48.
2. Abdullah warned that he would replace Al-Huda with a loyal premier, Samir Ar-Rifai, FO 371/68375, E9520, Kirkbride to Bevin, 8.7.48.
3. FO 371/68381, E3041, Kirkbride to Bevin, 27.2.48.

to Britain. Britain agreed with Abdullah that in order to safeguard Arab Palestine some sort of agreement with Israel was required. However, the British differed from the King about the desirability of formal peace. The Foreign Office asserted that a de facto agreement was sufficient to consolidate the understanding between the two countries.

2. Meetings in Paris (August-November 1948)

These meetings were the outcome of Israel's rejection of the Mediator's proposals and Abdullah's disappointment with Bernadotte's failure. The Israelis rejected the Bernadotte proposals and tried to initiate direct talks with Arab representatives during the General Assembly session in Paris at the end of 1948.[1] Abdullah was the only Arab leader to respond to this Israeli overture. He agreed to send his Ambassador in London, Prince Abdul Majid Haidar, to discuss with Aliahu (Alias) Sasson, the adviser on Arab affairs in the Israeli Foreign Office, the possibilities of mutual understanding. The two men met in Paris in August 1948.[2]

Sasson suggested that the Israelis would use their good offices with the Americans and secure Washington's political and financial support of Transjordan, in return for a joint Israeli-Transjordanian front against Bernadotte's proposals. However, these contacts did not end with any concrete decisions, but both sides took the opportunity to exchange views on their policies.[3]

The British legations in Amman and the Foreign Office had learned about these talks only in November 1948. The British were sceptical

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1. ISA 3749/1, Sasson to Shimshoni, 30.6.48; FO 371/68375, E10391, Beirut to FO, 2.8.48.
2. ISA 2329/13, Sharret to Sasson, 17.8.48.
3. Ibid.

about the value of a direct approach and doubted whether it could contribute at all to the settlement of the Palestinian problem. The Americans, on the other hand, were encouraged by the news coming from Paris and were optimistic about their outcome.[1] The main reason for the British doubtfulness about direct talks was their mistrust of Israel's aims in Palestine. The Foreign Office suspected the Israelis of contemplating the occupation of the whole of Mandatory Palestine, a suspiciaon that was reinforced by reports on the new build up of the Israeli army and air force.[2] Nevertheless, the British were careful not to induce the Arab countries to commence another round of fighting. Thus, notwithstanding these suspicions, the British government decided to maintain the Embargo on the delivery of arms to the Arab states, and only sent further stocks of arms to British bases in Transjordan.[3]

3. The danger of an Israeli attack (at the end of 1948)

The presence of Iraqi forces in the Samaria area was the main Israeli concern at that time. Since August 1948, the Israelis had demanded the evacuation of these forces whose presence was neither welcomed by Abdullah or Kirkbride who regarded them as an anti-British as much as an anti-Abdullah element.[4]

For the sake of removing the danger of an Israeli attack, Abdullah was prepared to conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel. The British believed that an attack could have been prevented by the full implementation of the Bernadotte plan. Bevin's main worry was, as he

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1. FRUS 48, Douglas to SoS, 25.8.48, p.1342.
2. FO 371/68379, E10548, FO Minute, Burrows, 5.8.48.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68822, E11049, Kirkbride to FO, 6.8.48.

explained to the British government, that in the course of direct negotiations the territorial status quo would be changed in Israel's favour.[1] Kirkbride, who shared these apprehensions warned the Foreign Office that nothing should be done to encourage the King to enter direct negotiations with Israel since 'he is already flirting with the idea'.[2] The Minister in Amman stressed that on this question he had Abu Al-Huda's full support.[3]

The Foreign Office was aware, as much as the King was, that an Israeli attack on Arab Palestine could take place before the General Assembly could decide to enforce Bernadotte's proposals on the two parties. The British cabinet could thus have either prepared a direct intervention in the case of an Israeli attack or supported Abdullah's endeavours to reach an understanding with Israel.

One of the Foreign Office's main predicaments was how to assess correctly the Israeli intentions. This was partly due to the lack of direct contact and partly since the Israelis were themselves divided on the question as to whether Israel should take over the whole of Palestine. Ben Gurion's initial desires to enlarge Israel and expand to the west were restrained by his colleagues in the Israeli government and by his own rethinking on the issue. The Israeli premier in October 1948 regarded the Negev as the most vital part of the state's survival and thus abandoned for the time being any thoughts of occupying Arab Palestine.[4] Moreover, the euphoric mood that characterized Ben

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1. CAB 128/113, CM57(48), 26.8.48, Bevin.
2. FO 371/688822, E11532, Amman to FO, 31.8.48.
3. Ibid.
4. State of Israel, Israel States Archives, Documents of the Foreign Policy of Israel (Companion volume), Jerusalem 1981, PGI minutes, 26.9.48 (note 557) p.173; Ben Gurion Diary, 24.5.48; 8.9.48 and I. Beer, Bitahon Israel (Israel's security), Amikam, 1966, Tel-Aviv p.196.

Gurion's thinking in July 1948 was replaced by a more realistic and sober approach.[1] His main conclusion in November 1948 was that Britain would oppose, by force, any Israeli attack.[2]

In his last assumption Ben Gurion was wrong. The British, neither in May 1948, nor in November that year, would have intervened directly in protecting Arab Palestine.[3] This was notwithstanding their obligation to do so under the first article of the annex of the alliance treaty which read as follows: 'In the event of either party becoming engaged in war, or of a menace of hostility each .... party will invite the other to bring to his territory or territory controlled by him the necessary forces of arms'.[4]

The writer Muhafaza claimed that the Transjordanians were notified by Bevin that this article would not apply to Arab Palestine.[5] Glubb had stressed the same point, remarking that 'that remarkable document' was absurd since it referred to different enemies, the USSR for Britain and Israel for Transjordan.[6] In fact, Bevin recognized this contradiction in a speech he made in the House of Commons.[7]

Bevin's disinclination to invoke the treaty was partly political due to his realisations that the Americans would object of such a British action, and partly military, due to the CoS's estimation of the

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1. This is evident from the entries in his diary see BGA, op.cit., 5.11.48.
2. Ben Gurion Diary, op.cit. 5.11.48.
3. CAB 130/37, GEN 223/81st meeting, 7.11.48, Bevin.
4. Underlined by the writer of this work, FO 371/68820, E3673, The Anglo-Transjordan treaty 16.3.48.
5. A. Muhafaze Al-Alaqat Al-Urduniya Al-Baritaniya, 1921-57 (Anglo-Jordanian relations), Beirut 1973, p.168.
6. Glubb, A Soldier, p.301 and see also M. Faddah, The Middle East in Transition, A study of Jordan's foreign policy, (London: Asia Publishing House, 1974), p.21; Robinson, Israel and the Arabs (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p.39.
7. Hansard, vol.451, col.1011, 9.11.48.

British ability to intervene. The CoS doubted Britain's ability to sustain a long war against Israel and suggested confining British intervention to the supply of arms and ammunition.[1] As will be indicated later in this chapter, it was only when proper British installations were in danger that British intervention was seriously considered.

However, even complying with the recommendations of the CoS to send arms to the Legion depended on the American consent to lifting the embargo. President Truman, in an election year, was reluctant to cause any shift in US policy. His consent for this action was given only after his re-election.[2] It is notable that in Washington, even the State Department failed to see the reason for the British anxiety in those months and British reaction was regarded as 'unrealistic'.[3]

The Foreign Office in the light of these developments felt it could do either of two things: recommend Transjordan to leave Palestine, or to encourage it to reach an agreement with Israel. This dilemma was accentuated when Abdullah, by November 1948, felt too vulnerable to pursue the talks with the Israelis without British protection and appealed for a fresh British commitment to strengthen him so that he would not enter the negotiations from an inferior position.[4]

Thus, Abdullah had apologised to Kirkbride for not having informed him about the negotiations.[5] The Tranjordanian Ambassador in London, the main participant in the Paris negotiations, was instructed to

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1. CAB 21/1922, MoD to GHQ MELF, 9.11.48.
2. FRUS 48, ASoS to SoS (Paris), 22.11.48, p.1534.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/68822, E14351, Kirkbride to FO, 8.11.49.
5. FO 371/68822, E14188, Amman to FO, 3.11.48.

inform the Foreign Office about those negotiations. However, it seems that the Ambassador was reluctant to give any significant details about what had occurred in Paris and did not fulfil a promise he gave to the Eastern Department to inform them before hand about any further meetings. When the Foreign Office learned from Kirkbride that the talks did continue without its knowledge it concluded that the Transjordanian ambassador was 'pretty disingenuous'.[1] It dawned upon the Head of the Eastern Department that the 'Minister's talks had already gone some way before he came to us'.[2] The Foreign Office was bewildered by Abdullah's lack of confidence, though it did not affect the attitude of the Office towards the King.

4. The outcome of the Paris negotiations

Kirkbride assessed in November 1948, that the talks in Paris became more substantial since the King had sent his personal secretary Abdel Ghani Karami to the talks.[3] The minister in Amman speculated that Karami would be presented with an Israeli approval for Transjordanian rule over Arab Palestine in return for the Negev, Latrun and the whole of Jerusalem.[4]

The Americans, on the other hand, reported that the two sides had only agreed to negotiate over the fate of the Negev, Jaffa, Ramleh and Beisan. Moreover, this report stressed that the Israelis tried to discover the degree of British involvement in the talks.[5]

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1. FO 371/68822, E14813, FO Minute, Burrows, 22.11.48.
2. Ibid.
3. A Palestinian in his origin and according to At-Tal worked in the past for the Jewish Agency, At-Tal, Karithat, 444; FRUS 48, Amman to SoS, 10.11.48, p.1564.
4. FO 371/68862, E14813, Amman to FO, 17.11.48.
5. FRUS 48, Stabler to SoS, 10.11.48, p.1564.

However, Ben Gurion's diary gives the impression that the two sides were only exploring possibilities for serious negotiations. In fact, Ben Gurion felt that he had not much to discuss with Abdullah before completing the occupation of the Negev, and just wanted to keep the momentum in the negotiations.[1] This is contradicted by some Arab writers who tended to assume considerable importance to the talks in Paris. They claimed that those talks resulted in Abdullah's decision to remain neutral in the case of an Israeli attact on the Negev.[2]

Whereas there is no evidence that the talks in Paris amounted to any such an agreement, it is safe to agree with the Arab arguments that Abdullah had intentionally refrained from assisting the Egyptians in the Negev and that by that eventually saved his forces from an Israeli attack.[3]

The reason for this approach by Abdullah was that the Negev was more of a British interest than a Transjordanian one. Britain was interested in securing the Negev as a land communication between Egypt and Transjordan, whereas Abdullah's desires were confined to a corridor to the Mediterranean, a request granted to him by the Israelis, in principle, at the beginning of 1950.[4] Abdullah was not suspected by the Israelis of having any ambitions towards the Negev and therefore his minimal involvement in that area was conceived by the Israelis as part of a British design to wrest this part from Israel.[5]

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary 9.12.48, p.870 - Ben Gurion wrote that the talks were not 'real' and the sides did not even agree on protocol, 21.11.48, p.837.
2. Abidi, Jordan 21; At-Tal, op.cit. p.344-45; A. Murad, Al-Dawr As-Siyasi lil-Jaish Al-Urduni, 1921-1973 (The political role of the Jordanian Army) (Beirut: PLO, 1973), p.60.
3. Murad Dawr, p.60, At-Tal, Karithat pp.420-21.
4. This was explained by Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda to W. Strang, in the latter's visit to the area, FO 371/75067, E8572, 4.7.49.
5. ISA 2412/26, Memo, British policy towards Israel, 12.5.49.

5. The shift in British policy (December 1948)

By November 1948, Kirkbride, who had scorned Abdullah earlier in the year for his 'cowardly' behaviour owing to the King's desire to reach a separate agreement with Israel, was himself terrified by the prospect of an Israeli attack on Arab Palestine. The Minister in Amman envisaged an Israeli offensive that would lead to the fall of Gaza, the Negev and Jerusalem into Jewish hands.[1] This gloomy scenario was shared by Glubb Pasha.[2] Bevin and Wright in London had reached similar conclusions about Israel's ability and ambitions. Moreover, the Foreign Office, in December 1948, had realised that the Americans were not fully behind Bernadotte's proposals, and that the Arab World resented them as much as the Israelis and the Hashemites did.[3]

Thus, the Foreign Office instructed Kirkbride to convey to the King Britain's support for negotiations with Israel, but pleaded with the King to consult it.[4] Notwithstanding Kirkbride's opposition in the past, he himself supported negotiations with Israel at the end of 1948. His main worry was that Israel would attack Transjordan if the latter would not enter peace negotiations. Kirkbride's apprehensions about an imminent Israeli attack, grew after the talks had moved from Paris to Jerusalem in December 1948.[5]

The two main participants in those talks reported that in those meetings, the Israelis gave their consent and blessing to the Jericho resolution, suggested the de facto partition of Jerusalem and the conclusion of permanent truce along the Legion front. The Israelis demanded the eviction of the Iraqi and Egyptian contingents. As for

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1. FO 816/132, Kirkbride to Bevin, 3.11.48.
2. Glubb, A Soldier p.212.
3. FO 816/132, Bevin to Kirkbride, 3.11.48.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/68862, E13635, E13635, Kirkbride to FO, 16.10.48.

the King's demands for Ramleh, Lydda and Jaffa, they were rejected. The main practical outcome of the talks was the consolidation of the de facto partition of Jerusalem by the introduction of mutually agreed military arrangements.[1]

However, Sir Alec Kirkbride like his American colleague, had sent an altogether different account of the meetings. According to him, the Transjordanians were presented with an ultimatum. Unless the Transjordanians were prepared to enter full peace negotiations, the Israelis would resume their military operations against them.[2] Kirkbride, somewhat confused, reported that the Israeli position was a mixture of a desire for peace with a readiness to resume the fighting.[3] Thus, in the midst of the meetings in Jerusalem, the Minister in Amman felt that even negotiations with Israel would not necessarily safeguard the Hashemite interests in Arab Palestine since the Israelis were prepared to resort to military pressure if their demands were not met. At-Tal and Dayan, however, never mentioned any ultimatum or threats made in the meeting. In fact, nothing concrete was agreed upon.[4] The Israeli documents indicate that the Israeli government took a decision to continue peace negotiations with Transjordan and to carry on with military operations against the Egyptians.[5] It seems that both the American and the British accounts emerged from a somewhat misleading version given by the King himself. Kirkbride admitted that the King

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1. At-Tal, Karithat, pp.443-45; Abidi, Jordan, p.32; Hashavia, Ain achat, p.172, M. Dayan, Story of my Life (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p.104.
2. FO 816/134, Amman to FO, 14.12.48 and FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 14.12.48; FRUS 48, Burdet to SoS, 23.12.48, p.1687; reports on the last meeting in December 1948, FO 816/142, 29.12.48; FRUS 48, Stabler to SoS, 29.12.48, p.1700.
3. FO 816/142, Kirkbride to Bevin, 15.12.48.
4. Ben Gurion War Diary, 30-31.12.48, pp.910-911; At-Tal, Karithat, p.447-448.
5. Ben Gurion, War Diary, pp.881-886 (several government meetings).

was hardly taking him or the premier into his confidence, and that in the cases which Abdullah did inform them, the information was confused and misleading.[1] In this case, contrary to the King's report, it seems that nothing concrete was agreed upon and the two sides consented to continue the talks towards an armistice in 1949.[2]

There is little doubt that Abdullah wanted to create the impression when informing the Americans, the British and Abu Al-Huda, that the Israelis would not be satisfied with anything less than a formal peace. The King wanted to persuade them that unless they gave him their blessing, they would be responsible for the resumption of hostilities.

Whether the Israelis had or had not submitted an ultimatum, the fact remains that both Kirkbride and the American representative felt that Transjordan was in real danger. The Consulates in Jerusalem reported Israeli movement of troops and added to the conviction of the State Department and the Foreign Office that an Israeli attack was imminent.[3] President Truman warned Ben Gurion that the US Government might review its attitude towards Israel in the light of the agressive Israeli policy. Ben Gurion was surprised by the American warning and denied the allegations.[4]

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1. FO 816/142, Amman to SoS, 28.12.48.
2. Ben Gurion's War Diary, 30-31.12.48, pp.910-911; and At-Tal Karithat, p.447-448. At-Tal's version is in particular reliable about the course of the negotations from September 1948 to March 1949. However, his claim for playing a major role in obstructing them is rather misleading since he took an active part and objected only to decisions that hindered his own political career, and was less interested in preventing them out of patriotic zeal. See At-Tal pp.437, 440, 441 and Vatikiotis remarks, P. Vatikiotis, Politics and the Military in Jordan (London: Frank Cass, 1967), p.102-105.
3. FO 816/142, Amman to SoS, 29.12.48; FRUS 48, Stabler to SoS, 29.12.48, p.1700.
4. FRUS 48, SD to the American Embassy in Israel, 30.12.48, pp.1704-05.

Abu Al-Huda, on the other hand, did not believe the King. He appreciated correctly that the King would look now for governmental support and thus offered his resignation. Kirkbride persuaded Bevin to send a special message to the premier urging him to remain in office, this was done and Abu Al-Huda stayed.[1]

Kirkbride, on the other hand, believed the king and appealed to the Foreign Office for a lead as to a desirable policy towards the Israelis. Kirkbride claimed that now that the Bernadotte plan had proved a failure, a new guideline was necessary for him and the Transjordanian premier, otherwise the King would enter the negotiations from an inferior position and might lose Arab Palestine.[2]

Thus, Kirkbride forced the Office to formulate a new guideline as a result of the failure of Bernadotte's initiative. Bevin's immediate reaction, characteristic of this pragmatic statesman was to endorse the direct negotiations as the alternative to the mediation efforts. The Foreign Secretary justified the negotiations in a letter to Kirkbride since they were essential for safeguarding the annexation of the West Bank.[3] Bevin looked for ways of appeasing possible Arab reaction to the negotiations as well as seeking the American co-operation, realising it contradicted their support for the PCC's role as the exclusive peace medium in the area.

6. The problem of Arab resentment to the talks

The Foreign Secretary hoped that eventually all Arab states would consent to a settlement that would divide Central Palestine between Israel and Transjordan. He regarded Egypt's consent as the most important factor in facilitating such an Arab response.[4]

1. FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 17.12.48.
2. FO 371/68862, E15724, Amman to FO, 9.12.48.
3. FO 816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 16.12.48.
4. Ibid.

Bevin proposed granting Israel the Galilee and dividing the Negev, south of Beersheba between Egypt and Transjordan. He that Israel would be tempted to accept this solution by promising most of the Negev to Transjordan and internationalising Lydda and Jerusalem. That is, he assumed that the Israelis would prefer the Jordanians to the Egyptians on their southern border. Bevin this was looking now for a solution that combined Bernadotte's second proposal with the 'Jessup principle'.[1]

The Foreign Office found Abu Al-Huda eager to approach the Egyptians and reach an understanding on this basis. However, Abdullah succeeded in spoiling his intentions to go over to Egypt and discuss the plan.[2] The King would never have accepted such a guideline from the Foreign Office. Neither before the war in Palestine nor after it, did he show any inclination to involve the Egyptian in his plans.[3] His reasons have already been elucidated in a previous chapter.[4]

The Egyptians wanted the British to serve as mediators between them and Abdullah, as long as they needed the Legion's help to extricate their army from its debacle in Palestine.[5] Once the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations in Rhodes commenced, the Egyptians saw no further use for a joint front.

The British ambassador in Cairo strongly supported a rapprochement since he believed that otherwise Transjordan would fall into an Israeli trap. Similar opinions were voiced by Sir John Troutbeck who cautioned against a Palestine settlement that did not involve Egypt.[6] This was

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1. See chapter 1.
2. A few days before the scheduled visit the King sent a message of support to the Mahdi of Sudan, supporting the latter's claim for independence, FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 17.12.48.
3. See chapter 2 and FO 816/130, Amman to FO, 2.10.48; FO 816/142, Amman to FO, 17.12.48.
4. FO 816/142, Baghdad to Amman (conversation, Mack-Abdullah), 24.12.48; Amman to FO, 29.12.48.
5. FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 16.12.48.
6. FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 16.12.48; 22.12.48.

mainly because it would damage the already strained Anglo-Egyptian relations.[1]

However, Kirkbride was opposed to the idea of dividing the Negev or for HMG serving as a mediator for that purpose.[2] As was mentioned, Kirkbride's apprehension was about Israel, not the Arab World. Most of the Eastern Department officials were also less enthusiastic about the idea which was mainly Bevin's conception. They advocated that Britain should not interfere in the Egypt-Transjordanian complex relations since Britain would lose in the end because of the necessity to take the side of one country while antagonizing the other.[3] In the Department's opinion an Egyptian-Transjordanian rapprochement was desirable, but not preferable to a Hashemite control in the Negev.[4] Bevin found more support amongst his representatives in the Middle East such as Sir Hugh Dow who stressed the importance of obtaining Egyptian consent to the Greater Transjordan concept.[5]

The main conclusion Bevin might have derived from his failure to convince Abdullah and Kirkbride to approach the Egyptians, could have been that the Negev, by December 1948, was considered by the Transjordanians as being part of Israel. In fact, a statement in this spirit was made by Abdullah in a conversation with Shiloah, in January 1949.[6] Sir Hugh Dow and Sir John Troutbeck pointed out this fact to the Foreign Office in their dispatches.[7]

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1. FO 816/142, BMEO to Amman, 22.12.48.
2. FO 816/142, Kirkbride to Bevin, 22.12.48.
3. FRUS 48, Douglas (conversation with Burrows) to ASoS, 7.12.48, p.1650.
4. FO 371/68822, E16002, McNeil to Bevin, 15.12.48.
5. FO 371/68822, E15867, FO Minute, 10.12.48; FO 371/68861, Beirut to FO, 11.9.48, 22.12.48 (also in FO 816/142).
6. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 6.1.49.
7. FO 816/142, Jerusalem to FO, 20.12.48.

In December 1948, Bevin defined his position as follows: 'it would be strategically convenient for us, if Tranjordan could get the whole of the Negev, or such part as may be alloted to the Arabs, but we wish to be careful not to antagonize Egypt'.[1] Antagonizing Egypt, seemed less important to the Eastern Department. However, they appreciated the strategical value for Britain in that area. The possibility of establishing bases there as well as controlling an area that was interposed between British installations in Transjordan and the British zone in Egypt, did not escape the attention of the officials.[2]

The Americans were divided on this question. The State Department favoured Bevin's ideas, but the President, contrary to the Department's line had already, by the end of 1948, recognised Israel's claim for that area.[3] In any case, by March 1949, the Israelis gained de-facto control over the Negev. The two Armistice agreements with Egypt and Jordan confirmed Israeli control over the area and British aspirations for the Negev were dealt a blow.

7. The need to consider American and UN positions

The Foreign Office saw no reason to check the negotiations on account of the creation of the PCC or its arrival in Jerusalem in order to assume the role of the late Mediator.[4] Bevin accepted this line owing to the uncertainty about the precise role the PCC could play in safeguarding Britain's interests.[5] Only Sir Ronald Campbell in

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1. This was written in reply to Abu Al-Huda's question about the future of the Negev, FO 371/68862, E15023, Bevin to Kirkbride, 24.11.48.
2. FO 371/68862, E15239, FO Minute, Burrows, 22.10.48.
3. According to ISA 2412/26, memo British policy towards Israel, 12.5.49.
4. FO 371/68822, E15531, Wright to Kirkbride, 3.12.48.
5. FO 816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 16.12.48.

Cairo resented this directive and asserted that direct negotiations at the time were 'untimed and unwise'.[1]

The Americans at that point were themselves undecided with regard to the PCCs role and informed the office that they would not object to direct talks parallel to the PCCs efforts. The Office thus, did not anticipate American opposition. Incidentally, the Americans suspected the British of checking the Transjordanians from conducting direct talks with Israel.[2]

Thus Bevin, after taking into account all these considerations advised Abdullah to pursue a separate policy towards Israel and 'look for the best deal you can', regardless of the Arab reaction.[3] The Israelis, however, could not bring themselves to accept the change in British policy.[4]

8. Preliminary Armistice talks (January 1949)

The round of talks in December 1948 ended with a decision to accredit official delegates on both sides to pursue the talks. The main agreement which stemmed from the January 1949 talks was to confine the discussion to the Legion front and accepting, in principle, the truce line as the border between the two states, namely, not suggesting any territorial changes as was done by Bernadotte, or implied by the Jessup principle.[5] However, the Transjordanians failed to obtain

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1. FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 22.12.48.
2. FO 816/142, SOS to Amman, 15.12.48. SD501BB. Palestine/12-2348, Burdet to ASoS, 23.12.48.
3. FO 371/68822, E15531, Wright to Kirkbride, 31.12.48; FO 371/75045, E167, FO Minute, Burrows, 31.
4. FRUS 48, Burdet (conversation with Dayan and Shiloah) to SoS, 22.12.48, p.1687.
5. Abidi, Jordan, p.33. The meeting took place in Bab Al-Wad on the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem road, FO 371/75330, E6, Amman to FO, 2.1.49.

formal Israeli recognition for the annexation of Arab Palestine, and the Israelis failed to receive an explicit Transjordanian approval of an Israeli control over the Negev.[1]

A few days after the first meeting in January 1949, Kirkbride learned about it. He reported a more conciliatory Israeli attitude, which he attributed to American pressure. This time, Kirkbride's account coincided with Jordanian and Israeli versions.[2] The Foreign Office attached little importance to the beginning of negotiations between the two accredited delegations, owing to the growing tension between HMG forces in the Middle East and the Israeli army.

9. Anglo-Israeli mutual suspicions in January 1949

Following the Israeli penetration into the Sinai, Israel and Britain were nearly at war, as will be elaborated in the next chapter. The conflict culminated in the shooting down of the five RAF aircraft by the Israelis. In that atmosphere, Ben Gurion viewed Britain as Israel's worst enemy and genuinely anticipated the British and the Iraqis to launch an attack from Samaria.[3]

The direct cause of the Israeli concern was the arrival of a detachment of British troops in Aqaba which arrived there as a result of the Israeli-British tension.[4] The Israelis accepted Abdullah's

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1. Both sides regarded this position as a tactical and not principal move. See Ben Gurion, War Diary, 2.1.49, p.921, 6.1.49, p.936, 7.1.49, p.937.
2. FO 371/75376, E464, Amman to FO, 10.1.49; Ben Gurion, op.cit. 9.1.49; At-Tal, Karithat, pp.449-51; Summary of this meeting can also be found in Abidi, Jordan, p.35 and Dayan, My Life, p.106.
3. Israeli intelligence reports and monitoring services in Ben Gurion, War Diary, 8.1.49, p.938; Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.862.
4. This will be given in full detail in the next chapter.

claim that the troops were sent there by Britain's own initiative. However, it seems that the King himself requested this force, owing to the Israeli advance towards the Gulf of Aqaba, alongside Wadi Arava.[1]

Abdullah's main apprehension was that the Israeli thrust to the South would end in an Israeli penetration to Transjordan proper.[2] Such a possibility was not ruled out by Britain. For the British a simultaneous invasion of the territory of two countries allied to them by a treaty, without proper British response, could have meant, as Michael Wright had put it, the loss of the British position in the Middle East.[3]

Thus, in the main, Britain was acting in a defensive manner, although it is possible to trace a tendency towards opportunism in Wright's suggestion to consider Israeli advance into the Southern Negev, as a casus belli for British intervention. This opinion was not shared by anyone else in the Foreign Office, and Wright himself did not hold it for long.[4] The consensus was that only an Israeli entry into Transjordan proper would be a cause to invoke the alliance treaty.[5]

The British measures included reinforcing the Aqaba garrison, putting the Royal Navy and the RAF on the highest alert and sending additional supplies of equipment to the British units in Transjordan.[6] Abdullah was explicitly told that: 'these moves were not made with the idea that they will enable the Arab Legion to take the offensive in Palestine.'[7]

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1. Ben Gurion, op.cit. 13.1.49, p.949. Conversation with At-Tal; FO 371/75045, E367, Brief for the SoS, for the Defence Committee meeting, 5.1.49. The CiC ME ordered the transfer of units from Mafraq to Aqaba.
2. FO 371/75045, E733, FO to UKUN NY, 17.1.49.
3. FO 371/75051, E932, FO Minute, Wright, 10.1.49.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 31.12.48.
6. FO371/75054, E733, FO to UKUN NY, 12.1.49.
7. FO816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 31.12.48.

Notwithstanding these grave developments in the Anglo-Israeli relations, they seemd to have had only marginal effects on the Israeli-Transjordanian talks. It was mainly owing to Abdullah's assurances to the Israelis that he was able to restrain both the Legion and the Iraqi forces from any attack on Israel.[1] In any case, the tension died out as quickly as it had emerged and ended with HMG's decision to grant a de facto recognition to Israel, and the Armistice between Israel and Egypt.[2] Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that to this very day, Israeli writers are convinced that Britain was about to attack Israel.[3]

10. Anglo-American discussions about the Palestine question (January 1949).

Abdullah's main apprehension was that the Israelis would reach an agreement with Egypt at Transjordan's expense. Thus, in Shuneh, the Transjordanian demands were made with a view to the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations in Rhodes. They included demands for Jaffa and Gaza as an outlet to the Mediterranean. The Israelis had implicitly affirmed Abdullah's assertion that his rule in Gaza was preferable to Egyptian control of the area.[4]

The Transjordanian delegates had warned the Israelis that Britain would object to their further advance towards the Gulf of Aqaba. However, the two Israeli delegates, Sasson and Dayan, returned from the

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 17.1.49, pp.956.
2. See chapter 1.
3. Editorial note in Ben Gurion, War Diary, Diary entries 11.1-12.1.49; D. Ben Gurion, Hazon va-Derech (Vision and reality) vol.1, pp.88-90.
4. Ben Gurion op.cit. 15.1.49, p.951; 17.1.49, p.956; Dayan, My life, p.108; At-Tal, Karithat, p.458, 465; FRUS 49, London to SD, 19.1.49, p.684; FO 371/75330, E5, Amman to FO, 1.2.49 - Dayan and Sasson came disguised as UN observers. Glubb was responsible for their safety. He and the American representative were present in the meeting. See also Abidi, Jordan, p.37.

meeting in Shuneh (15.1.49) with the impression that Abdullah wanted to free himself from British control.[1]

The Israelis expected the meeting in Shuneh to end with a mutual agreement to comply with Dr. Bunche's invitation to convene the two delegations in Rhodes and commence armistice negotiations.[2] However, the King explained that owing to considerable opposition from the ministers and the British, he was unable to embark on proper armistice negotiations.[3] The British reports and some other sources indicate that, in fact, there was no opposition in the Transjordan government to these talks in Rhodes, since they were in accordance with the general Arab line, neither did Kirkbride object to them. It seems that the King was reluctant to negotiate an armistice when there were other Arab delegates in Rhodes. Furthermore, the King preferred the talks to continue in Shuneh where he could personally intervene whenever there was a deadlock.[4]

The Foreign Office was in favour of an armistice and it resented the idea of a formal peace which would have incurred the animosity of the rest of the Arab world.[5] The Foreign Secretary suggested that all political matters should be left for the PCC.[6] Bevin's confidence in the PCC's prospects of success differed somewhat from the sceptical attitude shown by the Foreign Office officials towards this body. Bevin was mainly impressed by the American effective intervention in the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, and believed that American

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 17.1.49, p.956.
2. FO 371/75336, FO Minute, January 1949.
3. FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 15.1.49, p.667.
4. FRUS 49, op.cit.; FO 371/75336, E1191, Burrows, FO Minute, 24.1.49.
5. FO 816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 1.1.49.
6. FO 816/142, SoS to Kirkbride, 1.1.49; FRUS 49, London to SoS, 4.1.49, p.607.

membership in the PCC could bring about similar results in the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.[1]

The Foreign Office felt considerable relief after the conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian Armistice. The agreement prevented a full-scale clash with Israeli forces and secondly, it enabled Abdullah to enter armistice talks without being condemned by the Arab League.[2] Nevertheless, the Foreign Office was not oblivious to Abdullah's desire to go beyond merely an armistice agreement. A cabinet meeting in London was devoted to this problem, and ministers deemed it necessary to convey to Bevin, that in their view, the King should proceed prudently with the negotiations without antagonizing the Arab League.[3]

It seems that the Foreign Secretary hoped to renew the Anglo-American understanding which had brought about the Bernadotte scheme. That is, he desired a close Anglo-American co-operation to provide the parties in the Palestine conflict with a guideline as to what would be a desirable territorial agreement. However, Bevin's main predicament was that the Americans saw no harm in keeping the Negev in Jewish hands if Israel were to make concessions elsewhere.[4] Whereas, he considered the division of the Negev between Egypt and Jordan an essential part of his guideline.

The Foreign Secretary did not despair and urged the Americans to consent to at least a joint declaration that would emphasize the degree of co-operation between the two Powers on Middle Eastern affairs. As Bevin explained to the Americans, in January 1949 such a joint or even tripartite (French as well) declaration was necessary to refute the

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1. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 1.1.49.
2. FO 816/142, Bevin to Kirkbride, 1.1.49.
3. CAB 129/31, part I, CP(49)10, 15.1.49.
4. FRUS 49, ASoS to London, 13.1.49, p.658.

'false impression' created by the failure of the Bernadotte proposal that the two Powers did not see eye to eye on the Middle East.[1]

Initially, the Americans were reluctant to join in such a move, which in their view would have irritated the Russians who might see it as a move to create another NATO in the Middle East. Secondly, the State Department feared it would bring the issue of American policy to the Senate. The Department said it feared the prospect of such an embarrassing issue being debated in the House.[2] The French did not show any inclination either to join in such a declaration. The French Foreign Minister was apprehensive about the reaction of the North African population.[3]

However, the Foreign Office soon found out that the Americans would be willing to join this declaration in return for a British Public gesture towards Israel.[4] This American appeal could not have come at a better time. When it was made, in the middle of January 1949, the Foreign Office was already considering granting Israel a de facto recognition, owing to the growing pressure in the House of Commons. In fact, the recognition was timed in such a way that it would help the Foreign Secretary in crucial debates both in the Cabinet and in Parliament about British policy towards Palestine.[5] Thus, although the American Embassy in London attributed to their influence the change in British policy, it was the fruit of domestic pressure as well.[6]

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1. FRUS 49, Lovett to Sir Oliver Franks, 18.1.49, pp. 672-73.
2. Ibid. The SD would have had to explain the failure of Bernadotte's plan.
3. Ibid.
4. FRUS 49, Lovett to Sir Oliver Franks, 18.1.49, pp.672-73; Daily Telegraph, 19.1.49 and SD 867n.01/1-1249, London, 24.1.49.
5. see next chapter.
6. SD 867n.01/1-1949, SoS to London, 19.1.49.

Bevin's request was thus complied with on the other side of the Atlantic. A White House press release read as follows: 'While at the time there may have been differences of opinion in London and Washingtion as to how best to deal with the Palestine problem, there has been no difference whatever in our main objectives'.[5] Secretary Bevin made a similar declaration in the House: 'President Truman's aims and ours are the same'.[6] This was coupled with a de jure recognition of Israel and Transjordan by the United States.[7]

In the final analysis, notwithstanding the good relations between the two Powers, the American participation in the PCC did not bring with it the desired Anglo-American formula for solving the Palestine question. American guidance to their representative in the PCC was to look for a comprehensive settlement, including the solution of the refugee problem and Jerusalem, and did not share the British view of the desirability of a piecemeal Israeli-Transjordan agreement.[1]

11. The Shuneh negotiations (February 1949).

The Israelis were invited to Shuneh in February 1949 by the King who had promised them that he was given a free hand by the British to discuss armistice with them. He hinted that although he had no

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1. FRUS 49, Editorial Note, 1p.692.
2. HC, 26.1.49.
3. SD 867n.01/1-2549, Satterthwaite to Acheson, 25.1.49.
4. SD 861n.01/1-2749, Amman to SD, 27.1.49; FO 371/75330, E1105, Bevin to Abdullah, 19.1.49.

interest in the Southern Negev, HMG would never allow him to negotiate on this area.[1] British documents do not provide any indication of explicit guidelines to Abdullah to avoid discussion of that or other topics. The King probably mentioned British pressure on him, in order to obtain concession from Israel or to prevent Israeli demands for concessions.[2]

The King was still reluctant to send a delegation to Rhodes and preferred direct negotiations in Shuneh. He wanted to discuss with the Israelis two topics, which he had realised could not come under the framework of an armistice agreement, an outlet to the sea and an agreement on the Negev and the West Bank.[3]

Bevin wrote personally to the King asking him to negotiate territorial questions in Rhodes.[4] This letter played an important role in Abdullah's compliance with Bunche's invitation to conduct negotiations in Rhodes.[5] However, in Shuneh, in the meantime, the two sides agreed that they would participate in the PCC and Rhodes negotiations only to satisfy Anglo-American pressure, but the negotiations themselves would take place in Shuneh.[6] Dayan and Abdullah were the architects of this formula, namely, that the two sides would reach a prior agreement in Shuneh and then sign the Armistice in Rhodes.[7]

Fortunately for the two sides, the Arab League did not decide to negotiate en bloc in Rhodes, thus it was possible to conduct bilateral negotiations. The Egyptians themselves informed the Foreign Office

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1. FRUS 49, McDonald to SoS, 1.2.49, p.716; Dayan, My Life, p.107; At-Tal, Karithat, 464.
2. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 2.1.49, p.966; Ad-Daly, Azzam, 274.
3. FO 371/75330, E1105, Abdullah to Bevin, 19.1.49.
4. FO 371/75331/E1281, Bevin to Abdullah, 27.1.49.
5. FRUS 49, McDonald to SoS, 1.2.49, p.716.
6. Ibid.
7. FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 7.2.49, p.773; SD 501BB. Palestine/2-1249, SD to Jerusalem, 12.2.49.

that they were insistent that 'no other Arab state shall come to terms with the Jews until they have completed their negotiations'.[1] The Israelis announced that they would not negotiate with a joint Arab delegation.[2]

Thus, it was only at the end of February that the Transjordanian delegation proceeded to Rhodes. It was instructed by its government not to discuss political matters, a guideline approved by the King, who knew he would continue to conduct political negotiations in Shuneh.[3] In Shuneh, it became clear that two main obstacles remained in the way of Armistice were the future of the Gulf of Aqaba and that of the Iraqi front.

12. Troubles in the Gulf of Aqaba

The Israeli delegation to Rhodes was instructed by Ben Gurion to delay any agreement on final borders, until the Israeli army had completed operation UVDA (fait accompli) which was aimed at capturing the Southern Negev down to the Gulf.[4] This area was partly under the feeble control of the Legion.[5] Arab writers had little doubt that British aquiescence to the Israeli actions ensured the successful implementation of the operation.[6] However, it seems that the British

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1. FO 371/75064, E4099, Cairo to FO, 26.2.49; FO 371/75331, E2377, Amman to FO, 19.2.49.
2. ISA 2425/7, Eytan to Vigier (Bunche representative in Israel) 7.1.49.
3. FO 816/170, Research Department memo. August 1950; FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 24.2.49, p.767.
4. Netanel Lorch, Korot Milkhement Ha-A'zmaut (The Israeli independence war) (Ramat Gan, 1963), pp.533-4 (English version: Israel's war of Independence, 1947-49, Hartford House, 1968); Ben Gurion, War Diary, Ibid., 7.3.49, p.957.
5. Y. Cohen, L'or Ha-Yam u-ba-Machsach (During daylight and darkness) (Tel Aviv: Yprucham, 1969), pp.257-259.
6. See for instance, A. Muhfaza, Alqqat, p.186 and At-Tal, Karithat, 475-76.

more than anyone else were threatened by the Israeli advance owing to their anxiety about the safety of the British contingent in Aqaba.[1]

The last stage of the operation began on March 7 and it was some time before the British realised the direction of the Israeli movement. The initial response of the British was to reinforce further their contingent in Aqaba.[2] This step was taken after the Secretary of State for War and the CoS exerted heavy pressure on the Defence Committee.[3]

Secretary Alexander was convinced that the Israelis would attack OUTLONE, the British Contingent in Aqaba.[4] As in the situation in January, the whole British forces in the area were put on the highest alert.[5]

As for the Foreign Office, its main reaction was to appeal to the Americans and ask them to do all in their power to restrict the Israelis. The American Secretary of State Acheson was told by Sir Oliver Franks in Washington that the Israel action 'touched his people on a very raw nerve'.[6] However, the State Department was reluctant to act before the UN observers established the extent of the Israeli advance.[7] Even after it had been established that the Israelis were heading to the Gulf, the State Department was reluctant to condemn the Israelis, apprehensive that it might obstruct the armistice negotiations. Their only concern was to prevent an Israeli penetration into Transjordan proper.[8] The Americans asked the British 'not to allow any

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1. See their action about the Israeli advance in January 1949.
2. A battalion, a squadron of tanks and two destroyers were sent, CAB 21/1922, GHQ MELF to MoD, 10.3.49.
3. CAB 21/1922, Hollis to SoS of War, 11.3.49; Alexander to Bevin, 16.3.49.
4. CAB 21/1922, op.cit. this opinion was also shared by Glubb, see Glubb 212.
5. CAB 21/1922, GHQ MELF to MoD, 10.3.49; no reconnaissance flights were ordered to avoid a clash similar to the one of January 1949.
6. FRUS 49, Acheson-Franks conversation, 16.3.49, p.812.
7. CAB 131/8, DO(49)7 7.3.49; CAB 21/1922, Washington to FO, 10.3.49.
8. FRUS 49, Memo SoS to President, 10.3.49, p.810.

minor incident to set off the balloon,' and to behave with restraint.[1]

The Foreign Office had also approached the Israelis and were assured by the latter that there was no intention of crossing the border; on the other hand, the Israelis justified their advance to the Gulf by claiming that they were advancing in an area that was allotted to the Jews in the partition resolution.[2]

The British warned the Israelis that HMG's forces in the area were instructed to fire on any Israeli unit that crossed the border between Palestine and Transjordan and would fire back if attacked by the Israelis from Palestine proper.[3] Thus, the British were prepared to invoke the alliance treaty with Transjordan if the Israelis invaded Transjordan.[4] On the other hand, the Legion units in the area in which the Israelis advanced were ordered by Glubb to withdraw, which is another source of bitterness mentioned by Arab writers.[5]

According to Ben Gurion, the Egyptians by signing an Armistice with Israel, gave their consent to the Israeli advance. This tacit understanding enabled the Israelis to complete a successful bloodless operation.[6] Nevertheless, Ben Gurion would probably have ordered the completion of the operation with or without Transjordanian or Egyptian consent. As he himself explained: 'capturing a position near Eilat (Um Rashrash) is so vital and decisive that we should take the risk of a

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1. FRUS 49, SoS to Sir Oliver Franks, 10.3.49, p.812.
2. ISA 37/12, Linton-Wright conversation, 9.3.49; 38/1, Linton to FO, 11.3.49; Burrows to Linton, 30.3.49.
3. At-Tal brings this version which is confirmed by CAB 21/1922, FO to Haifa, 9.3.49, on p.476.
4. At-Tal, Karithat, p.476.
5. Ben Gurion, War Diary, monitoring service, 11.3.49, p.974; ISA 2431/1, Yadin to Shiloah, 10.3.49; Murad, Dawr, pp.58-9; At-Tal, Karithat, p.476; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.529.
6. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 11.3.49, p.974; CAB 21/1922, Campbell to FO, 12.3.49.

bloody clash with the Legion, unless it would turn into a real war'.[1] By 'real war', Ben Gurion meant British intervention. In such a case, the Israeli forces were ordered to withdraw.[2] On the other hand, it is worth noting that Ben Gurion notified Abdullah beforehand about the Israel plan in general terms and received an assurance from the King that he would do his best to avoid even small scale clashes between the two armies.[3]

13. The future of Samaria (the Arab Triangle).

The Israelis had demanded since July 1948 the evacuation of the Iraqi forces stationed in an area known as the Arab Triangle. The head of the Triangle was Nablus and its base stretched from Jenin to Tul Karem. The Israelis had contemplated occupying this area several times, but the plan was postponed owing to opposition within the Israeli government and Ben Gurion's rethinking on Israel's priorities in the war in Palestine.[4]

The Foreign Office was annoyed by the Iraqi government's refusal to enter armistice negotiations. Considerable pressure was exerted by the British on the Iraqis to enter the talks.[5] Alternatively, the British suggested a gradual Iraqi evacuation which they thought should not be completed before the future of the area was settled. The British pressure resulted in Iraqi consent to begin a gradual eviction of the Iraqi troops from the front into the heart of Samaria.[6]

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 3.3.49, p.972.
2. Ben Gurion, op.cit., 19.3.49.
3. ISA 2431, Nevo to Shertock, 12.3.49; ISA 2431/2, Nevo to Sharret, 10.3.49.
4. Lorch, War, p.536-37; At-Tal, Karithat, p.465. It includes the districts of Nablus, Tul Karem, Jenin and Kalkilya.
5. FO 371/75331, E1692, FO to Baghdad, 10.2.49.
6. FO 371/75386, E3510, Baghdad to FO, 16.3.49.

However, by March 1949, the Israeli position had stiffened. The Israelis were not satisfied with merely substituting the Iraqi forces by the Legion. Ben Gurion was exposed to pressure from the Israeli army to occupy the area, in February 1949, and only counter-pressure from the Israeli Foreign Office had prevented this.[1] The Israeli premier was first doubtful whether the Iraqis would keep their promise to evacuate their forces.[2] However, there is no indication that a specific and detailed operation was on its way as is claimed by Jon and David Kimchi.[3] There were, however, Israeli manouevres near the area as part of a war of nerves conducted by the Israelis to accelerate the Iraqi withdrawal and in order to indicate strong Israeli interest in the area.[4]

14. The Shuneh Agreement (The Armistice Agreement, March 1949)

By the time the two delegations began negotiations in Rhodes, the Israelis had accomplished their territorial ambitions in the Negev, whereas the King still feared Israeli designs and actions against his rule over the West Bank, owing to the Israeli demands with regard to the Arab Triangle. In the meanwhile other issues like the formalization of the partition line in Jerusalem were agreed upon in Rhodes. The question of the Triangle was left to negotiations in Shuneh and in Jerusalem.[5]

In a meeting in Jerusalem (16.3.49), the Israelis for the first time specified the quid pro quo they would demand in return for their

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1. Lorch, War, pp.536-7; Ben Gurion, War Diary, 14.3.49, p.976, 18.3.49, p.979.
2. There were increased infiltrations from the Iraqi side; FO 371/75386, E3562, Baghdad to FO, 17.3.49.
3. Kimchi, Both Sides, pp.262-68.
4. FO 371/75386, E3460, Dow to FO, 15.3.49.
5. At-Tal, Karithat, p.493.

approval of Legion rule in the Arab Triangle (the former Iraqi front). This involved widening the Israeli coastal strip between the Triangle and the Mediterranean. They indicated the area around Wadi Arara (A'ra) and the road running through this valley as the territorial concession desired by Israel. This area included strategic high places overlooking the Wadi Arara road which connected the Israeli settlement, Afula, with the town Hadera on the coast. This area was later named as the Little Triangle.[1]

Abdullah gave his immediate consent to the Israeli demand and At-Tal informed the Israelis that the King did not envisage any particular difficulties with his government on this issue.[2]

The main reason for Abdullah's immediate consent to the Israeli demand was the Iraqi decision to repatriate its contingent in Palestine.[3] The Foreign Office's pressure on Baghdad to leave the Iraqi units until the future of the Arab Triangle was decided, were ignored.[4] Abdullah was left alone facing the Israelis and there was little Britain could suggest with regard to his next steps.

The Eastern Department and the British Legation in Amman viewed gravely Abdullah's readiness to give in to the Israeli demands. They were concerned that the Israeli demand would leave the Israelis with control over important strategic points in the Samaria area.[5] The Foreign Office at the time, like the Transjordanians and the Israelis, ignored the human aspect of the transfer of the Little Triangle to

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1. FO 371/75386, E3611, Amman to FO, 9.3.48; Ben Gurion, War Diary, 16.3.49, p.977.
2. At-Tal, op.cit., p496; Ben Gurion, op.cit., 20.3.49, p.979; ISA 2431/1, Eytan to Shiloah, 20.3.49.
3. FO 371/75386, E3510, Baghdad to FO, 16.3.49.
4. FO 371/75386, E3510, Strang to Baghdad, 16.3.49
5. FO 371/75386, E3679, Amman to FO, 21.3.49

Israel. The area included 15 villages and a population of 35,000 inhabitants.[1]

The Foreign Office appealed to the Americans.[2] The Americans, although in general sharing the Foreign Office apprehension of a possible Israeli attack on the Arab Triangle, were reluctant to intervene unless tangible evidence for Israeli preparation for an attack could be provided.[3] As was mentioned before such an attack was not prepared and thus no evidence could have been produced by the British.

The British Legation in Amman asked for a practical British intervention by sending British forces to the Triangle or alternatively, allowing the Legion to reinforce its forces there, by entrusting the task of guarding the southern part of the kingdom in British hands.[4] This last suggestion was ruled out since the Acting Mediator had strongly opposed it.[5] As for sending British troops to the area, as far as the CoS were concerned they were only prepared to despatch British forces in case of an Israeli attack of Transjordan proper (an operation codenamed BARKER had been contemplated in case of an Israeli thrust into the Hashemite Kingdom).[6]

Abdullah was not even informed about British readiness to protect Transjordan proper. Moreover, whereas the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Office assured him that Israel was not interested in the Arab Triangle, Ben Gurion emissaries had informed the Acting

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1. At-Tal, Karithat, p.505, Dayan, My Life, pp.112-113.
2. FRUS 49, Memo Satterthwaite, 18.3.49, p.845
3. Ibid.
4. These requests were reported by the Times and the Daily Telegraph, 16.3.49; FRUS 49, Sharret-Acheson conversation, 22.3.49, p.854; SD 501. Palestine/3-1749, Amman to SD, 17.3.49.
5. CAB 21/1922, NY to FO, 26.3.49.
6. FO 371/68837, E16042, FO Minute, Walker, 14.12.48.

Mediator that the Legion entrance to the Triangle was a violation of the truce.[1] In an internal momorandum Eytan explained that Israel wanted the King to realize that their consent to his rule over the Triangle was a concession for which Israel demanded the Little Triangle.[2] In any case, Abdullah must have felt both threatened and decieved.

Following the meeting in Shuneh on March 16, the Transjordanian government met, while Abu Al-Huda, the premier, was still in Beirut, to discuss the Israeli demands. The King was correct in assuming that his government would not oppose such an agreement. Nevertheless, the government demanded that a ministerial delegation would meet with the Israelis in Jerusalem to finalize the agreement.[3]

The two delegates met in Jerusalem on March 23. Kirkbride reported that the Israelis reiterated in this meeting their demands with overtones of threats and duress.[4] It seems doubtful that the Israelis needed to use threats, since it was agreed in principle beforehand about the terms of the Armistice. In any case it was decided to conduct the ceremony of the signing of the Armistice the next day in Abdullah's palace at Shuneh.[5]

However, it took another week of discussion before the final ceremony took place. Kirkbride was this time solely responsible for this delay. He convinced the Transjordanian government to demand the

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 13.3.49, ISA 243112, Eytan to Abdullah, 16.3.49.
2. ISA 2431/2, Harkabi to Nevo, 16.3.49.
3. At-Tal, Karithat, pp.496-98; FO 371/75386, E3790, Amman to FO, 21.3.49.
4. FO 371/75386/679, Amman to FO, 21.3.49; E3790, Burrows to Bevin's private secretary, 23.3.49. This opinion was shared by the Americans, E3824, Amman to FO, 23.3.49; FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 23.3.49. pp.854-861.
5. At-Tal, op.cit., pp.496-98; FO 371/75386, E3790, Amman to FO, 21.3.49.

postponment of the final signing of the agreement until after the return of the premier who was still in Beirut attending the PCC conference.[1] This was done in order to gain time. Kirkbride hoped to achieve two things: first to convince London of the gravity of the situation and secondly to urge Abdullah to appeal personally to President Truman to exert pressure on the Israelis to modify their position.[2] In his last endeavour the British representative enjoyed the full cooperation of his American colleague in Amman, Wells Stabler.[3]

In order to convey to London the Strength of his feeling he described the meeting in Shuneh (24.3.49) as taking place in circumstances 'strongly reminiscence of Hitler and the late Czech president'.[4] However, it seems that Kirkbride was more alarmed than the Transjordanians themselves or the foreign Office in London, by the terms of the proposed armistice. Bevin, in particular, was not impressed by the British representative's description. The Foreign Secretary was preoccupied in Europe and Asia in problems whose settlement involved areas and sometime entire countries, he could not be impressed by the transfer of a strip of 15 kilometers.[5]

The British and American representatives in Amman were equally disappointed with the respective positions of their governments. The Eastern Department was willling to appeal to the Americans. The Foreign Office note to the State Department stated that the proposed deal would endanger Transjordan's 'internal security', as well its position in the Arab World.[6] On the other hand, the Office pointed out

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1. FO 371/75386, E3844, Amman to FO 24.3.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 23.3.49., pp.861-62.
4. FO 371/75386, E3844, Amman to FO 24.3.49.
5. CAB 21/1922, Bevin to Attlee, 24.3.49.
6. FO 371/75386, E3790, Strang to Washington, 23.3.49.

that if it were to advise the Transjordanians to reject the Israeli demands then 'we should no doubt be saddled with some, at least, of the responsibility for any consequences which might follow from the Transjordan refusal. The whole question of our own support for the Transjordan forces in Palestine would be reopened'.[1] Sir William Strang who drafted this note concluded it by emphasizing the mutual embarrasment that would be caused to the Americans and the British.[2]

The State Department replied by admitting it had limited influence on the Israeli government, and would not go beyond verbal protestations.[3] President Truman had asked the Israeli Foreign Minister, who visited Washington at the time, in vague terms, to urge Ben Gurion to display a more compromising attitude.[4] On the other hand, the President had sent a letter to the King advising him to go on with the negotiations, and not wait for American guarantees agains Israel.[5] Many Arab writers believe that this letter convinced the King to finalize the Armistice agreement with Israel.[6]

Kirkbride and Stabler by their own initiative and without refering to their governments advised the King not to conclude the agreement with Israel.[7] Unfortunately for the King, they did not offer any alternative course nor could they guarantee their government's support for such an act by the King.

In the meanwhile the premier Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda returned from Beirut to participate in the last meeting of the Transjordanian

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 49, SoS Memo, Truman-Sharret conversation, 24.3.49., p.863.
4. Ibid.
5. FRUS 49, Truman to Abdullah, 23.3.49, p.879.
6. M. Faddah, Jordan, p.45; At-Tal, Karithat, p.550; Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, p.531; H. Al-Majali, Hadha Bayan lil-Nas Qisat Muhadathat Templer, (This is the story of the Templer Affair), p.92.
7. FO 371/75836, E3720, Amman to FO, 24.3.49.

government before the final ceremony. He suggested at that meeting to accept the Israeli demands and ratify the agreement which was finalized in the meeting in Jerusalem. In that session the premier accused Britain of putting Transjordan in such a position that it had to surrender to Israeli pressure.[1]

Thus, on March 30, 1949, in the presence of the Israeli and Transjordanian delegations to Rhodes, and the entire Transjordan cabinet, but without any Israeli ministers, the formal Armistice was signed.[2] The gist of the agreement was the taking over of the Triangle by the Transjordans in return for the Little Triangle (the strip around Wadi Arara which included 15 Arab villages). The other main component for the agreement was the establishment of a special committee (article 8 of the agreement) that was to finalize the problem of access to Jerusalem and to formalize the partition of the city.[3] In the following years it would become the main medium for Israeli-Jordanian negotiations as will be elaborated in this chapter.

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1. At-Tal, Karithat, p.521; SD 867. 01/4-349, Stabler to SoS, 4.3.49.
2. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 31.3.49, p.984; FRUS 49, Amman to SD, 31.3.49, p.872-74; Kimchi, Both Sides, pp.270-71. Ben Gurion refused to participate in the meeting although Abu Al-Huda demanded it. Glubb did not participate either and had sent Col. Crocker (Operation Officer).
3. The agreement provided for the villagers (Article 6) in the area affected to be free to leave or stay as they wished. Those who left were to be compensated. See their fate in Chapter Three. The Israelis were to pay for a new road between Jenin and Tul Karem, see FO 371/75386, E3848, Amman to FO, 24.3.49; At-Tal, Karithat, pp.415-16 and Israeli Ministry of Defence publication, Kovets Mismachim be-Toldot Ha-medina (A selection of documents of Israel's history), doc.23. Some of the villagers were separated from their lands by the new Armistice line, Kirkbride in his memoirs refuted Transjordanian allegations that they consented to this since they were presented by a fake map. Sir Alec brings a photostat of the map signed by the sides. Kirkbride, Wings, p.298, fn.3 and W. Eytan Bein Israel la-Amin (Between Israel and the Nations) (Tel Aviv, 1958), p.41. In July 1949 the Little Triangle was transferred.

It is worth noting the different conclusions reached by the British CoS and the Foreign Office following the signature of the Israeli-Transjordanian Armistice. The military was mainly concerned with Transjordan's vulnerability in the future vis à vis Israeli aggression. They warned the Foreign Office that if Israel did not succeed in obtaining territory by negotiations 'she will probably resort to force to do so'. The CoS therefore suggested the lifting of the embargo on arms supply to the Arab countries.[1]

The Foreign Office, on the other hand, asserted that strengthening the Arab countries would lead to their intransigence and would hinder the peace negotiations. The Office desired to turn over a new leaf in its relations with the Israelis. After the agreement was ratified in Rhodes, Britain and Israel reached an agreement about the stationing of British troops in Aqaba.[2] This was taken as an indication for Israel's goodwill.[3] By the end of 1949, the Cos would reverse its attitude and come to share the Office's views.

The Office's main concern was the possible reaction in the Arab World. The Armistice was received with a great sense of indignation.[4] The Arab countries suspected the existance of a secret agreement between Israel and Transjordan.[5] Campbell in Cairo was in particular worried about the British role in this affair: 'we have not mate clear to the Egyptians how far we think Abdullah is justified in going with the Jews towards a settlement'.[6] The senior officials in London

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1. CAB 21/1922, Price, Secretary of CoSC, to Wright, 31.3.49.
2. CAB 21/1922, CoS(49)47, 28.3.49.
3. CAB 21/1922, CoS to CiC ME, 28.3.49.
4. Glubb, A Soldier, p.241.
5. FO 371/75333, E6177, Campbell to Bevin, 9.5.49.
6. FO 371/75064, E4498, Campbell to Wright, 19.3.49.

suggested telling the Egyptians that the King was neither encouraged nor discouraged to conclude the agreement. However, the Office was fully aware of Abdullah's need to come to terms with Israel, as it had understood Egypt's desire for an armistice with Israel.[1]

B. The attempt to conclude a peace treaty (April, 1949-February, 1950).

The Armistice marked the end of major military operations concerning both sides. It provided the two sides with two possible forums for direct negotiations. The Mixed Armistice Committee (MAC) which was formed with the aim of supervising the implementation of the agreement, and the special Article 8 committee intended to formulize plans agreed upon in practise about the freedom of access to Jerusalem and its holy places.[2] The King, in particular, considered the second forum as the most adequate one for direct political talks. A decision in principle to negotiate outside the framework of the PCC was taken in the first meeting in Shuneh after the Armistice.[3]

The main topic of discussion throughout 1949 was the implementation of Article 8 dealing with administration of the partition of Jerusalem and freedom of access of the Israelis to Mt. Scopus and the old Jewish quarter. The Jordanian government were reluctant to cooperate with the Israelis on this issue and checked Abdullah's tendency to accelerate the implementation of the Article. The ministers had their way since the discussions in the MAC were public and were conducted by Israeli and Jordanian officials and not by the King's personal envoys.[4]

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1. FO 371/75064, E4498, Wright to Campbell, 19.3.49.
2. Kovetz, doc.23.
3. FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 16.4.49, p.922.
4. FO 371/75338, E7024, Amman to FO, 8.6.49; FRUS 49, Stabler to SoS, 16.4.49, p.919, the Jordanian representatives were At-Tal and Hamd Al-Farhan the cabinet's secretary; FO 371/75273, E8187, report on May 1949, 1.6.49.

I. The direct Negotiations and the Lausanne Conference.

Whereas the American regarded any Israeli-Jordanian negotiations outside the PCC as damaging to the prospects of peace, the British found themselves in a serious dilemma. On the one hand, they agreed with the American appreciation that the Israelis wanted the Lausanne conference to fail in order to allow direct Israeli-Jordanian contact. On the other hand, the Office was convinced that the deadlock in Lausanne and in the Armistice committees could lead to an Israeli offensive on the West Bank. During the summer of 1949, the Legation in Amman had sent reports of an imminent Israeli attack; this was followed by the intensification of border clashes and incidents, culminating in the taking over by Israel of the Government House in no-man's land in Jerusalem.[1]

Sir Alec Kirkbride became in that period the main protagonist of direct approach. He argued that it would ease the defence expenditure and would allow the Legion to pay attention to the unrest and agitation in the West Bank following the Armistice agreement.[2] Bevin agreed to release war material for internal security, but was reluctant to approve of Abdullah's desire to ignore the PCC. The Foreign Secretary warned the King that he should in 'no way forfeit the Americans'.[3] The CoS were disatisfied with Bevin's decision to release only light arms to the Jordanians, and advocated sending heavy armours so that Jordan at least would have 'better chance of making a fighting retreat in the

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1. FRUS 49, SoS from ASoS, 3.6.49. FO 371/75333, E6902, Paris S(Bevin) to FO, 6.6.49; E7059, Amman to FO, 8.6.49; FO 371/75051, E 8512, FO Minute, Wright, 7.7.49.
2. FO 371/75338, E7023, Amman to FO, 7.6.49.
3. FO 371/75333, E6901, Paris (Bevin) to FO, 6.6.49.

event of an Israeli attack and withdrawing from Palestine more or less intact'.[1]

The Israeli withdrawal in July 1949 from the Lausanne conference attracted the attention of the parties concerned to the MAC. General Riley, the chief UN official in the committee, suggested merging the two committees (the Article 8 Committee and the MAC) for a while, a proposal accepted gladly by the two foes, owing to the confusion about the different function of those bodies.[2]

Unexpected support for turning the MAC into a forum of peace negotiations came from Glubb Pasha. The GCoS of the Legion asserted that in the future the israelis would be even stronger and would be able to extract more concession from the Jordanian in a peace deal, thus, it was better to conclude a treaty as soon as possible.[3] The Legation in Amman was sceptical and believed it was too late in any case and Israel would obtain far reaching concession in case of a peace treaty.[4] The eyes of British Middle East diplomats were turned to the Foreign Office Middle East conference in July 1949, with growing hopes amongst HMG representatives that a clearer guideline was on its way from London.

2. The London Middle East conference and the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations

The conference devoted considerable time to the desirability of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It was affected mainly

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1. FO 371/75333, E6902, Paris to FO, 6.6.49.
2. SD 501BB. Palestine/6-2249, NY to SD, 22.6.49.
3. FO 371/75338, E8347, Glubb to Amman Legation, 19.6.49.
4. FO 371/75338, E8347, Amman to FO, 2.7.49. Glubb was influenced very much by a conversation he had with General Riley.

by the shift in Bevin's attitude towards Israel. A few days before the session on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Bevin met for the first time with the Israeli representative in London and left the meeting with the impression that Israel owned its allegiance to the West and could be relied upon.[1] The Middle East conference was thus told by the Foreign Secretary: 'The Israelis were now ready to look to us for practical advice.'[2]

Bevin impressed the participants of the conference with the urgency of solving the Palestine problem: 'The settlement of the Palestine problem would clear the way for our military plans of the Middle East, particularly Egypt (sic).[3]

The shift in Bevin's attitude was typical of his pragmatism, but was too sudden for the diplomats, who had generally regarded Israel as a force that might drag the Arab world out of the sphere of British influence. In their opinion, the only way to prevent this was by objecting to separate Arab-Israeli agrements. Thus, the representatives advocated multilateral agreements under the UN or any other international body where Britain could supervise the process.[4]

These views, which were shared by most of the diplomats, apart from the Consul in Jerusalem and the British Minister in Tel-Aviv, were expressed in the conference in an unofficial discussion after the Foreign Secretary had instructed his representatives to encourage peace negotiations between Israel and the Arabs, regardless of the method and

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1. See next chapter; ISA 36/16, Kidron to Comay, 17.8.49; the conversation was on the 19th of July and the meeting in the FO (the conference) was on the 21st.
2. FO 371/75072, E9043, FO ME conference, 21.7.49.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75072, E9042, FO ME conference, 21.7.49.

form that this would be achieved.[1]

This is a point of importance, since the misinterpretation of British policy towards the conflict had led the Times, in January 1983, to publish on its front page, extracts from that session, under the headline: 'Britain blocked 1949 peace'.[2] The quotations there referred to remarks made by some representatives about their ability in the past to check any tendencies towards bilateral peace with Israel, in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.[3] Apart from assuming an ability they certainly did not possess, there was not much to check, apart from King Abdullah's desire for peace. Kirkbride went to great lengths in describing in that discussion his dominant position in Jordan. He considered himself to be the restraining power on Abdullah, whereas, in fact, we think this power was exercised mainly by Abu Al-Huda.[4]

It was difficult, apparently for the British Minister in Amman to admit the growing influence of public opinion on this, hitherto absolute, monarchy which was Britain's most loyal ally in the Arab World. Kirkbride went as far as boasting about his intention to exert pressure on some dissident ministers in the Jordanian cabinet who desired peace with Israel.[5] As far as British and American accounts are concerned those dissidents did not exist.

Bevin's guideline was in complete contrast to the American insistence on negotiations under the PCC aegis. The State Department deemed the maintaining of an exclusive role for the PCC as vital for

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1. I am thankful to Lord Bullock for attracting my attention to the fact that this was an unofficial discussion. Interview with Lord Bullock.
2. Cox News services in New York provided the information for the Times, see Lord Bullock's interpretation of the conference, in A. Bullock, Ernest Bevin (London: Heinemann, 1983), p.714.
3. FO 371/75072, E9043, FO ME conference, 21.7.49.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

the success of the peace process in the area, particularly since the Americans did not want the Israelis to escape responsibility for solving the refugee problem, which could only be achieved in multilateral discussions.[1] Bevin could not ignore the American pressure to attach more importance to the PCC and thus authorized the Office to participate in the Commission's efforts by introducing a British plan for peace. However, as was mentioned in the second chapter, the Foreign Office's plan was never endorsed by the PCC and served mainly as a guideline to the Office.[2]

With the decline of the PCC's importance as a negotiation forum, the Foreign Office concentrated on the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations as the basis for the Palestine settlement. This view was conveyed by Bevin in a conversation with the American Secretary of State. The Foreign Secretary suggested to Acheson that the PCC should give its blessing to these negotiations and, by that, placate Arab opposition. Acheson and the State Department accepted Bevin's concept.[3] The joint Anglo-American blessing for the negotiations enabled the sides to go on with the attempt to conclude a peace treaty without fearing to antagonize the Americans.

3. The resumption of the direct negotiations.

In October 1949, Abdullah initiated another round of direct contact with the Israelis. The King seemed to be obssesed with the need to obtain Israeli approval of the formal annexation of the West Bank.[4] Sir Alec Kirkbride suggested postponing the direct contact until after

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1. FRUS 49, Burdet to SoS, 6.7.49, p.1203, Truman expressed the same views in a letter to Weizmann, ISA 2414/26, 13.6.49.
2. See chapter 2.
3. FRUS 49, Acheson-Bevin conversation, 13.9.49, p.1377.
4. It was made through General Riley in FRUS 49, Burdet to SoS, 18.10.49, p.1446.

the completion of the formal union. Kirkbride believed that the resumption of talks with Israel would be a political blunder that would complicate the process of unification, since it would arouse the indignation of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, a population which was about to be represented in considerable numbers in the Jordanian parliament and cabinet.[1]

Kirkbride also anticipated the possible reaction of Abu Al-Huda. This time, the King, before entering the negotiations, decided to appoint Samir Ar-Rifa'i as special Minister to the Palace, with equal status to the Premier. Ar-Rifai, unlike Abu Al-Huda, was more inclined to execute the King's plans and wishes without pursuing his own policy. Abu Al-Huda, as a sign of protest left the Kingdom for two months, leaving the government in no position to oppose the King.[2] It was clear that the holder of the posts of Minister of the Court and premier could not co-exist for long.[3] Furthermore, for Kirkbride it was a clear indication that he would not be consulted about the next stages should the King have a loyal premier next to him.[4]

However, Abdullah's eagerness was not reciprocated by the Israelis. The priorities of the state of Israel had changed during 1949. The armistice agreements brought relative calm to the borders and the peace was no more a first priority. The government was preoccupied with absorbing the new immigrants and overcoming economic difficulties. It seems that the policy-makers were satisfied with the modus vivendi in the relations with the Arab neighbours.

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1. FRUS 49, Fitzalan to SoS, conversation with Kirkbride, 4.11.49, pp.1468-69.
2. FO 371/75273, E10169, Monthly Report, July 1949.
3. FO 371/75273, E12508, Monthly Report, September 1949.
4. Ibid.

4. The meetings at the end of 1949

The first of these meetings took place in Abdullah's palace at Shuneh in November 1949. The Israeli side was represented by Shiloah and Sasson and Ar-Rifai was the Jordanian delegate.[1] Whereas Kirkbride resented the renewed contact the Americans gave a formal blessing to the resumption of direct negotiations.[2] The American Middle East conference in Istanbul included in its agreed conclusions support for the peace talks. However, the decision stated clearly that the USG would not take an active part in the peace accord in the area.[3]

The talks were preliminary in the initial stages, but nevertheless the Israeli government was left with the impression that Abdullah was prepared to overcome the domestic as well as the external opposition to his policy.[4] The Jordanians, to the Israelis great dismay brought up the question of the Negev. The Israeli premier believed it was owing to British insistance, but this was denied by the Foreign Office in a conversation with the Israeli Foreign Office officials in Tel Aviv. On the other hand, the Israelis expressed their approval for Gaza being under Jordanian rule.[5]

The main Israeli concern was no doubt the extension of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty to the annexed West Bank. The Israelis were informed by Samir Ar-Rifai that Jordan would insist on the extension. Ben Gurion suggested leaving the issue for direct Anglo-Israeli negotiations.[6]

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1. The meeting took place on 28th of November, after the King had issued a formal invitation. FRUS 49, Ford to SoS, 24.11.49, p.1509-10.
2. SD 867n, 01/11-2249, SD memo, 22.11.49.
3. FRUS 49, Memo on the conference, 26-29.11.49, p.168
4. The Jordanian-Israeli talks in the British Embassy conversation with the SD, as appears in FRUS 49, 30.11.49, pp.1512-13.
5. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 4.12.49.
6. Ibid.

In December, Shiloah once more expressed the Israeli fear of the extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty to the West Bank and, in particular, of the possibility of the establishment of British bases west of the river Jordan. 'It would be easier for Israel to recognize Greater Jordan if the British did not return to Palestine', explained Shiloah in a conversation with Samir Ar-Rifai, in the begining of December 1949.[1]

Wereas, Ben Gurion was not sanguine of the outcome of the negotiations, the Israeli Foreign Office, and particularly Moshe Sharret, were optimistic and asserted that Israel would grant Jordan a corridor to the Mediterranean as well as giving its consent to the formal annexation of the West Bank.[2]

In the following meeting in December, it soon became clear that Ar-Rifai's demand for the Negev was a tactical move. The dispute was narrowed to the question of the corridor. The Israelis suggested that the corridor would reach the Gaza strip. It is interesting to note that both sides believed that the Egyptians would be pleased to get rid of the strip and the refugees who had settled there since 1948.[3] The most important meeting was on December 15. Both sides agreed to sign a document entitled 'Political questions and territorial changes'. Three main points were made in the document. First, Israel recognized the vital importance of a sea outlet to the Jordanians. Secondly, the Israelis stated that they consented to a corridor from Hebron, via Beersheba to Gaza to be under Jordanian sovereignty. Finally, in return the Jordanians agreed to fix passage points in the corridor and

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1. FRUS 49, Memo of conversation Wells Stabler with Greenhill (British Embassy), 5.12.49, pp.1518-19
2. FRUS 49, McDonald to SoS, conversation with Shiloah, 5.12.49, p.1521.
3. Ibid.

to its demilitarization, as well as promising that the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty would not apply to the corridor.[1] In this connection, it might be useful to mention Pollack and Sinai's reference to that document, in which the two writers state that the document in question was a draft peace treaty and that it was almost signed, but to Kirkbride's intervention.[2] However, the paper was by no means a draft peace treaty, nor was it signed as such. In February 1950, there was a peace treaty which was about to be concluded, and it could be that the two writers had confused the two documents, as did Abidi and Dayan in their versions.[3]

The British and American accounts of the meeting do not differ. I have used the American accounts since they were more detailed. There was, however, a considerable dissimilarity in the two countries' assessment. Whereas the American representatives in Tel Aviv, and even Amman, were optimistic about the outcome of the meetings, Kirkbride's accounts had constantly reported lack of progress and absence of understanding.[4] It seems that Kirkbride was exagerating when he described normal political negotiations as 'stormy meetings',[5] it was not after all a meeting between two British diplomats. On the other hand, there was sufficient reasons to be pessimistic, not so much owing to the course of the negotiations, but rather owing to the prospects of a separate peace between Israel and Jordan being accepted by the Arab World.

The new Head of the Eastern Department, Geoffrey Furlonge, told the Americans that the Foreign Office had decided to stay aloof, but

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1. FO 371/75277, E14906, Amman to FO, 15.12.49; SD 867n. 01/12-2049, Tel Aviv to SD, 20.12.49.
2. Pollack A. and A. Sinai (ed.), The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank, American Association for peace in the Middle East, 1977, p.325.
3. Abidi, Jordan, p.38; Dayan, My Life, pp.114-15.
4. FO 371/75277, E14906, Amman to FO, 5.12.49.
5. SD 867n. 01/12-2049, Tel Aviv to SD, 20.12.49.

it would interfere if this was requested by the Jordanians.[1] However, this was not entirely possible. As was mentioned before, one of the outstanding problems between Jordan and Israel was the possibility of extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty to the West Bank. The Israeli and British governments decided to discuss the problem, without involving the Jordanians. The Foreign Office made clear to the Israelis that this was a matter of principle between Britain and Jordan and none of Israel's concern. However, Sir Knox Helm was instructed to convey to the Israelis that Britain had no intention of establishing bases on the West Bank. In case of a war in the Middle East, however, the Foreign Office would regard Arab Palestine as a British area.[2]

As for the paper agreed upon, Kirkbride thought that Israel forced Jordan to make more concessions. The Eastern Department was disappointed that the annexation of Arab Palestine was not mentioned and feared that the process of incorporation would be delayed until other outstanding problems between Israel and Jordan were solved. On the other hand, the Department did not view an agreement with Israel as a conditio sine qua non to the formal union.[3]

5. The attempt to sign a peace treaty-Febreary 1950

The negotiations in 1949 ended with Ar-Rifai's attempt to persuade the Jordanian government to accept the paper of principles agreed upon in December 1949.[4] Both in London and in Amman the British officials regarded the involvement of the Jordanian government in the negotiations as vital for their success and as essential to the stability of

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1. SD 867n. 01/12-2049, London to SD, 20.12.49.
2. ISA 36/14, Eliash-Strang, 19.12.49.
3. FO 371/75277, E14906, Amman to FO, 15.12.49; FO Minute, 17.12.49
4. FRUS 50, Fitzalan to SoS, 16.1.50, p.691.

the state. First, since Abdullah seemed too eager to reach an agreement and might surrender too much to Israel. The Foreign Office believed Israel was pressing for peace and needed, in particular, an agreement over Jerusalem. Secondly, the Office was on its guard owing to the King's precarious position in the Arab World, following his actions in Arab Palestine.[1]

Indeed the King's main predicament was his relations with the government. Abdullah by the begining of 1950 had completely lost the confidence and co-operation of his ministers. The Cabinet was fully behind him on the question of the union but did not back him in his negotiations with Israel. The King also lost the advice and assistance of one of his closest aides, At-Tal who had left Jordan clandestinely in January 1950.[2]

Sir Alec Kirkbride found himself in between the two centres of power in the Kingdom. He was driven into this position not only because of his diplomatic functions but also as a result of his own desire to hold the balance in the monarchy.

This was a very delicate position to hold. It created the impression amongst some writers that Kirkbride was bitterly opposed to the direct negotiations and was the main cause for their failure.[3] Whereas, Kirkbride sided with the ministers with their attempt to check Abdullah's tendency to be too forthcoming in his eagerness to conclude a peace treaty, he did not share their absolute opposition to such an agreement. Kirkbride advocated a cautious progress towards agreement.[4] The practical outcome of this approach was, nevertheless, that the King did not enjoy Kirkbride's blessing for pursuing his own policy.

Another problem with which the Foreign Office felt it had to deal

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1. This position was summarised by Furlonge the Head of the Eastern Department in a conversation with the American Embassy in London, FRUS 50, Holme to SoS, 3.1.50, p.665.
2. New York Times, 23.1.50.
3. See Pollack-Sinai, Jordan, p.326.
4. FO 371/82715, E151/7, Amman to FO, 30.1.50.

with was the vulnerability of the Jordanians to the Israeli pressure, which had characterized the 1949 negotiations. The Legal Adviser of the Foreign Office believed that this problem was solved by the extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty to Arab Palestine. The Legal Adviser of the Office was consulted about what the Office described as an important policy decision, namely, the obligation of HMG to come to Jordan's assistance if it were attacked by Israel in the West Bank or Jordan proper. The same applied to an Israeli attack on Gaza and the invocation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty.[1] Thus, the British did not wait to the formal union of the two banks before extending the treaty, the main reason being to protect Jordan from Israeli military pressure during the direct negotiations.

In what seems today to be a curious maner, the Foreign Office decided not to inform either the Jordanian, the Egyptians or the Israeli governments about their decision. In fact, the Jordanians had reached their own conclusions and asked the Office for its views. The Office decided to conceal its decision since 'our primary interest is that a settlement should be reached between Israel and Jordan' and that 'any notification of the above sense (public or private) to either Jordan or Egyptian governments would have the effect of stiffening their attitude in the negotiations with Israel'.[2] (In the 'above sense' the Office meant their new interpretation of the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Transjordanian treaties as covering Gaza and the West Bank.)

Thus, the Jordanians were told that 'we will formally indicate to them our views with regard to our treaty obligations when their frontiers with Israel have been settled'.[3] On the one hand, the Foreign

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1. FO 371/82715, E1051/2, Sir Eric Beckett and Mr. H. Shawcross, 18.3.50.
2. FO 371/82715, E1051/14, FO to Cairo and Amman, 27.1.50.
3. Ibid.

Office did not trust the Jordanians and the Egyptians to the extent of informing them that the UK would protect their possessions in Palestine, in case of an Israeli attack. The feeling in Whitehall was that Jordan was now protected against Israeli aggression or pressure in the future.[1] Although it is difficult to see how this could have benefitted Jordan in its negotiations with Israel. The American position was less complicated by that time and they gave their full-fledged support to the negotiations. This came in a letter from Truman to Adbullah.[2]

The Israelis began to display signs of impatience towards the end of January 1950. Reuben Shiloah, Ben Gurion's main emissary to the talks, sent a letter to the King warning him that Israel would abandon the negotiations unless the Jordanian government would consider the working paper agreed upon in December 1949.[3] The Israeli pressure was the result of their wish to reach a final agreement about the partition of Jerusalem before the UN completed its discussions about the future of the city. It will be probably desirable at this point to examine the Foreign Office's attitude towards the question of Jerusalem since the negotiations in 1950-51 were concerned mainly with the question of internationalization and partition of the holy city.

6. The Foreign Office and the question of Jerusalem, 1949-51

In the beginning of 1949, the Israelis and the Jordanians found themselves confronted with world public opinion which desired to see the holy city under an international regime. During the last days of 1948, Transjordan and Israel had reached an agreement on a

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1. FO 371/82187, Furlonge to Burrows, 2.2.50
2. FRUS 50, Fitzalan to SoS, 9.1.50, p.677.
3. FO 371/82177, E1015/7, Amman to FO, 16.1.50.

comprehensive ceasefire in the city and agreed on the de facto partition of Jerusalem.[1] Thus, a united front against internationalization began to crystallize at that time: both sides using very much the same arguments to justify their control on their part of the city. That is, both claimed that without partition, one of the two parties would occupy the whole city, forcing the other to give in on a highly emotional and national asset in the conflict.[2]

The Israelis were the first to initiate a series of measures aimed at consolidating their control over the city. Actions which were condemned strongly by the Americans.[3] However, the Foreign Office were disinclined to take such a categorical view in support of internationalization as the Americans did. The Office had openly supported internationalization in the UN, however, privately conveyed to the Americans that they believed internationalization was impractical unless the Americans themselves were prepared to implement the scheme by sending troops to Jerusalem.[4] The British were, in fact, quite clear about their real motives for supporting partition as they conveyed to the State Department in March 1949: 'It is not for them to restrict King Abdullah from seeking whatever arrangements he thinks best in his own interests'.[5] The Foreign Secretary went even further in pointing out to the Americans that the British position on internationalization stemmed from the Jordanian opposition to the idea. The American Embassy in London was told by Bevin that had the Jordanians supported

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1. FO 816/142, FO to Amman, 16.12.48.
2. Glubb, A Soldier, pp.291-2.
3. The Israeli cabinet decided in February 1949 to incorporate the Jewish quarters of the city into Israel and transfer the Knesset there. SD 867n. 01/2-249, Jerusalem to SD, 2.2.49.
4. SD 501BB. Palestine/3-149, American Embassy in London to SD, 1.3.49.
5. SD 501BB. Palestine/3-149, American Embassy in London to SD, 1.3.49.

internationalization, the British government would have given its complete support for it.[1]

The Americans were aware of the difficulties incurred in implementing any plan of internationalization. However, they hoped that the two sides would be willing to co-operate if the scheme were approved by the UN General Assembly. In April 1949, the Israeli Foreign Office had still considered favourably some form of internationalization, although Ben Gurion was strongly opposed to the idea.[2] This might explain American optimism about the chances of success of the PCC and later the Trusteeship Council in implementing their respective plans of internationalization.[3]

In April 1949, the task was entrusted in the hands of the PCC. The Foreign Office wished the Commission to formulate a scheme accordance to the sixth point in their peace programme (the eight points plan mentioned earlier in this work).[4] That point read as follow: 'There should be partition of Jerusalem for administrative purposes with international supervision, particularly of the holy places'.[5] This formula, by the way, was accepted throughout 1949 by the Israeli Foreign Office.[6]

The PCC suggested in September 1949 the internationalization of Jerusalem and left the administrative and municipal responsibilities in the hands of the Jordanians and the Israelis. However, the sovereign

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1. SD 501BB. Palestine/3-149, Memo by Rockwell, 1.3.49.
2. FRUS 49, conversation between Burrows and Rockwell, 3.1.49, p.783; Truman Library, PSF, Box 184, Jerusalem to SoS. 13.4.49.
3. FRUS 49, Porter to SoS, 26.7.49, p.1256. The Trusteeship Council was a body established by the UN in the end of 1947 to supervise the implementation of the partition resolution with regards to Jerusalem.
4. See chapter 2.
5. FO 371/75067, E13722, July 1949, FO Minute.
6. ISA 37/8, Eban-McNeil, 22.4.49.

of the city was to be an international body.[1] The Israelis reacted by declaring their part of the city the capital of Israel.[2] The British representatives in Jordan had exerted pressure on the Foreign Office to reject the plan since it was unacceptable to the Jordanians and the Israelis.[3] The Foreign Office had notified the Americans that it regarded the plan as impractical and suggested a joint support for partitioning the city.[4]

The Foreign Office's arguments convinced the Americans not to submit the PCC plan to the UN. However, this was done by the Australians who felt committed to the November 1947 partition resolution which they had supported at the time and which called for the establishment of a corpus separatum in the city.[5]

The UN Ad-Hoc political committee decided to instruct the Trusteeship Council to prepare a detailed plan according to the PCC suggestions.[6] This decision was endorsed by the General Assembly on December 9, 1949, in a resolution which called for the internationalization of the city. The Israelis, the British and the Americans voted agains this resolution.[7]

The Trusteeship Council held its discussions in Geneva in 1950. The President of the Council, Roger Garreau, drafted a plan based on

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1. The plan was drafted as 'Instrument establishing a Permanent International Regime for the Jerusalem area', UN OR, 4th session, Ad-Hoc political committee, Vol.1, p.10.
2. FO 371/75351, E11112 Jerusalem to FO, 13.9.49; see the Israeli press reaction in Haaretz, 15.9.49 and the Arab Palestinians in Difa (15.9.49).
3. FO 371/75351, E11112, Jerusalem to FO, 13.9.49.
4. FO 371/75351, E11633, FO to NY UN, 27.9.49; FRUS 49, Greenhill (British Embassy in Washington) conversation with Wilkins (NEA), 14.10.49, p.1426.
5. FRUS 49, Ibid.
6. FO 371/75334, E14491, UN UK NY to FO, 2.12.49.
7. UN OR GA, plenary meeting of GA, pp.35-7; resolution 303 (IV) adopted by the fourth session.

the PCC suggestion and which proposed that the Jerusalem area would be constitued as a corpus separatum.[1] His plan was also supported by the UN Ad-Hoc political committee.[2] However, the Garreau Plan like those schemes suggested before it and the plans and resolutions that would follow it in the 1950s were doomed to fail. This was owing to the UN inability to implement them as a result of Israeli, Jordanian and British opposition and American reluctance to offer troops for such an act. In 1950, it was mainly the Israel-Jordanian efforts to conclude a peace treaty, including an agreement on Jerusalem, and not the UN initiatives that attracted the Foreign Office's attention.

7. The draft peace treaty of February 1950

The UN efforts to find a solution to the Jerusalem question had convinced Abdullah and the Israelis about the urgency of reaching a final agreement before the UN did. The King had suggested in the beginning of 1950 that Ben Gurion and Samir Ar-Rifai should meet, hoping that the seniority of these two men would facilitate a rapid agreement.[3] However, Ben Gurion, as he had done since 1947, left the negotiations with Abdullah to his aides, a tactic which shows something of the premier's attitude towards the King, as well as his priorities.

The Israelis were the first to suggest a resumption of a direct contact with the King in his palace in Shuneh.[4] Kirkbride and the Foreign Office urged the King to wait a while with his answer to the Israelis suggestion until the situation in the UN was clarified.[5]

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1. Times, 301.50.
2. New York Times, 12.2.50.
3. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 9.1.50, p.677; BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, April 1950.
4. FO 371/82177, E1015/7, Amman to FO, 16.1.50.
5. Ibid.

However, the King ignored this advice and invited the Israelis to Shuneh.[1]

At the meeting, the Israelis suggested to form a united front in the UN to block the organization's schemes for the internationalization of Jerusalem. The Jordanians rejected this proposal and proposed instead to concentrate on practical arrangements with regards to the future of the city.[2]

The Foreign Office was highly impressed by the Jordanian ability to negotiate.[3] Kirkbride was convinced, as indeed the Israelis were, that the armistice line would divide the city. He asserted that all that was needed was some 'simultaneous prods from the Americans and the British to Israel and Jordan and a settlement could be reached'.[4]

The Embassy in Tel Aviv was also showing signs of optimism. The Israeli representative reported that an understanding over the corridor question had been reached.[5] Similarily to his opposite number in Amman, Sir Knox Helm, urged a joint Anglo-American intervention. British representatives in the area voiced similar appeal and appreciations.[6]

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1. Dayan and Shiloah came to the meeting in February 1950. FO 371/82177, E1015/8 Amman to FO, 20.1.50.
2. FO 371/82177, E1015/10, Amman to FO, 24.1.50.
3. FO 371/82177, E1015/11, FO Minute, 2.2.50.
4. FO 371/82177, E1015/15, Amman to FO 1.2.50.
5. FO 371/82177, E1015/17, Tel Aviv to FO, 3.2.50.
6. FO 371/82177, E1015/9, Parrot (UN Department), 27.1.50.

The strongest pressure for a joint Anglo-American intervention came from Kirkbride. He warned the Office that stability in the Middle East would be endangered unless an Israeli-Jordanian settlement would be reached.[1] The main reason for the Foreign Office's disinclination to intervene was the improvement of the Anglo-Israeli relations.[2] Moreover, the Foreign Office refrained from any action that would be conceived as pressure on the Jordanian council of ministers. In the end of 1950, the whole British attitude towards the ministers would change, but, for the time being, the foreign Office displayed a sense of caution in its attitude towards the internal conflict in the Kingdom. The significance of this British attitude was that the Jordanian council of ministers did not feel it was acting agains British policy.

By February 1950, the two outstanding problems between the two parties were the demarcation line in Jerusalem and the question of a Jordanian corridor to the sea. Kirkbride suggested to Abdullah that he would instruct Ar-Rifai to continue meeting the Israelis, notwithstanding these two problems hoping still to persuade his government to exert pressure jointly on the two sides. The King tended to accept the Israeli suggestion for a Jordanian road via Israel to the Mediterranean as well as their proposal for the implementation of Article 8 (leaving Mt. Scopus and the Jewish quarter in the old city under Israeli rule). However, the ministers were strongly opposed to the King's tendency to accept the Israeli proposals, as was Glubb, who maintained that they would leave Jordan in an inferior strategic position.[3] Ar-Rifai still

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1. FO 371/81903, E1017/1, Kirkbride to McNeil, 13.1.50.
2. See Chapter Five (Anglo-Israeli relations).
3. FO 371/82187, E1017/14, Wright FO Minute, 3.2.50; E1017/20, Amman to FO, 10.2.50; BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 31.1.50, the British officers of the Legion submitted a memo stating that Jordan needed Mt. Scopus owing to its strategic situation.

supported the King, but his attitude would change once he would be in office as premier. The Jordanian cabinet was convened after the first Israel-Jordanian meeting in February 1950. A unanimous decision was passed about Jordan's refusal to give Israel any part of the old city. Thus, the Jordanian government was prepared to give up only Mt. Scopus in return for the Arab quarters of the new city.[1] However, the King did succeed in preventing Abu Al-Huda's suggestion for Jordanian support for the Garreau plan.[2]

The Israelis, aware of Abdullah's difficulties with his government, suggested resorting to the old way of negotiating, namely, directly with the King. This was gladly accepted by the King and on February 17, Al-Rifai and Shiloah met at Shuneh. The King presented the Israelis with a new approach. Abdullah proposed to leave aside all problems connected with Jerusalem and sign a non-aggresion pact for five years.[3]

The King's new initiative was an attempt to assert his authority vis à vis his ministers, as well as a genuine desire to accelerate the peace process. Abdullah submitted to the Israelis a seven points draft agreement. The Israeli representative were pleased with the agreement, and gave their approval in principle pending their government's consent. A jubilant Abdullah told Shiloah that he would replace his cabinet if it were to oppose the agreement.[4] A week later, representatives of both sides met to initial a draft treaty. It was probably owing to Ar-Rifai's influence that this draft treaty was accepted by the Jordanian Government. The latter accepted it with one reservation:

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1. FO 371/82177, E1015/22, Amman to FO, 13.2.50.
2. FO 371/82177, E1015/24, Amman to FO, 15.2.50.
3. FO 371/82177, E1015/22, Amman to FO, 18.2.50.
4. FRUS 50, Fitzalan to SoS, 20.2.50, p.753; McDonald to SoS, 26.32.50, p.757.

although it was privately willing to acknowledge that peace would include resumption of trade between the two countries, it demanded to ommit this clause from the initial draft.[1]

Kirkbride reported that the Israelis altered the draft to their advantage. However, a look at the two drafts, the Israeli and the Jordanian, indicates that the only revision was introduced by the Jordanians and it related to the resumption of trade.[2]

The gist of the agreement was a non-aggression commitment for five years. In addition, the sides agreed to abolish the 'no-man's land',[3] and to free Israeli access to Mt. Scopus and Jordanian movement on the Bethlehem-Jerusalem road. There was no explicit reference to the refugees. It was agreed that compensation should be paid to property owners in Jerusalem, whose property remained under the control of the other party. In very vague terms it was agreed to initiate a process of liquidating Arab property in Israel and Jewish property in Jordan (West Bank).[4]

In general, the lines of agreement seemed fairly sound from the Foreign Office's point of view.[5] The Foreign Office made few reservations. The period of five years was stated to be too short. The officials in London remarked correctly that the Armistice clearly provided for an undertaking of non-aggression, and there was a need for a stronger affirmation. Secondly, the Eastern Department received the abolition of 'no man's land' as an Israeli wish to get rid of what the

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1. FO 371/82178, E1015/24, CRO to Commonwealth Governments, 2.3.50.
2. The Jordanian draft in FO 371/82178, E1015/33, Amman to FO, 22.2.50; and the Israeli draft in ISA 2453/3, 24.2.50.
3. The 'no man's land' were areas which had been defined in an Israeli-Transjordanian agreement of July 7, 1948 and included Mt. Scopus, Augusta Victoria and Aissawiya village.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/24, CRO to Commonwealth governments, 2.3.50; E 1015/33, Amman to FO, 2.3.50.
5. FO 371/82178, E1015/33, FO Minute Thirkell, 2.3.50.

Israelis saw as a symbol of UN authority in Jerusalem. The Office advocated for a more careful approach on the side of the Jordanians.[1]

The Jordanian premier's initial reaction was hostile. He proposed to put the agreement to the Government's vote hoping to secure a negative response. He threatened to resign, which he was supposed to do anyhow, owing to the pending election of April 1950. However, Ar-Rifai refused to replace him, and Abu Al-Huda consented to stay in office until the election, on condition that the agreement would have to be approved by the government elected after April.[2] Kirkbride played an important role in convincing Abu Al-Huda to remain in office, by pointing to him that the seven points agreement was merely a proposal draft and not a final one.[3]

Sir Knox Helm reported that the Israeli government was under strong pressure at home and would be disappointed at the suspension of the negotiation until after the elections in Jordan.[4] Helm looked for means of assuring the Israelis that it would be worth their while to wait. He suggested to the Foreign Office that an official and formal British communique would link the extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty to the annexed territories with a public British promise not to establish bases in the West Bank. As was mentioned earlier such a secret undertaking was granted in 1949. However, the Head of the Eastern Department objected to this proposal since he thought it would stiffen the Israeli position in the negotiations.[5]

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1. FO 371/82178, E1015/33, FO Minute, March 1950.
2. FO 371/82178, E1015/33, Amman to FO, 27.2.50; CRO to Commonwealth governments; E1015/36, Amman to FO, 2.3.50.
3. FO 371/82715, E1015/18, Amman to FO, 6.3.50.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/40, Tel Aviv to FO, 8.3.50.
5. FO 371/82178, E1015/41, Furlonge memo, 9.3.50.

The Israelis were thus told about the suspension and reluctantly agreed to wait until after the Jordanian elections.[1] The Israeli Foreign Minister pleaded with the Americans for US political and economic assistance to Jordan, so that it could ratify the agreement. The SD consulted the Eastern Department on this question. Furlonge assessed that the opposition to Abdullah's policy was such, that any American encouragement would be useless.[2] The assistant SoS, Hare, accepted this assesment and Truman approved of his decision to turn down the Israeli request.[3] The Israelis were even prepared to make more territorial concession to increase Abdullah's prestige. But these views were never conveyed to the King. And, anyhow, it was too late for him to make any use of them.[4]

C. The Shiloah-Abdullah effort (March 1950 - July 1951).

1. Arab reaction and its effect on the Jordanian Government

Rumours about this agreement circulated throughout the Arab World, after Israel's papers had reported about the existance of a direct Israeli-Jordanian contact.[5] Consequently, Abdullah was exposed to heavy pressure from the Arab leaders. The Syrians warned him that they would close the border if Jordan were to continue the negotiations with Israel.[6] Ibn Saud threatened that the Arab World 'would build an impenetrable wall around Jordan'.[7] The Arab League met in March 1950 (25.3.-13.4.50), and the main issue on its agenda was the Israeli-

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1. FO 371/82178, E1015/41, Amman to FO, 9.3.50, E1015/43, Tel Aviv to FO, 10.3.50.
2. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 6.3.50, pp.781-82.
3. FRUS 50, Memo by Hare, 8.3.50, p.787.
4. ISA 38/8, Comay to Eliash, 23.2.50.
5. FO 371/82178, E1015/31, 1.3.50; Abidi, Jordan, 77; Kirkbride, Wings, 309, fn.5.
6. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 7.3.50, p.783.
7. FO 371/82178, E1015/33, Jedda to FO, 12.4.50.

Jordanian talks. In this conference, Abdullah was bitterly attacked.[1] Britain as well did not escape the wrath of the Arab delegates. The Egyptian press distributed a fabricated story that the February 1950 agreement was concluded between Ben Gurion and Abdullah aboard British battleship. This coincided with the publication of At-Tal's version on the March 1949 agreement in the Egyptian press, in which he attributed an important part to British intervention in favour of an agreement.[2] Ad-Daly, who based his version on the minutes of the League Council, claimed that Abu Al-Huda had notified both Azzam Pasha and Tawfiq As-Sweidi (the Iraqi premier) about the agreement, and that Azzam reported its content to the League Political Committee (Ad-Daly added that Azzam could not produce any documents when challenged by the Jordanian Foreign Minister Muhamad As-Shariqi).[3]

The Egyptian delegation proposed to expell Jordan from the League if it concluded a treaty with Israel. Owing to this Egyptian pressure, the Jordanian had to vote in favour of a Lebanese proposal that any member concluding an agreement with Israel should be expelled.[4]

The Arab pressure had an enormous effect on the newly elected Jordanian government, under the premiership of Said Al-Mufti. The ministers decided not to ratify the February 1950 agreement.[5] Abdullah ignored the growing discontent among his ministers and continued to meet the Israelis, mainly Shiloah, without his ministers and, sometimes, without Kirkbride's knowledge. Eventually, Kirkbride learned about the secret meetings and had to consider and reassess his posture.

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1. McDonald, My Mission, pp.195-96.
2. Observer, 5.3.50; Borseque Egyptian, 14.3.50; Le Monde, 15.3.50; Kirkbride, Wings, p.310; Middle East, p.110. fn.4; Dearden, Jordan, p.82.
3. Ad-Daly, Azzam, p.284-86, Al-Daba'a, 16,17.
4. FO 371/91705, Annual Report for 1950.
5. Ibid.

Kirkbride decided to continue and act as a mediator between the King and the ministers in order to preserve the integrity of the kingdom.

The CoS did not exclude the possibility of an Israeli attack after the new Jordanian government had rejected the agreement. They pointed out that, in such a case, HMG forces should engage the Israeli forces by land, sea and air. However, the absence of a corridor between the Suez and Jordan made this quite impossible. Therefore, the CoS suggested to the Defence Committee to concentrate on strengthening the Legion and raising the subsidy to it.[1]

2. The formal union and the negotiations.

These apprehensions continued to prevail amongst Foreign Office officials owing to reports from Tel Aviv sent in by Helm. Shiloah gave Helm the impression that unless a final agreement was reached, Israel might still strive to annex the West Bank, owing to pressure from extreme circles.[2] The Foreign Office however confined itself to the de jure recognition of the formal union, and the extension of the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty to the West Bank. The Israelis were once more notified that Britain would not establish bases in the West Bank and were granted de jure recognition.[3] The de jure recognition of Israel and of the new enlarged kingdom was given in order to create conditions 'more favourable for Israeli-Jordanian relations,'[4] The Israelis were further informed that the British recognition of the union was to counteract the League's opposition to Abdullah, as was manifested by the 'League resolution which combined condemnation of

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1. FO 371/82715, E1015/12, Brief for the SoS for the Defence Committee, Furlonge, 14.3.50. CoSC (50) 34, 3.3.50.
2. FO 371/82715, E10151/4, Helm to Wright, 7.2.50.
3. FO 371/82715, E1051/12, Helm to Wright, 7.2.50.
4. ISA 36/12, Helm-Eytan, 27.4.50.

Jordan with imposing an economic blockade on Israel'.[1]

The Israeli Foreign Office, however, saw the British recognition of the formal union as impeding progress in the negotiations. They were annoyed by Bevin's declaration in the House of Commons in which he stated that he opposed separate peace settlements in the conflict and preferred collective and comprehensive peace agreements. This was done in order to placate Arab public opinion since, privately, the Foreign Secretary supported an Israeli-Jordanian agreement. Helm explained to the Israelis that Bevin's statement was not an official declaration but rather 'the personal spontaneous reaction of an old trade unionist', and suggested that they ignore it altogether.[2] In any case, this statement was later corrected by the Parliamentary Secretary of Bevin, Ernest Davis, who implied British encouragment for the talks.[3]

3. The resumption of direct talks - May 1950.

The Foreign Office welcomed the Jordanian decision to postpone the talks until after the elections. They hoped the Israelis, after the Jordanian elections, would take into account the strength of public opinion in the Kingdom, and would be more compromising in their attitude. The King, on the other hand, was asked by the Foreign Office not to work towards a formal peace treaty before consulting the new government.[4]

However, neither the British pledges to the King to consult his government nor the government's opposition deterred the King. Abdullah

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1. Ibid.
2. ISA 36/12, Helm-Sharret, 2.5.50; HC.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/82715, E1051/19, FO Minute, 6.3.50.

suggested to the Israels the resumption of the confidential negotiations with the view of turning them into formal negotiations. He wrote to Ben Gurion that, if necessary, he would leave the League.[1]

Thus, the King loyal to his previous promises to the Israelis, resumed the contact after the elections. The King met Shiloah in Amman and expressed his confidence in the government's support. However, all the King could promise was a continued dialogue. The Jordanian Cabinet learned about the meeting a few days later and denounced the resumption of the talks.[2]

When Kirkbride learned about the resumption of the direct negotiations (through Helm in Tel-Aviv) he warned the King that they would be futile, unless the Cabinet approved them. A similar warning was sent from London to the King. The King asked Kirkbride to serve as a mediator between the Palace and the Cabinet. Kirkbride was reluctant to take formally such a function, which he had been fulfilling since 1948 and which would have been conceived by the Cabinet as siding with the King.[3]

The Foreign Office felt it could not offer any advice to its representative and left the legation to decide on the best policy.[4] The Department asserted, in an internal memorandum, that Abdullah had

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1. FO 371/82715, E1051/53, Tel Aviv to FO, 22.4.50.
2. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 27.4.50, p.877: Drew (conversation with Kirkbride) to SoS, 3.5.50, p.880.
3. FO 371/82178, E1015/55, Amman to FO, 4.5.50.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/55, FO Minute, 5.5.50.

not asked for their advice and thus the Foreign Office could not interfere. The Department was convinced of the genuine determination behind the Arab League threat to expel Abdullah. However, the Foreign Office experts seemed unable to determine whether this was a serious blow to British position or not.[1] After all, since 1948 the Foreign Office had not regarded the organisation as an important political factor.[2]

Kirkbride shared the views of the Foreign Office about the insignificance of the Arab League. Nevertheless, he deemed it unnecessary to enter into a new clash with the League, after the successful annexations of the West Bank. As he himself had put it: 'it would be a folly to provoke another storm immediately afterwards on a much more sensitive question.'[3]

Kirkbride's pleas had no impact on the King. He continued to meet the Israelis from May 1950 onwards. He eventually replaced Said Al-Mufti and appointed Samir Ar-Rifai. The latter however, once in office, felt no more able than his predecessor to go against strong domestic and external pressure and publicly continued the government line. But, privately, he did his utmost to reach a modus vivendi with the Israelis to prevent deterioration of the situation.[4]

Kirkbride asked the King not to extricate himself from the difficulties with the Israelis by telling them that he had been curbed by the British. This was precisely what Abdullah did. In a meeting in May 1950, the Israeli delegate was told that the British had advised him 'to go slow' with the negotiations, however, the King stated that he was nevertheless determined to go ahead with them without consulting

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1. FO 371/82178, E1015/67, FO Minute, May 1950.
2. See chapter 1.
3. FO 371/82178, E1015/33, Amman to FO, 4.5.50.
4. FO 371/91788, Annual Report of 1950.

the British further.[1]

The British did not conceal their position from the Israelis. Wright informed the Israelis that notwithstanding Britain's desire for peace, it would not push the King towards a formal agreement.[2] However, Sharret had accused Britain of being responsible for the deadlock in the talks although he could not understand the British motives, as he wrote to the Israeli Embassy in London.[3]

In May 1950, the Israelis made their last attempt to facilitate an agreement by offering a territorial concession in the Triangle area (Jenin) in return for Jordan dropping all claims for the Negev area.[4] However, by then it seemed that both the Jordanian and Israeli governments were satisfied with the territorial status quo.

5. The impact of the Tripartite Declaration on the talks.

The Tripartite Declaration has already been discussed in a different context at the beginning of this work. Its main impact on the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations was the Western Powers' recognition of the Israeli-Jordanian border. However, it had no impact on the course of the negotiations in itself and neither did it prevent serious escalation of the Israeli-Jordanian border in the second half of 1950. The declaration was mainly a manifestation of Anglo-American co-operation and coordination of policy in the face of what was seen as Russian intransigence. It also aimed to encourage the settlement of

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1. FO 371/82178, E1015/57, Tel Aviv to FO, 10.5.50.
2. ISA 37/1, London to Tel-Aviv, 16.5.50. Incidentally, Churchill at that time expressed strong support for an Israeli-Jordanian separate peace. Hansard, vol.474, col.1137-39.
3. ISA 37/1, Sharret to London, 16.4.50.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/61, Amman to FO, 27.5.50.

the Arab-Israeli and other conflicts in the area, as a means of bringing stability to the Middle East.[1]

The Foreign Office viewed the declaration as a means of securing Jordan's border against Israeli or Syrian attack. In fact, the Foreign Office suggested timing the Tripartite Declaration with the announcement of the formal union, so that it would deter any internal or external opposition to the union.[2] The British had mainly in mind a possilbe Israeli pressure, as is correctly indicated by Dr. Busch.[3] Busch asserts that 'Britain .... supported a tripartite Anglo-American-French accord in 1950 to plan joint action in case of disruption of the Jordan-Israel frontier'.[4] The Foreign Office asserted that the validity of the declaration would be tested in particular in frontier incidents on the Israeli-Jordanian border.[5] However, if this was the criterion for the declaration's validity, then it was not applicable to the Israeli-Jordanian dispute, as was proved during the escalation of the border clashes in the summers of 1950 and 1951.

On the other hand, the Office had conceived the declaration as a stimulus for peace. Michael Wright had suggested in the preliminary meeting preceeding the declaration that it would be given only after an Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement was signed. He, unlike most of the officials in the Office, was also prepared to give Israel public assurance not to establish bases in the West Bank, and was generally more optimistic about the prospects of the February 1950 agreement being accepted by the Jordanian government. The Assistant SoS in Washington, Raymond Hare had similar ideas, but the Americans did not wish to delay

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1. Abidi, Jordan, p.66.
2. FO 371/81907, E1023/10, FO Minute, Furlonge, 27.3.50.
3. Busch, 'Great Britain and Jordan, 1918-1956, in Sinai and Pollack, Jordan, p.40.
4. Busch, op.cit.
5. FO 371/821922, E10213/II, FO Minute, Palestine Question, 22.9.50.

publication of the declaration.[1]

Incidentally, Kirkbride reported the King's dissatisfaction with the declaration which supported the frontiers in the Middle East as they were, because he still entertained the hope 'that one day he might induce HMG to let him march the Arab Legion in Syria'.[2] On the other hand, the council of ministers were, according to Kirkbride, of the opinion that owing to the declaration, there was no hurry to conclude an agreement with Israel.[3] Kirkbride might have been right, but the ministers had been convinced long before the declaration that an agreement with Israel was not desirable owing to the possible isolation of Jordan.

6. The continuation of the direct contact in the second half of 1950.

The Israelis who hitherto were as eager as the King was, ot conclude a formal treaty seemed to be satisfied, after the Tripartite Declaration had been published with the situation as it was. The declaration and the Israeli support for the UN action in Korea had normalised Israel's relations with the West, and concepts like the 'Jessup principle' were no longer mentioned. In the second half of 1950, the Israelis could not ask for more, and peace with Jordan was perceived as a 'bonus' but not as a necessity.

Yet the talks continued partly owing to Shiloah's personal ambition, which matched that of the King, to conclude a peace treaty of which he would be the architect. Shiloah risked his reputation on being able to bring about the peace settlement.[4] Whereas Abdullah's

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1. FO 371/81908, E1023/6, Bipartite commission, Hare-Wright, 1.5.50.
2. FO 371/81911, E1023/115, Kirkbride to Younger, 2.6.50.
3. Ibid.
4. See also Chadwick views in FO 371/82179, E1015/90, 22.8.50.

mistrust of Kirkbride even grew, Shiloah's confidence in Britain increased, and whatever was not reported from Amman was soon completed by information from Tel-Aviv provided by Shiloah (the King had emphatically asked Shiloah not to inform the British).[1] This reverse of Israeli and Jordanian attitudes towards Britain was the beginning of military understanding between the two countries culminating in the joint operation in 1956.

The Israelis were mainly interested in implementing Article 8 of the Armistice that would grant them safe access to Jerusalem and Mt. Scopus.[2] Some of the Israeli military operations were seen by the British and the American Consuls in Jerusalem in the context of an Israeli pressure on the Jordanians to implement that article.[3] The Israelis, with or without the military pressure, had succeeded in bringing back the Jordanians to the MAC negotiating table in July 1950.[4]

In July 1950, Shiloah, for the first time, suggested to the King that he 'put the whole idea (of negotiations) into cold storage for an indefinite time, owing to the futility of the contact.[5] However, in that month, Sir Knox Helm emerged as the main protagonist of direct contact with Jordan. He and General Riley believed that as long as negotiations continued the border incidents could be of minor nature and restricted. Helm appealed to the Foreign Office for direct British intervention for that purpose: 'more than ever am I convinced that the Middle East needs leadership and wants ours', wrote Helm to Furlonge in this connection.[6]

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1. FO 371/82179, E1015/65, Tel Aviv to FO, 16.6.50. Shiloah was on bad terms with the British, since he clashed with his superiors, while serving as a British intelligence officer, E1015/90, Chadwick to Furlonge, 22.8.50.
2. FO 371/82178, Tel Aviv to FO, 23.6.50.
3. FO 371/82178, E1015/68, Judd to Furlonge, 24.6.48.
4. FO 371/82178, E1015/69, Amman to FO, 5.7.50.
5. FO 371/82178, E1015/70, Tel Aviv to FO, 7.7.50.
6. FO 371/82178, E1015/72, Helm to Furlonge, 3.7.50.

Helm spelled out clearly what was needed, in his view, for progress in the negotiations: a strong British pressure on the Jordanian government to go on with the negotiations. The alternative, warned Helm, would be British inaction which would be worse than taking sides- He suggested public declaration to that effect and enlisting the support of the Times.[1] Thus, to a large extent Shiloah was prepared to go on with the negotiations owing to Helm's position. Shiloah's main predicament was that the Israeli government seemed to despair from the contact and suggested suspending the negotiations for a while.[2]

By the middle of 1950, Kirkbride emphasized the role played by Palestinian deputies from the West Bank in opposing the contact with Israel.[3] The Jordanian government sought the support of these deputies in their opposition to the negotiations. A fact finding mission was sent to the West Bank and convened in Nablus and Jerusalem with Palestinian notables, who signed petitions against the negotiations. Kirkbride claimed that the signatories were persons who 'have in the past, encouraged Abdullah to press for a separate peace. It is typical of the lack of moral courage prevailing in the Middle Eastern countries.'[4] Nevertheless, Kirkbride did not doubt that there was a consensus against peace.[5] The British Ambassador added the Palestinian opposition to the 'list' of his predicaments. Kirkbride advocated now the resumption of the PCC efforts and suggested that the Commission would mediate between the two sides.[6]

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1. FO 371/82178, R1015/72, Helm to Furlonge, 3.7.50.
2. Shiloah met Abdullah in July and made no progress. FO 371/82178, E1015/74, Tel Aviv to FO, 11.7.50.
3. This was done by sending copies of petitions signed by notables from all over Arab Palestine to the King protesting against agreement with Israel. FO 371/82704, E1015/79, 24.7.50, 29.7.50.
4. FO 371/82704, E1015/79, Amman to FO, July 1950.
5. Ibid.
6. FRUS 50, Douglas (conversation with Kirkbride) to SoS, 19.5.50, p.902.

By August 1950, the Foreign Office had accepted Kirkbride's assertion that the method of direct approach had failed owing to the Jordanian government opposition, and that the only hope for a settlement was in a renewed effort by the PCC.[1] The UN Secretariat suggested that the MAC would be the venue for direct talks, but was strongly opposed by the Americans who feared procedural and principle difficulties, and the offer failed.[2]

In August 1950, the PCC arrived in Jerusalem. Kirkbride complained that the King tried to sabotage the commission links with the Jordanian government.[3] The British government had advised the Israeli and Jordanian governments to co-operate with the PCC.[4] On their way to Jerusalem the PCC members met the Foreign Office officials. The commission members argued that outside pressure on the Arab leaders would be welcomed by these leaders who wanted to reach an agreement with Israel.[5]

The Jordanian government informed the PCC that it was prepared to widen the scope of the special committee of the MAC. The Israelis were displeased with the level proposed by the Jordanians for the renewed negotiations in the MAC, which the Foreign Office also regarded as inadequate.[6] The Foreign Office believed that Kirkbride was able to convince the Jordanian government to participate in ministerial talks in the special committee.[7] Eventually, junior Israeli and Jordanian officials met in September 1950 and agreed to concentrate on working arrangements.[8]

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1. ISA 37/12, Furlonge to Kidron, 10.8.50.
2. FRUS 50, SD to NY, 29.6.50., p.950, fn.1.
3. FO 371/82179, E1015/82, Kirkbride to Bevin, 2.8.50.
4. FO 371/82179, E1015/82, FO to Tel Aviv, 9.8.50.
5. FO 371/82179, E1015/80, meeting with the PCC, 8.7.50, they referred to the leaders of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.
6. FO 371/82179, E1015/88, FO Minute, Furlonge, 22.8.50. The Jordanian-appointed Azmi Nashashibi and Farhan both in the rank of under-secretary and claimed they were senior.
7. FO 371/82179, E1015/87, Amman to FO, 31.8.50.
8. FO.371, E1015/96, Amman to FO, 31.8.50.

7. The direct approach is not abandoned.

When it seemed that both sides reconciled with the special committee as the best medium to the discuss Israeli-Jordanian relations, the King again resorted to direct negotiations. Abdullah was once more engaged in a trial of strength with his ministers. He invited Eytan to Amman in October 1950. The background for this meeting was the Jisr Majami incident.[7]

In September 1950, some Israeli settlers with protection of the IDF crossed the river Jordan to cultivate a plot near Naharim (Palestine Electricity Plant) which was shown on the Israeli side of the armistice demarcation line in the Rhodes map.[1] The British Embassy in Amman claimed that the area was in Israeli territory as a result of an error.[2] Thus, the King hoped to solve the problem in a direct meeting (1.10.50).

The Foreign Office advised the Jordanians to take the mattter to the MAC. The Office felt the Jordanians were morally right but technically wrong.[3] However, the Jordanian government decided to ignore the Office's advice to look for an equitable solution and appealed to the Security Council, an appeal which had failed, since it was based on Jordanian allegations that the map of the Armistice was forged.[4] The Jordanian government hinted in the Parliament that Britain was responsible for the failure of the Jordanian move, since it did not extend military or political help. The government also accused the GCOS, Glubb, for improper preparation of the map.[5]

1. FO 371/82179, E1015/100, Amman to FO, 4.10.50.
2. FO 371/91705, Annual report for Israel. FRUS 50, Drew to SoS, 9.9.50, p.994.
3. FO 371/91788, Annual report for Jordan.
4. FO 371/82716, E1053/13 FO Minute, December 1950. This area was in Transjordan before 1948; Kirk, Middle East, p.289-9; FO 371/82916, E11010/52, Amman, 13.9.50.
5. FO 371/82179, E1053/13, ibid.; Riley had a copy of the map showing the area in Israeli hands, FRUS 50, SoS to Drew, 10.9.50, p.992.
6. Chronology in MEJ 5 (Winter 1951), pp.84-85.

This ostensible irritation with Britain caused an angry reaction both in the British Legation in Amman and in the Foreign Office, Kirkbride again described the growing influence of Public Opinion, hitherto perceived as anti-Israeli, and now becoming more and more anti-British.[1]

The King revealed in his conversation with the Israeli delegate that he contemplated replacing Said Al-Mufti as premier owing to his opposition to direct talks. Kirkbride succeeded in preventing this by convincing the King that the option of the PCC was still open and Al-Mufti might agree to negotiations under its auspices.[2]

The Jordanian Foreign Minister was accused by the Cabinet for misrepresenting the case of Naharim in the Security Council and was replaced by the Palestinian Ruhi Abd Al-Hadi, bringing the number of Palestinian ministers to six (out of 12). The Israelis saw it as a sign of stiffening of the Jordanian attitude. Indeed, Abd Al-Hadi's first declaration was to announce Jordan's allegiance to the League and objection to separate peace with Israel.[3] Ben Gurion and the IFO concluded that separate peace with Jordan was impractical at that point.[4] Helm appealed once more to the Office and suggested the British would initiate peace proposals in the UN. William Strang, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, did not oppose a British public declaration in favour of Israeli-Jordanian negotiations, but doubted whether it would be sufficient to alter the Jordanian ministers views.[5]

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1. FO 371/82716, E1053/3, FO Minute, 18.12.50.
2. FO 371/82179, E1015/101, Tel Aviv to FO, 7.10.50; ISA 163/4, Avner to Paris, 19.10.50.
3. ISA 163/4, Israeli assessments, Avner to Paris, 19.10.50.
4. FO 371/82179, E1015/102, Ben Gurion conversation with SoS for Air, 4.10.50.
5. FO 371/82179, E1015/106, Helm to Wright, 7.10.50; Strang to Helm, 18.10.50.

The Israeli demands for the implementation of Article 8 were supported by the British. But, the Foreign Office realised that the Jordanian delegates participated in the special commission meeting, only to satisfy the King, and adopted an obstructive attitude that did not allow any progress in those meetings.[1] It is notable that Helm believed Kirkbride was instructed by the Foreign Office to check the King from entering direct negotiations towards the end of 1950. Helm and the Israelis misinterpreted Kirkbride's support for the PCC intervention as opposition to direct talks. Kirkbride suggested the PCC method, since he believed this was the only method acceptable to the ministers. The Foreign Office encouraged Helm to continue to urge the Israelis not to give up their efforts, and Kirkbride was instructed to carry on with his endeavours to persuade the Jordanian government to accept the PCC mediation. The officials concluded: 'The advice he (Helm) and Alec Kirkbride have given to their respective governments are not necessarily incompatible'.[2] This may have been the case. However, the problem was that only the King and Shiloah remained sincerely intersted in achieving a peace settlement.

The disinclination of the Jordanian Cabinet to participate in any negotiations and the continued anti-British statements in the Parliament had intensified during November 1950. The Council of Ministers accused Britain of bias towards Israel to the disadvantage of Jordan.[3] The Eastern Department assessed that this anti-British attitude was the result of political and constitutional changes in Jordan: 'The West Bank deputies are inspired by a shortsighted, but unshakeable resolve to have nothing to do with Israel'. They behaved that way, according

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1. FO 371/82179, E1015/112, Jerusalem to FO, 2.12.50; Jordan's access to Jerusalem was already secured.
2. FO 371/82179, E1015/117, Furlonge, FO Minute, 20.10.50; Helm to Furlonge, 10.10.50.
3. FO 371/82716, E1053, FO Minute, December 1950 (18.12.50.)

to the officials, since they did not wish to disturb Arab unity and were motivated by a feeling (fostered by Egypt) that Jordan's freedom of action was impaired by its closse alliance with Britain. A Foreign Office official remarked that this feeling 'has nothing to do with Israel question (sic) and was bound to emerge with the growth of 'democracy' in the country'.[1]

8. The changes within Jordan and the negotiations with Israel (1951).

The continuation of the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations in 1951 should be analysed against the background of the political development in the Hashemite Kingdom. In the first half of the year, the struggle between the old and new order in politics continued. It culminated in the assassination of King Abdullah. Sir Alec Kirkbride had this to say about the process: 'The transformation of the tribal patriarchy of Transjordan into the pseudo-democracy of Jordan complete with the nationalistic ideologies of a modern Arab State which began with the union of Transjordan and Arab Palestine in April 1950, was continued in 1951. The assassination of King Abdullah in July 1951 was the most outstanding event in this process'.[2]

Abdullah's main predicament was the difficulty of finding a government willing to incur public odium by making peace with Israel. Meetings between Abdullah, Ar-Rifai (who became premier in December, 1950) and Shiloah continued intermittently until Abdullah's death, but efforts were concentrated upon extension of the co-operation under the Rhodes agreement.

The contact in the beginning of the year was through a correspondence between Shiloah, the ailing President Weizmann and the King. In

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1. FO 371/81912, E1023/154, Wadrop, FO Minute, 16.11.50.
2. FO 371/98856, introduction to the annual report of Jordan of 1951.

the main it concentrated on solving the various border disputes, but it also dealt with the question of peace. Shiloah, by his own initiative, suggested the return of the Arab quarters in Jerusalem to Jordan as part of a peace settlement.[1] In January 1951, Shiloah met Ar-Rifai to discuss these issues. Shiloah offered compromise over Naharim in return for the implementation of Article 8 of the Armistice.[2]

All that Samir Ar-Rifai could offer was his participation in a joint effort to explore ways of implementing more fully the Armistice agreement. In the end of the January 1951 meeting, Ar-Rifai declared that that meeting was the last secret one and all the ensuing contacts would be under the MAC.[3] Kirkbride still hoped to widen the scope of the negotiations somewhate by involving the PCC delegates who had moved to Jerusalem in August 1950.[4]

There was very little hope of turning the MAC to a forum for political talks. The Jordanian delegates to the committee came from the Jordanian Foreign Ministers whose leadership was almost all Palestinian. These delegates were authorised to discuss military matters alone.[5] The West Bank ministers also prevented Samir Ar-Rifai from going too far in his negotiations with Shiloah, or rather from implementing the King's policy.[6]

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1. FO 371/91370, E1081/1, Amman to FO, 3.1.51; FO 371/91364, E1041/2, Amman to FO, 6.1.51; E1041/4, Tel Aviv to FO, 15.1.51. Abdullah suggested a meeting with Weizmann, however the latter was too ill to attend. This had already been suggested by Churchill in the HC in 1950.
2. FO 371/91370, E1081/7, Tel Aviv to FO, 17.1.51; BGA. Ben Gurion Diary, 3.1.51.
3. FO 371/91364, E1041/8, Kirkbride to Furlonge, 15..51.
4. FO 371/91716, E1053/8, FO Minute, Furlonge, 8.2.51.
5. In February 1950, Azmi Nashashibi became deputy Foreign Minister and in August 1950 Muhson Adib Al-Umari General Director of the Office, Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, 548-49.
6. Not all the West Bank ministers opposed negotiations, for instance Suleiman Nablusi, minister of finance. On the other hand, the Israeli intelligence believed: Anwar Al-Khatib led the opposition to Abdullah's policy. ISA, 2445/IFO research report, February 1951.

The Eastern Department had generally professed its satisfaction at the amount of agreement that still existed between the two parties.[1] From Cairo, the new head of the BMEO, Sir T. Rapp, continued to advocate a more pro-Israeli policy and to plead with the Office to strengthen King Abdullah. Rapp warned against the diminution of British influence in Jordan, owing to the Arab Palestinian participation in the Parliament and government. Whereas the Office accepted this analysis, it still regarded the Israelis as the more 'tough' party in the negotiations.[2] It is notable that the Office disagreed with another observation made by Rapp. The head of the BMEO suggested that a settlement of the refugee problem depended on an Israeli-Jordanian agreement.[3] It seems that already in 1949 the Israelis and the Jordanians decided to regard the problem of the refugees in Jordan as an internal Jordanian problem, or at least not as a subject for their negotiations.[4]

As for Rapp's suggestion that the Foreign Office would force the pace and pressure Jordanian politicians, the Eastern Department asserted that this proposal overlooked the importance the cabinet and parliament in Jordan attached to the Arab League's policy. Furlonge, the head of the Department, revealed that already in the summer of 1950 he discussed with Michael Wright the desirability of pressure on Jordanian politicians and concluded that such a pressure would merely weaken the British position in the Kingdom in the main, since 'Arabs may be led, but cannot be driven'. Furlonge believed Britain was more respected by acts of a positive nature, implying to the effect that he assumed the Tripartite Declaration had.[5]

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1. FO 371/91716, E1053/8, Furlonge, FO Minute, 20.1.51.
2. FO 371/91364, E1041/9, FO Minute, 6.1.51.
3. Ibid.
4. In the material reviewed for this work there is no indication of any negotiations about refugees.
5. FO 371/91364, ibid.

9. Jordan after Abdullah's Death

For Sir Alec Kirkbride, Jordan after Abdullah's assasiantion was a state which moved closer to the pattern of the other Arab countries. As the legation in Amman had put it, it was no longer in a 'fearlessly independent position within the Arab League'.[1] However, for Kirkbride it was even worse that that. It was a serious blow to his position within the Hashemite Kingdom. The British representative in Amman who had spent almost thirty years in the place, felt that a new era in the Middle East had begun in which Britain would have only a marginal role to play.

Sir Alec had little doubt about those who were to blame for the assasination and to the consequent decline of his own position: 'This crime was a notable manifestation of the fact that the once peaceful and amiable [state] of Transjordan had largely been taken by the Palestinians'.[2] He reported that the parliamentary elections following the King's death were dominated by 'loud anti-British nationalists from the West Bank' who also won the elections there.[3]

Kirkbride was not the only one to pinpoint the Palestinians as responsible for the King's death. The Jordanian authorities blamed the former Mufti's supporters, and Abdullah At-Tal for instigating the murder.[4] The Israelis shared this view, but like the Jordanian court

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1. FO 371/98856, Jordan annual report 1951. The King was assassinated in Jerusalem on July 20, 1951.
2. FO 371/98856, ibid. The assassin was Mustafa Shuqri Ashu, a Palestinian serving with the former Mufti's paramilitary group, Al-Jihad Al-Muqadas; FO 371/91383, E1942/10, Amman to FO, 20.7.51.
3. FO 371/98856, Jordan, annual report, ibid.
4. Together with Ashu, an Arab Catholic priest Father Ayat and Musa Al-Husseini were arrested as At-Tal's agents: FO 371/91389, E1942/47, Jerusalem to FO, 1.8.51. Ayat was acquitted later and At-Tal sentenced to death in absentia, the rest all allegedly connected to either the Mufti or At-Tal were executed in September 1951: FO 371/91389, E1942/64, Amman to FO, 4.9.51.

failed to produce any substantial evidence about the former Mufti's intervention.[1] It seems that both in Kirkbride's case and in Israel's case it was the fruit of their belief that one should not absolve the former Mufti from personal responsibility for the murder. Jordanian writers in recent years have implied a strong American and British involvement in the plot to assasinate Abdullah, but there seems to be insufficient evidence for accepting their theory either.[2]

It is notable that the Foreign Office in London was most careful in its reaction and was in fact worried by Kirkbride's and the Jordanian government's tendency to fix the blame on the Palestinians. The Eastern Department officials warned that only the former Mufti would benefit from such a campaign against the Palestinians.[3]

However, Kirkbride's main point was not only the direct responsibility of the Palestinians for the King's death, but their role in bringing about the changes within Jordan. He was strongly supported by the head of the BMEO on this issue. In fact, before Abdullah's death, Sir Thomas Rapp predicted that the movement of Palestinians to the East Bank (estimated to be 100,000 in 1950-51) would turn Jordan into a more nationalistic Arab state and would drag it away from the Western camp and Britain.[4]

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1. ISA 2431/9, Israeli Foreign Office research department, 29.7.51; ISA 36/15, Furlonge-Eylat, 27.7.51.
2. See Naser Ad-Din Nashashibi's version. He was the director of the Royal Broadcast Company and Abdullah's secretary. N. Nashashibi, Man qatala Al-Maliq Abdullah (who killed King Abdullah), Kuwait 1981. The Jordanian court historians had implicated the Americans for not warning the King about an impending assassination attempt of which they had previous information, Musa and Mahdi, Urdun, pp. 552-3.
3. ISA 36/15, Furlonge-Eylat conversation, 27.7.51.
4. The report was in fact prepared by the Joint Intelligence Committee Middle East, of which the head of the political division of the BMEO was ex officio chairman. It was prepared owing to the information of Abdullah's illness and old age. FO 371/91838, E11942/40, Rapp to Furlonge, 23.9.51.

Kirkbride shared the conclusion of this report and after the King's death added that the Palestinians would push towards constitutional reforms that would undermine Britain's position even further.[1]

The Foreign Office in London did not view things in such a gloomy way. The Office did not sense any change in the strength of the Anglo-Jordanian alliance (the only Anglo-Arab alliance left in the Middle East after the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty).[2] Nevertheless, the Eastern Department was aware of the growth of Arab nationalism in Jordan and advocated a more sensitive policy towards Nationalism in Jordan and suggested avoiding any act which might cause resentment. The Office explained precisely what it meant by a more sensitive policy: although 'we pay the piper so we could call the tune', Britain should allow some degree of independence in Jordan's foreign and particular Arab policy.[3]

Fortunately for the Office, on the main foreign and Arab policy issue after the King's death, there was a large degree of agreement between Britain and Jordan. This was the Iraqi attempt to convince the Jordanians to enter a union with the former, an idea suggested by Abdullah himself before his death owing to his apprehension of his two sons' ability to rule the country after his death.[4] Neither Talal, Abdullah's heir, nor the Jordanian government favoured the idea. The Americans and the Israelis had also opposed the proposed merger and the latter even saw it as a causus belli.[5] The Foreign Office regarded the Iraqi campaign as having a destabilizing effect. Moreover, the Office

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1. FO 371/91838, E11942/40, Kirkbride to Rapp, 2.8.51.
2. FO 371/91716, ER1053/16, Morrison-Eylat, 7.8.51.
3. FO 371/91839, ET1042/40, FO Minute, 2.8.51.
4. FO 371/91839, E1942/40, Amman to FO, 23.7.51; Abidi, Jordan, pp. 81-82; Jewish Observer Middle Review 7 (25.7.58.)
5. Ben Gurion's diary reveals that an Israeli operation for the occupation of the West Bank was prepared in the case of an Iraqi-Jordanian merger. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 21.7.51; the American position in FRUS 51, Drew to SoS, 10.8.51, p.992.

as much as the legation in Amman considered the Legion as the pro-British element in the Hashemite Kingdom that should be protected from any external influence.[1]

Conclusions

The Israeli-Jordanian negotiations came to an end before Abdullah's death. In spite of a continued cycle of infiltrations and reprisals, the basic understanding reached in November 1947 was kept; in fact, one might say it was kept until 1967. Britain had a most important role in bringing about this understanding. One of Britain's last contributions towards consolidating it was allaying the Israelis' fears about the possibility of an Iraqi-Jordanian union. Britain promised the Israelis that such a union would fail to gain Britain's support.[2] Thus, immediately after the war, the Foreign Office accepted the King's argument that only a renewed understanding would safeguard the West Bank from an Israeli attack aimed at occupying it. Such Israeli plans did exist in 1948-49 and were not executed partly owing to Israel's preoccupation with the Southern Front, but also owing to the chances of reaching an agreement with Abdullah. Ben Gurion also feared the British reaction to such an act.

However, the Foreign Office and in particular Sir Alec Kirkbride in Amman did not regard a formal peace between Israel and Jordan as a

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1. The Iraqi state trials after the July 1958 revolution revealed that the Iraqi delegation and their embassy in Amman were intensively active in trying to persuade Jordanian politicians to accept the idea of a union. The Iraqis were apprehensive of Britain's ability to maintain the Hashemite rule in Jordan for much longer. Mahkamat Al-Shaab vol.4, pp.1255-56; FRUS 51, Crocker to SoS, 8.8.51, p.992.
2. ISA 36/15, Eylat's conversation with Strang, 7.8.51; ISA 37/1, Eylat-Morrison, 9.8.51. The Israeli ambassador had also met the head of the British Chancery in Baghdad who explained that the Iraqis were too preoccupied with the events around them (Iran) and thus did not contemplate a union.

prerequisite for sustaining the 1947 understanding. The Israeli government from 1950 onwards accepted in principle this assumption, apart from Reuben Shiloah who sought to further his own political career by achieving a formal peace agreement with King Abdullah. Whereas the Israeli government allowed Shiloah to continue the negotiations as long as he deemed it useful, the Jordanian Government strongly resented the King's eagerness to conclude a formal peace treaty with Israel, owing to the opposition in the Arab World to such an agreement.

Kirkbride sided with the the ministers not out of opposition to an Israeli-Jordanian peace, but owing to his fears that the the continued resistance to Abdullah's efforts both in the government and the annexed West Bank would end in the disintegration of the kingdom. In fact, Kirkbride in many ways saw the assassination as the beginning of this process in Jordan.

The Foreign office lost interest in the negotiations in the summer of 1949, when it seemed that both sides were pleased with the understanding they had reached about the partitioning of Mandatory Palestine betwen Israel and Jordan. At that point the Foreign Office's view towards Israel had changed. The change of policy towards the Israeli-Jordanian agreement cannot be understood without examination of the Anglo-Israeli relations to which we devote the last chapter in this work.

CHAPTER FIVE: Anglo Israeli Relations, 1948-51.

In a matter of less than two years Israel and Britain have moved from a situation in which they were both on the brink of war to one in which they seriously considered the conclusion of a treaty of alliance. These fluctuations in Anglo-Israeli relations were the result of Britain's ad hoc policy. The dynamism and logic of pragmatic policy is such that it follows events almost regardless of past prejudices, psychological barriers, preconceptions or emotions. Thus, the Foreign Office had easily adjusted itself to the new situation in the Middle East after the creation of the state of Israel. It had done the same when it had to consider its reaction to the establishment of the Arab League in 1945. Although the British opposed the League at first, it soon accepted it as a fact and tried to win its loyalty and direct its policy. The Office had proved itself less able when it tried to predict ideological developments like Arab Nationalism and its various trends. But in the case of Israel, it was a matter of accepting the facts rather than predicting them.

The Israelis were the ones who found it difficult, in particular Ben Gurion, to forget the past. Some of HMG's ambassadors in the area suffered from the same disability. Thus the change of attitude was determined by London. However, Israel's identification with the West in the Korean crisis simplified the process of adjustment.

Indeed, one of the important factors affecting the radical shift in British policy towards Israel was the developing Cold War between the Eastern and Western blocs. In the aftermath of the Korean crisis only two categories of states existed in the Foreign Office's perceptions: those which were prepared to be part of the pro-Western alliance

and those which preferred to stay neutral. During the Cold War being neutral was tantamount to joining the Communist camp.[1]

Israel's identification with the West during the Korean War had included it in the former category. With American blessing and backing, Britain was given the prime responsibility of keeping Israel and the Arab countries in the Western orbit. It became a far more important objective of British policy than solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Greater Transjordan concept had helped Britain to keep both Jordan and Israel in the Western camp.

The British determination to carry through the Greater Transjordan concept did not compel HMG to go beyond the de facto recognition of the state of Israel. As King Abdullah had found out, it was enough to reach a modus vivendi with Israel in order to ensure the successful implementation of the annexation of the West Bank. Yet, it seems that Britain went much further than this in its relations with Israel.

In order to discover the reasons and motives for this British attitude, this chapter will concentrate on the transition period in which Anglo-Israeli contacts had turned from practical relationship into close military and political co-operation.

Attention should be paid to the link between the improvement of Anglo-Israeli relations and the Greater Transjordan idea. This could be found in the British perceptions about the desired solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict. As was mentioned earlier in this work, the Foreign Office regarded an Israeli-Jordanian settlement as the best basis for solving the Palestine problem. Thus, although it was not

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1. The Foreign Office had first expressed these views in November 1949, see FO 371/75056, E4770, record of meeting McGhee-Wright, 14.11.49. The Americans only in 1950 accepted this division: FO 371/81908, E1023/33, London bipartite conference, May 1950, 2.5.50.

essential for the success of this settlement to have formal Anglo-Israeli relations, it could have, no doubt, helped to bring about such a solution.

1. The Non-Recognition Policy.

The question of recognizing Israel was discussed by the British Foreign Office in the last days of the Mandate. It was hoped in Whitehall that the French and the Americans would agree to co-ordinate their decision on recognition and would delay that decision until after the 15th of May.[1] To their great satisfaction, the British learned that the Quai d'Orsay were willing to postpone their decision and it seemed as if a similar tendency existed in the State Department.[2] However, the American president had viewed the question of recognition in entirely different terms than the various foreign offices. In less than an hour after the State of Israel was declared the American government had granted it a de facto recognition.

It might be worthwhile to compare briefly what the various writers and scholars say about the American decision to recognize Israel to what the Foreign Office, at the time, had to say about this American move. The Foreign Office deemed it important to understand the US decision in order to find ways to co-ordinate the countries' policies, in spite of the different attitudes taken on that issue.

There is little doubt that the State Department and the Secretary of State were vehemently opposed to this move. Thus, the decision was attributed to the president and his closest aides.[3] The latter had ruled in favour of an immediate recognition owing to election

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1. FO 371/68664, E6090, FO to NY UN, 8.5.48.
2. FO 371/68664, E6349, Paris to FO, 17.4.48.
3. E. Wilson, Decision on Palestine: How the US came to recognize Israel, pp.142-45.

considerations, fear of an early Russian recognition.[1] It was also due to Truman's determination to show to the State Department that 'the president of the US, and not a second or third echelon in the State Deprtment, is responsible for making foreign policy'.[2]

James McDonald claimed that if it were not for the Assistant Secretary of State, Robert Lovett, Truman would have granted a de jure recognition early on.[3] Lovett and the other senior State Department officials and administration personalities had doubted the viability of the new state.[4] Marshall's main objection was based on the assumption that Israel would lose the war.[5] There was also a considerable concern about the American position in the Arab World and the effect of the decision on furture oil concessions in the area.[6] However, as Sacher had pointed out correctly, the recognition had no effect on the American effort to obtain oil concessions from Kuwait, Syria and Saudi Arabia.[7]

After the decision had been taken, the American ambassador in London warned that the worst outcome of the recognition was the damage done to Anglo-American relations: 'I believe that the worst shock so far to general Anglo-American concert of policy since I have been here was a sudden US de facto recognition of the Jewish state, without

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1. Sacher, Europe, p.526; McDonald, ibid, p.6; E. Elath, Ha-Mavak a'l ha-medina (The struggle for statehood) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1982), pp.742-746; C. Clifford, 'Recognizing Israel: the 1948 story, American Heritage, Vol. 28, No. 3, April 1977; FRUS 48, SD-President meeting, 12.4.48, pp.973; H. Wilson, Chariots of Israel (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 1981), p.277; Snetsinger, John, Truman, the Jewish vote and the creation of Israel (Stanford, California: Hoover Institute, 1974), p.140; S. Moskovits, 'The US recognition of Israel in the context of the Cold War, 1948-1954' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis for Kent State University, 1976).
2. H. Truman, Memoirs, Vol.2, pp.164-65.
3. McDonald, My Mission, pp.15-16.
4. Ibid.
5. Truman Library, interview with Clifford Hess, pp.96-97.
6. FRUS 48, Austin to Marshall, 19.5.48, p.1013.
7. Sacher, Europe, p.522.

previous notice of our intentions to the British government'.[1] However, Lovett was not alarmed by Douglas' note. He put the blame for the absence of a concerted effort on Britain: 'Our mutual task would have been easier, however, had the British not been extremely laggard until the eleventh hour in dealing with crisis largely of their own making'.[2]

Douglas was wrong. Anglo-American co-operation withstood even more severe blows. The Foreign Office's reaction was characterized by astonishment more than by anger.[3] There was a sincere effort in the Office to understand the American decision. Lord Inverchapel, the Ambassador in Washington, attributed the decision to President Truman, who according to the Ambassador had the idea in his mind for some time before the actual recognition.[4] In fact, there was an initial tendency to follow the American example, but Michael Wright had eventually ruled against it.[5] He was strongly supported by Sir Alec Cadogan on this issue.[6]

2. On the path to recognition (May-December 1948).

Already on May the 24th, Bevin had mentioned the need to secure Arab acceptance of a Jewish state, provided it would be minimized in its territory.[7] Weizmann's papers reveal that he knew in June 1948 of a British plan by which HMG was willing to recognize Israel if it were

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1. FRUS 48, Douglas to Marshall, 22.5.48.
2. Mr. Bevin had described the decision as jumping the gun before 'the man at the United Nations (Austin) knew about it'; HC, Vol.460, 26.1.49, Col.943-45.
3. FO 371/68664, E6391, Washington to FO, 16.5.48.
4. FO 371/68664, E6402, Wright to UN NY, 19.5.48.
5. Ibid.
6. FRUS 48, Lovett to Douglas, 28.5.48, p.1070; Lovett would emerge as a pro-Israeli figure in a rather hostile State Department (towards Israel), Clifford interview, Ibid, p.100.
7. FRUS 48, Douglas - Bevin conversation, quoted in Bullock, Bevin, p.565.

to give up the Negev and possibly some part of Northern Galilee.[1] Bevin was convinced it was in the Arabs' best interest to accept a small compact sovereign state owing to the efficiency shown by the Jewish army.[2] In such a case, Bevin was prepared to grant a de jure recognition.[3] However, as long as Israel showed no willingness to concede territory, the United Kingdom representative in the United Nations made a considerable effort to prevent the appearance of Abba Eban in that forum as the representative of the state of Israel.[4]

In September 1948, Bevin, and Marshall and the French premier Queuille were prepared to grant a de jure recognition in return for Israeli acceptance of the second Bernadotte proposals,[5] a proposal regarded by Ben Gurion as most alarming and therefore to be rejected.[6]

Nevertheless, the general trend was to convey to the Arab governments the message of the inevitability of the Jewish state.[7] For some of the British representatives in the Middle East, like Broadmead in Damascus or Houstown-Boswell in Beirut, it was a complete reversal of their previous advice given to the Arab governments, when they predicted that Israel would not come into being.[8] Notwithstanding this effort, the official policy of non-recognition was still intact throughout 1948.

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1. Weizmann Letters, Letter 189, to Ginzburg, 15.6.48.
2. FRUS 48, Douglas to SoS, 19.6.48, p.1124.
3. Abba Eban claimed this suggestion came from McNeil, in A. Eban, An Autobiography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), p.132.
4. SD 501BB. Palestine/7-748, Beeley-Douglas conversation in London to SD, 7.7.48.
5. FO 800/487, Douglas to Bevin, 27.8.48; Bullock, Bevin, p.596; Ben Gurion, War Diary, 21.9.48, p.709.
6. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 23.9.48, p.719. The Americans had soon after granted a de jure recognition.
7. FO 371/68375, E9172, Broadmead to the Syrian Government; E9183, Beirut to FO, 7.7.48.
8. FO 816/136, Bevin to Kirkbride, 16.6.48.

It was Ernest Bevin who first pressed his representatives to put across this idea, partly out of fear of Israeli expansionism. As he wrote to Sir Alec Kirkbride - the only solution for the Palestine problem was the establishment of an independent Jewish state, 'otherwise the Jews would occupy the whole of Palestine and Transjordan'.[1] He assured Kirkbride that such a state (in the July 1948 borders) would have a limited number of inhabitants and absorption capacity of immigrants.[2] Furthermore, Bevin claimed: 'It is entirely unrealistic of the Arab states to demand the abolition of the state of Israel as precondition for a settlement'.[3]

Bevin was supported by some officials in the department, particularly Hector McNeil and by Sir Hugh Dow in Jerusalem. Dow already advocated in June 1948 the establishment of a British Consulate in Tel-Aviv.[4] With this support in hand, Bevin felt that he could wrtie in a cabinet paper that, '[While] it appears fairly clear that a Jewish state of some kind will form part of the eventual Palestine settlement, the state is still short of [the] criteria demanded for recognition'.[5]

3. The problem of understanding Israeli politics.

Whereas the Foreign Office had experts on Arab affairs there was very little knowledge and understanding of Israeli or even Jewish issues in the period between the establishment of the Jewish state and the de facto recognition by Britain (January 1949). The Consulate in Jerusalem was responsible for some of the inaccurate information sent

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1. FO 800/477, Bevin to Amman, 6.7.48.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 816/121, SoS to Kirkbride, 27.5.48.
4. FO 371/68666, E7951, Dow to FO, 11.6.48; interview with Beith.
5. CAB 129/29, CP(48)208, 25.8.48.

to the Foreign Office during this period. Following these reports from Jerusalem the feeling in the Eastern Department was that Weizmann would be a key factor in improving Anglo-Israeli relations.[1] However, Weizmann was bitterly opposed to the Foreign Office's policies. Moreover, even if Weizmann did display pro-British tendencies it would hardly affect Israeli politics. The truth was that Ben Gurion had already stripped Weizmann of any political standing, in spite of Sharret's opposition, in September 1948.[2] Only after his first visit to Israel in June 1949 did Strang realise to his great astonishment that 'Weizmann was violently anti-British and insignificant politically in Israel'.[3]

The most striking misconception about Israel at the time was the assumption, frequently made by British officials, that the country was to become Communist. Bevin and most of the Foreign Office officials reached that conclusion owing to the influx of East European immigrants. The Office feared that Communist agents, in particular from Roumania, were infiltrating through the immigration process.[4]

This particular apprehension was not unique at the time. Marshall also suspected the presence of Communist agents in Israel and in fact used it as an argument against recognizing Israel.[5] Thus, when Bevin attracted Marshall's attention to the Czech and Russian arms supply to Israel, and the Russian support for the partition resolution as indications of Israel becoming Communist, he found out that his collegue was thinking very much in the same way.[6]

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1. FO 371/68667, E8444, FO Minute, June 1948.
2. Ben Gurion, War Diary, p.706; see also I. Berlin, Personal Impressions (The Hogarth Press: 1980), p.58.
3. ISA 37/8, Report on Strang meeting; see also Weizmann-Strang conversation in ISA 2412/26, both in June 1949.
4. FO 371/68367, E2246, Goldmann to Easterman, reporting a conversation with McNeil, 24.2.48; Bullock, Bevin 48; Marcus Seiff to McDonald, in McDonald, My Mission, p.84.
5. FRUS 48, SD-President meeting, 12.5.48, p.974.
6. Bullock, op.cit., p.648.

Only few officials in Israel appreciated the extent of Britain's fear of a 'Red Israel'. In particular in a period where China was turning 'Red' and neutrality in the Cold War was considered as siding with the Eastern Block. The Israeli Foreign Office saw it as part of a British 'smear-campaign' against Israel.[1] One of the few who did, was the Governor of Jerusalem, Dov Yosef, who assured the British consulate there that Israel would side with the West.[2]

In his comprehensive analysis of the Israeli-Russian relations, the writer Krammer claimed that the British and American fears were unfounded. He remarked: 'British and American officials were inclined to believe the worst in analysing Russian motives, willingly gave unwarranted credence to anti-Zionist rumours that the Soviet Union saw in the establishment of a Jewish state a colony of potentially grateful believers'.[3] As another writer had pointed out this tendency was in particular true of Britain in 1948/49 and the USA in 1949/51.[4] Thus, according to these writers, Israel's turning to Moscow was on pragmatic grounds and not ideological ones.[5]

The Foreign Office had little doubt about a mass infiltration of Russian agents as immigrants to Palestine. The Office and Bevin were convinced that the Russians encouraged immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe for the purpose of dominating Palestine.[6] The Americans had

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1. ISA 2412/26, IFO memo, Britain's attitude towards Israel, 12.5.49.
2. FO 371/68698, EI3493, Jerusalem to FO, 18.10.48.
3. A. Krammer, The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc 1947-53 (University of Illinois Press: 1974), p.6.
4. P. Kennedy, The Realities behind Diplomacy (Fontana: 1981), pp.363-64.
5. The Jewish Agency and the Czech Government signed an arms deal in December 1947. After the Communist coup in Prague, arms consignments to the Jews multiplied and training was provided. There was a permanent Jewish delegation in Prague purchasing arms since February 1948, Krammer, Israel and the USSR, pp.59-64,80,83 and Ben Gurion, War Diary, 20.5.48; 10.6.48; 19.10.48, 1.8.48, and see A. Dagan, Moscow and Jerusalem (Abelrad-Shuman: 1970), p.23.
6. FO 371/68364, E356, Eastern Department to Moscow, 22.1.48.

their own reports and thus decided to send an envoy, Sam Claus, to investigate to what extent Israel was drifting towards the Communist camp.[1] In November 1948, Claus concluded that there was certainly influence of Communist immigrants in the Israeli army and that MAPAM, the second largest party, was the real Communist danger. He recommended the improvement of the Israeli security services and the supply of Western arms to Israel to weaken its inclination towards the East.[2]

It seems that both the Americans and the British were deceived by Ben Gurion's professed policy of neutrality. This was done for tactical purposes and Ben-Gurion as most of his close aides, including Sharret, were in favour of Israel's inclusion in the Western Block. However, some of the Israeli Foreign Office staff were genuinely supporting the non-alignment policy. The Israelis acted entirely on a pragmatic level in their relations with the USSR. It was extremely important for the Israelis not to be associated with any policy or activities against the USSR in order that the Russian arms supply and the flow of East European immigrants would continue.[3]

It is notable that notwithstanding the clear shift in Russian policy towards Israel from January 1949 and onwards, the Foreign Office, unlike the State Department, still harboured suspicions about

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 25.11.48, p.846.
2. The Defense Department remained suspicious until May 1949, FRUS 49, SoS for Defense to NSC 16.5.49, p.1011; The Americans were highly impressed by the British reports see FRUS 49 Douglas to SoS, 28.10.48, p.1531. Claus' visit in ISA 2412/26,13.11.48.
3. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 25.11.48., p.846; Truman Library, Dean Acheson papers, Box 64, Folder-March 1949, memo of conversation with Sharret, 22.3.49. For a comprehensive discussion of this problem see M. Breecher, The Foreign Policy of Israel, (Oxford University Press: 1972), pp.542-565; and Y. Ro'i, 'Soviet-Israeli Relations 1947-1954', in The USSR and the Middle East (Confino and Shamir eds.) (Tel Aviv: Israeli Universities Press), pp.123-133.

Israel becoming a Communist state.[1] In January 1949, the military aid to Israel from the Eastern Block had ceased and the Russians had declared their disillusionment with Israel's neutrality.[2]

The Foreign Office still received information of supply of Czech arms to Israel in the beginning of 1949.[3] The State Department, on the other hand, was convinced already in December 1948 that the Eastern Block attitude had changed and that arms supplies had stopped.[4]

The consul in Haifa, Marriot, had also contributed to the conviction in the Office that Israel might become Communist by predicting that the country would swing to the left after the first elections.[5]

It is somewhat difficult to assess where Bevin stood on this question. On the one hand, he disagreed with Marriot and reported to the Cabinet that there was no indication that there would be any 'large and immediate swing to the extreme left in the first Israeli elections'.[6] On the other hand, Bevin told a meeting of senior army and Foreign Office officials that in his view Israel would turn into a Communist country within five years, because of the immigration from the Eastern block and lack of immigration from the West.[7] On another occasion the Foreign Secretary predicted that the USSR would have considerable influence alongside a strong American presence.[8] It seems that Bevin's last remarks reflected his real apprehension about Israel's ability to benefit from American support without committing itself to the Western Block.

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1. FO 371/68638, E13229, Moscow to FO, 2.10.48
2. Krammer, Israel and the USSR, p.117-118.
3. FO 371/75396 and 75397; compare with Krammer, Israel and the USSR, 119-25, 128.130 and A. Saharan, Knafei Hanizahon (The wings of victory), Am Ha-Sefer, Tel-Aviv, 1966, p.196; B. Kagan, The secret battle for Israel (Cleveland, 1966), pp.126-7.
4. FRUS 48, Prague to ASoS, 8.12.48, p.1652.
5. FO 371/68632, E12522, Haifa to FO, 24.9.48.
6. CAB 129/31 part I, CP(49), 15.1.49, Memo Bevin on Palestine.
7. FRUS 48, Holms to ASoS, 22.12.48, p.168 (the meeting included Alexander, Tedder, Slim, McNeil, Sir O. Sargent and Wright.
8. CAB 129/31, part I, CP(49), 15.1.49, memo Bevin.

The State Department in 1949 was willing to live with a non-aligned Israel, but in the 1950s it was unacceptable and in spite of Israeli assurances, some State Department officials were still suspicious about Communist influence in Israel.[1]

Since May 1949, the fear of Israel's ability to take the Arab World out of the British sphere of influence replaced that of a 'Red Israel'.[2] A neutral Israel with such an aim could be backed by both camps. Moreover, neutrality at peace time, in those days, meant hostility at war time. Finally, one could add that it was convenient to particularly anti-Zionist officials in the Office to predict that Israel was turning Communist, even when there was not enough evidence to support this. When Israel fully identified itself with the West in the Korean war, there was no more mentioning of the theory of 'Red Israel'.

4. Different levels of contact.

One of the reasons for these and other misconceptions about Israel was the complex way in which the two governments contacted each other before British recognition of Israel. The first formal representative of HMG to the Jewish state was Cyril Marriot, the consul in Haifa. Contacts with him were established in May-June 1948. Marriot's knowledge of the area was limited, and as he admitted was even more obscure as far as the Jews were concerned: 'My experience of Jews was gained in Roumania, where one knew if there were a dirty house in the village it was the Jew's'.[3] He gained a similar experience in New York, where he observed 'one rarely met the Jews in a decent society'.[4]

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1. FRUS 50, ibid., Rockwell-Kollek meeting, 31.8.50.
2. FO 371/75071, Middle East conference, ibid.
3. FO 371/68505, E6249, Marriot to FO, 26.4.48.
4. Ibid.

Palestine had proved to be even a worse place to be in; Marriot had frequently complained to Bevin about the 'lousy job' he had to do.[1] In February 1949, Marriot, in fact, asked to leave Israel after suffering for almost a year from what he called being unpopular and a target of press attacks.[2]

The issues handled by Marriot were mainly liaison with the Israeli army and were related to securing British installations in Palestine until the final withdrawal (June 1948). His main contact was a lawyer in Haifa, Yacov Salomon, whom he was asked now and then on behalf of His Majesty's government to warn the Israelis whenever British lives or bases were in danger.[3] Marriot was under the authority of Sir Hugh Dow, the consul general in Jerusalem. Dow spent most of his time travelling between Jerusalem and Amman, and thus was less involved with Israeli affairs. In July 1948, the Foreign Office had sent John Sherringham, who first served as liaison with the Jewish agency during the war. His appointment had contributed to the flow of accurate information and appreciations from the Consulate to London and his

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1. FO 800/477, Marriot to Bevin, 13.6.48.
2. ISA 36/12, Comay - Marriot conversation, 3.2.49.
3. See chapter 1.

arrival had changed for the better the ability of the Office to assess the political scene in Israel.[1] With the addition of Colin Crow after January 1949, the British embassy had an adequate staff dealing with Israeli affairs, although Helm complained in May 1949 that the situation in this respect was far from satisfactory.[2]

The British Middle East Office and its head Sir John Troutbeck played, or at least had tried to play, an important role in obstructing the process of normalization between the two states. As early as July 1948, Sir J. Troutbeck warned against recognizing the Jewish State. In his view, Israel would turn into an extremist state that should be opposed by Britain with all its means.[3]

During the first weeks of the war in Palestine, Troutbeck predicted that a defeat of the Arab armies would shake the position of the Arab rulers. He asserted that it would be inevitable for those rulers to blame it all on the British. After all, it would be Britain which was unable to save the Arabs once they had lost the support in the UN and lacked reserves of ammunition and stores. Therefore, the head of BMEO urged the British government, in the end of May 1948, to do its utmost to bring about the elimination of a separate Jewish state and if this proved impossible then Troutbeck suggested working towards a compromise that would scale down Jewish territorial demands.[4]

The Foreign Office disapproved totally of this approach. Troutbeck was told that there was no use in talking about the elimination of the Jewish state. The Foreign Office's efforts should be channeled towards persuading the Arabs of the need to reach a settlement with the

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1. CZA, s25/5364; Goldmann to Sharret 8.7.48 in Israeli Documents, doc.299; FO 371/75329, E11211, Jerusalem to FO, 8.2.49.
2. ISA 36/12, Helm - Ben Gurion, 30.5.49.
3. FO 371/68374, E9702, BMEO to FO, 5.7.48.
4. FO 371/68673, E7048, BMEO to FO, 26.5.48.

Jews, explained the head of the Eastern Department in a letter to Sir John Troutbeck.[1]

Troutbeck was mainly supported by Houstown-Boswell in Beirut. The latter advised the Foreign Office to capitalize on the American decision to recognize Israel, and to regard the recognition as violation of the truce and thus Britain could unilaterally lift its arms embargo.[2] The Minister in Beirut advocated a policy of non-recognition of the Jewish State, since this state 'would become the Achilles heel of our defence'.[3] He envisaged Israel as a Communist State, backed by the USSR, which would encroach on Arab territory.[4] Houstown Boswell called upon Britain to relinquish its neutral policy and to support openly the Arabs and in particular Abdullah.[5]

Troutbeck upon reading the Beirut Telegram remarked: 'It is difficult to see that Zionist policy is anything else than unashamed aggression carried out by methods of deceit and brutality not worthy of Hitler'.[6] However, neither Troutbeck, nor Houstown-Boswell represented the consensus in the Foreign Office. In London, the tendency was to look for ways of approaching the Israeli government and normalize the relationship.

As was mentioned earlier, Hector McNeil and Goldmann were chosen respectively by their governments to negotiate about the future Anglo-Israeli relations. Goldmann after failing in January 1948 to obtain a meeting with Bevin, tried again in October 1948 but was again turned down.[7] Nahum Goldmann continued to pursue his own policy and create

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1. FO 371/68673, E7048, FO Minute Burrows, May 1948.
2. FO 371/68386, E6364, Beirut to FO, 16.5.48.
3. FO 371/E68386, E8737, Beirut to FO, 9.5.48.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. FO 371/68386, E8737, Troutbeck to Wright, 9.5.48.
7. FO 371/68699, UN NY to FO, 23.10.48.

unwarranted hopes in Tel-Aviv about a dramatic change in the Foreign Office's views. He also misled the Office, as he did in the beginning of 1948, to believe that Israel was prepared to make far reaching concessions on the oil refineries and on the Arab-Israeli settlements. In fact, this time, the Foreign Office suspected the reliability of the Israeli representative.[1]

Goldmann was correct in reporting that the Minister of State, for his part, showed a positive attitude towards Israel and even towards its aspirations in the Negev. But, McNeil did not go to the extent of supporting the Israeli military operations there. Eban, who replaced Goldmann in October 1948 in the contacts with McNeil, had found out in his conversations with the British Minister that Goldmann's reports were exaggerated.[2] In fact, McNeil warned the Israelis that their advance in the Negev would render British recognition of Israel impossible.[3]

There seemed to be two schools of thought in the Office about the desirability of recognition at the time. The first considered non-recognition policy as a good political card to restrict Israel. The other, of which McNeil was the main representative, took to view that a gradual approach towards recognition would benefit Britain as much as it would Israel.[4] The result seemed to be that the latter school won the day and there certainly did not exist a 'rigid position of non-recognition' as suggested by one writer.[5]

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1. FO 371/68666, E7890, FO Minute, O. Sargent, 3.6.48.
2. ISA 64/15, Eban to Eytan, 1.10.48; compared with Israel Documents, doc.346, Goldmann to Eban, 19.7.48.
3. ISA 37/12, Linton - McNeil conversation, 30.12.48.
4. FO 371/68670, E11511, FO Minute, 2.9.48; Beeley represented the first school, Beith and McNeil the other, interview with Beith.
5. Pattison, 'The delayed British recognition of Israel', MEJ Vol.37 No.3 (Summer 1983), p.413.

It is difficult to define Bevin's attitude at the time (May-October 1948). He initiated the opening of a British Consulate in the Jewish part of Jerusalem, in October 1948.[1] This was done in spite of Ben-Gurion's demand that a formal application be submitted to the Israeli government. An act which, after it had been done, implied recognition.[2] On the other hand, it seems that the Foreign Secretary had decided to use the recognition as a political card against Israel. In September 1948, Bevin decided to oppose the admission of Israel to the United Nations as long as Bernadotte's proposals were under discussion.[3] After the failure of Bernadotte, he conditioned Israel's acceptance to the UN on the success of the PCC.[4] The Americans did not link the peace efforts with the question of Israel's admission to the UN.[5]

Bevin's main reason, however, for opposing Israel's admission was probably his desire to ensure a simultaneous Israeli and Transjordanian membership. To that end, he was even prepared to use the right of Veto in the Security Council.[6]

On this matter and generally on the desired attitude towards Israel, Bevin was supported by the Foreign Office officialdom. He had certainly enjoyed the backing of Clement Attlee on this issue and the sympathy of most of the ministers. However, some influential figures

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1. FO 371/68699, E13351, O. Sargent to Paris, 8.12.48.
2. ISA 64/15, Linton to Sharret, 3.10.48; Eytan to D. Yosef, 3.10.48; ISA 2412/26, IFO Minute, 10.10.48.
3. FO 371/68670, E11952, Bevin to Washington, 12.9.48; Eban, Autobiography, p.135.
4. FO 371/68693, E70, Paris to FO, 16.12.48.
5. Israel was admitted in May 1949, Eban, Autobiography, p.143.
6. FO 371/68693, E15384, FO Minute, Wright, 26.11.48; E1883, Beirut to FO, 9.9.48.

in the Cabinet did not share the Foreign Secretary's attitude. One of them was Aneurin Bevan. He emerged as the main spokesman against the 'Bevin's Middle East policy'. Bevan advocated a pro-Israeli policy from the first day of Israel's existence. Namely, he suggested relying on the friendship and allegiance of Isreael.[1]

The need to find a formula that would enable a concerted Anglo-American effort in the Middle East in general and in ex-Mandatory Palestine in particular played an important role in influencing the Foreign Secretary's thinking about Israel. Furthermore, the failure of the Bernadotte mission convinced Bevin that an alternative Israeli-Transjordan agreement should be found. This could only be done by co-ordinating British policy with the American one, and by finding ways of communicating with the Israelis.[2] Thus, one could venture and point out the months of November-December 1948, as the time in which Bevin had finally made up his mind that it was now necessary for Britain 'to show that our policy was not one sided'.[3]

The practical result of this change could be traced already in November 1948 when contacts between the two countries became even more intensive and an informal British delegation visited Israel.[4] The British Consul in Haifa began at that time to attend formal events as an official guest of the Israeli government.[5] The gestures toward Israel had paid off, when the US government decided to grant a de jure recognition to Transjordan in the end of 1948.[6]

The change in Bevin's mood was not complete. Throughout 1948 both Bevin and Attlee would still display considerable animosity towards

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1. CAB 128/15, CM3(49), 17.1.49.
2. FO 371/68699, E13351, FO to UN NY, 8.12.48.
3. FO 371/68699, E15782, O. Sargent to Paris, 8.12.48.
4. FO 371/68699, E14143, O'Leary to FO, 1.11.48.
5. FO 371/68699, E14669, Haifa to FO, 3.11.48.
6. FRUS 48, Douglas to ASoS, 10.12.48, p.1659.

American Jewry and the Israeli lobby in Washington, whom they saw as a major obstacle to Anglo-American understanding on Palestine.[1]

The Israelis attributed the continued detention of Jewish refugees in Cyprus to Bevin's 'malice'.[2] The British authorities in Palestine had detained in the island of Cyprus during the last years of the Mandate those immigrants who attempted to enter Palestine. After the establishment of the state of Israel, about 11,000 refugees still remained in the camps. This was done despite the permission granted by the Israeli government to these refugees to immigrate to Israel.[3] The continued detention was carried out by the British by invoking the truce resolution in Palestine and the Mediator authority to prevent the entrance of trained men of military age into Palestine. The crux of the matter was that only the mediator had the right to decide on this issue. The latter hesitated to take any definite decision on this affair.[4]

The British refusal to release the men in Cyprus was a main stumbling block in the Anglo-Israeli rapprochement. Apart from attributing the decision to Bevin, the Israelis believed it was done as a political bargaining card.[5] Attlee's biographer attributes the decision to Bevin as well and claimed that the premier felt uneasy about this decision.[6]

However, it seems that the decision was taken by the Foreign Office officials and was done in order not to harm Anglo-Arab

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1. K. Harris, Attlee (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), pp.181-2; FO800/457, conversation Gallad-Bey and Bevin, 26.5.48; CAB 128/15, CM(3), ibid.
2. ISA 2412/26, Weizmann to Truman, 9.1.49.
3. Israeli Documents, doc.417, Eban to the SC, 4.8.48; doc.242, Eban to SC, 28.6.48.
4. Ibid.
5. Israeli Documents, vol.3, doc.51, Rosen to Sharret, 25.1.49.
6. Harris, Attlee, p.395.

relations. According to American documents already in May 1948, Bevin contemplated the gradual release of the Cyprus refugees.[1] However, in November that year the Eastern Department warned him that a wholesale release of the refugees would have a grave effect on Anglo-Arab relations.[2] The Department was convinced by Troutbeck's assessment that the release of the Cyprus internees would tip the balance against the Arabs.[3] Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary was still in favour of the release.[4] In a luncheon he gave to senior Foreign Office and Army officers and officials he declared his intention to release them.[5] It was eventually decided to leave the matter to the Acting Mediator, but in fact, the Office was generally in favour of keeping the refugees.[6]

Another incident which had cast a shadow over Anglo-Israeli relations was the abduction of five British citizens in Israel by the Irgun and the trial of two of them by the Israeli court. When those two were acquitted the whole affair was over.[7]

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1. FRUS 48, Douglas (conversation with Bevin) to SoS, 10.5.48.
2. FO 371/68699, E15193, Beith to Burrows, 19.11.48.
3. FO 371/75330, E1082, BMEO to FO, 22.1.49.
4. FO 371/68699, E15782, O. Sargent to Paris, 8.12.48.
5. FRUS 48, Douglas to SoS, reporting the meeting in December 1948, p.1684.
6. FO 371/68699, E1593, Beith to Burrows, 19.11.48.
7. Israeli Documents, vol.1, doc.331, Goldmann to Sharret, 15.7.48; FO 371/68656, 68657, 68658.

5. On the brink of an Anglo-Israeli war (December 1948-January 1949).

In November 1948, the Security Council tried to stop the Israeli advance in southern and northern Palestine by threatening it with the imposition of sanctions. However, the Israelis were not deterred and in December that year launched yet another attack on the Egyptian forces in the Negev, Gaza strip and even penetrated into the Sinai peninsula.[1] The Israelis declared that they were free to act against the Egyptians, since the latter had rejected the Security Council's call for armistice negotiations.[2] The main aim of the operation was the evacuation of the Egyptian contingent in the Negev and its liquidation. They entered Sinai for that purpose as well.[3]

After the Israelis had launched their attack, the British succeeded in moving a resolution in the Security Council calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of all forces back to the positions they had occupied before October 1948. The Americans and the Russians abstained on this vote. The State Department saw no point in introducing a new resolution which repeated the provisions entailed in the previous ones.[4] Thus, owing to the American reluctance to be associated with any measures unfavourable to Israel, the Security Council was unable to execute a former decision to impose sanctions on Israel (November 1948 resolution). Bevin was in particular annoyed with this American stand, since at the same time the Americans supported Israel's application to the United Nations.[5] The Americans explained they were disinclined to jeopardize their newly acquired position in the PCC.

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1. CAB 129/31, Part I, CP(49)10, 15.1.49, Historical Memo; for events preceding this attack see chapter 1. The Israelis had also launched a further attack on Southern Lebanon, reaching the Litani river.
2. Toldot, p.345.
3. Toldot, pp.345-47.
4. Bullock, Bevin, p.649.
5. FRUS 48, ASoS to US/UN (Paris), 26.12.48, p.1691.

They were further worried by their representative in Tel-Aviv's warning that they would be regarded in one line with Great Britain in Israeli eyes.[1]

On December 29, the British government were informed by the Egyptians that the Israelis had crossed Egyptian territory. The Foreign Office regarded these reports as unreliable and British intelligence could not establish whether or not this information was correct.[2] Moreover, the Israelis did not allow the UN observers to visit the front.[3]

The Americans were notified that the British Cabinet took a decision that in case Israeli forces would be found on Egyptian territory, the United Kingdom would invoke the Anglo-Egyptian treaty and would work towards rescinding the Security Council arms embargo.[4] Such an Israeli invasion was regarded by the Foreign Office as endangering the stability of the Middle East.[5] The Americans replied that they would have to lift the Embargo as well and advised the Foreign Office to confirm the information about the Israeli penetration.[6]

Notwithstanding this unenthusiastic American response, the State Department, which was as worried as the British Office, agreed to pass a warning to the Israelis. The warning was conveyed through James McDonald in Tel-Aviv. The British threatened to come to the Egyptian's assistance if they were asked to.[7] In fact, the Americans issued a strong warning of their own threatening the Israelis that they would reconsider their UN application and review Israeli-US relations

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1. FRUS 49, McDonald to SoS, 5.1.49, p.614.
2. FO 371/75045, E167, FO Minute, Burrows, January 1949.
3. CAB128/15, Cab 3(49), 17.1.49.
4. FO 371/75045, E167, Ibid.
5. CAB 128/15, Ibid.
6. FRUS 48, Lovett - Sir O. Franks conversation, 30.12.48., pp.1701-02.
7. ISA 36/12, McDonald's note, 31.12.48.

altogether.[1]

The Israeli Foreign Minister assured the Americans, on January 3, that no Israeli troops remained on Egyptian soil.[2] However, on the same day, the British intelligence had confirmed the existence of Israeli forces well inside Egyptian territory (20 miles).[3] Thus, the Defence Committee decided to put into effect the Cabinet decision about meeting Britain's obligations under its treaty with Egypt.[4] In practice, it was decided to reinforce the British contingent in Aqaba. An action which led to another centre of tension, as was mentioned in the previous chapter.[5] Furthermore, two battalions were sent from East Africa to the Canal Zone, and some Naval units were put on the alert, as well.[6]

The Middle East Land Forces HQ prepared a plan for army operations in the Sinai in support of the Egyptian army, codenamed 'CLATTER'.[7] In fact, the Israelis anticipated some British action of this kind. In such a case, Ben Gurion ordered his forces to withdraw immediately back into Israel.[8] The Israeli military spokesman claimed that Israel had learned about British manoeuvres in Tripolitania under conditions designed to reproduce those which would be obtained in landing operations in Israel.[9]

What seems to be quite evident was that some Foreign Office officials had thought in opportunistic terms as had been suggested by some

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1. FRUS 48, ASoS to McDonald, 31.12.48, p.1690.
2. ISA 36/12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to USG, 3.1.49.
3. FO 371/75045, E367, Brief for SoS, for Defence Committee, 13.1.49.
4. FO 371/75045, E733, FO to UN NY, 12.1.49.
5. CAB 21/1922, FO to Amman, 30.12.48.
6. CAB 21/1922, DO(49)I, 3.1.49.
7. FO 371/75334, E360, MELF to WO, 14.1.49.
8. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 30.12.48.
9. ISA 38/12, IDF spokesman, 4.1.49.

writers.[1] Namely, the Foreign Office wanted to seize the opportunity of the Israeli invasion and to invoke the 'long disputed Anglo-Egyptian treaty'.[2] Harold Wilson argues that: 'To curb Israeli successes, Bevin tried to invoke the Anglo-Egyptian treaty'.[3] Again, we have a case where Foreign Office's tendencies and thinking are attributed, quite wrongly, to Ernest Bevin. The Israeli Foreign Office, at the time, shared this assumption. The Office issued a statement to that effect. In response, the British Consul in Haifa conveyed to Tel-Aviv the message that Britain had no wish to go to war with Israel.[4]

Sir Ronald Campbell was one of these Foreign Office personalities who had probably hoped to capitalize on the developments in the Negev. He argued, in a letter to Bevin, that furnishing arms to the Egyptians would not be enough to compel the Israelis to withdraw back to the October lines. He suggested that Britain would take action on their own initiative to clear the Beersheba - Hebron road. The Ambassador in Cairo assessed that although the Americans would resent the British action, they would realise in the end of the day that the road would be an essential strategical asset in the next World War.[5]

The head of the British Middle East Office had also recommended the involvement of 'our forces in the fighting'.[6] Otherwise, Britain and Egypt would have to live with a peace imposed by Israel.[7]

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1. Kimchi, Both Sides, p.261; Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.858; Wilson, Chariots, 232; Zasloff, Great Britain, p.164; Ben Gurion, Mechudeshet, p.336 and Rothenberg, The anatomy of the Israeli Army, p.56.
2. Kimchi, op.cit. p.261.
3. Wilson, op.cit. p.232 and accepted by Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, p.858.
4. ISA 36/12, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to USG, 3.1.49; Weizmann to Truman, 9.1.49.
5. FO 816/142, Campbell to Kirkbride, 31.12.48.
6. FO 141/1246, 1/186, BMEO to FO, 30.12.48; FO 816/142, Cairo to Amman, 31.12.48.
7. Ibid.

Troutbeck asserted that if Britain acted swiftly and with no hesitation American and home criticism would be avoided.[1] The minister in Lebanon had also requested direct British intervention to stop the Israeli advance in Lebanon.[2] The head of the Eastern Department did not rule out the possibility of such an intervention, if the Israelis were consistent in their refusal to withdraw from the Sinai.[3]

Troutbeck's and Campbell's inclination towards opportunism was accentuated by their admission that, they did not believe the Israelis were aiming at capturing any part of the Sinai.[4] Thus, although Egypt proper was not in danger, they still demanded the invoking of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty. The Permanent under-Secretary of State rejected their request for active participation, precisely on the ground that Israel was not aiming at Egyptian territory.[5] Indeed, according to the formal version of the Israeli army, the operation in the Gaza area and Sinai was a decoy action.[6] The real objective was capturing the whole of the Negev.[7] In the final analysis it seems that given the warning conveyed to Israel, the Foreign Office in general and Bevin in particular had no wish to intervene in any manner in the fighting, as long as the Israelis were not advancing towards the Suez Canal.

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1. FO 816/142, BMEO to Amman, 31.12.48.
2. FO 816/142, Beirut to Amman, 2.1.49.
3. FO 371/75334, E454, Campbell to FO, 10.1.49; FO Minute, January 1949, Burrows to Beith.
4. FO 371/75334, E156, Troutbeck to Bevin, 4.1.49.
5. FO 371/75336, E1273, FO Minute, O. Sargent, 17.1.49.
6. Toldot, pp.349-55.
7. Ben Gurion, Hemchudeshet, p.335; War Diary, editorial note, p.815.

According to Ben Gurion and his biographer the British warning and activities were the main reason for the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai.[1] Ben Gurion insisted on emphasizing that it was the British pressure and not the American one that had persuaded him to order the reluctant Yigal Allon to return to Israeli territory.[2] The Israeli premier claimed that the US warning was dictated by the British Foreign Office.[3] As Lord Bullock rightly assumes it was more convenient for Ben Gurion to appear as giving in to British military pressure than American verbal threat.[4] In fact, the Americans were pressured by General Riley to intervene and regardless of the British note, would have probably warned Israel as they did against the 'ill advised action' that 'placed in jeopardy the peace in the Middle East'.[5] Thus it was probably the joint Anglo-American pressure which brought about the Israeli withdrawal.[6]

The most ironical development of this Anglo-Israeli conflict was that the only direct clash between British and Israeli forces occurred after the end of hostilities in that front and after the decision of

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1. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 31.12.48, pp.914-5 and Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion, pp.859-60.
2. Ben Gurion, War Diary, Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Bullock, Bevin, p.650.
5. FRUS 48, Rusk to ASoS, 24.12.48, 1689; the note from Britain was sent on the 31st of December.
6. Zasloff, Great Britain, p.165.

both Egypt and Israel to enter armistice negotiations. On January 7, the Israelis shot down five RAF aircraft on a reconnaissance flight. The flight was one of few intended to find out whether or not the Israelis had left Egyptian territory. It should be remembered that UN observers were still not allowed into the area a day after the ceasefire agreement between Egypt and Israel was signed.[1]

In hindsight, it seems difficult to understand why the British deemed it necessary to ask for an additional reconnaissance flight when the fighting had ceased. More so, since the Egyptians not only did not request this flight, but were even strongly opposed to it. The Egyptians realised that joint flights, or British flights on behalf of the Egyptians, could have implied Egyptian acknowledgement of the validity of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty; that is, if the request for the flights had come from the Egyptians.[2] Moreover, it is notable that in Egypt a new premier came to power and he was probably reluctant to take any step implying recognition of the treaty's validity.[3] Finally, the Egyptians did not want to admit that Israeli forces had entered Egyptian territory. It should be mentioned that the Egyptian position on this issue was not consistent and according to American sources they had asked at one point in the fighting (29.12.48) to use British Spitfires, with Egyptian pilots, in order to stop the Israeli advance.[4]

The explanation for this additional flight, after the cessation of hostilities, lies in the Ministry of Defence's determination to learn

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1. FO 371/75401, E1967, FO Minute, 3.2.49; CAB 128/15, Cab 3(49), 17.1.49.
2. FO 371/75380, E362, MED ME to Air Ministry, 2.1.49; Monroe, Mr. Bevin, p.44; CAB 128/15, Ibid.
3. In Rhodes the Israelis were told by the Egyptians that the flight was done contrary to their wishes, Israeli Documents, vol.3, doc.99, meeting of the delegations, 5.2.49
4. FRUS 48, ASoS to US UN Paris (reporting a telegram from UK Embassy in Cairo to FO, p.1689.

more about Israeli intentions. Clement Attlee was under strong pressure from the Ministry of Defence to prepare the British forces in the Middle East to the possibility of war with Israel.[1] The Ministry of Defence, the Eastern Department and the CoS deemed it necessary to find out the strength and structure of the Israeli Air Force and the location of the Israeli airfields so that operation 'CLATTER' would be successful.[2] (The operation designed for British action against Israel).

Clement Attlee felt uneasy about the Foreign Office's attempt to conceal from the Cabinet and the House of Commons the true nature of the flights. Not only because of their link with operation 'CLATTER', but also since it was decided to send armed aircraft over Israeli territory to protect the reconnaissance flights.[3] He suggested to Bevin to call them training flights and was annoyed when the Foreign Secretary referred to them as reconnaissance flights.[4] The need to protect those flights arose from a previous incident in which an RAF Mosquito was shot down by the Israelis.[5]

Bevin, on the whole, did not object to the Ministry of Defence's tactics. He regarded the Israeli invasion as part of their strategy to negotiate with Transjordan while attacking Egypt and vice versa.[6] Thus, those writers who claimed that Bevin did not have personal responsibility for the incident were correct in pointing out that once again one could not hold Bevin responsible for the ill-advised decisions of the British government.[7] On the other hand, it should be

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1. FO 371/75399, E154, Attlee to Bevin, 30.12.48.
2. FO 371/75399, E297, Alexander to Attlee, 1.1.49.
3. FO 371/75399, E154, FO Minute, Burrows, 31.12.48; E297, Alexander to Attlee, 1.1.49.
4. CAB 128/1, Cab3(49), 17.1.49.
5. CAB 21/1922, DO(49)1, 3.1.49.
6. FO 371/75334, E338, FO to Washington, 11.1.49 (see chapter 4 - this was a correct assumption).
7. Monroe, Mr. Bevin, p.44; Bullock, Bevin, p.650.

mentioned that he did not oppose the Minister of Defence or Attlee in their determination to carry out the flight. Moreover, the decision was not taken by the Air Officer Commanding the Canal Zone alone, he was carrying out orders from the Ministry of Defence.[1] It is notable that in the Defence Committee, Bevin opposed the continuation of the reconnaissance flights, fearing that Britain would be accused of violating the truce. Nevertheless, he agreed that political considerations would not override military operations.[2]

The captured British pilot admitted that his plane was shot down over 'Palestine'. The Cabinet was told it was difficult to refute or accept this point.[3] In fact, four out of the five planes were shot over Egyptian territory (Yigal Allon's forces had dragged the wrecks into Israeli territory).[4]

The British initial reaction was to put the Royal Navy on the highest alert, reinforce the RAF in the Middle East and advise British citizens in Israel to leave the country.[5] The American rebuke to these British actions led to a more moderate British reaction.[6]

By comparing American and British documents one reaches the conclusion that Bevin was not fully aware of the degree of American bitterness of the dissatisfaction with his policy. He was informed by the British ambassador in Washington that Truman stressed the need for peace in the area and that the President suggested not to exaggerate

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1. FO 371/75339, E154, FO Minute, 31.12.48; E297, Alexander to Attlee, 1.1.49.
2. Bevin to Attlee, 28.12.48 found by Lord Bullock in Bevin, p.650.
3. CAB 128/1, Cab 3(49), 17.1.49.
4. Ben Gurion, War Diary, 7.1.49, p.934; Toldot, p.362; E. Weizmann, Lecha Shamain, Lecha Aretz (Thou shall have the sky and the land), Tel Aviv, 1975, pp.69-73.
5. FRUS 49, McDonald to SoS, 9.1.49, p.633.
6. H. Sacher, Europe, interview with David Niles, 21.1.49 in p.527 reporting a conversation between O. Franks and Truman on 13.1.49.

the whole incident. He, Truman, was not prepared to make a sore point out of the Negev in Anglo-American relations: 'It was a small area and not worth mentioning'.[1] Nevertheless, the State Department suggested in another conversation that the Foreign Office would recognize the alteration in the situation of the Middle East as a result of the state of Israel. Robert Lovett told the British ambassador: 'It was clear as indeed had been proved by recent events that the state of Israel would be the most dynamic, efficient, vigorous government in the Near East in the future'.[2] Thus, concluded the Acting Secretary of State, it was important to keep it in the West. He described British policy hitherto as 'one of containing the Israelis even at the risk of permanently estranging them'.[3] A policy which was unrealistic in his view.[4]

What Bevin was not told about, was a particularly strong criticism of British and especially his own policy in Palestine. Sir O. Franks accepted Lovett's description of Bevin's highly emotional dramatic reaction to the Israeli moves which led to unconstructive acts like the RAF reconnaissance, the reinforcements in Aqaba and the naval alert. Lovett indicated that the American diplomatic approach had achieved more. The proof for this, according to him, was the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai.[5] As for Bevin's threat to end the Embargo, Lovett wrote to Douglas in London: 'In fact Bevin's heated admonition to this government to back up SC resolutions sounds queer in light of his simultaneous willingness to violate SC resolution 29.5.48 by renewing arm's supply'.[6]

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1. FO 371/75334, E615, Washington to FO, 13.1.49.
2. FO 371/75334, E614, Washington to FO, 13.1.49.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. FRUS 49, ibid., O. Franks-Lovett conversation, 13.1.49, pp.658-660.
6. FRUS 49, Lovett to Douglas, 13.1.49, p.660.

Two points should be mentioned in connection with these remarks. First, Attlee, Alexander and the Defence Committee as a whole, were as responsible as Bevin for the 'Dramatic reactions'. Secondly, Israeli withdrawal was the result of a joint Anglo-American pressure, and not solely owing to an American effort.

In any case, in the final analysis what was important was the impression that Bevin had derived from the American reaction. The Foreign Minister was in particular pleased by the American pressure on Israel.The Americans had exerted pressure on Israel not to submit a formal complaint against Britain in the UN. Bevin believed that the way was now open for a joint Anglo-American declaration of policy.[1] On the other hand, it is notable that Truman sent a letter to Weizmann in which the President gave renewed assurances concerning Israel's interests in the Negev.[2] Weizmann replied that he was grateful 'all the more so as the British Foreign Secretary and his associates have apparently not abandoned their design to deprive us of this large and important area'.[3] The American reaction had no doubt impressed the British Cabinet when it decided to abolish the measures it had taken in anticipation of Anglo-Israeli clashes. The Foreign Office explained it had been done in order not to prejudice the Israeli-Egyptian armistice negotiations.[4]

As for the Israelis and the Egyptians, the two sides came under strong American pressure and agreed to enter the Armistice negotiations.[5] Ben Gurion wrote in his diary that he agreed to withdraw the

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1. FO 371/75334, E615, FO to Washington, 17.1.49.
2. FRUS 49, ibid., ASoS to McDonald, 11.1.49, p.643; Eylat-Satterthwaite, 13.1.49, p.653.
3. ISA 2412/24, Weizmann to Truman, 9.1.49; Weizmann told the president that he had information of Bevin's further plan to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.
4. CAB 128/15, Cab 3(49), 17.1.49.
5. Ibid.

Israeli forces and enter into the negotiations since he was confident that an armistice agreement 'would disintegrate the Arab front and weaken British influence in the East...and to prevent Bevin's hatred to Israel have any influence in Washington'.[1]

The Foreign Office was pleased by the beginning of the armistice negotiations. In the main since it extricated Britain from a very embarrassing situation. We should remember that Anglo-Egyptian relations at the time were at a new low, and that at no point had the Egyptians asked for British assistance. Thus, any action against Israel would have first appeared to be a purely British initiative and seconly could have led to Egyptian accusations that Britain was trying to impose the treaty on them.[2]

6. The de-facto recognition.

The senior Israeli official dealing with British affairs in the Israeli Foreign Office, like some other writers, was convinced in hind-sight that were it not for the shooting incident, Britain would not have granted Israel a de facto recognition.[3]

However, it seems that the incident had only accelerated the decision making process and probably determined to some extent the timing of the recognition, since the two countries were moving, anyhow, towards normalization of the relationship. In fact, the months preceding the incident were in particular important in this context. Bevin was seriously discussing with the Foreign Office the possibility of recognizing Israel de jure, provided the military operations came to

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1. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 9.1.49; Bar Zohar.
2. FO 371/75334, E251, Washington to FO, 6.1.49.
3. Interview with Comay, 11.10.82; Zasloff, Great Britain, p.167; Eban, Autobiography, p.137.

a halt.[1] The Foreign Secretary wrote in a Cabinet memorandum that it would have been convenient to establish direct communication with Israel and recognize the Jewish state.[2]

This trend was not unique to the Foreign Office. In December 1948, the military (the CoS Committee) had informed the Foreign Office that in their view Israel possessed the strongest indigenous army force in the Middle East. The implication of this assessment was that Israel was vital for the defence of the area in time of war.[3] Immediately after the incident the CiC ME advocated the cultivation of friendly relations with Israel on strategical grounds. They argued that the Western allies would need Israel's co-operation in case the area fell under Russian occupation.[4]

On the other hand, persons like Sir Orme Sargent, the permanent under Secretary of State, were to say the least, not impressed by the incident and in some way reversed their views about the need to recognize Israel. He feared that Israel would play off the Arab states one against the other, unless the Arab World would be united.[5]

The main effect was on British public opinion. It came now out in favour of recognition.[6] Whereas the Times (7.1.49) justified the British behaviour in the Sinai, most papers criticized it. 'All sense of clarity and restraint in British policy appeared to have vanished into the clouds' declared the Economist (15.1.49). Leaders of the

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1. FO 371/68699, E15189, Bevin discussing the implication of de jure recognition on the privileges enjoyed by Britain druing the Mandate.
2. CAB 128/13, CM(48)78, December 1948.
3. FRUS 48, Conversation on Palestine, Bevin with army officers, in Douglas to SoS, 22.12.48, p.1683.
4. FO 371/75367, E999, BMEO (CiC opinion) to FO, 14.1.49.
5. FO 371/75368, E1373, FO Minute, 17.1.49.
6. Spectator: 'Whitehall, Washington and Palestine', 14.1.49, pp.88-90; New Statesman and Nation: 'British threat to peace'; Economist: storm in the desert', 15.1.49.

Liberal and Conservative parties demanded recognition.[1]

This pressure had its main effect on the Cabinet meeting or January 15, 1949. Bevin told that meeting that the Foreign Office had not opposed a Jewish state in the past and that by supporting the Bernadotte plan, Britain recognized the existence of such a state. However, he wanted to delay the recognition until the final definition of Israel's frontiers.[2] Bevin realised that this could take time and therefore suggested the establishment of a British consulate in Tel-Aviv in the meanwhile. A day later he found out that the Israelis refused this offer unless it would be accompanied by a de facto recognition.[3] A step which had probably pushed Bevin even further towards recognition without conditioning it on the definition of Israel's frontiers. It is notable that Bevin's suggestion was made against the advise of the Eastern Department. The Department claimed that it would seem to the Arabs that under American pressure the British were abandoning their impartial attitude.[4]

The Foreign Office hoped the Cabinet would delay its decision on recognition until after it had obtained the opinions of HMG representatives in the Arab World. However, the Cabinet was facing a crucial debate in the House of Commons on Palestine on January 26. Thus, it had decided in principle to grant a de facto recognition to Israel on January 24, and agreed to delay the formal announcement until after the debate. Thus, the decision was made before the office made up its mind. On the other hand, it enabled the Foreign Secretary to face the Opposition in the House by promising a recognition in a short while.[5]

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1. Observer, 15.1.49.
2. CAB 129//31, Part 1, CP(49)10, 15.1.49.
3. Sharret supported the British offer, in Ben Gurion, War Diary, 24.12.48, p.895.
4. Bevin had already suggested it in June 1948, FO/71/68666, E6090, Burrows, 16.6.48; SD867n.o1/12-3148, London to SD, 31.12.48.
5. FO 371/75368, E1259, FO Minute, 24.1.49.

Three main reasons were given for the decision to grant recognition and they were minuted by Bevin in a Cabinet paper from January 17. First, Bevin explained that the recognition was essential for the peace process: 'Nothing should be done at this stage that should prejudice the continuation of the Israeli-Transjordan and Israeli-Egyptian talks'.[1] Moreover, Britain hoped to exert more influence on the peace process by the recognition.[2]

Secondly, it was a way of solving the outstanding financial disputes between the ex-Mandatory government and the new state, or as it was put in the Foreign Office's language HMG was convinced of 'the importance of entering into direct relations with Israel in order to facilitate day to day transactions covering the area of Palestine occupied by the Jews'.[3] Finally, the Foreign Secretary regarded this move as a means of persuading the Arab governments that Israel was a fait accompli.[4]

The developments in Palestine were debated on January 26 in the House. The debate became an all out confrontation between Churchill and Bevin about whose policy in Palestine was more damaging to British interests.[5] Churchill demanded recognition on behalf of the Opposition. In the debate, the House was not told about a final decision to recognize Israel, but only about the intention of HMG to do so. The Foreign Secretary explained that the Cabinet would wait until the borders and status of the state would be defined.[6]

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1. CAB 128/13, CM3(49), 17.1.49.
2. Brief for SoS in FO 371/75369, E1510, 25.1.49.
3. CAB 128/13, Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Report by Bromley in British Embassy in Washinton to McLintock, in FRUS 49, 13.1.49, p.653. The debate, Hansard, vol.460, 26.1.49, col.933-35, 943-45.
6. Hansard, col.943-945.

The delay was caused, inter alia, owing to opposition in some government quarters to a decision that would antagonize the Muslims in India, Ceylon and Pakistan.[1] Other members of the government wished to co-ordinate the timing with New Zealand and Australia.[2] It was also hoped that the French would await the British declaration, but this was not achieved.[3]

The material for Bevin's speech was prepared by the Foreign Office.[4] Thus, the arguments for delaying recognition which were given in the House were partly the Office's ones. In fact, he believed it was a tactical mistake to delay the decision until after the debate: 'otherwise the impression might be that the government had changed their policy in response to Parliamentary pressure'.[5]

Bevin's main disappointment was his inability to present the decision to the House as part and parcel of a new Anglo-American understanding about the unity of purpose in the Middle East. Notwithstanding his disappointment, Bevin could still point out to the considerable improvement of American attitude towards Jordan in return for the shift of British attitude towards Israel.[6]

Even before the recognition of Israel, the Office was constantly on the alert to ensure that Transjordan and Israel would be treated equally in the international arena. Thus, Israel's admission to the UN, in the Foreign Office's view, depended on Transjordan's admission.[7]

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1. In fact, Ceylon had pleaded with Britain not to recognize Israel and the Indians had also refused to follow the British suit; CAB 128/15, CM3(49), 17.1.49; FRUS 49, Holms to SoS, report on Cabinet meeting, 24.1.49.
2. CAB 21/1687, 5.2.49; the Australians and the Canadians had favoured recognition since May 1948.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75369, E1510, Brief for the SoS, 25.1.49.
5. CAB 128/15, Cab 3(49), 17.1.49.
6. Hansard, col.943-45; see chapter 4, Bevin referred to the de jure recognition of Transjordan.
7. FO 371/68665, E6090, Wright to Bevin, 15.5.48.

Both states for that matter were regarded as the successors to the Mandatory Palestine Government.[1]

According to Lord Bullock the main reason for Bevin's decision to support recognition was the American support for Israel. After a firm American refusal to back Arab control over the Negev (the southern part), the Foreign Secretary was convinced that the American support was irreversible.[2] The Foreign Office asserted that the Americans would not be moved from their position since they were impressed by the successes of the Israeli army.[3]

Bevin had certainly wanted to maintain the Anglo-American alliance and for that reason alone would have followed the American example and line. However, as was mentioned hitherto, other pressures acted upon him, both external and internal. But, most of all, it seems, that his own pragmatism would have led him to recognition. However, he prefered to choose his own timing. This could be shown by pointing out to the fact that he did not change his attitude towards Israel's existence, that is notwithstanding his recognition of the inevitability of the Jewish state, he did not regard Israel in a positive manner. In his speech in the House, Bevin found very little to say in favour of Israel and on the contrary condemned it for the creation of the refugee problem.[4]

Israel was recognized by Britain on January 30, 1949. This gesture was preceded by the release of the Cyprus detainees. One tends to accept Monroe's assertion that there is no basis for Crossman's

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1. FO 371/68664, E6402, FO to UN NY, 19.5.48; Pattison, Israel, p.420.
2. Bullock, Bevin, p.651; FO 371/75337, E1392, Franks to Bevin, January 1949.
3. Bullock, op.cit.; FO 371/75334, E614, Washington to FO, 13.1.49.
4. Ibid.

allegation that the release was due to a deal struck between him and McNeil by which in return for the release, Crossman would not raise the matter of the shooting down incident in the House. As was mentioned earlier, Bevin contemplated the release long before the debate.[1] As it seems that Sacher tends to exaggerate when he claimed that owing to despair and pressure Britain had released the refugees.[2]

Throughout the first half of 1949, Bevin would continue to be ambiguous about Israel and to display a twofold attitude towards the Jewish State. His speeches in the House would still be anti-Israeli, but gradually as the second half of 1949 passes by, the Foreign Secretary would show a new face to the Israelis.[3] He would talk about a new era in the Anglo-Israeli relations and would tell Sir Knox Helm, the first British representative in Tel-Aviv, that he was sent to Israel 'to forget the past and handle the future'.[4]

As was mentioned earlier, notwithstanding the Foreign Office's request to consult its representatives in the Arab World before approving of the recognition, the Cabinet did not wait and took the decision before the Parliament debate. The Foreign Office had decided nevertheless to conduct this survey. It seems that the Office as an organization had to reach its own conclusions regardless of the directives which came from the government; after all, the usual case was the one in which the Office advised the government of the desired

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1. R. Crossman, in an interview with Monroe (19.10.58), Monroe Papers; and Monroe, Bevin, p.45.
2. Sacher, Europe, p.577.
3. ISA 37/12, IFO Minute, undated.
4. Helm's interview with Bullock, in Bullock, Bevin, p.653 fn.1.

foreign policy and not vice versa.

The initiative to carry out this survey came from the permanent under Secretary of State, Sir W. Strang, and was approved by Bevin.[1] The need for such a survey was explained by Bevin himself: 'The existence of Israel calls for some recasting of our whole Middle East policy'.[2]

There seemed to be a consensus amongst the various legations about the negative role Israel would play in the area's politics. The head of the BMEO had probably summarized everyone's view by predicting that Israel's control over the Negev would gravely impair the whole strategic build up of the United Kingdom in the area.[3] On the other hand, Troutbeck differentiated between his attitude towards Israel and the need to recognize it as a fait accompli. He agreed with London that without formal relations with Israel it was impossible for Britain to influence the Arab-Israeli conflict.[4]

Troutbeck saw very little hope for an Arab-Israeli peace owing to what he called the expansionist policy of Israel and the nature of its people.[5] Where Troutbeck differed from his colleagues was that he attributed Israel's aggressiveness to the Jewish character, in particular he referred to the Jews coming from behind the Iron Curtain as 'picked Communist[s]'.[6] Finally, Troutbeck doubted Israel's viability and predicted its collapse owing to drying of American funds. He advocated a policy of 'firmness' towards Israel and suggested persuading the Americans that the Arabs were more important than Israel.[7]

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1. FO 371/75064, E1742, FO Minute Roberts, 31.4.49.
2. FO 371/75064, E1742, Roberts conveying Bevin's words.
3. FO 371/75330, E5, Troutbeck to Burrows, 31.12.48.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. FO 371/75064, E4263, FO Minute Beith, 22.3.49.
7. Ibid.

A rather exceptional view, in those days, was held by Sir Hugh Dow in Jerusalem. He predicted that Israel would be a strong bulwark against Communism and believed that a firm Anglo-American policy could prevent Israel's expansionism. Moreover: 'HMG might eventually wielded greater influence in Israel than the USA without any abandonment of our primary aims', namely, support for the Arab World.[1] Dow was probably influenced by Abdullah's attitude. The King had personally conveyed to the Israelis his satisfaction with Britain's decision to recognize them.[2]

The representatives in Damascus and Beirut asserted that the Syrian and Lebanese governments were more frightened of the Israelis than of a Communist threat and Sir H. Mack in Baghdad called for 'an early limitation to Israel's frontiers' and the resumption of arm's supply under the treaties to Iraq and Egypt.[3] Israel was attributed a great deal of capability and influence not only by the diplomats in the Arab World but also by some other officials. A representative of the UN Department in the Office claimed the UN became a pro-Jewish organization and thereby an increasingly anti-British institution (this was even before Israel had been accepted to the organization).[4]

The CoS who would become in 1950-51 the most pro-Israeli element in the British policy-making organization had shared at the time the general attitude towards Israel. They maintained that good relations with Israel were possible only by enstranging the Arabs. The CoS asserted that during war time both Egypt and Israel would be preoccupied by the Western Allies, thus, Israeli co-operation was not

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1. FO 371/75064, E4263, FO Minute Beith, summarising the representatives' views, 22.3.49.
2. Israeli Documents, vol.3, doc.186, 1.2.49.
3. FO 371/75064, Ibid.
4. Ibid.

essential, although it would have been desirable.[1] The Foreign Office did not accept this last assumption. It seemed to the Eastern Department to be an expansive proposition and the Department believed that friendly governments could facilitate the re-entry of allied troops to the Middle East.[2]

In the final analysis the survey ended with the British diplomats in the Middle East conveying the view that Israel was an anti-British element. However, at home, the Eastern Department did not share this view. It is notable that while considering the desired attitude towards the Arab League in the beginning of 1948, the Foreign Office followed its representatives' advice; namely, to regard the League as an anti-British factor and unimportant politically.[3] It is possible that the Office concluded that the experts in the Arab world did not know enough about Israel. In any case the Eastern Department ruled out that a friendly Israel was preferable to HMG; with one qualification - the Foreign Office should not sacrifice vital Arab interests in the process of rapproachment towards Israel.[4]

As far as Israel's viability was concerned, the department, unlike the head of the BMEO, was convinced Israel would survive mainly since it would eventually become a progressive, pro-Western country. One official went as far as predicting that Israel would become an important pillar in British Middle East policy. However, the department was thinking about the future and did not ignore altogether the warnings made by the representatives in the Arab World. In the beginning of 1949 Israel was still 'A potential danger to our interests and must be

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1. FO 371/75064, E4691, FO Minute, 29.3.49.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/6838, (the entire file), FO 371/68385, E3929, FO Minute, 6.4.48.
4. FO 371/75064, E4961, Ibid.

treated accordingly. But the less friendly our relations with her, the greater (so long as she enjoys American support) is likely to be that danger'.[1]

The Office had appointed an ad hoc committee under the permanent under-secretary of state, Sir William Strang, to conclude the discussion. The Committee (PUSC) paid attention to two main problems facing Britain in dealing with Israel. The first was the Arab World's refusal to accept Israel and Britain's need to maintain friendly relations with both parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The second was Israel's neutrality. The Committee explained Arab hatred of Israel as a factor promoting Arab unity. The nationalists regarded Israel as an an act of imperialistic injustice and the ruling class conceived Israel as a threat to their existence. The PUSC believed HMG were in a better position than all the other powers. Although it was blamed for the creation of Israel, the Arab government turned towards Britain as the only Power likely to oppose Israel.[2]

As for Israel's neutrality, the PUSC concluded that 'it is too early to assess the probable orientation of the policy of Israel'.[3] But, the Foreign Office was confident that Israel's financial dependence on the Americans would ensure a pro-Western orientation.[4]

7. Obstacles on the way to normalization (January - July 1949).

The Jerusalem Post (19.5.49) had described the arrival of Sir Knox Helm in Israel as an historical event since it happened precisely ten years after the publication of the 1939 anti-Zionist White Paper. Indeed the circle was completed in many ways by May 1949. The Foreign

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1. FO 371/75061, E4961, FO Minute, Beith, 22.3.49.
2. FO 371/75067, E13989, PUSC Minute, 30.4.49.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Office was pleased with the results of the first Israeli elections and the Eastern Department's officials declared it was a victory for the peace and consolidation policy of MAPAI.[1]

By the midst of 1949, the suspicions of Israel's drifting to the Communist camp were gradually disappearing. By that time Canada and France granted de jure recognition to Israel, and an Anglo-Israeli trade agreement was concluded.[2]

The Foreign Office had hardly intervened in the Israeli-Arab armistice negotiations in Rhodes. This fact, however, did not placate Israel's apprehensions about an alleged dubious part played by the British embassies in the Arab World against those armistice agreements. Thus, when Britain suggested enlarging the scope of the Rhodes negotiations (as means of bringing Egypt and Transjordan closer) the Israeli Foreign Office concluded that it was a British attempt to hinder and obstruct the armistice process, if not even to allow it to fail.[3] The director-general of the Office wrote to Ben-Gurion that only Britain would benefit from the failure of the armistice negotiations.[4] Thus, we find many occasions during the armistice negotiations in which the Israelis stressed the importance of ensuring that Britain would not violate the agreements.[5]

The British were aware of these suspicions. Thus, when the Egyptians had suggested, during the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations, moving the British base from the Canal Zone to Gaza, the CoS warned that Israel would consider the presence of British troops there as a threat

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1. The results, MAPAI 35.7%, MAPAPM 14.7%; FO 371/75190, E2382, Jerusalem to FO, 14.2.49; FO Minute Thirkell, 2.3.49.
2. FO 371/75190, E6842, Helm's report, 16.5-26.5.49; E7722, Press Summary, no.2, May 1949.
3. Israeli Documents, vol.3, doc.66, Sharret to Eban, 30.1.49.
4. Israeli Documents, doc.37, Eytan to Ben Gurion, 30.1.49.
5. Israeli Documents, doc.157, 99, 100.

to her.[1] One should add that the CoS would have preferred the base to stay in the Canal Zone in any case, but nevertheless there seemed to be a sincere worry about Israel's reaction to such a possibility.

Thus, the process was not an easy one and although progress had been made in 1949, the first half of the year was rather marked for both sides' difficulties in overcoming past prejudices and suspicions. One of the main sources of friction was Britain's decision to resume arms supply to Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan. This was done in spite of American, Israeli and UN objections.[2] The Egyptians in particular pressed for the resumption of arms deliveries and HMG ambassador and CiC ME in Cairo had strongly supported this Egyptian demand. Like Bevin and the CoS in London, the British representatives in Egypt believed that the renewal of arms supplies would enable Egypt and Britain to reach an agreement about a treaty that would replace the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty.[3] Furthermore, the Iraqis were annoyed by the French supply to Husni Zaim's regime and the British found it difficult to resist Iraqi demands.[4]

The Americans and the Acting Mediator agreed only to a limited supply of arms, however it seems that Britain supplied arms before, and regardless of, American consent.[5] The Israeli Foreign Office had raised the matter in the Security Council and protested formally to the British government claiming that this move would lead to an arms race

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1. CAB 21/1976, CoS(49)146, 27.4.49.
2. CAB 21/1922, FO to NY, 7.3.49; FRUS 49, ASoS to Lausanne, 6.6.49, p.1091.
3. FO 141/1357, 289/4, Chapman-Andrews memo, 19.4.49; Campbell to Wright, 20.1.49; CAB 21/1922 DO(49)2, 10.1.49; CAB 21/1976, CoS(49)51, April 1949; CAB 21/1922, DO(49)4, 16.3.49.
4. CAB 21/1922, FO to NY, 7.3.49.
5. CAB 21/1922, DO(49)4, Alexander to Bevin, 16.3.49. Only after the Israeli-Syrian armistice was signed did Dr. Bunche allow the supply of arms.

in the area. The British replied that the weapons supplied would be used for internal purposes only.[1]

Another source of resentment was Britain's abstention in the vote about Israel's admission to the UN, in March 1949. It was no doubt influenced by Anglo-Israeli tension in the Gulf of Aqaba following the Israeli thrust southward. Sir Terence Shone, the British representative, declared that Britain was worried about Ben-Gurion's statements that the internationalization of Jerusalem should apply only to the Arab parts of the city. Another reason given by the British representative was Israel's policy towards the refugee problem.[2] As had been hitherto indicated it was rather on these two issues, the Jerusalem and the refugee problems, that a great deal of agreement existed between the two states, although Britain could not announce it openly. As American documents reveal the real motives for the British abstention were the American refusal to link Israel's admission to the UN to that of Transjordan.[3]

8. Turning point - A change of attitude (July 1949).

A change of attitude as different from a change of policy could be traced by pointing out to a positive line of thinking within the Foreign Office about Israel. That is, the Office was not only accepting Israel as a *fait accompli*, but had also considered it as a friendly country which shared Britain's interests in the Middle East. Two events in June - July 1949 could be marked as a turning point in Britain's attitude towards Israel. The first was Sir William Strang's visit to Israel and its effect on the Office's policy and the second

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1. ISA 72/30, Kenneth Younger - Eylat conversation, 11.4.50; CAB 21/1926, COS(49)90, 14.6.49.
2. UN SC.OR 4th year, nos. 17-8, 3.3.-4.3.49; resolution, 194(113); Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, p.302
3. *FRUS 49*, McClintock - Bromley conversation, 28.2.49, p.774.

one was Bevin's conversation with Dr. Eliash, the Israeli representative in London.

After concluding a tour of the Middle East in June 1949, which included Israel, the permanent under-secretary of state declared that intellectually a European was more at home in Israel than in any of the Arab countries.[1] Strang did not conceal his sympathy with Israel's achievements: 'It struck a sympathetic chord to see the Israelis walk as free men in the land of their own'.[2] This admiration was given with one qualification since this land was 'unjustly acquired'.[3]

Sir William still regarded Israel as an expansionist state which 'unless checked will spread from the Nile to the Euphrates in the often quoted words attributed to Ben-Gurion'.[4] This mixed sense of admiration and apprehension made Strang ridicule the Arab attempt to boycott Israel. He doubted the Arab countries' ability to overcome the intelligence, resources and tenacity of the Israelis. Nor did Strang anticipate the Israelis to be deserted by American Jewry.[5] The permanent under secretary of state suggested considering the possibility of British assistance to Israel to bring the latter's economic dynamism as a solution for British economic and political interests in the area; this was suggested in case of Arab failure to build up their national economies on a solid basis.[6] It is notable that Strang seemed to ignore the fact that Britain relied on the Arab natural resources more than on their ability to build up a solid economy.

In practise, Strang decided, after the visit, to endorse the recommendations of the Committee he chaired in April 1949: namely, he

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1. FO 371/75067, E8752, W. Strang tour to the ME, 4.7.49.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75067, E8752, W. Strang tour to the Middle East, 4.7.49.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

advocated that Britain would do its utmost to draw Israel into the orbit of the Western powers. He also adopted Sir Hugh Dow's proposal to exert pressure on the Americans to check Israel's expansionist tendencies.[1]

An improvement of the relationship to such an extent depended, of course, on Israel as well. Ben Gurion told Strang that he genuinely believed that the United Kingdom should have a special relationship with Israel; a relationship based on a similar cultural heritage and civilization. Ben Gurion spelled out what he meant in a conversation with Strang: 'Israel had a civilizing mission in the Middle East'.[2] Moreover, concluded the Israeli premier, the Anglo-Israeli relations should be based on the model of Britain's relations with Belgium, and not on the pattern of Anglo-Jordanian relations.[3]

The Israeli Foreign Minister was assigned to the mission of convincing the new British representative in Tel-Aviv, of Israel's allegiance to the West. Helm was told that Israel's neutrality was not that of Switzerland. That is, Israel would back the West if the choice would be forced upon it.[4] Fortunately for Israel, Helm understood Israel's inability to oppose openly the USSR and saw Israel's professed neutrality as a means of facilitating Jewish immigration from the Eastern Block.[5]

However, the most striking surprise for the Israelis was Bevin's change of heart. The Foreign Secretary decided to inform the Israelis about his new attitude, even before the news was delivered to the Foreign Office. In fact, it seems that Bevin deemed it necessary to

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. ISA 37/8, W. Strang - Ben Gurion meeting, 1.6.49.
4. FO 371/75281, E8696, Tel Aviv to FO, 16.7.49.
5. FO 371/75281, E8696, Helm to Burrows, July 1949.

anticipate the Foreign Office's Middle East conference by formulating his own ideas about the future of Anglo-Israeli relations.[1] A few days before this conference was convened, Bevin had invited the Israeli minister in London for an informal conversation.

Bevin began the conversation by stating that hitherto his difficulty in dealing with the Israelis was the lack of knowledge of what Israel's policy was. He complained that 'No one (in the Foreign Office) spoke with him about such things (Anglo-Israeli relations) and he did not want to be the questioner, in the view of the past'.[2] The Foreign Secretary admitted he had failed in the past with regard to Palestine, however he asserted that it was better that things had happened the way they did. That is, Bevin appreciated the Israeli fait accompli tactics: 'Had you gone on talking of a solution it might have taken generations to get what you did and who knows whether you would have got it'.[3]

Bevin proposed to serve as a mediator if both sides wished it. He accepted the principle of resettlement in solving the refugee problem and surprised his listener by rejecting the idea of repatriation. Thus there is little wonder that Eliash ended his despatch to Tel-Aviv with the conclusion that Mr. Bevin was not after all a 'sworn enemy of Israel'.[4] Dr. Eliash was impressed by Bevin's desire to add to his personal historical portrait the features of a man who had finally contributed to the establishment of the state of Israel.[5]

Bevin did not wish his new ideas to become public knowledge so that it would not harm Anglo-Arab relations. However the story was

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1. FO 371/75072, Middle East conference, July 1949.
2. ISA 2414/16, Eliash - Bevin, 19.7.49.
3. ISA 36/14, Eliash - Bevin, 19.7.49.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

leaked to the press by the Israelis and he could not deny it, when asked by the Foreign Office.[1] Bevin did not take notes of the conversation and when he was asked about it two months later all he could recall was the 'pleasant mood of the conversation'. The Israelis however wanted confirmation of this change of attitude and inspite of the inclination of the head of the Eastern Department to deny this shift in policy, Michael Wright ruled in favour of a telegram to the Israelis confirming that indeed things had changed in London.[2]

Helm was thus authorized to reiterate Bevin's main points. The most important of which were that HMG considered Israel as a permanent factor in the Middle East. However, Helm warned the Israelis that HMG's attitude depended on Israel's policy towards its neighbours.[3] The British minister stated that Britain's prime interest was 'the survival of Western civilization to which Israel professes to belong'.[4] HMG 'could not believe that Israel still maintained its neutrality'.[5] Helm handed over an aide mémoire to the Israeli government which expressed HMG's hope 'to take Israel more to their confidence than they did in the past'.[6] Bevin indicated in a memorandum to the Cabinet about his change of attitude. He suggested that if HMG were to facilitate an Arab-Israeli settlement it would be possible to grant a de jure recognition to Israel.[7] This was also the guideline given to the Middle East conference.

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1. The Israelis in London leaked it to the Manchester Guardian (1.9.49) which reported that the conversation was the culmination point of Anglo-Israeli reconciliation and the Foreign Office suspected that the Israeli delegation in Lausanne leaked the story to Le Figaro (2.9.49). In FO 371/75207, E11807, Helm to Bevin, 29.9.49.
2. FO 371/75281, E10891, Burrows to Paris, 19.9.49.
3. FO 371/75207, E11807, Helm to Bevin, 23.9.49; ISA 36/12, Helm to Sharret, 22.9.49.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. CAB 129/19CP(49), 25.8.49; Bevin's memo was accepted without debate, Bullock, Bevin, p.714.

Bevin's views had 'caused a sensation in the (Israeli Foreign) Office and had influenced our thinking'.[1] Consequently, the Israelis did not object to the inclusion of Britain in the Economic Survey Mission.[2] Whereas the director general of the Office and the Minister were convinced that there was a genuine British effort to include Israel in their sphere of influence, Shiloah, on the other hand suspected that there was no change in the Foreign Office and Bevin's attitude.[3] The latter based his assumption on information received from the Middle East conference in London where HMG's representatives expressed anti-Israeli sentiments.[4]

Finally on this point, it might be worthy to note that the Foreign Secretary's pragmatism was the main feature in his policy towards Zionism and Israel. There seems to be thus little basis to Mr. Sacher's assertion that 'Mr. Bevin was psychologically incapable of neutrality in regard to Palestine', pointing to Bevin's supposed anti-semitism.[5] Bevin had certainly held a grudge against American Jews and did not always avoid making some remarks about it. In the Foreign Office's Middle East conference he explained that Britain should be careful and not be involved actively in the Palestine area which was 'an area in which international Jewry disposed of such influence' that would render any British involvement impossible.[6] But this was an exceptional remark. In general, Bevin was guided by pragmatic motives in his policy towards Israel.

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1. ISA 36/14, IFO Memo, September 1949.
2. Ibid.
3. Eytan to Sharret in ISA 2414/26, 26.8.49; Sharret to Sasson, 26.9.49.
4. ISA 38/11, Shiloah to Sharret, 7.8.49, Kidron to Shiloah, 17.8.49.
5. H. Sacher, A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p.76.
6. FO 371/75072, E9043, ME Conference, 21.7.49, summary of conference.

9. Towards a de jure recognition (April 1950).

Anglo-Israeli relations had improved considerably by the end of 1949 from the low point they had reached with the shooting down incident in January 1949. In March 1950 the two sides reached an agreement about the liquidation of financial questions arising out of the surrender of the Palastine Mandate.[1] This was accompanied by an agreement on Sterling release to Israel which satisfied the latter by its generous terms.[2]

In April 1950, HMG decided to grant a de jure recognition to Israel without recognizing Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem (only its de facto authority there).[3] The recognition was given simultaneously with British de jure recognition of the union of the two banks of the river Jordan.[4]

The only objection came from Cairo and Baghdad. In Cairo, Sir Ronald Campbell suggested to wait until Israel and Egypt would reach a peace settlement. He saw the British act as stiffening the Israeli position. Campbell felt that the Wafd Government was ready to negotiate with Israel, if Britain would serve as mediator, aiming at obtaining some territorial concessions from Israel in the southern Negev.[5] It is doubtful whether the Egyptians in the heat of their conflict with Britain would have asked the latter to have served as brokers. Sir John Troutbeck suggested that the recognition should be made conditional on an Israeli expression of willingness to negotiate with the Arab countries collectively and on a basis of compensation to the refugees and territorial adjustments.[6]

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1. FO 371/82506, E1015/9, Annual report Israel, 1949.
2. FO 371/82507, E1013/8, monthly report Israel - March 1949; ISA 38/5 19.5.49 (IFO Memo).
3. ISA 36/12, Helm to Sharret, 27.4.40.
4. FO 371/82198, E10111/3, FO Minute Sherringham, 13.4.50.
5. FO 371/82198, E10111/3, Cairo to FO, 12.4.50; Interview with Sir Ronald Campbell.
6. FO 371/82198, E10111/7 FO Minute, 20.4.50.

In Baghdad, Sir Henry Mack warned against an angry Iraqi reaction.[1] This despatch had caused considerable resentment in London. The Eastern Department officials had already been annoyed by the Iraqi policy in the Arab League where it was felt that Iraq could have done more to assist the Jordanians on the issue of Arab Palestine. The head of the Department expressed his hope that 'the Iraqi rulers would have the sense to accept it (the recognition) and to restrain any irresponsible agitation on the part of the population'. [2] Furlonge made it clear it was a turning point in British policy towards the Arabs '...in the future we must, if we are to re-establish our influence in the Middle East, go ahead on whatever course seems good to us without attempting to appease Arab opinion. After consultation in the Department we all agreed that this is the right line to adopt'.[3] In any case the Foreign Office had no reservations about HMG's decision and was encouraged by Kirkbride's blessing to the move which he saw as contributing to the consolidation of Abdullah's rule in the West Bank.[4] The Foreign Office was reluctant to stipulate any conditions to the recognition. The shift in British policy by the middle of 1950 became thus more evident.

10. Israel and the British Military authorities.

The main manifestation of normal relations between an outside power and a local Middle Eastern country was, and probably still is, the supply of arms and equipment from the Power to the local government. In August 1949, the head of the Eastern Department ruled that there was no prohibition against making supplies available to

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/82198, E10111/5, Amman to FO, 15.4.50.
3. FO 371/82198, E10111/4, FO Minute, Sherringham, 14.4.50.

Israel, provided Israel were not given preference over the other Middle Eastern countries. Burrows warned, however, that there was a danger of valuable information leaking to the Russians and asked that this consideration would be taken into account.[1]

The CoS, although worried that the supply of arms to Israel would alienate the Arabs, were even more concerned that Israel might turn to the Russians for weapons. Thus they came up with a compromise: Britain would recommend to the Americans that they supply Israel and the British would supply the Arabs. The CoS predicted that this division of labour would not last long anyway, since the objective of both powers was to create a Middle East defence pact which would include both Israel and the Arab countries.[2] The CoS argued that even if Israel were not an ally it was a well disposed neutral country. Michael Wright and Sir William Strang accepted this view. However, they opposed the division between American and British supply since it would cause problems in standardization of weapons and thus suggested that Britain would supply Israel as well.[3] Therefore, it was decided in January 1950 to supply non-service types of weapons to Israel.[4]

The Israelis requested Britain in the end of 1949 to allow their officers to be trained in England. The British government had refused to grant its permission. It explained that this was done since Ben Gurion announced his intention to send Israeli officers both to the Eastern and Western blocks for training. In a conversation with SD officials the British embassy admitted that it was mainly due to the fact 'that bad blood existed between the British army and the Israelis'.[5]

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1. FO 371/75243, E10041, FO Minute, Burrows, 10.8.49.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/75243, E10918, FO Minute, 20.1.50.
5. FRUS 49, Hare - Greenhill, 6.12.49, pp.1523-4. The USG in contrast were prepared to accept both Arab and Israeli officers. In July 1951 the first two Israeli pilots were trained in Britain; ISA 37/10, 1.1.51.

These allegedly bad feelings between Israel and the British army disappeared as 1950 went by. Israel was not regarded anymore as a potential communist country, at least not by most of the officials apart from Glubb in Jordan who still suspected Israel to be one.[1] Moreover, persons like Wright, the superintending under secretary of state, desist regarding Israel as an expansionist state. Wright, nevertheless, still feared what he called 'underground forces' which would like to see Israel expand'.[2] These forces, he predicted would be strengthened by the flow of immigrants that would result in deterioration of the economic situation.[3]

Wright supported the CoS desire in July 1950 to supply arms to Israel and equip its army on the same lines as the Western armies in order to keep it friendly.[4] However, the defence committee was still reluctant to go that far in its relations with Israel. This caused a temporary setback in the two countries' relations, in particular since it coincided with fresh supplies of British arms to the Egyptians.[5] The CoS had concurred with the Foreign Office that the timing of the decision to supply arms to Israel was an important issue. Choosing the wrong timing, explained a Foreign Office official, might lead to Britain sacrificing its 'influence with the Arabs and this might even be stabbing in the back of Abdullah'.[6]

This problem of reconciling the desire to supply arms to Israel on the one hand, and the fear of the harm it might cause to Anglo-Arab relations on the other, preoccupied the Office in the weeks preceding the Tripartite Declaration. Moreover, it became evident in those days

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1. FO 371/81904, E1018/5, Glubb memo, 20.4.50.
2. FO 371/81908, E1023/26, London conference, Bipartite (official) meeting, 1.5.-3.5.50.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/82507, ER1013/9, Monthly report April 1950.
6. FO 371/81908, E1023/26, Ibid.

that it would be almost impossible to set up a regional organization for defence that would include both Israel and Arab countries. At the time, the Americans displayed a more optimistic mood with regard to that possibility. Only when the attempt reached its practical stage in the summer of 1951, would the Americans find out that the British scepticism was justified.[1] Incidentally, the Israelis saw the Tripartite Declaration as an indication of British recognition of the need to include Israel in a regional arrangement.[2]

There is little doubt that the Israeli declaration of support for the UN action in Korea had allayed any remaining doubts about Israel's allegiance to the West. Israel's reaction was compared to that of Egypt, which preferred to remain neutral.[3]

The Israelis, immediately after their declaration, renewed their request for arms supply from the United Kingdom.[4] The Foreign Office was willing to comply with this request in the long run, but preferred to consult the Americans first. The British offered the State Department a joint Anglo-French-American statement about the question of arms supply to the Middle East. The State Department feared that such a statement would imply the existence of established machinery for prior Anglo-American-French consultations. More important, the State Department did not want to be blamed alongside with the British with the responsibility of rejecting Israel's request.[5]

The Israelis had tried as well to involve the Americans in their campaign against the renewed British arms supply to Egypt. American senators and the Israeli press were geared since January 1950 against

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1. FRUS 50, Hare - Burrows, 6.4.50, p.845.
2. ISA 2445/2, Eylat to Comay, 8.1.51.
3. FO 371/81920, E10211/6, Tel Aviv to FO, 5.7.50; FRUS 51, NSC Files, Webb to Lay, 26.1.51, p.18.
4. FO 371/81920, E10211/19, FO Minute, Younger, 7.7.50.
5. FRUS 50, SoS to US/UK, 24.6.50, p.940.

the rearmament of the Egyptian army. The British claimed it was all done for internal security and the Israelis argued it was part of preparations for a second round of fighting.[1] It is notable that the Israelis did not accuse the British of deliberately preparing the Arab countries for a second round, but rather of acting out of misconceptions about the real motives of the Arab governments. The Israelis had partly initiated this campaign in order to persuade the Americans to supply greater quantities of arms and better equipment to Israel; and partly out of genuine fear.[2] There was also the need to pattern the Israeli army to Western equipment when the Czech supply had stopped.[3]

The Foreign Ofice decided then to consult its representatives in the Arab World about the question. In Damascus, Beirut and Amman it was assessed by the British legations there that the announcement of arms supply to Israel would increase the urgency of the Arab countries request for arms. On the other hand, the British representatives did not anticipate strong adverse reactions.[4] The legation in Baghdad was the only one which was against the supply of arms to Israel.[5]

With this information in hand the Defence Committee had to decide on the question. The Eastern Department was in favour of the supply by August 1950.[6] Thus, the Committee authorized the Foreign Office in the beginning of August 1950 to inform the Israelis that they could put forward their request for arms. The Foreign Office assessed that

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1. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 26.1.50; Jerusalem Post, 26.1.50; FRUS 50, Eylat-Betty, 6.2.50, p.723; Ben Artzi - Eliot, 9.3.50, pp.792-3; SoS to US/IS, 7.4.50, p.850; McDonald to SoS, 4.5.50, p.882; ISA 38/12, Kidron to Comay, 26.4.50; Eylat - Acheson, 31.1.50, p.713.
2. The Israelis produced convincing evidence (data) about the increasing expenditures of the Arab World. FRUS 50, Eylat to Acheson, 13.2.50, p.736-41; ISA 170/8, IFO memo, 19.12.49.
3. FRUS 50, McDonald to SoS, 26.1.50.
4. FO 371/81960, E1192/124, Beirut to FO, 31.7.50; E1192/125, Damascus to FO; E1192/126, Amman to FO, 1.8.50.
5. Ibid., E1192/134, Baghdad to FO, 14.8.50.
6. ISA 37/12, Kidron - Furlonge, 10.8.50.

altogether the arms supply from Britain to Israel would not amount to much since the Americans would supply Israel with most of its requirements. (In August 1950 a new American legislation came into being, dealing with the Korean war's effects and allowing the American government to supply arms to friendly countries including Israel.)[1] Moreover, HMG decided in July 1950 to offer training facilities in Britain for the Israeli defence forces.

The Foreign Office felt that the Defence Committee was too forthcoming in its compliance with the Israeli requests and thus succeeded in preventing the supply of jets and tanks to them.[2] The same qualification applied to Syria and Lebanon, namely all those countries not aligned to Britain by treaties.[3]

In October 1950, the British military had for the first time enquired about the possibility of British bases in Israel. It was brought up in a conversation between the Israeli GCoS, Yadin and the Secretary of State for Air, who visited Israel then. Yadin explained that public opinion did not allow the establishment of British bases in time of peace. However, he promised the full cooperation of Israel in the case of a Russian invasion.[4] Knox Helm was highly impressed by the outcome of Henderson's conversations with Ben Gurion and Yadin. He wrote to Michael Wright: 'I think I saw clearly from yesterday's conversations the importance which the Israeli government attached to our influence in this part of the world, and their desire if possible to match in steps with us'.[5]

This British initial enquiries about the possibility of

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1. FO 371/81960, E1192, FO Minute, Furlonge 8.8.50.
2. FO 371/81960, E1192/133, Tel Aviv to FO, 11.8.50.
3. FO 371/81960, E1192/139, FO Minute, 2.9.50.
4. FO 371/82179, E1015/102, FO Minute, 4.10.50.
5. FO 371/82179, E1015/106, Helm to Wright, 7.10,50.
6. FO 371/80379, E1054/16, FO Historical Minute, 1950.

establishing a base in Israel should be seen in the context of the deadlock in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations in which the British tried to safeguard the Canal Zone as their main base in the Middle East, but nevertheless looked for alternative bases.[1] The Defence Secretary Emmanuel Shinwell played an important role in this direction. Shinwell tried to assist the Israelis in a 'negative way'. That is, by advocating the reduction of arms sales to Egypt.[2] The Defence Ministry supported its minister, not out of a pro-Israeli attitude, but out of concern about the situation of arms production and rearmament of the British army. After the Korean War, the Americans pressed the British to step up its arms production and enlarge its army. Attlee explained to the cabinet that this was necessary since the Russian army was not demobilized and furthermore the Russians were accumulating nuclear weapons.[3]

In fact, the situation was so grave that in November 1950 Shinwell imposed an embargo on all shipments of arms from the UK, whether under contract or not.[4] However, in the case of Egypt he was strongly opposed by Bevin, the CoS and Attlee. The latter believed that by fulfilling the arms contract with Egypt, Britain would facilitate a final defence agreement with the Egyptian government.[5] This debate between Shinwell and Bevin coincided with Faruq's announcement that he did not regard the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty as a basis for negotiations. However, at that time, this did not seem a serious threat and it was not yet fully realised that the Egyptians would not be induced to sign an agreement by an arms deal. The two main Egyptian requirements had not changed since 1945: the evacuation of the Canal Zone and

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1. Shinwell was supported in the Cabinet by Hugh Gaitskell and Bevan and by the HC. CAB 131/10, DO(51)3, 21.2.51; CAB 128/119, CM(51), 15.1.51; CM 77(50), 23.11.50 in CAB 128/118.
2. Ibid.
3. CAB 128/118, CM77(50), 25.11.50.
4. CAB 31/11, DO(51)30, 17.3.51; CAB 128/118, CM(50)77, 23.11.50.

fulfilment of Egyptian aspirations in the Sudan.[1]

One should differentiate between the CoS' and even Bevin's posture on the question of arms supply to Egypt and their attitude towards Israel at the end of 1950. Notwithstanding their efforts to reach an agreement with Egypt, no effort was spared to reach a closer military co-ordination with Israel. In fact, at one point at the end of 1950, Bevin and the CoS considered seriously the possibility of concluding a defence treaty with Israel. Sir Knox Helm remarked that he saw little hope for Israeli agreement to the presence of British forces on its soil; therefore, the offer was not made. Helm suggested waiting until the conclusion of an Arab-Israeli settlement.[2]

The CoS had finally ruled against proposing to Israel the establishment of a British base there also on technical grounds: the transfer of the base would be costly, would take several years and would involve too much replanning. Thus it was ruled out that Israel was not a practical alternative.[3] On the other hand, it was agreed by the Foreign Office and the CoS that Israel's geographical position 'makes it essential for us to have at least her goodwill if not her active co-operation for the purpose of Middle East defence'.[4]

It is notable that the Defence Ministry was in favour of trying to conclude a separate treaty with Israel which would enable Britain to make more concessions to the Egyptians.[5] Bevin in this discussion

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1. FO 371/80457, JE1187/156, FO to Wright, 23.11.50. About the Sudan and the Suez Canal see J. Marlow, Anglo-Egyptian relations 1800-1953 (London: The Cresset Press, 1954), p.335; P.J. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p.364.
2. FO 371/80455, JE1197/121, record of conversation in Bevin's room, 5.9.50.
3. Ibid.
4. FO 371/82716, ER1053/13, FO Minute Oliver, 18.12.50.
5. FO 371/80457, JE1197/163, MoD to GH ME, December 1950.

took the Ministry of Defence point of view, namely advocated a treaty with Israel.[1] The Foreign Secretary told the CoS that the Egyptian Foreign Minister told him that Egypt would not object to a separate defence agreement between Israel and Britain, nor did it regard such an agreement incompatible with an Anglo-Egyptian treaty.[2] It is interesting to note that the Americans suggested not involving Israel in defense agreements.[3]

The nature of the debate indicates to what extent Anglo-Israeli relations had been normalized by the end of 1950. Before moving to survey the Anglo-Israeli relation in 1951, it would be worth noting the progress made on the political plain between the two countries.

14. The pro-Israeli diplomats.

The most significant personnel change in the Foreign Office's Middle East organization was the replacement of Sir John Troutbeck by Sir Thomas Rapp as the head of the BMEO. This change was in particular important in relation to the Foreign Office's attitude towards Israel. It should be remembered that Troutbeck was the most outspoken anti-Israeli diplomat in the area.[4]

After concluding a preliminary trip to Israel in December 1950 the new head of the BMEO was highly impressed by Israel's 'super-abundant energy, applied with a fixity of purpose transcending all sectional differences to the creation of a highly organized state'.[5] Whereas the Arab countries in Sir Thomas' eyes were clinging 'jealously to their traditional ways of life'.[6]

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1. FO 371/80457, JE1197/163, Ibid.
2. FO 371/80455, JE1197/169, Ibid.
3. FO 371/80455, JE1197/169, CoS - Bevin conversation, December 1950.
4. See p.381 in this chapter.
5. FO 371/82179, E1015/119, Rapp to Bevin, 15.12.50.
6. Ibid.

Helm explained that Rapp's visit to Israel was intended to break his (Helm's) isolation and that of Israel in the British Middle East pattern.[1] This certainly was achieved not by the mere visit, but by Rapp's appointment.

Both Helm and Rapp were convinced of the extraordinary ability of the Israeli army. These views were shared by the British Military attaché who was present during Israeli mobilization exercises and who reported that 'the Israeli army was a well disciplined, well trained, well armed and highly mobile fighting force, whose effectiveness increases from month to month'.[2]

The admiration for Israel was nevertheless professed with some reservations. Rapp warned that 'the younger generation is being brought up in an environment of militarism' and thus 'a permanent threat to Middle East tranquillity is thereby being created and Israel would thus tend to move away from the democratic way of life towards totalitarianism of the right or left'.[3] The only way of avoiding this was by maintaining the viability of Israel's economy, suggested Rapp.[4]

Helm concluded his summary of 1950 by stating that Israel was depending financially on American funds and foreign capital investments and closely associated to Britain in defence and political matters.[5] A senior Israeli Foreign Office official who reached the same conclusion, added that, without Britain, Israel could not hope to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict.[6]

It is notable that the State Department had reviewed Anglo-Israeli relations in 1950 in the following terms: 'During the past year

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1. ISA 36/12, Memo IFO, Rapp visit, 15.12.50.
2. FO 371/82179, E1015/119, Rapp to Bevin, 15.12.50.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. FO 371/1705, Annual Report Israel 1951.
6. ISA 2403/3, Refael to Shiloah, 28.12.50.

Britain's relations with Israel have greatly improved due largely to substantial change in British policy towards Israel. As a result Great Britain is in a position to exert its influence usefully upon Israel and has done so on a number of occasions'.[1]

12. The circle completed - on the way to military co-operation (1951).

In January 1951, the Israeli representatives in Washington informed the State Department that the Israeli policy of non-alignment had failed and that the Israeli army was prepared to participate in the Western defence of the Middle East. When the Americans pointed out that the responsibility of defending the Middle East lay with the British, the Israeli officials assured them that the psychological barrier that hindered the Anglo-Israeli understanding was rapidly disappearing.[2] Helm in Tel Aviv doubted whether these officials spoke with governmental authority and suggested that HMG would officially enquire about Israeli schemes of being integrated into the Western defence system in the area.[3]

The Israeli consent to play a part in the Western defence system was of a particular importance to the Western block in 1951. In an Anglo-American consultation about the future of the Southern flank of NATO which took place in Malta in February 1951, the creation of such a system was discussed. The British army authorities in the Middle East had prepared a draft for this bi-partite meeting in which they suggested basing the Western defence on the Legion and the Israeli army. Those two armies, according to this concept, would serve as a mobile force in defending the outer ring of the Middle East, i.e.

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1. FRUS 51, SD statement, 6.2.51, p.576.
2. FO 371/91206, E1073/2, Washington to FO, 5.1.51.
3. FO 371/91206, E1073/4, Tel Aviv to FO, 8.1.51.

Turkey and Iran.[1]

The Minister of Defence had suggested already in December 1950 that General Robertson, the CiC Middle East, would visit Israel.[2] However, only in January 1951 was it possible to convince the Foreign Office of the desirability of carrying out this visit. The Israelis were informed that Robertson's visit would be purely military and would aim at establishing personal contacts with the Israeli CoS.[3]

However, Robertson's visit was as much political as it was military. The General was given a political guidance by the Defence Committee. He was told that the main obstacle for Anglo-Israeli relations was the Israeli public opinion which unlike the Israeli government was still favouring neutrality as Israel's best policy. The Committee expressed its hope that the visit would change the Israeli mood.[4]

Moreover, Sir William Strang had met unofficially with the Israeli ambassador in London and explored with him the political dimension of the visit. Strang explained that the West feared that a Russian invasion in Europe and the Middle East was imminent. In order to prepare itself for this possibility the 'British government felt that Israel ought not to be excluded form the defensive plans they (the British government) had in mind'.[5] The Israelis, in fact, knew beforehand what the British 'had in mind'. The Americans had inquired at the end of 1950 whether Israel was prepared to stockpile foodstuffs, raw material and petroleum products in Israel.[6] The Israelis were even

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1. FO 371/91219, E1012/10, draft CiC ME, February 1951; interview with Beeley, 21.5.81.
2. ISA 38/12, Shinwell - Eylat conversation, 13.10.50.
3. ISA 36/14, Eliash account, 15.1.51.
4. CAB 131/11, DO(51)8, 13.2.51. Directive to Robertson.
5. ISA 36/14, Strang - Eylat in Travellers Club, 15.1.51.
6. ISA 36/14, IFO Memo, February 1951; FRUS 50, Eban-McGhee, 22.11.50, p.1053; Sharret memo to Marshall, 23.12.50, pp.1077-82.

prepared to manufacture ammunition for the West.[1]

Strang told Eylat he believed the defence treaties with the Arab countries were insufficient in protecting Western interests in the area. The permanent under-secretary of state suggested considering a separate Anglo-Israeli alliance. He also assured the Israeli ambassador that the Egyptians made clear that they would not object to such a treaty.[2] This is confirmed by the Egyptian green book which describes the Anglo-Egyptian negotiation in 1950/51. According to this source the Egyptians did not oppose an Anglo-Israeli direct understanding, nor did the Egyptian premier object to the establishment of a British base in Gaza.[3]

Notwithstanding the talk about a treaty, Strang had only offered two specific practical proposals. The first was the establishment of a British base in Gaza with a corridor to Jordan. By this the British hoped also to solve one of the outstanding problems in the Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.[4] Alternatively, he suggested the establishment of a British base in Israel in an arrangement that would be similar to the one by which the American bases operated in Britain.[5]

It is not clear what kind of base the British had in mind. The Defence Committee were told by the CoS that they had in mind a base in time of war. It is notable that the CoS in 1951 saw Israel ad the only alternative base to Egypt, although they envisaged grave political complications arising from such an alternative.[6]

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1. FRUS 51, Ford to SoS, 5.1.51, p.561.
2. ISA 36/14, Strang - Eylat, ibid.
3. Egyptian Green Book, Salah Ad-Din - Stevenson, 17.8.50, pp.59-62; 24.8.50, pp.64-65.
4. See chapter 4.
5. ISA 36/14, Strang - Eylat, 15.1.51; BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 27.1.51; CAB 131/10,DO(51)3, 21.2.51.
6. CAB 131/10,DO(51)3, 21.2.51.

Eylat had personally consented to the establishment of a British base in Israel without consulting the Israeli government and brought Ben Gurion's wrath on him. The truth is that Eylat warned Strang that the Israeli government would be unwilling to establish bases there. The main reason was to avoid a showdown with the Soviets, so long as there was any possibility of further immigration of Jews from the Eastern Block.[1] These British suggestions were mainly given in order to examine the Israeli reaction and were not so much part of a well prepared scheme. The Israeli reaction gave the British some idea about the rôle Israel could play in the defence of the Middle East.

In any case, Strang was notified that it was premature to discuss the establishment of bases.[2] Apart from the reservations made by Eylat, the official Israeli reaction added that it was difficult for Israel to align itself with a power which had defence treaties with Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.[3] Nevertheless, Robertson was welcomed in Israel and the Israelis were as enthusiastic as the British to have confidential and informal consultations and hoped to obtain further British military and financial assistance.[4]

Ben Gurion's reaction was in fact more bitter than the official Israeli reply. The Israeli premier regarded the British proposal as a disguised attempt to penetrate Israel. In his diary he wrote: 'Why should we enable this - their policy in the Middle East had not changed, in spite of the shift in public opinion. This policy is not conducted by Cripps, Morrison or Bevan, but only by Bevin. His policy is hostile'.[5] Ben Gurion preferred to negotiate an alliance with the

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1. ISA 37/10, Strang - Eylat, 15.1.51.
2. ISA 37/10, note to Strang, January 1951.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 27.1.51.

Americans. In fact, the Israeli ambassador in Washington on behalf of Ben Gurion complained that the defence of Israel and its neighbours was allocated to Britain and suggested a joint Anglo-American defence. This was by no means the position of the Israeli Foreign Office which was in favour of an Anglo-Israeli alliance.[1]

However, the Defence Committee had no idea about Ben Gurion's reaction and was pleased with the outcome of Strang's conversation with Eylat. Thus it was decided to sent Robertson.[2] The visit was described by Helm as a 'landmark in the development of Anglo-Israeli relations'.[3] Robertson had changed slightly the British suggestion and sought unofficial understanding between Israel and Britain on defence matters.[4] The General was instructed just before leaving to request transit rights, by land, air and sea in Israeli territory during war time. He was told to inquire about Israel's industrial capacity and potential. He further suggested to the Israelis secret and informal discussions on the co-ordination of weapons, training and strategy. The British were in particular interested in lifting the ban on RAF flights over Israel.[5] To all these requests the Israelis did not give a definite affirmative reply, but promised to consider it positively.[6] Moreover they were reluctant to give full information about their military potential. This was due to refusal by some members of the Israeli army who suspected that this information would be passed by the British to the Legion.[7]

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1. FRUS 51, Eban - Ohly, 15.2.51, pp.581-2.
2. CAB 131/10,DO(51)2, 16.2.51.
3. FO 371/91706, ER1013/3, Monthly report, February 1951. It produced Communist demonstrations in Israel's main cities and sharp criticism in the Knesset from MAPAM and the Revisionists, 36/14, IFO memo.
4. FO 371/91184, E1024/10, Helm to Bowker, 23.3.51.
5. CAB 131/11,DO(51)2, 13.2.51.
6. ISA 36/14, Sharret to Eylat, 28.2.51.
7. FRUS 51. Eban - McGhee, 26.6.51, p.735.

It should be noted that Robertson did not visit only Israel. There was a general aim to his tour. This was to calm down the Middle Eastern countries' 'fear that the West was disinterested in Israel and the Arab countries'.[1] In other words to assure the loyalty of the Middle Eastern countries to the West in the world in which a third World War seemed imminent. A more practical purpose was to find out the precise arms demands of those countries.[2] The British had decided to change their attitude towards arms supply. NATO counties had reached the conclusion that it would take them until the end of 1952 to rearm themselves. In that period, which was regarded as critical, it was decided that Britain had a primary responsibility to provide armaments for Israel and the Arab countries, and the USA would furnish Saudi Arabia, Iran and Greece with arms.[3]

Robertson found Ben Gurion more amiable than he had expected. However, it seems that the General misunderstood Ben Gurion when the latter expressed his wish to see Israel in the Commonwealth.[4] The Foreign Office believed Ben Gurion wished Israel to be a full member, but in fact the premier was just referring to a matter of attitude: 'British attitude towards us should be more like their attitude towards a country like New Zealand than like their relationship with the Arab states'.[5] According to his biographer, Ben Gurion was annoyed by Robertson's attitude which implied that Israel was safely secure as a Western ally.[6]

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1. FRUS 51, US/UK to SoS, 10.2.51.
2. Ibid.
3. FRUS 51, memo of conversation, McGhee - Foreign Office, 2.4.51, pp.104-5.
4. FO 371/91716, ER1053/10, Tel Aviv to FO, February 1951; CAB 131, DO(51)8, 9.4.51; CAB 131/11,DO(51)44, 5.4.51.
5. ISA 36/14, summary Robertson visit.
6. Bar Zohar, Ben Gurion,p.904.

When Herbert Morrison replaced Bevin as Foreign Secretary, the British renewed their request for transit facilities in time of war. Morrison also suggested further military co-operation as an important stage for better political understanding.[1] However, Ben Gurion was still reluctant to commit Israel to such an arrangement. Moreover, he was disinclined to decide before the second Israeli elections, due in July 1951.[2]

The discussions about the desirability of an alliance with Israel were continued in March 1951. The Defence Committee had constantly emphasized throughout these discussions that the degree of co-operation with Israel depended on the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. In fact the CoS suggested that in case of failure to renew the 1936 treaty with Egypt, the British base should be moved in 1956 to Israel.[3] The main objection came from Ralph Stevenson, the new ambassador in Egypt. He claimed that an Anglo-Egyptian agreement should precede an Anglo-Israeli alliance. Otherwise Egypt would persist in its neutrality in the Cold War.[4] Stevenson also deemed an Israeli-Egyptian agreement as a prerequisite to an Anglo-Israeli alliance.[5]

Similar suspicions were aroused by Sir Hugh Dow in Jerusalem. He warned that Israel might wish to bedevil Anglo-Arab relations. He suggested that HMG would concentrate jointly with the Americans in exerting pressure on the Israelis to continue the peace efforts.[6] Dow had apparently little belief in Israel's public demonstrations: 'We should not let the ability with which Israel argues her case in the international forum blind us to the fact that, in her relations with

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1. Morrison to Ben Gurion, 23.4.51 in Bar-Zohar, op.cit., p.905; CAB 131/11,DO(51)44, 5.4.51.
2. BGA, Ben Gurion Diary, 9.7.51.
3. CAB 131/11,DO(51)44, 5.4.51, Morrison.
4. FO 371/1184, Stevenson to Bevin, 6.3.51; FO Minute, 20.3.51.
5. Ibid.
6. E1024/6, Dow to Bevin, 3.3.51.

the Arabs, though her lips drop oil, her hand still holds the whip'.[1] Helm was worried that Stevenson and Dow's position might hinder mutual confidence with Israel.[2]

Whereas Stevenson warned that an Anglo-Israeli agreement might split the Arab World into a Hashemite and anti-Hashemite blocks, this possibility was welcomed by Helm. Helm opposed an Israeli-Egyptian agreement since he believed it would result in the loss of Jordan's allegiance: 'I suggest that a Jordan-Israeli accommodation would be the most solid base on which to build the integrated Middle East which I believe to be the object of our policy'.[3] Helm did not think an Israeli agreement with Britain and Jordan should irritate the Arab World more than the de jure recognition granted by Britain to Israel did.[4]

The Eastern Department ruled out in favour of Helm's arguments. There 'was no reason why we should not work simultaneously for an Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Israeli agreement, especially if the latter were of a secret nature'.[5] The new superintending under-secretary of state, Bowker, who replaced Wright, argued that it was more important to secure consent for transit facilities than to hope for an Israeli-Arab settlement.[6] To the credit of the Eastern Department officials, one could say that their appreciation was correct since the development of Anglo-Egyptian relations was irrelevant to the Anglo-Israeli rapprochement. The Egyptians did not object to an Anglo-Israeli agreement as was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The further improvement of Anglo-Israeli relations should be compared with the deterioration in Israeli-American relations which

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1. Ibid.
2. E1024/10, Helm to Bowker, 23.3.51.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. FO Minute Oliver, 27.4.51; Wadrop, 27.4.51; Furlonge, 29.4.51.
6. FO 371/91184, E1024/10, FO Minute, Bowker, 30.4.51.

reached a low owing to the dispute over the Israeli drainage work at the Hula.[1] In the middle of 1951, the feeling in the Foreign Office was that Israel relied on Britain more than on the Americans.[2] This was also the result of the division of responsibilities in the area between the two powers, but it was mainly the outcome of the deterioration in Anglo-Arab relations and in particular the Anglo-Egyptian relations.

Conclusions.

The political problems between Israel and Britain were solved by the end of 1951. On the strategical level Israel was considered as important as Turkey to the west, but owing to the Arab-Israeli conflict this importance was only manifested by the unofficial inclusion of Israel in the British military infrastructure in the area. The Israelis were disappointed at not being included officially in the proposed regional reorganization, but on the other hand, in a short while it was clear that there was no proper organization to belong to. The Middle East Allied Command which was proposed by the NATO powers to the Arab countries was rejected by the Egyptians and the Arab League, and apart from Jordan, no other Arab country showed any inclination to be part of a Western Alliance in the area.[3] Moreover, the unofficial

1. FRUS 51, Weizmann to Truman, 18.5.51, p.689.
2. This was also the impression of the American ambassador in Tel Aviv, see FRUS 51, Davis to SoS, 19.7.51, p.767.
3. In 1951, the Truman Doctrine seemed to the Americans to be a passive method of containing the Communist penetration of the Middle East. The trend in Washington was to look for a more active policy and participation in the defence of the Middle East. This trend was welcomed by the British with one qualification - the British did not want to lose their political hegemony in the area. A formula was found by which a Middle East Allied Command, a regional defence organization affiliated to NATO, would be under the commandership of supreme allied commander who in time of war was to be British. The MEAC had also been initiated in order to induce the Egyptian army to be part of it and by that solving some of the outstanding problems between the two countries. The Egyptian refusal to give in on their demand for the total evacuation of the British forces in the Canal Zone had brought to the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty by Egypt in October 1951 and diminished the chances of the MEAC. Information gathered from FO 371/91219, 91220, 91206, 91185.

military ties with the West had benefited Israel as well. The Israelis did not wish to be the 'bridgehead of Imperialism in the Middle East' and still strove to cultivate good relations with the emerging Third World.[1]

It was mainly the Foreign Office's pragmatism that facilitated such a rapid rapprochement between the two countries. Bevin as well played an important role in bringing about the improvement of relations with the Jewish State. The main partner on the Israeli side was the Israeli Foreign Office and in particular the senior officials there who were partly of British origin themselves. The same could not be said of David Ben Gurion, whose suspicion towards the Foreign Office and animosity towards Bevin at times hindered the process of reconciliation. However, Ben Gurion's desire to be part of the Western Alliance had brought him closer to Britain and after Bevin's death, the Israeli premier did his utmost to further co-operation between the two countries.

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1. ISA 37/1, IFO Memo, 2.8.51.

Conclusions.

The Anglo-Transjordanian understanding of the best solution for the question of post-mandatory Palestine served as the main guideline for the British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict in the years 1948-1951. The essence of this understanding was the partition of Palestine between the Jewish state and the Hashemite Kingdom. The main feature of this partition was the creation of a Greater Transjordan - the annexation of the areas allotted to the Arab Palestinians by the UN November 1947 resolution to Transjordan. This understanding in many ways determined the outcome of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. It also enabled the Foreign Office to predict correctly the course of that war.

The Anglo-Transjordanian understanding was reached owing to Britain's desire to maintain its influence in Palestine. Palestine was an important buffer zone and a defence line against any power seeking possession of the Canal Zone and the oilfields of Arabia. In the period under review, a Russian invasion of the Middle East seemed imminent, both to the Americans and the British. Giving up the direct control over Palestine was acceptable to the British government, but leaving it to the influence of another power was unthinkable.

It was also the fruit of an ad hoc policy which had been pursued by the Foreign Office since the end of the First World War. A policy which enabled Britain to adjust itself to any new development in the area and to confront any radical alteration of the political situation. Once it was clear that Israel was a fait accompli, the Foreign Office advised the British government to consider the Jewish state as a new factor in the Middle East and suggested the formulation of a policy which would take into account the Jewish state.

The Foreign Office had thus found a scheme that would both ensure British interests in former Mandatory Palestine and could serve as a solution for the Arab-Jewish conflict there - a conflict which had haunted the area during the Mandatory era. In the years following the war in Palestine, the efforts of the Foreign Office were directed towards consolidating the Greater Transjordan concept, first by keeping a close watch on the process of the annexation of the West Bank and, secondly, by protecting the area from an Israeli or Arab offensive.

The first task was entrusted to the hands of Sir Alec Kirkbride, the British representative in Amman, who together with the King had arrived in Palestine in 1921 to create a Transjordanian monarchy for the Sharif's son. His long stay in Jordan and his subsequent strong influence on the King, made him an ideal person for this mission. Kirkbride's main worry was that the large Palestinian majority would undermine Britain's position in Greater Transjordan. Kirkbride warned that the Palestinians' demands for a greater share in Jordan's political affairs would turn this absolute Kingdom into a constitutional monarchy. Such a process, according to Kirkbride, would have ended in the Palestinization of Jordan. The British representative in Amman, like most of the Foreign Office's officials, had no doubt that a Palestinized Jordan, or an independent Palestine, would be an anti-British factor and a Communist stronghold. The British animosity towards the Palestinian leader, the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini, had contributed much to this British fear.

The second way of ensuring the success of the British and Jordanian scheme was by protecting the Kingdom from an Israeli attack. The Israeli plans for the West Bank were a mixture of the territorial ambitions of Ben Gurion and most of his army commanders, on the one

hand, and a genuine Israeli fear that the West Bank would serve as a launching pad for a joint Anglo-Iraqi attack on Israel, on the other. Nevertheless, the Israeli threats to occupy the area should be seen as part of an Israeli tactic to force Abdullah to formalize the tacit Jewish-Hashemite understanding about the partition of Palestine, reached prior to the war in Palestine. In fact, Abdullah was very eager to follow this policy, but the strong opposition from his ministers and in particular of Premier Tawfiq Abu Al-Huda to a formal peace treaty with Israel, prevented the King from going very far in his relations with the Israelis.

This dispute between the King and his ministers put Kirkbride in a difficult position. After first agreeing to serve as a mediator between the King and his government, the British representative decided to side with the latter. Kirkbride believed that the King's policies might bring about the disintegration of the Hashemite rule in Transjordan and would end in a coup d'état instigated by the former Mufti. There is also little doubt that Abdullah's decision not to make Kirkbride a party to his secret negotiations with the Israelis also affected Kirkbride's attitude towards these negotiations.

The short-term fruits of the Greater Transjordan concept were soon reaped by Britain. Another round of fighting between the Arabs and the Israelis was prevented for the time being. The allegiance of Israel and Jordan to the West was secured as well. The Foreign Office had assessed correctly that its conflict with Egypt had little to do with its Palestine policy. Egypt's grievance against the British was based on Britain's refusal to evacuate the Canal Zone. Moreover, towards the end of the period, the Egyptian reluctance to be part of the Western Alliance on the one hand, and Israel and Jordan's support for the UN

action in Korea, further proved the loyalty of these two countries to the West.

In the early 1950s, the Arab-Israeli conflict was conceived by the Foreign Office as a territorial dispute between Israel and Jordan. The pro-Western orientation of these two countries contributed to the reduction in the importance attached to this conflict. The modus vivendi reached between Jordan and Israel before the war in Palestine seemed to hold after the end of hostilities there, and London hoped that like similar disputes in Europe, the hostilities in the early 1950s would be concluded by a peace treaty.

It is notable that both Americans and the UN were backing the British in most of their decisions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and any divergences of opinion were tactical rather than strategical. Furthermore, neither the Americans nor the UN were able to offer a more practical or workable solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the ensuing years, three new factors would affect the course of the conflict: Egypt's Arab Nationalism under Nasser's regime; the Soviet Union; and the re-emergence of the Palestinian national movement. These factors would intensify the conflict and turn it into a regional dispute that so far has twice brought the two superpowers to the brink of confrontation. As for the first two factors, it appears that Britain could not have predicted their appearance before Nasser's coming to power in Egypt in 1954. The same cannot be said about the Palestinian question.

The Palestinians as a political force were insignificant between 1948 and 1964, at least as far as the Arab-Israeli conflict was concerned. On the one hand, during 1948-1951 Britain did not regard the Palestinians as a factor to be considered in finding a solution for

Palestine. One reason for this was that the Palestinian leadership was disorganized as a result of the war, and the various bodies and organizations which came forward as representatives of the Palestinians were usually suspected of being exploited by the Arab governments for the latters' own political interests. The other reason was that Britain feared that the Palestinians might take over Jordan, and under the leadership of the Mufti turn into a state hostile to Britin and the West.

All the parties involved in the conflict were prepared to discuss the humanitarian aspect of the refugee problem. In fact, Israel and the Arab states were willing to negotiate a solution to this problem at the Lausanne conference in the summer of 1949. This conference was in many ways a missed opportunity. It was the first and only time that an all-Arab delegation and Israel concurred on the principle of partition according to the UN resolution of November 1947. It was also the last time the Israelis were prepared to admit a joint responsibility with the Arab countries in the creation of the refugee problem, by making a gesture and offering to repatriate some of the refugees. The Israeli motives were practical and partly the result of American pressure, but nevertheless, they opened the way for a political solution to the problem.

It was only natural that such a solution would take some time to work out. However, the Americans, who underestimated the political significance of the question, believed they had in their hands a magic and rapid solution to the refugee problem. This was the 'economic solution', a formula which ignored the political sensitivities of both the Israelis and the Arabs with regard to the refugees. The British reluctantly supported this American initiative and even took the

lead at one stage of the process. When this solution did not work out, the UN, in whose hands the problem was entrusted, treated the problem as one that called for temporary relief rather than overall solution. In the years to come, until 1969, all peace initiatives in the area would continue to ignore the political part of the question. At the period under review this situation was welcomed both by the Israelis, who hoped that the Arab states would resettle the refugees, and by the Arab states who decided to exploit the conditions in the refugee camps as a political card against Israel.

The main British worry with regard to the refugees was their apprehension of a resettlement scheme that would treat Jordan as the new home for the Palestinian refugees. Most of the refugees, after the war, were located in Greater Transjordan. The Foreign Office could not come out openly against a proposal to resettle the refugees there, but owing to their desire to deep Transjordan under the Hashemite rule, the Office suggested the resettlement of the refugees in Iraq and Syria.

Finally, we should not forget that the critical assessment in this work of Britain's policies, decisions and perceptions are made with the benefit of hindsight. We must also remember that the Arab-Israeli conflict was not the only problem facing the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, which had to deal with Iran and Egypt as well. Moreover, the history of the conflict hitherto has shown us that the other external powers who became involved in the conflict were faced with the very same problems and suffered from the very same misconceptions as did Britain when attempting to solve the conflict and ensure their own interests in the Middle East.

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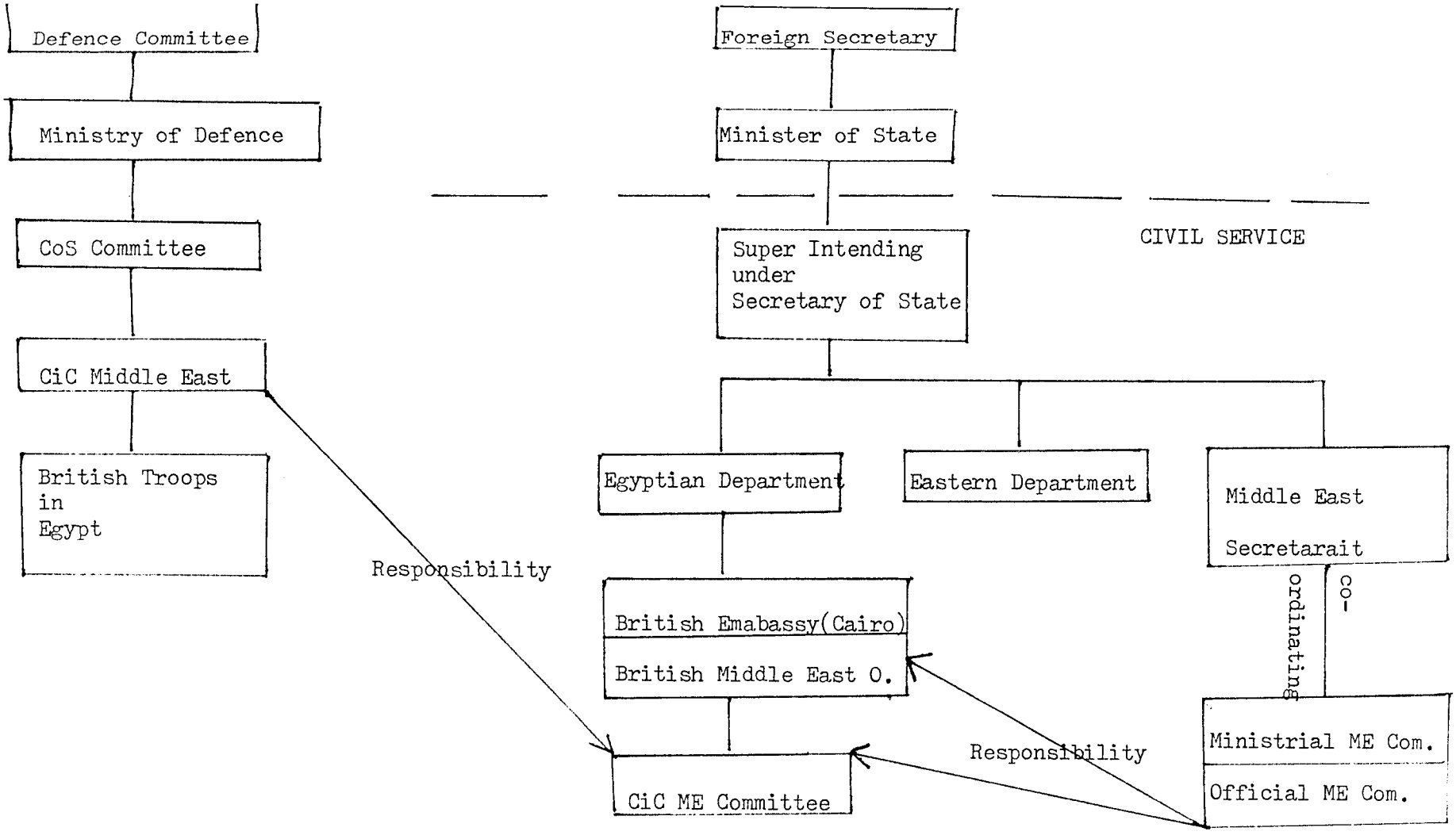

APPENDIX ONE: WHERE WAS POLICY MADE?

(i) Acceptance of refugees by both sides in proportions to be determined.

(ii) Israel's proposal to incorporate the Gaza strip with the refugees at present in it could form part of a general settlement subject to the following conditions:

(a) It should be made clear that there is no question of a mere deal between territory and acceptance of responsibility for refugees. Territorial compensation for the Gaza strip should be found elsewhere by Israel for the Arabs - see (iii) below - provided the Arabs demand such compensation

(b) Some safeguards should be devised in regard to the future treatment of the Gaza refugees in Israel; they should be permitted to return to any part of Israel where they had property or special interests and they should be able to earn a livelihood and presumably have full rights of citizenship.

(iii) Territorial compensation for the Gaza area (if ceded) and for other areas held by Israel but not allotted to her under the 1947 Plan should be provided if the Arabs demand it. The following areas appear politically and geographically suitable for this purpose i.e. contiguous to other Arab areas:-

(a) A land-bridge in the southern Negev between Egypt and Jordan

(b) An area in the Negev north of Beersheba connecting with Arab central Palestine

(c) An area along the Egyptian frontier south of El Auja

(d) The restoration of part or all of Western Galilee

(e) The Ramleh-Lydda area.

We see no reason to insist that any one of these areas should form the exclusive field for compensation. They could, if necessary, be combined in various proportions. This would certainly provide greater flexibility for the discussions. But the shape of the eventual territorial compensation should in any case be governed by the requirements of either side in regard to communications and outlets to the sea (see iv below).

(iv) Communications and outlets. If the territorial compensation to the Arabs were to be in the form of the award to Jordan, or to Jordan and Egypt, of part of whole of the Southern Negev, thus providing a land bridge between Egypt and Jordan, Israel should have guaranteed freedom of access and communication to the Red Sea. Equally the Arab States should have guaranteed freedom of communication and access to the Mediterranean. If another solution were adopted for the Southern Negev there should nonetheless be guaranteed freedom of communication and access across it between Egypt and Jordan and between Israel and the Red Sea. An alternative method of providing for freedom of communication and access might be by a neutral zone or zones.

/(v)...

(v) A free port (or at least a free zone for all Arab States) should be established at Haifa with an arrangement by which Iraqi crude oil could be freely exported in return for the provision by Iraq of normal supplies for the Haifa Refinery.

(vi) There should be a partition of Jerusalem for administrative purposes with international supervision, particularly of the Holy Places.

(vii) Central Arab Palestine should be incorporated in Jordan.

(viii) Israel and the Arab States concerned should agree to share for their mutual benefit the waters of the Jordan and Yarmuk.