

ABSTRACT

Anglo-American relations throughout the Second World War and the years that followed, were at times coloured by the history of Zionism. This was the result of transfer of the Zionists' main effort from London to Washington in the hope of capitalizing on, and increasing, Zionist pressure there. The Zionists, faced with abandonment of British support for their aspirations in Palestine, due to strategic considerations, hoped that American intervention in British Palestine policy might cause Britain to resume that support. But no serious American attempt was made to prevent the introduction, in May 1939, of the British anti-Zionist White Paper policy.

This lack of American pressure continued throughout the war. But as soon as the war ended, active American intervention began. The result, according to the evidence of the British Foreign Minister of the time (Bevin), was Britain's decision to abandon Palestine. This thesis endeavours to show the course of these Anglo-American relations, and to describe the development of the forces that prompted and perpetuated this American intervention.

The thesis shows how in a first phase, which lasted until the beginning of 1943, the Government of the United States was reluctant to intervene for virtually the same reasons as governed the change in British policy that dates from 1938, when in face of the Axis threat they abandoned their attempt to impose the partition of Palestine and sought to maintain relations with the Arabs that would be good enough to suit their strategic ends.

Consequently, throughout the war, world Jewry was faced with a grim combination of Nazi persecution of the Jews in Europe--later to become their total extermination --and the closing of the asylum of Palestine by the British. This combination had two main effects on the Jews: in America it enhanced the recruitment of the majority of Jews to the ranks of the Zionist movement, while in Palestine it reinforced Jewish determination to fight the White Paper, even by resort to violence. The common characteristic of both developments was the increase in Zionist impatience and Zionist militancy.

In the course of that development, American Zionists, inspired by visitors from London and Palestine, pursued a dream that realists considered impossible of fulfilment. Before anyone in America knew the full dimensions of the holocaust and before victory in the war seemed in any way assured, the American Zionists illustrated their belief that "the hour of redemption would soon strike," and produced the "Biltmore" programme. These American Zionists believed that a Jewish State in the whole of Palestine, should be given to them "by the world", at the end of the war, and that this was going to be the true outcome of Jewish suffering.

In the second phase, which ran between the beginning of 1943 and the end of the war, their Messianic dream gradually turned into a political programme. 1943 was the year in which the German threat to the Middle East came to an end. As the Allies' victory loomed in sight, not only the Zionists, but both the British and the United States began to consider the future of Palestine. The British Cabinet, largely under the influence of Churchill, saw the

final phase of the war as providing it a better chance to tackle the problem than the post-war era was likely to be. Before long, it reached the conclusion that the White Paper must be replaced by a partition and accordingly drew up concrete plans.

Significantly, however, the Cabinet decided to make its stand secret, until implementation of its plan was possible. It decided to exclude even the United States from knowledge of it. In consequence, an asymmetric relation developed between the two powers in which the British were told of American schemes and proposals for Palestine (most of which were merely random improvisations) but did not tell the Americans their own. The relationship amounted to a dialogue of the deaf. When, for reasons that this thesis will explain, the chance to implement partition was missed, Britain appeared to the Americans, as well as to the rest of the world, as doggedly adhering to the White Paper policy. This impression both increased Zionist belligerency, helping to make the post-war British position in Palestine impossible, and hardened the attitude of President Truman, causing him to start intervening.

After 1943, two conflicting tendencies developed simultaneously in America, both affecting Middle Eastern policy. On the one hand, a scare about oil shortage and about other American interests in the Middle East, awakened an American wish to win Arab goodwill. On the other hand, mounting Zionist and (through Zionist effort) American public pressure on the Administration, brought about growing support for Zionist aspirations, particularly in Congress. This coincidence of pressures became a source of profound

embarrassment to United States foreign policy makers. Since the British were at the same time disturbed by the prospects of growing difficulties in Palestine, springing from growing Jewish militancy, the one sense in which the two governments co-operated during the war in regard to Palestine was in an attempt to damp down Zionist agitation. This attempt gave birth to plans for a joint statement, condemning this agitation as impeding the Allied war effort; but the Zionists and their supporters managed to defeat this move.

The result of the inner embarrassment caused to Americans was an ambiguous policy, according to which soothing statements were simultaneously made both to Jews and to Arabs--only the former received these reassurances publicly; the latter learned of them in secret.

This "two-way-talk" policy reached its peak towards the end of the war. Before Roosevelt's death, in April 1945, he had reached the conclusion that a Zionist solution in Palestine was impossible to implement and to maintain without resort to force. This conclusion led him to abandon his earlier support for it and to seek solutions of a different character. He, however, did not have the time or the readiness to develop his ideas much further.

In his last year in office, Roosevelt struggled to stem the mounting Zionist pressure on his administration. After his failure to issue the Anglo-American statement, he scored a temporary success by managing to shelve pro-Zionist resolutions in Congress. But he was all-but completely disarmed during the 1944 election campaign. This campaign was marked by a flood of pro-Zionist utterances, made by both political parties and their candidates for the Presidency,

as a result of skilful Zionist tactics; in this election campaign, as they were again to do in the future, the Zionists instead of adhering to one Party, as they had done in the past, put their vote up to auction.

Nevertheless, politically, the American Zionists achieved very little during the war. Their only impressive success was the mass recruitment of Jewry itself. All their other seeming achievements, in the form of platforms and statements and promises, seemed, when the war ended, to have vanished into thin air. But the same happened to all the plans and schemes proposed during the war by Britain and the United States. Palestine was not discussed at Yalta and formed no part of mutual post-war arrangements. The secret partition plan of the British Cabinet lay in ruins and all the other alternatives looked just as unpalatable. What remained intact was the White Paper.

In the third phase, which ran from the end of the war until early 1947, American intervention began and developed. But it did not take the form for which the American Zionists had hoped; nor did it in the end bring about the results they desired. While in Britain, the new Labour Government bitterly disappointed the Zionists, the new President of the United States--a man little known to them--kept them in the dark from May until October 1945, even when he was acting, as they later discovered, "in their cause".

Truman, as a matter of fact, was not exactly working "in the Zionists' cause." His early intervention was confined to the attempt to solve what appeared to him the burning humanitarian problem of the Jewish displaced persons in the

occupied zones of Germany. He believed that this was a problem limited in scope that could be solved comparatively easily. His efforts, throughout the first year and a half of his reign, were strictly confined to making Britain accept the admission of 100,000 refugees into Palestine and not to furthering the Jewish State programme which he thought premature. But since the British Government failed to grasp the distinction he drew between these two aims, they gradually helped him to drift into greater support for Zionist aims. His shift culminated in the mid-term election campaign of the fall of 1946, when, for the first time, he was brought to support the idea of partition.

The Labour Government was not deaf to American pressure. While they first regarded Palestine as their exclusive affair, the shock of Truman's intervention made them change course and try to harness American co-operation in solving the Palestine issue. But all their committees and the joint teams of experts which they formed together with the Americans, could not remove some basic disagreements in regard to the immigration of the 100,000 which Truman continued to demand. The British were in fact giving way, step by step to this demand, but their retreat always came too late to match Truman's new leaning towards the Zionists. In consequence, both countries' hopes to amalgamate their Palestine policies did not materialize. The renewal of their war-time alliance, devised to contain the Soviet threat to the Middle East, failed to cover Palestine.

Britain ended within a vicious circle. World events rendered her more and more dependent on American goodwill, financial and economic support for her sheer survival

as a world power. She was therefore unable to act vigorously to quell Jewish terrorism in Palestine. At the same time she wished to replace the White Paper, long considered obsolete, with some better policy but to do this she needed tranquillity and moderation among the rival people of Palestine. But tranquillity was unattainable so long as Jewish terror remained active and that terror was the result of the continuation of the White Paper régime.

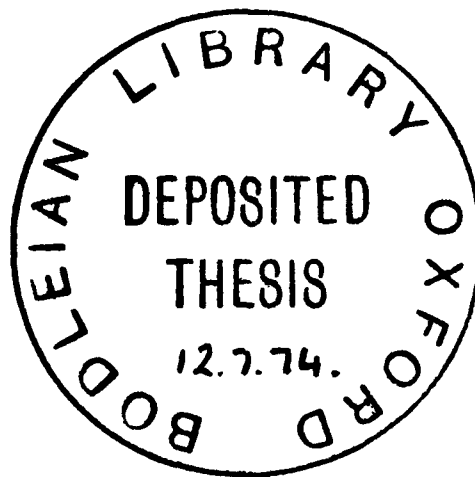
In her despair, Britain tried to persuade both people, through simultaneous conferences held in London early in 1947, that they were both taking great risks by leaving her no choice but to withdraw. Her pleading, however, foundered on the rock of blinkered nationalism on both sides. This was the consideration that caused Britain, in February 1947, to throw the Palestine issue into the lap of the United Nations "without recommendations"--a step which led eventually to her complete withdrawal from Palestine.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN BRITISH PALESTINE POLICY
1938-1947

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List of Abbreviations

AFL	American Federation of Labour
AJC	American Jewish Committee
APC	American Palestine Committee
AZEC	American Zionist Emergency Council
Cab	British Cabinet: British Cabinet Papers
CID	British Committee of Imperial Defence
Cmd	British Government Command Paper
CO	Colonial Office; British Colonial Office Papers
C of S	Chiefs of Staff; British Chiefs of Staff Papers
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem
DP	European Displaced Persons
FDRL	Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FO	Foreign Office; British Foreign Office Papers
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States. Documents published annually by the State Department.
GB	Great Britain
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HSTL	Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri
JDC	Jewish Distribution Committee (universally known as the "Joint")
JTA	Jewish Telegraph Agency
JNH	Jewish National Home
ManGuard	The <u>Manchester Guardian</u>
ME*	Middle East
Memo	Memorandum
MR	President Roosevelt Map Room; Files of Map Room documents

* During World War II the Americans used the term "Near East" to designate roughly what the British called, during the same period, "Middle East".

NE*	Near East
NED	The Near East (and Africa) Division of the United States State Department
NY	New York
NYT	<u>New York Times</u>
OF	Official File, Files of documents at Roosevelt's and Truman's respective libraries
OSS	Office of Strategic Services, the United States
Prem	Papers of the British Prime Minister
PSF	President's Private Secretary Files. Documents in Truman's and Roosevelt's libraries
PRO	British Public Record Office, London.
RIIA	Royal Institute of International Affairs, London
SA	The Silver Archives, The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio
St Dept	State Department; Papers held at the Department's History Division, Washington, D.C.
UN**	The United Nations
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UPA	United Palestine Appeal
US, USA	The United States of America
WA	Weizmann Archives, Rehovoth
ZANY	Zionist Archives, New York
Z. Exec.	The Zionist Executive, Jerusalem; Papers of the Zionist Executive
ZOA	Zionist Organization of America

* During World War II the Americans used the term "Near East" to designate roughly what the British called, during the same period, "Middle East".

**During the War the term United Nations was used to designate the countries which belonged to the Allied camp. Only after 1945 did it become the name of the World Organization. To avoid possible confusion, I have refrained from using capital letters when denoting the wartime allies.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of World War II, the United States exercised considerable pressure on Great Britain to cause her to change her Palestine policy in favour of Zionism. This pressure bore witness to the success of the American Zionists in using America's growing influence in world affairs as a lever wherewith to prod Britain into resuming her earlier Zionist sponsorship.

These American Zionist efforts long pre-dated the end of the war; they began when, under pressure of events in Europe, Britain reversed her attitude to Zionism, and embarked on the road which culminated in the White Paper of 1939.

A short time after that paper had become British official policy for Palestine, a senior Colonial Office official wrote:

"There is no doubt that the Zionists live in hope that American pressure may do for them what their own pleading failed to do, in converting His Majesty's Government to their own point of view. But it is very doubtful whether the influence of the American Jews over the United States is really as potent as the Zionists and their supporters believe."¹

Indeed, for years the American Zionists worked at their task to little real effect. But once the war was over, and once a new President--Truman--took office, America suddenly began to intervene in Britain's Palestine affairs.

The American Zionists were successful only in

¹ Minute by Sir John Shuckburgh, CO 733/426 75872/14 of 7 Feb. 1940.

getting their Government to intervene, and not in getting Great Britain to change her policy. Since Britain reckoned this to be impossible, and since the situation in Palestine was impossible as well, she decided, in 1947, to give up the Mandate and to leave the country to war and chaos.

This of course was the crucial step that led to the establishment of the State of Israel, but on the way to it the Zionists had to take risks so great that even their more militant leaders did not originally envisage such an end. When they sought American intervention in British policy, what they had in mind was a kind of second Balfour Declaration rather than a bloody war which would expose the Jews in Palestine to the risk of another Jewish holocaust.

The American Government certainly had no such intention when it began to intervene. Originally, it wanted very little: only the admission to Palestine of some 100,000 survivors of Nazi extermination. And yet, according to British evidence, it was American pressure which "sabotaged" every attempt to work out a practicable solution for Palestine, until no choice was left to Britain but to quit.¹

The aim of this thesis is to discover just why, where and when America was caused to intervene, and how that intervention affected Anglo-American relations and British Palestine policy. When starting on my task, I did not a priori dismiss the possibility that Zionist pressure in America played only a minor role in bringing about United States intervention, and that there were other reasons for this.

¹ See Bevin's remarks in the House of Commons, 25 February 1947; Hansard, vol. 433, cols. 1911-4.

(a) Historical Background: Three Periods in
United States-Palestine Relations

Anglo-American relations in regard to Palestine and Zionism can be divided into three periods. The first runs from 1917 until about 1924, when there was considerable interest in America, both in the idea of a Jewish National Home and in safeguarding American rights within the newly British-occupied territories in the Middle East, which later became mandates. The second is from 1925 until 1937; in its course, interest greatly declined and so did the influence of American Zionists. The third period runs from 1938 until 1947, and during it the American Zionists gradually gathered tremendous influence; at the same time, the United States intensified its interest in Palestine affairs. In the last phase of the third period, United States intervention began.

This thesis covers the third period, but a brief survey of the two earlier ones makes it easier to understand the general pattern of the third.

The idea of a Jewish National Home as first put forward attracted President Woodrow Wilson.¹ Nevertheless, he was careful not to make any outright statement of support until he thought the time ripe. When Dr. Weizmann, leader of Britain's Zionists and a new star in Zionist diplomacy tried, in the summer of 1917, to get American support as an added encouragement to Britain, and to that end used the services of the American Zionist Justice Louis Brandeis, President Wilson sought the State Department's advice, and

¹ F.E. Manuel, The Realities of American-Palestine Relations, p. 163.

on the strength of this refused to give any such public support.¹ The Department argued that to do so would be inept, since Palestine was still under Turkish rule, and since the United States was not in a state of war with Turkey.²

That refusal, however, did not spell lack of interest in the future of Palestine. In fact American interest had been growing since May 1917, when Arthur Balfour, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs paid a visit to Washington. It was then that the Americans first learned about the secret Anglo-French agreement to divide the Middle East into respective spheres of influence once Turkey had been defeated.³

Active American support for the Balfour Declaration was scarcely necessary: Britain did not in the end insist on public United States encouragement to take such a step. It was probably enough for her that America would not stand in her way, and there was never any such American intention. Britain herself was, for reasons of her own, keenly interested in Zionism.⁴

¹ This refusal followed a well known exchange of notes between Wilson and his chief adviser on foreign affairs, Colonel Edward House. In September 1917, the British Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Lord Robert Cecil, cabled the President asking for an American statement of support for Zionism. House, who brought the telegram to the President, later recalled that, intentionally or not, the President delayed his reply for more than a month, with the excuse that he had "forgotten it in his pocket". But then, Wilson confirmed, he personally "concurred in the formula suggested", but agreed, nevertheless, to ask the British that "no mention of the US approval shall be made when HMG makes formula public". Cf. Report of the Royal Commission, Cmd 5479, 1937, p. 22. See also L. Stein, The Balfour Declaration, pp. 528-532, 581-586.

² Manuel, op. cit., pp. 167-170, 176.

³ See Balfour's account to his niece Blanche Dugdale, quoted in Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, p. 40. See also C.J. Friedrich, American Policy towards Palestine, p. 6.

⁴ Cf. H. Beeley, "The Origin of the Balfour Declaration", FO 371/40138, E 7460.

Even after the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, the United States made no official move to support it. Not until nearly a year later, in September 1918, did it make such a statement, in the form of a New Year greeting, sent by the President to American Jewry. Wilson's statement was to become characteristic of future Presidential relations with the Zionists.

The State Department continued to be hostile to expressions of mutual goodwill and the President, when he decided to make the statement, simply ignored its advice; in fact he did not tell the Department what he was going to do.¹

The State Department was opposed to Zionism from the beginning, though it used varying arguments to justify its attitude. In 1917-18 it was argued that before any step was taken, the outcome of the war must become clear. From then until 1924, it said that no support could be given until there was a peace settlement with Turkey.² Later still, the pro-Arab argument cropped up and became dominant. But in fact there seemed to be a more fundamental reason for its attitude: Zionism was viewed with suspicion, because it was seen as an alien factor, threatening to impair the Department's complete control over United States foreign policy as a result of some "Jewish conspiracy".³

Wilson's public statement of September 1918 was made after sudden submission to pressure from Rabbi Stephen Wise, the Jewish mouthpiece of the New York Democratic Party.

¹ Manuel, op. cit., pp. 175-178, 180.

² Only at the end of 1924 was official American recognition of the British Mandate in Palestine made. See below, pp. xi-xii.

³ In future years, Zionist organizations were subject to dogging by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). See below, p. 128.

It was timed to coincide with the Jewish New Year festival and clearly aimed to win a favourable Jewish response.¹ Indeed, that statement boosted Zionist morale to such an extent that Justice Brandeis triumphantly declared that: "Opposition to Zionism could henceforth be considered disloyalty to the United States."² If so, one of the most disloyal institutions in the United States for the next thirty years, was to be the State Department.

Soon, however, the mood of internationalism declined in the United States; this change affected the American attitude toward Palestine, though not as immediately as it affected the outlook on some other parts of the world. For though in May 1920, the Senate voted against the United States joining the League of Nations, some developments of importance took place in regard to Palestine. Synchronisation between the two processes was not precise; some ardent isolationists remained, as they continued to be, pro-Zionists.

The last phase of the first period, despite American withdrawal from international affairs, left three landmarks in her Palestine policy, in the form of three documents: only later did the general trend of isolationism extend to Palestine. These three documents were: the 1919 King-Crane Commission report, a Congressional resolution of 1922, and the 1924 Anglo-American Convention.

(b) The King-Crane Report

At the Paris Peace Conference of 1918-1919, the

¹ A statement designed for issue on one of the consecutive Jewish festivals of each fall became a traditional practice of America's Presidents. It was particularly so in election years, that is, every second year, as those festivals usually occurred about 5-6 weeks before polling date.

² Manuel, op. cit., p. 178.

American attitude toward Anglo-French Middle Eastern policy was one of impatience and contempt. Wilson, a crusading internationalist, was not as interested in agreement between the big powers as he was in "the real wish of the area's inhabitants." That approach led him later on to some hesitation about the character of the Jewish National Home.

When negotiation about the future of the Turkish Empire seemed to be getting nowhere, Wilson demanded that an inquiry commission be sent to the area. The other "Big Three", while paying lip-service to his idea, showed little inclination to carry it out.¹ Eventually Wilson lost his patience and in March 1919 told his fellows that an American commission would undertake the inquiry alone.²

At the end of May, under the worried eyes of the Zionists,³ a commission headed by Henry King and Charles Crane set out for Palestine and Syria, where after only six weeks they finished their whole investigation.⁴ But despite the fantastic speed at which they made it, their conclusion never reached the conference table; it was made available to the British, French, and Italian delegations "only if they asked for it."⁵ Consequently, it was ignored by the conference at which the Charter for the Mandates was drafted. The public was not told about it until 1922,⁶ and its full

¹ The French had no intention of doing so; the British were by comparison willing, and in fact appointed commissioners of their own but they were, nevertheless, not particularly sorry that the French had demolished the whole project. See H.N. Howard, The King-Crane Commission, pp. 50-56.

² C.J. Friedrich, op. cit., pp. 6-7. Manuel, op. cit., pp. 244-247.

³ After consulting Weizmann, Judge Brandeis went to Palestine "on the heels of the Commission," Manuel, ibid.

⁴ The Commission dealt also with Anatolia, but that part of the report was not completed until 20 August.

⁵ Howard, op. cit., p. 220.

⁶ Manuel, op. cit., p. 249.

text was not officially published until 1947.¹

But the commissioners' verdict had much effect on the future attitude of the State Department, particularly on its Near East Division (NED).

The report's conclusions sharply contested the spirit of optimism shared by Britain, the Zionists, and President Wilson himself. Curiously, it was also opposed to the line taken a short time earlier by the recognized leader of the Arab world--at that time Emir Feisal.²

It expressed great concern about the prospects of the Jewish National Home, because of fear of development of a conflict between the Jewish and the Arab national movements. It therefore recommended extreme caution in carrying out the Zionist project, even in the form of a "greatly reduced Zionist program." It suggested that the flow of Jewish immigration into Palestine must be controlled and allowed to develop only piecemeal.³

(c) The Congressional Resolution of 1922

The American Zionists continued to seek a clear statement of support from their Government; but with the defeat of the Democrats at the 1920 Presidential election, their chances of securing this became less and less.

¹ FRUS 1919, Papers relating to the Paris Peace Conference, vol. XII.

² Feisal acted as the head of the Arab delegation at the Peace Conference and was the mouthpiece for Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, he became convinced that the Arabs and the Zionists would benefit from one another's presence in the area. True, the agreement he signed with Weizmann in January 1919 for co-operation, had appended to it a reservation stating that he would be bound by it only if the Arabs achieved all their other aims, but Feisal repeated his views before the Peace Conference itself when giving evidence early in February. Manuel, op. cit., p. 227. Cf. also, A.H. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, p. 51.

³ FRUS, Paris Peace Conference, vol. XII, pp. 794-795.

Confronted with growing estrangement from the Administration, they shifted their attention to Congress. Between 1919 and 1922 they developed techniques of tackling Congressmen at their grassroots; instead of trying to meet a Congressman in Washington, they exercised pressure at his constituency end. Another technique that they inaugurated was that of the telegram campaign, whereby the object of pressure was, over a short period, sent scores of telegrams from Zionist constituents, all voicing the same demand.

The biennial election of 1922 gave the Zionists just the chance they needed. They hoped that if both Houses of Congress were simultaneously to adopt a pro-Zionist resolution, the President would have to abandon his adherence to the State Department's attitude, and side with Congress.

On 30 June 1922 they scored a success: both Houses adopted a resolution of sympathy with the Balfour Declaration and with the Jewish National Home, laboriously pushed through by non-Jewish Congressmen. Confronted with this fait accompli, President Harding ignored the advice of Secretary of State Hughes, and on 21 September himself signed the resolution.¹ This outcome gave a good deal of comfort to the British, but caused embarrassment to the State Department.²

(d) The Anglo-American Convention of 1924

The dismemberment of the Turkish Empire raised the

¹ Friedrich, op. cit., pp. 14-19. There was, however, nothing in the resolution committing the United States to any form or size of the Jewish National Home. Incidentally, Congress approved it a few weeks after the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, had issued his 1922 White Paper (Cmd 1700), which greatly restricted the boundaries of the intended Home. In their act, Congress and the President in fact implicitly recognized British freedom to interpret and alter the Mandate unilaterally. See Cmd 1700.

² Manuel, op. cit., pp. 275, 277, 282.

question of American capitulatory rights in Palestine. Earlier, the United States had enjoyed these rights through special treaties with Turkey. American withdrawal from the League of Nations complicated the legal situation in regard to these rights, since the British Mandate was in consequence not legally binding on the United States.

Disputes arose immediately on the end of the hostilities in Palestine, particularly in regard to American oil concessions,¹ and the jurisdiction of British courts over American nationals living in Palestine.²

Lord Balfour on his second visit to Washington in January 1922,³ gave impetus, though not sufficiently strongly, to a British attempt to settle these outstanding problems. His idea was that in exchange for the settlement of American rights in Palestine, the United States Government would legally recognize the British Mandate.⁴

But the State Department procrastinated over the next two years. Only on 2 December 1924 was the Convention finally signed in London.⁵ Its gist afforded America the right to ignore any alteration in the terms of the Mandate that affected her own Palestine interests.⁶

¹ Palestine was held at the beginning of the century to give the best promise of crude oil deposits. In 1906 the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey received its first Palestine concession, but the outbreak of war stopped the drilling before any result was achieved. Cf. S.H. Longrigg, Oil in the Middle East, p. 25. In March 1919 the British Army refused to permit the renewal of the works. FRUS 1919, Vol. II, pp. 250-252 and FRUS 1920, Vol. II, p. 649.

² FRUS 1920, Vol. II, pp. 675-678.

³ For the International Naval Conference.

⁴ Cf. Exchange of correspondence between Balfour and Hughes, January-June 1922, FRUS, Vol. II, pp. 268-328.

⁵ By Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain and US Ambassador Kellogg, FRUS 1924, Vol. II, pp. 201-202.

⁶ In 1938 and 1939 the Zionists raised a legal argument based on this point, see below, pp. 8-9, 22-23.

Technically, the convention became the fundamental law underlying United States relations with Palestine for nearly a quarter of a century. But despite appearances, neither the Convention, nor the 1922 Congressional Resolution, contained provisions that might cause the United States to intervene in British policy, if that were to turn against the Jewish National Home; not for many years was this possibility put to the test.

After 1925 there is little worthy of note in American Palestine affairs. Zionist relations with the British Government, though not always harmonious, were good. When in 1930 it seemed for a moment that the anti-Zionist line in Whitehall was uppermost, Weizmann brilliantly manoeuvred the then British Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, into reversing an anti-Zionist government decision.

There was scarcely need for any political help from the United States during the second period; in its course, Weizmann's relations with some of the most prominent American Zionist leaders were none too cordial. This antipathy, together with America's retreat into isolationism, weakened American Zionism causing it to degenerate; throughout the period, it was not a power to be reckoned with.

Chapter One

AMERICAN ASSENT TO THE 1939 WHITE PAPER

The 1939 White Paper marked official British departure from support of the Jewish National Home as conceived by its originators. This policy, although announced only on 17 May, had been discernible many months earlier.

Zionist diplomacy was anxious to ward it off, devising some prophylactic that would prevent the expected set-back, but the Zionists found their position in Britain suddenly weaker than ever before. In their perplexity, they tried to get additional diplomatic support from the United States, just as they had done some twenty years earlier. This time, however, the circumstances were entirely different, and their attempt failed. During the years before, and immediately after, the publication of the White Paper, the only effective help they could get came from the British Government.

There were two main reasons for their failure. One was that the United States Government did not at the time think it was America's business to take action on behalf of the Zionists. Indeed, it was in no position to do so, even had it wanted to. The other was British awareness of America's unwillingness to intervene. But even if subjected to American diplomatic pressure, the British were determined to carry out their policy come what might. The Americans realised this.

British determination sprang from strategic

considerations. Expectation of imminent outbreak of war in Europe caused Britain to weigh the support which she could expect from Jews all over the world, including those in the United States, against the danger of alienating the Arabs; of the two, the latter preoccupation seemed the more important. For in the event of war Jewish support appeared to be unconditional, whereas Arab support was not. Maybe Britain's earlier choices of policy had been made largely on moral grounds; now the basis was strategic.

From the moment of the outbreak of the Arab revolt in 1936, the Arab-Jewish dispute in Palestine had ceased to be a local problem; it had become an international one. This fundamental change, which was manifest in the growing interest of the neighbouring Arab countries in the problem, was discernible also on the Jewish side. Here, it took the form of a reawakening of American Zionism. But such help as the American Jews could render at that stage was of no avail to Zionism.

(a) The American Palestine Statement of October 1938

During the 1920's and most of the 1930's, many American Jewish organizations had taken an interest in the development of the Palestine Yishuv, without necessarily affiliating with the Zionist movement. So long as the British were taking positive action towards building up the National Home, little distinction was drawn in the United States between "Zionists" and "non-Zionists".

American Zionism helped the Yishuv only by proxy. Very few American Jews were ready themselves to immigrate into Palestine, and as far as fund-raising was concerned,

Zionists and non-Zionists alike engaged in collecting money for Palestine.¹ The very development of the far-away Jewish National Home warmed all hearts, but few Jews seriously bothered to think what ultimate form that National Home should take.

Even the Arab riots that broke out in 1936, and seemed to threaten the future of the Yishuv,² gave reason for joint concern rather than for disagreement between "Zionists" and "non-Zionists". The British were still seen as defenders of the Palestinian Jews and there was no reason why their policy should not be given general support.

Only the short-lived British partition plan, devised by the Peel Commission in 1937, generated a brief moment of argument between American Jews. Some opposed it, because it drastically curtailed the boundaries of the National Home, others because they feared that Jewish statehood might affect their own standing as loyal American citizens. Yet others supported the plan, hoping to achieve a once-for-all settlement with the Arabs. But the line of division was as yet not clearly drawn between the protagonists who belonged to the Zionist movement, and those who did not.

American Jewish excitement over partition, however, as well as some concern for the future of American vested interests in Palestine, spurred the State Department to intervene for the first time for years. On 7 July 1937, the United

¹ From 1921 until 1945, American Jews contributed a total of \$155,000,000 to various funds in Palestine. At the same time, only 8,500 out of more than five million American Jews became immigrants into that country.

² In 1936-9 the Jewish Agency adopted a policy of abstention from any offensive retaliation against the Arabs ("Havlagah"). This was seen in America as a sign of weakness and lack of confidence in the Yishuv's future.

States Ambassador in London, Bingham, enquired at the Foreign Office what exactly the British Government intended to do. In reply, the Foreign Secretary, Antony Eden, assured him that the United States would be kept informed of any new British plan, and that in any event, the United States could rest assured that American rights in Palestine, as laid down by the 1924 Convention, would remain unimpaired.¹

The British soon abandoned the idea of partition, owing to rapid changes of scene brought about in Europe by the Axis powers. They appointed another inquiry Commission, called after its chairman, Woodhead, to study the practical problems that partition entailed. The Woodhead Commission worked under duress. In Palestine, the Arab revolt broke out again, to an accompaniment of increased pressure from the neighbouring Arab countries, while in Europe, the Sudeten crisis on the Czech border grew daily more menacing. The Munich agreement that "settled" it was reached only just before Woodhead's report was due.

Confronted with these events in Europe and the Middle East, British strategists demanded immediate abandonment of partition, and the Cabinet tended to agree with them, even before its members saw the Commission's report.² It appears that by August 1938, and while Woodhead was still in Palestine, the Government had made up its mind that Britain could on no account afford any kind of partition. The Munich war-scare put the seal on its decision.³

On 14 September 1938--that is, some days before

¹ Hull-Bingham correspondence, 7 July 1937, FRUS pp. 889-892.

² J.M. Cohen, "Policies and Politics in Palestine, 1936-9", Ph.D. thesis, London University, pp. 243-257.

³ Ibid.

Munich--the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, carried out the unpleasant task of breaking the news to Weizmann. Partition, MacDonald said, was still, in his view, the best solution, but it must be dropped now. Instead, Britain was planning to call an Arab-Jewish conference, in which it hoped to reach some "other" solution. Weizmann was led to understand that the Jews would have to make big concessions.¹

It cost Weizmann several days of intelligence work to find out that things were actually bleaker for the Zionists than MacDonald's words had suggested. He could think of no one in the British Government to whom he could turn for help, and saw no way ahead but resort to help from elsewhere. At the beginning of October he sparked off action by the American Zionists, though whether he obtained the kind of action he originally wanted cannot be said for sure.

To generate action among people long unused to taking it was not easy. The President of the Zionist Organization of America,² for one, hesitated to put pressure on the United States Government, and in order to overcome his inaction Weizmann had to by-pass him, and to send alarmist telegrams to other Zionist leaders. The proposed conference, Weizmann cabled, was "nothing but eyewash." The British Government had in fact already made up its mind, regardless of the mounting refugee problem, to stop Jewish immigration and, perhaps, to establish an Arab Government in Palestine.³

The outcome of his effort was, that, thanks to Rabbi Stephen Wise, head of the American Jewish Congress, a united

¹ Report by Weizmann, 15 Sep. 1938, CZA/S 25/7563.

² Henceforth ZOA.

³ Weizmann to Solomon Goldmann, 3 Oct. 1938 and Weizmann to Wise and to Lipsky, 6 Oct. WA.

front of the seven most important Jewish organizations was formed on 10 October 1938. An ad hoc Emergency Committee was established and joint action by Zionists and non-Zionists was planned.¹

The campaign devised by this committee was to take three main forms. It was to organise country-wide mass rallies, aimed at getting wide publicity in both the local and the national press. It was to stimulate lobbies of Congressmen and Government to make representations to the White House, requesting intervention in Britain's Palestine policy. And it was to set in train an unprecedented avalanche of telegrams, concentrated on the State Department.

Within days, the Zionists scored an impressive success. Both the White House and the State Department were taken by surprise. Roosevelt personally received numerous letters from distinguished politicians, asking him to intervene, and the State Department was stunned to receive something like one hundred thousand telegrams, which piled up on the desks of the Near East Division.²

The White House, in its search for a way out, urgently consulted the State Department as to whether, in law, the 1924 Convention allowed of American intervention in support of any Zionist claim. The Department answered no; the President accordingly signed scores of identical letters, addressed to all Congressmen and Governors who had requested his intervention. The President's letter, to be found in quantity in his files, read:

¹ Halperin, The Political World of American Zionism, pp. 36-37. The reason for Wise's success was, in all likelihood, that the campaign was aimed at sustaining the status quo in Palestine, not at the introduction of innovations.

² Memo by Murray, 4 March 1939 (sic), FRUS 1938, p. 960, and FRUS 1939, pp. 724-725.

" . . . we kept constantly before the British Government through our Ambassador in London, the interest which the American people have in Palestine. [But] . . . under the terms of our convention with Great Britain we are unable to prevent the modification of the mandate."¹

The State Department was worse off than the White House, for its regulations demanded that all letters addressed to it must be answered. Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles² suggested a way out of its almost comic dilemma. He suggested that, instead of answering each letter separately, which was practically impossible, a single official letter of acknowledgement should be issued.³ The trouble was what this letter was to say.

After ascertaining that the Zionist allegations were basically true,⁴ Secretary of State Cordell Hull decided to issue a public statement on Palestine expressing general sympathy with the Zionists, but in the same breath to tell the British confidentially that this statement was for home consumption only.

To be on the safe side with Britain, Hull made sure that the confidential assurance would reach the Foreign Office before it learned of the home announcement. On 12 October, he instructed his ambassador in London, Joseph Kennedy, as follows:

"I should like to have you see Lord Halifax⁵ and entirely personally and unofficially inform him that you do not presume to interfere in any way

¹ Various repetitions in FDRL OF/700 Box 1 and in SA/Manson file.

² Perhaps the only person in the State Department with Zionist inclinations.

³ Minute of 12 Oct. 1938, 867.01/1178, USNA.

⁴ Cf. Welles to Ambassador Kennedy, 10 Oct. and report of Kennedy's conversation with Malcolm MacDonald on the following day, *FRUS* 1938 p. 951.

⁵ The then new British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

with the policy which Great Britain may adopt regarding Palestine."¹

Not till this was done did the Department, on 14 October, release a lengthy statement about Palestine, the first of its kind for years.

The statement consisted of three parts. It began with an account of the "close interest" that the American people, and each successive President of the United States, had taken in the development of the Jewish National Home. At the same time, the statement specified that this interest had been basically "moral", and that none of the earlier expressions of support committed the United States to any "foreign obligation or entanglement."

Its second part contained its pith. As there seemed to be conflicting interpretations of United States rights in Palestine, as laid down by the 1924 Convention, the Department issued its own interpretation of that document, particularly of Articles 5 and 7.

Article 5, it said, defined the rights of the United States and confined them to:

"Non-discriminatory treatment in matters of commerce, non-impairment of vested American property rights, permission to American nationals to establish and maintain educational, philanthropic and religious institutions . . ."

The Zionists of America wanted to interpret this article to mean that the whole project of the Jewish National Home, being so largely financed from American Jewish funds, was in fact a "vested American interest." They asked that the United States should regard any arrest of that Home's development as "impairment of American rights."² But the State

¹ Hull to Kennedy, 12 Oct. 1938, FRUS 1938, p. 952.

² FRUS 1938, pp. 956-959.

Department did not accept their view. Likewise with Article 7. This read that:

"Nothing contained in the present Convention shall be affected by any modification which may be made in the terms of the Mandate . . . unless such modification shall have been assented to by the US . . ."

Here the Zionists hoped to get the American Government to oppose, on grounds of international law, any alteration of the original terms of the mandate, for instance, in regard to Jewish immigration.¹

But the State Department remained unmoved. By its standards, Article 5 concerned, at best, only American nationals living in Palestine--a few thousand in all.² As to Article 7, the Department reckoned that it had nothing to do with the Jewish National Home. It was merely "one out of eight other identical agreements concluded by the US Government with respect to other [mandated] territories."

The third part of the Department's statement hung on Eden's assurance to Ambassador Bingham, and expressed the hope that America would be informed "in ample time" of any intention to alter the terms of the mandate. But it did not ask that America be consulted about any such alteration.³

By this statement, the Department converted the whole affair from an embarrassment into a success for itself. All the parties concerned seemed relatively satisfied. The

¹ Ibid.

² An assembly of American nationals living in Palestine, sent, on 18 October a delegation to the American General Consul in Jerusalem, forwarding a petition. They claimed they had migrated to Palestine relying on the 1924 Convention and had hoped to live in a developing Jewish National Home. They urged the United States Government to intervene, in order to keep Palestine's doors open. FRUS 1938, p. 966.

³ For the full text of the 1938 statement see FRUS 1938, pp. 953-955.

Zionists saw in it reassurance, publicly stated, that the United States supported the original concept of the Jewish National Home. The British were satisfied with receipt of a confidential assurance that America would practise non-intervention. Even the Palestinian Arabs were not altogether disappointed, for they sensed that the trend of British policy was in their favour, and were glad that America had tacitly admitted its inability to intervene.¹

One person who seemed concerned by it was King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. He took the trouble to write a long personal letter to President Roosevelt in language that the President found refreshingly blunt, telling him how mean were the Jews, and the Zionists in particular. Roosevelt replied at like length, and the two heads of state remained pen-friends on the subject of Palestine until the President's death in 1945.

The American Zionists' campaign of 1936 was only a rehearsal for campaigns of the future. From it, they learned many lessons that later helped them to elaborate their techniques of pressure. Yet for the time being--that is, for the rest of 1938 and for the two years that followed--they let their machinery lie idle. Their ability to run successful country-wide campaigns and to produce effective results, was not further developed until 1942.

(b) The Effect of the European Situation on Palestine

The statement just described scarcely affected the

¹ Memo by Murray. In a meeting between the Chief of the NED and a delegation of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, held in January 1939, the Arab spokesman said that the 1938 statement was "a very fair and objective presentation" of America's position. FRUS 1939, p. 702.

course decided upon by the British Cabinet a few days after its issue. For the Cabinet's prime worry was the possible effect of the situation in Europe on the attitude of the Arab world. When the American statement was made, a comprehensive British plan for appeasing the Arabs already existed. As early as September 1938, British legations in many parts of the world had been informed that,

" . . . it would be extremely desirable . . . to maintain friendliest relations with the Arab people,"

and that

"it is hoped that suspending Jewish immigration and postponing partition will conciliate Arab opinion in Palestine and surrounding countries."¹

Towards the end of October 1938, this new line of thought was fed into the policy-making process; the outcome was to be the 1939 White Paper. A Cabinet Committee was instructed to prepare a statement of the new policy. The Woodhead report, for what it was now worth, together with partition, were to be shelved. An Arab-Jewish conference was to be called in London, after which "if accord should not be reached within a reasonable time," the British would have to enforce their own solution.² Two weeks later, these decisions were made public.³

During the preparations for the conference in question, the degree to which the Palestine problem had become an international matter became fully manifest. Delegates from all the Arab countries were invited to take part, and were asked to "advise" the British Government as to how to deal with the Arab-Jewish dispute. As a matter of fact, the presence of

¹ FO to Sir Ronald Lindsay, British Ambassador to the United States, 25 Sep. 1938, FO 371/21864, E.5621.

² Cabinet Committee, Minutes of 24 Oct., FO 371/21865, E.6379.

³ Cmd 5854 of November 1938.

these countries was needed not only in order to obtain their goodwill toward Britain, but also to mitigate the militancy of the Palestine Arabs.

But to demonstrate Britain's lack of bias, the Jewish delegation was also to be international: representatives of world Jewry, Zionists and non-Zionists, were also invited. The trouble, when the actual meeting took place, was that the Arabs refused to sit at the same table as the Jews, and the conference was perforce divided into two parts, between which the British representatives shuttled as best they might. The conference, which began on 7 February, did not get far. The Jewish delegates were the first to see no point in staying; soon, their Arab counterparts from Palestine quit as well. Britain, not unduly perturbed, was left to do business with the amenable Arab states, with whom agreement, or at least acquiescence in the White Paper policy, seemed attainable. At one moment it seemed that the new policy could be introduced in March, but Hitler's seizure of Prague put an end to this hope, and caused the British to wish to think again.

Appeasement of the Arabs remained their prime consideration. In face of mounting German and Italian threats, Britain needed "reliable" populations and rulers in the Middle East. This requirement strengthened Arab bargaining power. For Egypt controlled vital sea and air communications to the Far East, India, and East Africa. Iraq was an important air junction and had rich oil deposits, for which Palestine and the Levant served as an outlet. In a word, any Arab country could, if it wanted to, give Britain a good deal of trouble.

Having put down the Arab rebellion in Palestine by November 1938, the British were in a position to apply a carrot

as well as a stick. In February 1939, the Committee of Imperial Defence¹ made various suggestions as to how to buy Arab goodwill: Iraq, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia were to be handsomely subsidized to sustain their rulers' budgets. In addition, every British legation in the Arab world was to be equipped with extra funds, wherewith to offset possible Arab revenue losses incurred as a result of war. But all this, the CID reckoned, was of secondary importance. "The overriding need was the settlement of the Palestine problem."²

But at this point the international character of the Palestine problem began to exercise Whitehall from a different angle. It remained true that if war started, the Jews had no choice but loyalty to Britain. But what about American support in such an event? Counter arguments started to crop up, based on fear lest American public opinion should be incensed by appeasement of the Arabs.

Lord Vansittart, chief diplomatic adviser at the Foreign Office, did not believe in appeasement and voiced these worries. ~~Late~~ in ~~February~~ 1939 he wrote that,

"... every gain that we might achieve among the Arabs, who after all are an unreliable and centrifugal people, would be much more than offset by the loss we should sustain in the United States."³

Until the collapse of the Munich agreement, few heeded his warnings. Vansittart, on his own evidence, "could recall no major issue on which his advice was taken,"⁴ and his verdict certainly applies to the piece of advice quoted above.

¹ Henceforth CID.

² See, "Measures to influence Arab States and minor powers in the Middle East in case of a European war involving the United Kingdom", memo by Sir John Shuckburgh, 16 Feb. 1939, for the CID. Cab 51/11/297.

³ Memo by R. Vansittart, 24 Feb. 1937, FO 371/23226, E. 1659.

⁴ R. Vansittart, The Mist Procession, p. 550.

But the sobering shock which the British Government received when Prague fell to Hitler shook many established convictions. A strategic reassessment was called for.

But this break in British policy-making proved short. Within a month the British Government had recovered its confidence and on 20 April, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, re-introduced the international theme in its Arab context. Closing his eyes to the alarming dimensions that the Jewish refugee problem had attained, and with his attention fixed on the guarantee that he had recently given to Poland, the Prime Minister told his colleagues:

"We are now compelled to consider Palestine mainly from the point of view of its effect on the international situation. If we must offend one side, let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs."¹

Thus the Jews, already sufficiently "offended", were called on to support British strategy in a peculiar way on which the British scarcely bothered to put a gloss. As will be seen, this British attitude and the acts to which it led served as strong stimulants to the militant mood that subsequently emerged both among Palestinian and the American Jews.

(c) Weizmann's Tactics to Counter the White Paper Policy

Only a few days before the Prague crisis, the British Government had made up its mind exactly what its policy in Palestine was to be.² Basically it contained three elements.

First, an independent state, with a large Arab majority, was to be established in Palestine within ten years. Meanwhile, gradual development towards self-government was to

¹ Minutes of the Cabinet Committee meeting, FO 371/232333, E.2995 (p. 34).

² Cabinet Meeting, 15 March 1939, Cab 23/98 11(39)5.

take place, by means of the appointment of Palestinians to various ministerial offices. Next, in order to retain the prevailing ratio of 2:1 in favour of the Arab population, total Jewish immigration into Palestine was not to exceed an ultimate 75,000 spread over a period of five years. After that period, no more Jewish immigrants were to be allowed, unless with Arab consent.

Thirdly, in order to protect Arab villagers against the allegedly large-scale eviction caused by Jewish land purchase, the Palestine High Commissioner was to have special powers to restrict land transfer to Jews.

Together, the three elements formed the foundation of the 1939 White Paper.

The British Cabinet knew that, at that stage, the Zionists' only hope was to delay the execution of this policy. Therefore, once the Cabinet had taken its decision, speedy execution became imperative. For it realised that any delay exposed it to the risk of missing a moment for appeasing the Arabs, or might cause erosion of the policy's terms, or both.

Hitler's sudden seizure of Czechoslovakia, by causing the British Cabinet to re-think its policy, endowed Weizmann with the gift of time to prepare a counter assault.¹ Sensing that the British had begun to hesitate, he hoped to bring about exactly what the Cabinet feared, namely, a series of delays; he also renewed his attempt to generate pressure from America.

He conducted this rear-guard action singlehanded. He had no cabinet to turn to, nor did he want one. When the London conference failed, each Jewish leader had gone home in

¹ See above, p. 14.

the bitter certainty that the diplomatic battle had been lost, and with little idea of what move to make next. Weizmann was the only Zionist leader in a position regularly to take the pulse of the British Cabinet, and he alone saw scope for action.

But by now his position within the Zionist movement was somewhat peculiar. No one had yet seriously challenged his leadership, yet, at the same time, he had reached a point at which, for geographical reasons, he had started to lose contact with the focal points of Zionism. In the first place, for some years past, Palestine, not London, had become the site of the Zionists' most important task, and there new leaders, younger and technically more fitted than he, were doing the job. In the second place, Europe had lost to the United States its central significance in Jewish life, and Weizmann never had, nor particularly sought, much influence over American Jewry.

Until 1939, the narrow basis of Weizmann's leadership escaped notice, since he was still the chief diplomat of the Zionist movement, and since London remained the centre of Zionist diplomacy. But now the complete British turnabout on Zionism not only reduced the scope for Weizmann's activities but caused him to lose credit with the Palestine and American Jews. In whispers, they blamed him for being hopelessly Anglophile, which was true, but also for conducting "appeasement" of the British, which was not. He never hesitated to combat anti-Zionist British moves with all the means at his disposal, refraining only when convinced that he was alienating British officialdom to no purpose. The rear-guard action that he conducted in 1939 was not only that of the Zionists; it was also his own.

His assault upon the British Government was two-pronged--from inside the Government and from America. In London, he canvassed a few of his old friends, who were still in positions of importance, but only one of them, Walter Elliot,¹ was keen to act. In America he tried to convince President Roosevelt to take action over the head of the State Department.

For a while his delaying tactics worked. During the April pause in British policy-making that has been described, Elliott managed to make both the Cabinet and the Cabinet Committee reconsider the new policy.² He used Vansittart's arguments in order to do so. But the stabilization of the situation in Europe enabled the Prime Minister to brush aside Elliot's appeal. By 1 May, he had reverted simply to fixing the date for the announcement of the new policy.³

Weizmann's appeal to Roosevelt came in the thick of the Prague crisis--a moment at which the number of Jewish refugees from Hitler greatly increased. He was initially successful, and hoped that this was only the beginning of Roosevelt's intervention on a larger scale.

He did not at the time know Roosevelt personally, and, to make an effective appeal, needed a go-between whom the President respected. He knew of only one such Jew in the United States, the veteran Zionist leader and ex-judge of the Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis. But Weizmann's relations with

¹ Minister of Health and member of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine.

² Elliot's Memo, 28 April. FO 371/23234, E 3231.

³ Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 1 May, Cab 23/99 25(39)1; and Elliot to the Prime Minister, 24 Apr., Premier 1/352.

Brandeis had been strained for nearly twenty years, and both needed to overcome long standing and mutual grudges before they could co-operate. The way to move Brandeis, Weizmann knew, was to paint a black picture, and to admit, in a way, that British support for Zionism was at an end. Weizmann wrote broken heartedly, and Brandeis was moved.

On 17 March he passed Weizmann's appeal and information to the President, asking "whether he did not feel a word from [him] may yet be in time to avert the folly and injustice of the British proposal."¹ Roosevelt at once inquired of the State Department what was happening, and was told that an aide mémoire had just arrived from the British Embassy, confirming Weizmann's information.²

On 19 March the President made a first cautious move through Sumner Welles. Ambassador Kennedy was alerted and advised to offer informally, and "in the right quarter" the advice that, "in view of the international crisis, which seems to be shaping up, a short delay in the publication might be of advantage."³ The hint no doubt contributed to the British decision of March to hold up publication. The President was able to inform Brandeis with some satisfaction that the publication had been postponed, and that he was "trying to put it off further."⁴

At this point Weizmann seems to have erred by confining the American initiative to secret diplomacy. Anxious not to let matters leave his hands, he did not inform any other

¹ Brandeis to the President, FDRL, PSF/Box 49.

² FRUS 1939, pp. 732-733. The British informed the Americans of their Palestine plans in order to keep Eden's 1937 promise to Ambassador Bingham.

³ Welles to Kennedy, FRUS 1939, p. 737.

⁴ Roosevelt to Brandeis, 23 March 1939, FDRL, PSF/Box 49.

Zionist leaders. One result was that the British Ambassador in Washington reported home "surprising little Jewish agitation, compared with last year's."¹ This in turn, reinforced the Cabinet's conviction, that "offending the Jews" did far less harm to Britain than "offending the Arabs". In any event, the British Cabinet accepted reports that American Jews were much worried about the increase of anti-semitism in their own country and that therefore their "real" interest was quiet and humble acquiescence in steps that the British anyway saw as unavoidable. The Cabinet accepted with satisfaction its Washington Embassy's earlier appreciation that,

"[it was] hardly believable that the Jews will be such fools as to stir trouble against us at the moment when we are their only friends left."²

It was typical of the British, despite their highly sophisticated political thought and experience, to regard everybody else's mind as if it worked like their own.

(d) Political and Legal Arguments against the White Paper

One may well ask at this stage, what did the Zionists want apart from delay? What constructive suggestion had they to make if they were to counter the British advice, that they should, with their eyes open give way to the Arabs in order to save the world from Hitler?

It does not appear that there was any common Zionist answer to this question, let alone a common plan as to how to face their dilemma. The Jews in Palestine were fully absorbed with defending themselves against Arab attacks, and expanding their settlements. Their influence upon--indeed, their interest

¹ Lindsey to FO, 17 March, FO 371/23230, E. 2050.

² Minute by Victor Mallet, Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, 11 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23221, E.768.

in--top-level Zionist diplomacy was at that time only secondary. Nevertheless, David Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Zionist Executive, soon after the outbreak of war defined Zionist strategy as "fighting the war as if there was no White Paper, and fighting the White Paper as if there was no war." In practice, his dictum meant that there ought to be full co-operation with the British, except in regard to the new policy. There was as yet no indication whether active resistance to its enforcement was meant.

Ben Gurion's line, however ambiguous, gave the Palestine Jews a feeling of hope. They felt that until the war was won, no time was to be wasted, no effort spared, yet that progress was possible all the same.

Weizmann, in London, saw the Jewish dilemma in the round. He realised that instigating the Jewish people against Britain might not only damage the common cause against Nazi Germany, but might also prove counter-productive to the cause of Zionism. He refused to see the White Paper, even after its enforcement, as Britain's final decision, and with some justification envisaged that new chances of changing it would arise from time to time.

But what were the American Jews to do? Ben Gurion's formula meant very little to most of them. They could not share the day-to-day excitement of building the Jewish National Home; at the same time, they were not able to appreciate the subtlety of Weizmann's thoughts. All that they saw was a British "betrayal", and the end of their hopes in Palestine. Most of them shared with other sectors of the American public the popular image of British imperialists, solely responsible for all the troubles in Palestine, because they instigated Arab

opposition to the Jews, so as themselves to divide and rule.

Seeing themselves as full and loyal American citizens, the American Zionists naturally resorted to the democratic process, in order to influence their country's foreign policy as they held that it should be.

These differences of environment and circumstance as between the Jewish communities brought about the development of different views and different tactics. While Weizmann's approach was moral and political, the American Jews saw the problem from a legal standpoint. They tried to prove that the new British policy was legally invalid.

When Weizmann had asked Stephen Wise in October 1938 to see "that the voice of America be heard," he had wanted to invite action by American diplomats, so as to prove to the British that it was a political mistake to underrate the influence of the Jews. The American Jews saw the problem of handling Britain in much simpler terms: they publicly claimed that the new British policy was an offence against International Law.

Weizmann argued as follows: the new policy was morally unjust, because it closed the doors of Palestine at a moment when more than ever before they needed to remain open. The world was proving unable to solve the Jewish problem but Zionism could do so. If Britain persisted in a moral wrong, she was bound eventually to weaken her strength against Nazism.

Half a million Jews, Weizmann argued, had come to Palestine in order to escape persecution arising from their minority status everywhere. Now they faced the danger of remaining a minority in the only country where some fifty nations had once held out to them the hope of redeeming themselves.

Weizmann did not accept the concept that Arab and Jewish national aspirations were irreconcilable. But the Arabs, he maintained, had many countries in which they deserved independence. Palestine was different: it was a country taken from the Jews nineteen hundred years previously, and the Jews had always claimed it. If they were now to get it, they and the Arabs could come to terms whereby Arab rights in Palestine would be internationally guaranteed, while the Palestine Jewish entity might well be woven into some wide federation of Arab states.

The American Jews and their supporters claimed, on the other hand, that the Jewish National Home was an international agreement, made through the League of Nations; this agreement the White Paper violated.¹ It had been reinforced by the 1924 Convention and therefore it was the task of the United States Administration to demand that pacta sunt servanda. If the Administration was not on the alert, it was the task of America's legislators to draw their attention to a commitment.

It is worth noting that the originators of this legal concept came from the ranks of the non-Jewish pro-Zionist American Palestine Committee,² notably from Senator William Borah and Representative Hamilton Fish, both staunch isolationists. During the 1938 campaign, a group of Congressmen had

¹ In August 1939, a few days before the war broke out, this view was accepted by the majority of the League of Nations Mandate Commission.

² Henceforth APC. Established in 1932, this committee was not particularly active until 1942. The Zionists, somewhat disrespectfully dubbed it a "Paper Organization". Nevertheless, membership of this organization always included several important Congressmen and public men who were quite ready to keep the Zionist cause alive. Cf., for instance, Halperin, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

used the Congress floor to combine pro-Zionist agitation with anti-British views.¹

Of the participants, Weizmann alone was well informed as to what was going on in British Government circles,² the American Zionists by comparison were fumbling in the dark. Only once, before the White Paper was published were they caused to react to a British move. On 4 May, Malcolm MacDonald, in reply to a question in the House of Commons, said that "Palestine would be considered in the light of the international situation." The American Jews had no idea that the issue of the new anti-Zionist policy was imminent but the press report of the parliamentary debate just cited was enough to cause a group of Congressmen, headed by Senator William King of Utah, to send a worried letter to the Secretary of State, urging him to be on his guard about American rights as set out in the 1924 Convention. In reply, Cordell Hull assured them that America still held to its 1938 statement.³

(e) The Influence of America on Britain's Final Decision

Before the Prague crisis, Chamberlain was all for the earliest possible publication of the White Paper, regardless of any repercussions in America. He was convinced that,

"If it was necessary to face anti-British feeling in America as a result of our Palestine policy, it was better that it should happen when there was not yet . . . an acute international crisis."⁴

Once the crisis had become "acute", the Prime

¹ A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, The Eve of War 1939, p. 179.

² Mainly through Walter Elliot.

³ Hull to Senator King, 8 May 1939, FRUS 1939, pp. 747-748.

⁴ Cabinet Meeting, 8 March 1939, Cab 23/97 10(39)5.

Minister changed his mind: a delay on a week to week basis was, he thought, worth while.

But week followed week and delay followed delay. First came Roosevelt's plea, then Walter Elliot's; next, towards the end of April, "an important speech" by Hitler was expected.¹ But Hitler's speech of 28 April did little to clarify the international situation and MacDonald renewed his warning that publication of the White Paper was now or perhaps never.² He supported his argument with the somewhat questionable evidence of the American Ambassador,³ who was of opinion that,

"The [American] Jews would not be able to work out strong pro-Jewish agitation [but] . . . they might be in a position to work out an anti-British one."⁴

The Cabinet was disturbed by the complexity of its dilemma. On the one hand it was worried about the impending visit of the King and Queen to the United States.⁵ It must not alienate the American Jews, for to do so might expose their Majesties to hostile demonstrations. On the other, it must bear the Arabs in mind. Malcolm MacDonald admitted the force of both arguments when he remarked that,

"While early announcement might embitter feeling against us in the US it would go a long way to recover . . . the sympathy of the Arab world."⁶

¹ Cabinet Meeting, 26 Apr. 1939, Cab 23/99 24(39)6.

² Ibid.

³ Joseph Kennedy was usually considered by the British to be "strange" and "gloomy", partly because of his utterances on the Irish problem and on Fascism. His co-operation and goodwill in regard to the Palestine problem were a pleasant surprise for the Cabinet. Kennedy went out of his way to persuade the Foreign Office that Britain had little need to worry about Zionist influence in America. When, after publication of the White Paper, he proved right, various Cabinet members expressed their gratitude to him, FO 371/23236, E.3875.

⁴ Cabinet Meeting, 26 Apr. 1939, Cab 23/99 24(39)6.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

And he could, he went on, sugar a bitter pill for the Jews by means of some fresh news for them. He told his colleagues that a scheme to absorb "substantial numbers of Jewish refugees in Guiana" was due to be published in the following week.¹

But the Cabinet continued to hesitate, and at the beginning of May took refuge in a further delay.²

Sensing the British Cabinet's plight, Weizmann deployed all his skill at exploiting chinks in Britain's armour. He decided to try Roosevelt again. He again made contact with Brandeis and asked him to make a further appeal to the President, as the "successor of President Wilson" who was "jointly responsible with Lord Balfour" for the adoption of the Jewish National Home idea. This Home, Roosevelt was to be told, was under threat of liquidation.³

Next day Brandeis passed the appeal to the President and for a moment it appeared that Roosevelt's March intervention would be repeated. For he sent a message to Sumner Welles saying:

"I still believe that any announcement about Palestine at this time . . . is a mistake, and I think we should tell them [the British] that . . . What shall I say to Brandeis?"⁴

¹ This scheme was also aimed to impress Roosevelt, and it was hoped that it would do so. Roosevelt was the father of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, established a year earlier at Evian. But when the report was published, in the first week of May, it proved to be a fiasco. Guiana, the last resort for refugees at that time, could not absorb more than several thousands of them, and not immediately. See A.J. Sherman, Island Refuge (London, 1973), pp. 253-254. Two years later, Lord Moyne was to define the Guiana scheme "a lost case [sic]". CZA/J/19.

² This last delay had perhaps less to do with America than with the launching of the Italian-German "Pact of Steel" on 7 May, which again necessitated reassessment of Britain's policy in the context of the international situation.

³ Weizmann to Brandeis, 8 May 1939, quoted in FRUS 1939, p.749.

⁴ Roosevelt to Hull, ibid., p. 748.

But the British were never "told" again. Welles was about to instruct Kennedy as the President wished, when he got a telegram from London saying that the British had delayed their announcement further. Taking this as just another sign of British indecision on Palestine, both Roosevelt and Welles were satisfied.

But not for long. On 15 May, the State Department received the full draft of the White Paper, together with the news that its publication was now firmly fixed for 17 May.¹ Wallace Murray, Chief of the NED studied the document, aided by the Department's legal advisers and his judgement was that:

" . . . having in view particularly the British strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the necessity for Great Britain . . . of cementing its position in the Near East, it is our opinion that the final British decision represents perhaps as reasonable a compromise between Jewish and Arab aspirations as is practicable . . . at this time."²

Murray added his conviction that the demand made by the Zionists, for United States intervention in Britain's Palestine policy on the basis of the 1924 convention had no legal foundation.

The NED's judgement in fact fully agreed with that of the British Cabinet, and there is no evidence of any challenge to this opinion from any quarter of the United States Administration. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Murray's opinion became United States policy. At the final stage, America made no attempt to stop, change, or even postpone the White Paper.

On 17 May the new policy was laid before the British Parliament, and on 22 and 23 May a stormy debate took place. The Government came under heavy fire, not only from the Labour

¹ Ibid., pp. 750-757.

² Ibid.

opposition but also from the Conservative back benches. A group of Conservative MPs, headed by Winston Churchill, warned it of the serious results of alienating American sympathy for Britain at such an hour.¹

As to American Jewry: the Zionists learned of the new policy only after it had been announced, so that no preventive action was possible. But many protest rallies were held and petitions read by Congressmen into the Congressional Record.² Another ad hoc Emergency Committee was hurriedly set up and managed to stir considerable anti-British agitation and protest. The Administration's position remained unshaken.

Confronted with increasing pressure from Congressmen, the State Department, on 25 May asked Roosevelt's permission to publish a statement. The President, who had earlier proffered a "no comment" approach, eventually yielded and a short statement was published on 26 May.

This made no attempt to argue with the British Government; it contested only the Zionist claims. It reiterated the Department's 1938 position that dismissed the legal argument, and stated that according to the Department's best judgement, "the US obtained no power to prevent change in the terms of the mandate." It said, further, that America "has no greater right with respect to Palestine than with respect to any other mandates confirmed by the League of Nations."³

Roosevelt himself showed no signs of forestalling

¹ Hansard, Commons, vol. 347, col. 2186.

² On 22 May, fifteen out of twenty two members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs added their names to a petition calling on the President to intervene with the British policy. It was only one of such similar expression of belated protest. US Congressional Record, vol. 84, p.t. 11.

³ "Statement Regarding American Rights Under the 1924 Convention", FRUS 1939, pp. 768-769.

the British decision. He would have liked to please everybody, for he loved the legend, held popularly among the Jews, about "Good Old Roosevelt", who always fought for them against the "Big Bad State Department". He enjoyed this legend till his last day and more than once, when conditions were critical, used to ask his Cabinet members to "let him hide behind their skirts."¹

He seems to have made no further communication to Brandeis, but after the White Paper was published, he sent a memorandum to Cordell Hull. This is a puzzling document, written in philosophic vein, and its purpose is not clear. Though he had two days earlier failed to move against the British policy, as he had done in March, he wrote that he had read its purport "with interest and a good deal of dismay," and that he thought the new policy did not fit the idea of the Balfour Declaration's originators.²

Weizmann's final attempt had failed and Ambassador Kennedy was proved right. American Jewish reaction came too late and was, when all was said and done, ineffective. The Royal visit, on the other hand, was a success, and helped to bring together the English-speaking peoples.

The Zionist movement, and indeed world Jewry as well, suffered a blow which many thought would bring to an end the fortunes of the National Home. "There is darkness all around us," Weizmann told the eve-of-war Zionist Congress, "there is darkness . . . and we cannot see through the clouds."³

¹ A remark to Stimson, Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 707, p. 2. FDRL.

² Roosevelt to Hull, 17 May 1939, FRUS 1939, pp. 757-758. Roosevelt scarcely bothered to write memoranda even when a concrete argument was needed. Instead, he used to add the initials OKFDR to memoranda written by his aides, and of which he approved. My guess is that in this case he wrote for the record.

³ Final speech, 21st Zionist Congress Record, Geneva, August 1939, CZA.

(f) Why America did not Intervene

People have wondered why America remained so passive in face of the 1939 threat to the Jewish National Home. The Zionists had many influential advocates in the United States, while the Arabs had none; many in the Administration were true sympathizers with Zionism, including the President himself. Why did the President not sustain his March intervention, so satisfying much of his electorate?

The British were far from popular with the American public and with Congress. What was more, the refugee problem could have been expected to render the Zionist solution attractive to Americans, set as they were upon their own strict immigration laws. They might have been expected to press the British to stick to their word and at the same time to rid themselves of unpleasant moral embarrassment.

Three reasons seem to have prevented them from intervening. The first was the unimportance of Palestine as a topic with the great majority of the American public. The second was the immense strength of Britain, as yet unimpaired as a first-rate power, and her independence in running her own affairs. In the late nineteen thirties, Britain's foreign policy was in appearance so self-assured that decisions were taken as if neither the United States nor the Soviet Union existed.¹ A striking example of its independent line took place when in January 1938, Roosevelt offered his mediation to negotiate peace in Europe. His hope was to deter Hitler; he did not realise that he was plunging into the thick of a new British policy of appeasement.² Chamberlain's rebuff of

¹ Cf. H.G. Nicholas, Britain and the United States, pp. 25-26.

² Cf. Cab. 29/96 1(38)1.

his offer was later condemned by Churchill as jettisoning "the last frail chance to save the world from tyranny, otherwise than by war." This British reluctance to allow American intervention in Europe rendered it unlikely that Britain would allow America to intervene in a quarter where Britain's peace-making role was indisputable.

A third reason was Roosevelt's determination to combat American isolationism and his interest in sustaining Britain's strength.

America itself, apart from some traditional missionary and educational work, took no interest in Middle Eastern affairs. Oil was another focus of interest but only in small circles; the fear of exhaustion of domestic reserves had not yet struck home.¹ Oil was not an important factor in American Middle East policy until 1943, and even then there was a division of opinion about the magnitude of the problem.

Roosevelt was not sure how far he could make moves over Palestine without bringing down domestic troubles on his own head. Many Congressmen who opposed the White Paper did so in order to annoy Britain rather than to influence American policy, whereas Roosevelt himself was convinced that Britain was America's chief ally.

He laboured long and hard to din into its reluctant legislators the message that strategically, the American navy was not strong enough to defend the United States on two oceans, and that given the rapid development of modern weapons of war, "the Atlantic had shrunk to the former dimensions of the

¹ Fears had arisen from time to time but always proved to be false alarms. Cf. the Economist, 18 May 1938, also W.R. Polk, The United States and The Arab World, p. 262; A.J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, The World in March 1939, p. 129.

English Channel."¹ He himself was convinced that even if it was impossible to change America's Neutrality Laws, because of Congress opposition to any such step, America's interest lay in sustaining the strongest possible British Empire. If appeasement of the Arabs was necessary to attain that end, then he might see it as a tragedy but would have to acquiesce in it.

The often repeated British concept that the Jews had no choice in the event of war but to accept whatever Britain did in Palestine, had, to a great extent, been accepted by the American Government. They too were later to be infuriated by the "Zionist nuisance"--that is, by loud Zionist protests when these appeared to them to be distracting attention from the nation's job of winning the war against Hitler.

(g) The American Argument in the Struggle against
the Land Transfer Regulations

The promulgation of the White Paper in May 1939 for the time being entailed the imposition of only one out of its three basic recommendations. To begin with, only Jewish immigration was curtailed. Severe punishment was prescribed for illegal immigrants and for anyone who assisted them. The Zionists had no intention of obeying the ban on immigration; at the same time they hoped to be able to check implementation of the other two stages. The outbreak of war on 3 September provided them with a new argument: the vital importance of American aid to the British war effort.²

¹ Cf. H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States, pp. 737-744; also A.J. Toynbee, The Eve of War, pp. 587-588.

² When I use the generalization "the Zionists" or "the Arabs", I do not necessarily mean a co-ordinated attempt by either of

At the close of 1939, amicable relations between the two English speaking nations could not be taken for granted. America was, for example, wary of British naval operations in the vicinity of its Atlantic shores: United States warships were shadowing and searching British ships over a wide zone.¹ Anti-British agitation was still strong, and although in November Roosevelt finally managed to push through his "cash and carry" bill, he was not able, at that stage to do more. And much more was needed. To the British, a victory for Roosevelt in the coming Presidential election seemed indispensable.

On the British side, great efforts were made to gain popularity in the United States. The British Embassy's staff had been reinforced and so had the Information Services. The appointment of Lord Lothian as Ambassador was part of an attempt aimed not only at popularising Britain with the United States Government but also at the grass-roots of the American people. To some Zionists it appeared that the stepping up of this approach was bringing about a change of climate as a result of which their argument might be better listened to in Britain.

Or at least, this was Weizmann's conviction. True, when the war broke out, he at once voiced the unconditional loyalty of "the Jewish Agency and all the Jews it represented" to the allies' cause. In a letter to The Times, and in private communications to British Ministers, he committed the Zionist

these peoples. So far as Zionism was concerned, there was surprisingly little co-ordination between Weizmann's diplomacy and the activities of the Palestine and American Zionists. For the discussion of this question see below, pp. 56-61.

¹ Memo by the First Lord of the Admiralty, 25 Dec. 1939, Cab 67/3 WP (G) (39)163.

movement to "unreserved support, not withstanding any differences over the Palestine question."¹

But obviously there were implicit conditions.

Weizmann expected that the British would keep to the status quo as it existed on 3 September. He hoped that no implementation of further items in the White Paper would take place.²

At that time, he was still in control of, and in fact running singlehanded, the movement's international affairs. His diplomacy was still highly personal but less self-assured than before.³ He reported most of his manoeuvres only generally to his colleagues in the United States and in Palestine. He went into more detail only when, in a particular case, he needed special assistance. His aim was to avert anti-British sentiments on their part.

In late 1939 he wrote to the American Zionists that he was planning to come to the United States and asked them to arrange on his behalf a series of meetings with prominent members of the American administration. He wanted to meet Roosevelt as well.⁴ According to his own account, his trip "had no specific object" other than closely to explore the American political scene,⁵ but this was not what he impressed on members of the British War Cabinet. To them he behaved as if he had more concrete plans and tried to convince them that he was in a position to bring big sectors of the American public

¹ The Times, 6 September 1939, also FO 371/23239, E. 6384.

² Zionist Executive, 12 November 1939, also FO 371/23241, E. 7163.

³ The exclusion of Elliot from the War Cabinet appears to have diminished Weizmann's knowledge of what went on there.

⁴ Weizmann to Kaplan, 17 October 1939, and to Goldmann, 7 December 1939, W.A.

⁵ Weizmann, Trial and Error, p. 513.

into closer harmony with Britain. His talks with various Ministers convinced him, wrongly as things turned out, that in return, nothing would be done to alter the Palestine situation, at least until he came back.¹

Paradoxically, but perhaps not unreasonably, Weizmann's American visit was now viewed favourably in certain British Government quarters but was considered "undesirable" by the State Department. While Halifax and Churchill wished Weizmann well, the State Department took several steps to encourage certain anti-Zionist Jewish organizations to oppose his visit.²

Weizmann's meeting with Winston Churchill on 17 December was an encouragement and a surprise to him. He found out that Churchill, newly appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, not only remained an ardent pro-Zionist, but was also ready and willing to muster opposition within the Cabinet, were the question of further enactment of the White Paper to come to a head. Churchill asked Weizmann to provide him with a memorandum to refresh his memory on the points involved; this Weizmann did.³

But during his unusually long-drawn-out journey to the United States, Weizmann was completely cut off for about six weeks from news of subsequent developments. He was unaware, therefore, that the High Commissioner for Palestine and the Colonial Secretary were urging the Cabinet to enact the Land Transfer regulations and that they enjoyed the support of both the Foreign Office and the War Office. Nor did any other

¹ Zionist Executive, 10 and 26 December 1939.

² Memo by Messersmith, 29 November 1939, FRUS p. 810.

³ Trial and Error, p. 514.

Zionist leader know of this.

Inadvertently, however, the American Zionists set in train a controversy within the British Cabinet. Weizmann may have been badly informed but they knew virtually nothing. It so happened, however, that a false deduction based on such knowledge as came their way led them to make representations that became the cause of dissent within the Cabinet on another and wider topic.

At the beginning of October, the Colonial Secretary announced that as a result of recent increase in Jewish illegal immigration, he had authorized the High Commissioner to decree that there should be no quota of legal immigration for the half-year to follow.¹ The American Jews took this to mean a further tightening up of the White Paper policy, with intent to cancel even the rate of immigration that the policy had earlier allowed.

Early in November, their alarm caused a group of American Jewish leaders to discuss what action to take.² They did not know what to do for the best, since earlier attempts to stimulate the Administration had all proved futile. Eventually, they decided to try and make representations directly to the British Embassy. On 15 November they asked it to deliver four identical telegrams to four British Ministers--Chamberlain, Halifax, MacDonald, and Churchill. These told the British Ministers personally of the rumours that all the legal immigration was to be banned and begged them not further to aggravate

¹ The British did not curtail the quota laid down. They in fact counted the illegal immigrants caught, or thought to have entered illegally, against the limited quota allowed by the White Paper.

² The same group had formed the Emergency Committee in October 1938. Non-Zionists were represented by the influential American Jewish Committee (henceforth AJC).

the condition of world Jewry at such an hour.¹

When after ten days the senders had received no assurance that the rumours were false, or even that the telegrams had been sent, a delegation from among them paid a visit to the Embassy and again expressed their concern to Lord Lothian.

Lothian now regarded the matter as serious enough to pass to the Foreign Office. He asked his superiors to supply him with better information about how things stood in regard to Palestine and how they thought he should answer Jewish enquiries. He ended his telegram with the remark that "Jewish influence is a powerful factor in this country" and that "except for the controversy over the White Paper [Jewish opinion] is friendly to Britain."²

Lothian had to wait a long time for a full reply to his telegram. Delay ensued because his enquiries sparked off an anti-White Paper intervention by Churchill.

Churchill, who no doubt knew that he was in a minority, was out to combat Britain's Palestine policy with all his might. His onslaught held up the implementation of the second phase of the White Paper until the end of February 1940. Though he eventually failed to stop it, he kept up his opposition to the third and most vital phase. This he succeeded in checking in 1941.³

Unexpected developments followed. On receipt of Lothian's telegram, the North American Department of the Foreign Office discussed it with the Colonial Office. The result was a reply on the following lines: (1) there was no truth in

¹ Lothian to FO, 25 Nov. 1939, Cab 67/3 WP(G)(39) 161.

² Ibid.

³ Weizmann knew nothing, or very little, of Churchill's actions, since Churchill always observed Cabinet secrecy.

the rumours about the complete stoppage of legal Jewish immigration. (2) On the other hand, implementation of the Land Transfer Regulations was under consideration but the Jews must not be told so. (3) The Embassy must take a sterner line with the American Zionists and must remind them of Weizmann's recent expression of loyalty.

But when the draft of so blunt a reply was circulated to some members of the Cabinet, Churchill, almost by chance, saw it.¹ He immediately sent a strongly worded memorandum criticizing both the style and the content of the telegram and asking the Foreign Office to hold up its despatch.

Churchill was very acid. "The trend of American opinion since the war," he wrote, "was most disappointing." Britain could not expect to win the war if the pro-British tendencies in the American public were not cultivated: "Do we really wish," he asked, "to throw what Lord Lothian calls "the powerful factor" of the influence of the American Jews against us? Can we afford to do so?"²

Evidently most Cabinet members thought otherwise, but Churchill was ready with an alternative answer to Lothian. He recommended saying:

" . . . that the White Paper represented the sincere effort of the pre-war Government to hold the scales evenly between Jews and Arabs, [but that] it was our desire . . . during the war to reduce all domestic controversies. That [we] felt that the future of Palestine was one of the questions which must find its place in the general peace settlement . . . and that meanwhile nothing would be done to prejudice the final form which this settlement would take."³

¹ He wrote his memo two days after the deadline, but the telegram had not yet been sent to Washington, and could therefore be held up.

² "The American Zionist Organization and HMG's policy in Palestine", memo by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Cab 67/3 WP(G)(39)163, 25 Dec. 1939.

³ Ibid.

The view that the White Paper had been "a policy of another Government", and that the whole issue must be re-opened when the war was won, became the cornerstone of Churchill's personal Palestine policy, which he later tried to impose on his own Cabinet. Though he did not manage to do so, he at least prevented the British Government from implementing the White Paper to the full.

The Cabinet was torn by faction. The Colonial Secretary, happy to teach the Zionists a lesson, vehemently supported the original draft reply to Lothian, proclaiming that:

"The introduction of these [land] regulations will be a blow to that section of Jewish opinion which hoped that the emergency of war would find us unable to carry out our declared policy."

He was convinced that "on grounds of expediency," American Jewish support was no match for that of the Moslem and Arab world, and warned the Cabinet that:

"If in response to Jewish agitation these regulations were to be held in suspense, it would be regarded as the final proof that Britain cannot be relied upon to keep faith with the Arabs."¹

But the Foreign Secretary, Halifax, who was responsible for the first draft reply to Lord Lothian, was no longer so sure. On second thoughts he came to the conclusion that at minimum the style of the telegram must be altered. Consequently he supported the Cabinet decision of 27 December 1939 that all proceedings leading to enactment of the Land Act must be held up until the Cabinet had reached agreement on the subject.²

Throughout January and early February 1940, the question gave rise to a series of consultations and exchanges

¹ "Control of Land Transfer", memo by the Colonial Secretary, Cab 67/4 WP(G) (40)3, 11 Jan. 1940.

² Cabinet Meeting, 27 Dec. 1939, Cab 65/2 WM 123(39)7.

of memoranda. The Prime Minister tried conciliation and took up the matter personally with the three ministers concerned.¹ Their response boiled down to two conflicting stands: the one, taken by Churchill, maintained that nothing must be done to alter the situation in Palestine until the war was over. The other, represented by Halifax, held that although some alteration of form was necessary, the substance of the draft reply must be retained. Both he and the Colonial Secretary advocated enforcement of the Land Regulations.

At last, on 12 February, Churchill gave in. He told his Cabinet colleagues that he was satisfied if a different tone was adopted in dealings with the American Zionists and that he agreed to withdraw his vote against the Land Act, "provided that his objection was recorded in the Cabinet minutes."²

Consequently the Cabinet approved the Land Sales Regulations, which prohibited or restricted land sales to Jews in most parts of Palestine. Last moment appeal from leaders of the Labour Party had little effect. On 28 February the Act became declared policy through its publication in the Palestine Gazette.

Thus the American Zionists at last received a reply to their inquiries, and what a reply it was. Their frustration and demoralization were so profound that their public reaction was negligible. They were plunged into the depths of despair from which they did not recover until America came into the war.

In Palestine the picture was different. For several

¹ Cab 65/5 WM 15(40)3.

² Cab 65/5 WM 39(40)12.

days frenzied anti-British riots surged in the streets of the towns. Then the police managed to bring things under control. Ben Gurion's formula that the Yishuv must fight the White Paper as if there were no war, and the war as if there were no White Paper, took on a somewhat different complexion.

Churchill's quixotic and hopeless fight against the Act is somewhat puzzling. Did he, at that stage, seriously attribute such importance to the influence of the Zionists in America and reckon that this consideration overshadowed the danger of losing Arab goodwill? Halifax and MacDonald appear to have been far more down to earth than he (and they were only the tip of an iceberg, for almost all members of the British Government thought as they did). At that stage the American Zionists counted for little at home, particularly when some of them were so mad as to sabotage American aid to Britain. The Arabs, on the other hand, were worth heeding, for they were still sitting on the fence, watching and weighing British consistency over implementation of the White Paper, as a test of their chances of fulfilling their own national aspirations. Did Churchill fail to grasp these points?

It seems that he was both pro-Zionist by sentiment and an early protagonist for Anglo-American alliance in fighting Hitler. At Cabinet meetings he went out of his way to lecture his colleagues on both subjects.¹ But did he do so out of expediency? If so, the gap between his concept of expediency and that of the rest of the Government was extraordinarily wide.

It seems that expediency was only part of his motive.

¹ See, for instance, his praise for the Jewish agricultural achievement when the Policy of the Land Sales Regulation was discussed. Ibid.

One can think of three other reasons why he acted as he did. One was his belief, which we shall see later, that Roosevelt was as ardent a Zionist as he was himself and that Roosevelt hated the White Paper as much as he did. Another reason could be--and probably was--Churchill's contempt for the appeasers, most of whom were still members of the Government. To him, the White Paper was one of the products of the appeasement policy. Opposition to it was one of his battle cries against a policy that he regarded as bankrupt.

Churchill's third reason, and perhaps his chief one, was his personal word given to Weizmann on 17 December. The creation of the Jewish National Home, and perhaps of a Jewish State had, for Churchill, been one of the desires of half a lifetime. He had been involved with Weizmann and Zionism since 1917, and had greatly helped to shape the Palestine Mandate in 1922. Since then he had regarded anyone who tried to trample on his flower-bed as hostile.

(h) The Checking of the White Paper:

Constitutional Development

The final draft reply to Lord Lothian, sent on 17 February, advised caution, but remained vague.

" . . . for your own information . . . whilst we have not withdrawn from the policy stated in the White Paper, we are anxious not to arouse fresh controversies by public reassertion of our position, which might be considered provocative."¹

This was a compromise formula, which gave little indication as to what "not withdrawn", and what "not to arouse controversies" was meant to convey. Whether or not it foreshadowed implementation of the third stage of the White Paper

¹ Cab 67/6 WP(G) (40)149, Annex.

policy, remained to be seen.

In fact, the battle within the Cabinet continued. The Colonial Office wanted the White Paper carried out to the full, while Churchill stuck to his guns. The Foreign Office took a middle course and while supporting verbal assurance to the Arabs that Britain would carry out the third phase, when the time came, did not think that now was the right time to implement it.

But the Colonial Office did not sit idle. After the Land Act came into force, it instructed the High Commissioner to prepare the ground for constitutional steps towards the participation of the inhabitants in running the country. This, it thought, was consistent with paragraph 10(4) of the 1939 White Paper, which read as follows:

"As soon as peace and order have been sufficiently restored in Palestine, steps will be taken to carry out the policy of giving the people of Palestine an increasing part in the government of the country. . . . Arab and Jewish representatives will be invited to serve as Heads of Departments, approximately in proportion to their populations."¹

During April and May, secret talks were held between the Palestine administration and various moderate Arab leaders, in an attempt to select two candidates for the posts in question.² For the time being, no corresponding effort was made with the Jews, so as not to impair secrecy, so "raising fresh controversies".³ The British realised that, this time, the Jews were likely to put up fierce resistance, since from the

¹ Cmd 6019.

² CO 733/444 (part I) 75872/85 and a few months later in FO 371/24564, E. 2994.

³ Ibid. As a matter of principle the British reserved one such post for the Palestine Jews, whom the British knew would not co-operate.

standpoint of international law, the proposed constitutional developments, being irreversible, were the most critical part of the White Paper.

One question was whether "peace and order had been sufficiently restored." Paradoxically, world war had brought true peace to Palestine. There was no question about this. But for the British the real conundrum was not the situation in Palestine but global strategic considerations.

In the light of the latter, the arguments for and against the Land Regulations, raised in January, both gained weight. British defeats in Norway, and later the fall of France, changed the whole balance of world power. This was now heavily weighted against Britain. Not only was American aid now needed more than ever before and in unprecedented quantities; it had become impossible to see how Britain could win the war unless America joined in. Public opinion in America always seemed to lag behind American assessment of Britain's war-needs and was greatly against drifting into involvement in war. At the same time, Italy's declaration of war in support of Germany rendered imminent a war front in the Middle East: Britain needed reliable régimes and populations there far more than hitherto.

Britain's dilemma was acute: how far could she afford to suspend further implementation of the White Paper without driving the Arabs to side with the Axis powers (who now seemed to many to be winning the war)? But also, how big a nuisance might the American Jews become, if the British Government, to placate the Arabs, now accelerated enactment of the final stage of the White Paper?

Till the Chamberlain Government fell, opinion within

the Cabinet remained divided just as before, and the chances that the rest of the policy would be pushed through were the same as ever. But under stress of the disasters of May 1940, a new British Government came to power. Now Churchill was Prime Minister and the outspokenly pro-Zionist Labour Party became a partner in his Coalition. In these circumstances, the balance of opinion on Palestine underwent a total change, or at least seemed to do so.¹ When the issue of enacting the constitutional developments came to a head, Churchill was setting the tone in Cabinet.

Oddly enough, while there had been marked pressure from the Arab side, there had been very little from that of the Zionists and none at all from America. Churchill, when he so vigorously advanced his argument about the need to placate American Jewry, seems sometimes to have been shadow-boxing against a problem that had not yet arisen. America's support was vital but the Jewish factor in America seemed nebulous.²

Arab pressure for speedy enactment of the constitutional development came both from Arab statesmen and from British diplomats in the Middle East; Nuri es-Said, the Iraqi Foreign Minister was particularly vocal. Axis successes in Europe rendered his position shaky. He himself was a staunch pro-Britisher, but most of his colleagues and rivals in the

¹ Lord Beaverbrook told Weizmann in August that "apart from himself and the Colonial Secretary Lloyd, the whole Government was now pro-Zionist." Z. Exec. 2 September 1940. He was wrong, at least about the Secretary for War, Eden, let alone Lord Halifax.

² In May, Weizmann went out of his way to tell FO men that "the American Jews were already inclined to think that in some way the Germans were better than the British." Talk to Baggalay, FO 371/24564, E. 1999. But such talk was more an indication of Weizmann's desperation than an assessment of American Jewish thought.

Government and the army,¹ either cared little who won the war or saw advantage in a German victory. An additional anti-British element at work in Iraq was a group of exiled Palestinian leaders of the 1936-1939 Arab rebellion.

British diplomats seeking to cement Nuri's position in Iraq's domestic struggle, thought that much could be gained if he were to be the man who brought about Arab redemption in Palestine; at the time, Nuri thought and wished likewise. As part of the process, these diplomats hoped to get Iraq to commit itself to the British side.²

At the end of May 1940, and so before the fall of France, Nuri communicated his plan to the Foreign Office.³ It suggested that,

"As a complement to the measures which are being taken by the Iraqi Government themselves to defeat the enemy trickery, HMG, and possibly the French as well, should issue a clear and unambiguous pronouncement guaranteeing immediately, or at least at the end of the war, the execution of . . . self-government in Palestine."

The Colonial Office quickly lent support to Nuri's plea, anxious, as it had always been, to reach a radical solution in Palestine, which in its eyes now meant completing execution of the White Paper policy.⁴ But the Foreign Office was more wary. In a memorandum of 12 June, Halifax proposed to refrain from making any new promises to the Arabs, on the ground that to do so "might merely encourage those Arabs who think they can use our present difficulties to secure further concessions." Nevertheless, he reckoned that the Arabs must be caused to stop doubting British intentions eventually to

¹ Led by the élite group of officers called "the Golden Square".

² G.E. Kirk, The Middle East in the War, p. 63.

³ Majid Khadduri, Independent Iraq, p. 171.

⁴ Cabinet Meeting, 14 June 1940, Cab 65/7 WM 167(40)13.

carry out the White Paper in full, and he proposed to give Nuri such an assurance.¹

The matter came before the Cabinet on 14 June--the day that the Germans occupied Paris. Wishful thinkers entertained a hope that the United States might now join the war immediately;² Therefore, Nuri's proposal had little chance of acceptance: its sole supporter was Lord Lloyd, the Colonial Secretary.

But the real issue was not whether to accept Nuri's proposal but whether to give him, as Halifax suggested, an assurance that Britain still intended to fulfil the White Paper. The new Labour and Liberal Ministers opposed any such act, on grounds that "an announcement of the kind proposed might have serious repercussions on opinion in America." Neville Chamberlain supported Halifax.

But it was Churchill who tipped the scale against any such re-assurance. He said that "Iraq had done nothing to deserve special consideration, and was likely to be much more impressed by military success" than by any such pronouncements.³

His verdict seemed to turn the tide of the White Paper policy. Nevertheless, future Colonial Secretaries continued to hope for an eventual breakthrough for the constitutional development it had envisaged. When in February 1941, Lord Moyne took Lord Lloyd's place at the Colonial Office, he

¹ "Palestine", Memo by Halifax, Cab 67/7 WP(G) (40)149.

² Cabinet Meeting, 13 June 1940, Cab 65/7 WM 165(40)7, also WM 167(40)2.

³ Cabinet Meeting, 14 June 1940, Cab 65/7 WM 167(40)13. A year later Churchill was blamed by some British politicians for the lack of judgement whereby he and the British Government had promoted the Iraqi rebellion of April-May 1941. For the final rejection of Nuri's request see minute of Cabinet Meeting of 3 July, Cab 65/8 WM 192(40)9.

yet again tried to mobilize the pro-White Paper forces within the Government and met with some success. The Cabinet reshuffle that brought him to office helped to create just the circumstances needed for resuming pressure and towards the end of February three important Ministers--Eden, Moyne, and Margesson¹--suddenly stood solidly against the Prime Minister.

Churchill was caught in a fix. He was at the time at grips with the project for a Jewish Army which he wanted to push through.² Conversely, the three Ministers pushed for the constitutional development. The two sides seemed so evenly balanced that a quiet compromise became imperative. The shelving of the last stage of the White Paper was bartered against the shelving of the Jewish Army project. The two parties tacitly agreed not to raise either issue for the time being.³

(i) The Effect of the White Paper on Anglo-American Relations and on the Future of Palestine

The White Paper, despite the volume of disapproval of its terms within the British Government, not only survived the war, but was never rescinded. This fact, combined with the European Jewish holocaust, played a major role in the emergence of the forces that eventually ousted Britain from Palestine.

Two groups within the British Government brought about the 1939 policy. The first consisted of officials and

¹ Eden had taken Halifax's place at the Foreign Office, while Margesson took Eden's at the War Office.

² About the Jewish Army project see below, p. 76.

³ For this seemingly clear-cut deal see (i) CO 733/444 75872/85 (ii) FO 371/27126, E. 60 and E. 739, and ibid., 24565, E. 2894. For a more detailed description of it see below, pp. 76-77.

military men, who were fundamentally convinced that the Balfour Declaration had been a mistake and that it was not too late to reverse it. The membership of that group gradually increased from the time of the outbreak of the Arab rebellion in 1936.

A vast middle group included an overwhelming majority of the British Foreign and Colonial civil services, whose attitude had traditionally been support for the current line taken by the Cabinet. From mid-1938, this group had been stricken with panic by successive crises in Europe. Consequently, it went a long way towards meeting the aims of the first group.

A third group supported Zionism. It grew weaker after 1936, because the middle group started to shift towards the Arabs. It was also weak because its members happened to belong to the anti-appeasement faction, which was temporarily in the doldrums.

It must here be recalled that when the British Government, from 1916 onwards, began to show its interest in Zionism,¹ it was swayed by a middle-of-the-road group which argued that Zionism would serve British imperial interests. When that hope turned out to be false, opinion began to shift in favour of the Arabs.

There is no doubt that the pro-Arab group hoped that the White Paper would reduce the Jewish National Home to some miniature entity, but they were not strong enough to push this view to its ultimate goal. For a while, they enjoyed support from the middle group but it was short lived. Once

¹ See Harold Beeley, "The Origins of the Balfour Declaration", research for the Foreign Office in FO 371/40138, E 7460.

Churchill came to power, the cohesion between the originators of the White Paper began to crumble, and when "the Hinge of Fate" swung in favour of the Allies, it fell apart. Churchill played a major role in destroying support for the White Paper and by mid-1943 the middle group seemed to have rejoined his side.

Nevertheless, Churchill was not strong enough to bring about an alternative policy in the form of partition, much as he wanted to do in 1944.¹ He proved unable to uproot the strong anti-Zionist convictions which dominated the thoughts of the military and the diplomats in the Middle East. The result was, that although the implementation of the White Paper was frustrated, no alternative policy was introduced until the last British soldier had left Palestine in 1948.

The struggle within the British Government was little known outside it. The survival of the White Paper policy and its inheritance by the post-war Labour Government, seemed to most foreign observers to be all of a piece with their image of British imperialism, the basic aim of which was to retain rule at any cost.

This conception vastly influenced the mood of world Jewry, as well as of the American public. The co-existence of the White Paper with the Nazi extermination of the Jews in Europe increased both anger and restlessness among the Jews outside Europe. Their exasperation and helplessness led to increasing militancy and a desperate thirst for action. In Palestine, these impulses fertilised the ground for the development of Jewish terrorism and for the determination of the Jewish Agency to prepare for a militant struggle against British

¹ See below, pp. 154-166.

policy. In the United States, they brought about mass recruitment to the ranks of the Zionist movement and later an increase in the militancy of that movement. Towards the end of the war, Zionist political strength became such that the United States Administration was no longer able to ignore it.

But the combination of Jewish persecution with keeping the gates of Palestine shut had its effect on the sentiments on non-Jewish Americans as well. Just after the end of the war, the British Ambassador reported that,

"It is argued here that had His Majesty's Government admitted sufficient numbers to Palestine . . . a million Jews might have been saved from death at the hand of Hitler."¹

This accusation, though historically inexact,² was nevertheless widely held among the United States public and even in Congress. When, at the end of the war, a "populist" President (Truman) came to office, he himself appeared to have shared that outlook.

The White Paper itself was not specific enough to

¹ Halifax to FO, 3 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45380, E. 7579.

² Curtailment of Jewish immigration to the level of 1000-1500 per month, did not begin with the 1939 White Paper, but far earlier, that is, in mid-1936. During the war period, only until the entry of Italy was it still possible to arrange for mass immigration from Europe; but at that time the Nazis had not yet shown the tendency to exterminate the Jews. Later, only a few ships managed to slip away from Europe and the British, somewhat unwisely, saw fit to deport their passengers to Mauritius. Soon it became evident that the Jewish Agency was not able to fulfil even the limited quota allowed by the White Paper. When the news about systematic gassing and shooting of Jews started to break, the British Government, in February 1943, secretly provided for the entry of any survivor, who could manage to escape. Unfortunately due to various bottlenecks, by March 1944 (the official end of the first five years of the White Paper), only 50,000 out of 75,000 had managed legally to get to Palestine. Ben Gurion was then out to propose that the extra certificates should be made available for immigration of Jews from Arab countries, in some of which they faced pogroms. Cf. Z. Exec. Various minutes in February and March 1943. Also a discussion in Roosevelt's Cabinet a few months later cited in the Morgenthau Diaries, March 1944, vol. 709, pp. 16-19, FDRL.

prevent its circumvention, by the Jews, in many well-planned ways. It was also not so oppressive as to frustrate the Jewish spirit of resolution; but its very existence, on the other hand, lent purpose to the members of the Yishuv. In the final account the White Paper was self-defeating and counter productive.

Chapter Two

AMERICAN JEWRY DURING THE WAR: FRUSTRATION, FERMENT, ZIONISM

The Zionist failure to prevent the issue of the 1939 White Paper looked at the time far more conclusive than, eventually, it became. The Zionists never learned that by the middle of 1943 most top British politicians regarded that Paper's policy as outdated, and only later returned to their earlier views.¹

During the war, Jewry was faced with a grim combination--the persecution of their brethren in Europe and the closing of the asylum of Palestine. In regard to both, the American Jews felt particularly incapable of rendering any help. Their restlessness rose to fever-pitch with the emergence of the news, long and suspiciously kept secret, about the systematic killing of the European Jews. There was nothing, it seemed, they could do. Or was there?

The United States Administration tried to convince their Jewish leaders that attempting to thwart the White Paper in time of war would impair the Allies' cause and be of no help to the Jews. The surest and only way to help the European Jews was, according to the Allies' leaders' advice, to beat

¹ For the story of the British Cabinet's Palestine deliberations see below, Chapter Three.

Hitler as early as possible. The Jews were called upon to waive their anti-British grievances until after the war, when a favourable hearing was supposedly to be given to their claims, at a presumed peace conference. Were they to do otherwise, the situation might be aggravated by alienating the militant Arab nationalists and the Moslem world--a consequence that would not only make the Allies' task harder, but also endanger the safety of the Jewish communities in Palestine as well as in the Arab world.

But the role of silent observers of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history proved impossible. Pain is perhaps the strongest experience whereby a living creature becomes aware of its existence; the same is true of nations. Even the most ardent Jewish assimilationist suddenly realised that being a Jew was something no one could choose or regret or escape. That thought led to great heart-searching. Every Jew knew well that had he been in Europe between 1943 and 1945, no view or ideology could have saved him from the fate of his brethren there. What was more, many grew obsessed with the suspicion that there existed a "conspiracy of silence" between the Nazis and the Allies, designed to keep the doors of Palestine shut while the extermination went on. Secret and fruitless Allied "refugee diplomacy" only helped to spread this conviction. As opposed to the disillusion of the assimilationists, Zionism provided the one and only idea in modern Judaism which seemed to have been vindicated. It negated the diaspora and proposed a clear substitute for the dispersion, which seemed to be the source of all troubles.

Zionism was the modern substitute for the Messianism of earlier centuries. It greatly resembled its predecessor

and yet contained all the characteristics of a modern national movement. It sought Jewish self-determination in Palestine and was ready to make use of every available means to that end. It was also ready to take great risks: in a period when risks were being taken anyway and death was a commonplace, American Jewry ceased to worry overmuch about awakening hostile reaction in their own country, or becoming involved in a conflict with the Arab world. Suddenly Zionism struck the American Jews as the only true redemption for their brethren all over the world--perhaps one day also for themselves.

Messianism always followed disastrous periods in the history of the Jewish people; Jewish suffering was its sap. There was always an attempt to find meaning in the prolonged sufferings and to seek consolation in a supposed redemption which must follow the pre-Messianic tribulations. During World War II, but particularly during its second phase, Messianic reactions in America took the form of mass-recruitment to the ranks of the American Zionists. Zionism, from being a small and marginal section of American Jewry, turned within a few years into virtually the single ideology of the five million American Jews.

The Zionism which now emerged was a special brand. It was impatient, intolerant of opposition; it oversimplified issues and was somewhat hysterical. A spirit which would have never caught on in times of tranquility, from the end of 1942, spread like a blaze. From then on, less and less American Jews were ready to listen to appeals for cautiousness. The slogan of their militant leaders had been that "there was nothing left for them to lose but their own illusions."¹ Such

¹ Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver; speech before the American Jewish Conference, quoted in New Palestine, September 1943.

convictions, however false, proved as powerful as any that modern society had known.

American Jewry suddenly became united and not on a moderate or middle course. It joined together on a platform which only a few years earlier would have been considered far too daring, even by most Zionists. It united in the straight demand for the immediate establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

This mass conversion of Jews into Zionists was followed by a clear and simple political demand: that the Government of the United States should side with the Zionists against the British policy in Palestine. It turned American Jewry into potential "troublemakers" for the Administration, and as such, into the most important ethnic pressure group on American foreign policy.¹ Such pressure was not unique in America but it was so, on such scale, to Jewry.

Nevertheless, politically, American Zionism achieved very little during the war. Its only impressive success was the mass recruitment of Jewry itself. Apart from vague promises, it did not manage to move the Administration towards fulfilment of any of its demands on foreign policy. Its members were, as a result, deeply frustrated to find, when the war ended, no change in United States policy towards Britain and Palestine. Moreover, Zionist feverish and "irrational" activities among the United States public during the war brought about marked irritation among the heads of the Administration. The United States Government was in fact co-operating with the British in an attempt to stem unpleasant Zionist pressure.

¹ For this evaluation see, for instance, A. Toynbee, The World in March 1939, p. 5 and G. Almond, The American People and Foreign Policy, pp. 187-188.

Only the final outcome of this pressure was favourable to the Zionists. But this end did not come in the quick and simple way that the Zionists expected. The balance of America's Palestine policy only very slowly and hesitantly shifted towards an anti-White Paper approach. Only when the war ended, when the magnitude and the nature of the holocaust became known, and when the United States Government underwent a considerable change of personnel, did the "harmony" in Anglo-American Palestine relations begin to break down.

There is no doubt, however, that the Anglo-American post-war rupture, which played a major role in Britain's decision to abandon the Mandate, was the outcome of the tremendous increase in the power of American Zionism. That development occurred during the war.

The aim of this chapter is to describe its course, ranging from pain and frustration to heady militancy.

(a) The Three Zionist Centres

Before describing the above development, it is suitable to survey the structure of the Zionist world during the war. It would be a mistake to regard Zionism, during that period as an organization evolved by one brain, or co-ordinated from one single centre, or even as concentrated around one single pragmatic programme. There was no such Zionist plan, or any single Zionist diplomacy, if only for the reason that unity was unmanagable.

Zionist diplomacy was carried out from three centres and independently; the three were London, Jerusalem, and the United States. The importance of each centre varied from period to period, governed by four major factors: (a) the

war situation, (b) the attitude of both the British and the United States Government, (c) the morale and outlook of the Jewish community in each centre, and (d) the popularity of each centre's leadership among members of the other two.

Each centre ran its own diplomacy, seeking objectives fixed by its own leadership. And although there was an important interaction between the three, each was working under its own steam.

Efforts to reach some degree of co-ordination, based on compromise, were not particularly desired by the leaders of any centre. Instead, each tried to penetrate and to subordinate the others to its own way of thinking. Each tended to underestimate the wisdom of the policies attempted by the other two and to doubt the reliability of their leadership.

But crowning all, there was one overwhelming obstacle to the creation of one solid diplomacy: communication was tremendously difficult between the three centres. Secrecy was impossible and transport at a premium. Every message sent between Jerusalem, London, and New York, even when carried by emissaries, was subject to censorship. In addition, telegrams were slow. The detailed "Biltmore" resolution, for instance, which was to serve as a cornerstone for future Zionist planning, did not reach Jerusalem until several weeks after the Biltmore conference ended.¹ The British intelligence invariably monitored Zionist communications² and in such circumstances it was inordinately difficult to convey diplomatic support from one centre to another. Lack of secrecy once led a member

¹ Cf. Z. Exec. Minutes, 4 October 1942, CZA.

² See for instance, FO 371/35040, E. 6270, and 371/35037, E. 5170.

of the Jerusalem Executive to propose regular couriers to carry messages to the other centres.¹ But how were those couriers to travel, when even top Zionist leaders had to wait weeks to get "priority" which the British were usually reluctant to grant. It took Weizmann more than a month to get this privilege for his first visit to America, exactly when the matter of the Land Regulations was being debated in the British Cabinet. In 1941 Ben Gurion waited long weeks in New York for a chance to get back to Palestine, eventually giving up the endeavour and travelling the other way round the world via the West Coast, New Zealand, and India (which took him an extra month). On his second visit, when he intended to introduce his "Outlines" before the American Zionists, he got stuck in London for three months before getting a passage to the United States.² Leaders and officials of lesser importance had to wait even longer, and sometimes their applications for passage were simply rejected.

In such circumstances, no wonder that a co-ordinated, let alone an agreed single policy was unattainable. As we shall see, there was no unified policy at any time during the war.³

Traditionally, there existed a "natural" division of labour within the Zionist movement. America supplied the finance and some vague support in international affairs. London provided the top leadership and the main diplomatic services, while the Palestine centre "did the work", by means

¹ Z. Exec. Minutes, 22 March 1942, CZA.

² Z. Exec. Minutes, 16 February 1942, CZA.

³ The celebrated "Biltmore" resolution did not at the time constitute a practical plan. It was differently conceived by each centre.

supplied through the other two.

But after the introduction of the 1939 White Paper that division of labour began to break down. The London centre became handicapped by the hostile British attitude. The Palestine centre in due course began to lose faith in Weizmann's ability to alter British policy and began to look elsewhere for diplomatic support; naturally they turned to the United States. The Palestine centre grew to depend more upon its own judgement in matters of foreign policy and as a result, increased the range of its own diplomatic activities.

As for the American centre--until almost the end of 1942 it was a somnolent mammoth. But from then on, American Zionists too felt entitled to participate, if not equally to supervise, Zionist policy-making. It now reckoned itself the strongest--and what is more the only--centre from which the desired change might come.

Weizmann's headquarters in London was a modest house manned by a handful of devoted aides. It fitted the kind of personal one-man diplomacy that he ran. Each of his aides had other occupations beside his Zionist work and it was Weizmann's comings and goings in Government circles that supplied the group with its daily work. When Weizmann went abroad, the pulse of the London centre immediately slowed down.¹

The Palestine centre was differently run. It was a virtual government for the half million members of the Yishuv. At its head stood the Zionist Executive, supervised by the Zionist Inner Council²--bodies especially constructed for

¹ Cf. Shertok's report to the Zionist Executive, Minutes, 25 April 1943, CZA.

² Hebrew: Vaad poel Zioni Metzumtzam.

war-time purposes. During peacetime there was a wider body, elected directly by the Zionist Congress to conduct the affairs of the world movement, but on the eve of war a situation in which the various centres might be cut off from each other was foreseen; accordingly, it had been decided to plant the whole body in Palestine, based solely on leading members of the Yishuv. Under that temporary arrangement, the Palestine centre was de jure running the whole movement's affairs. But not quite--since the Executive President, Dr. Weizmann, was still living in London.

In practice there arose a far from clear situation, which became the source of many feuds. The Zionist Executive of six full members¹ provided proper leadership for the Yishuv, but its authority over the world Zionist movement remained undecided, because of the absence of Dr. Weizmann from its meetings.²

Members of the Executive bore ministerial responsibilities covering the various facets of the Yishuv's life. The same Executive also served as a governing body for the Jewish Agency but again its Chairman (Ben Gurion) acted without contact with its President (Weizmann). In short, whilst inside Palestine the Executive had the power of a government over the Yishuv,³ outside, its authority had no definite scope.

¹ Ben Gurion, Shertok, Kaplan, Fishman, Grunbaum, and Shmorak. In fact twice as many people, in various capacities, some of them ill-defined, took part in the Executive meetings.

² Weizmann's first visit to Palestine during the war was in November 1944.

³ The Yishuv had in fact a parallel political structure, which was said alone to represent the Palestine Jewish community--it was the National Council (Hebrew: Vaad Leumi). The 13 members of its Directorship likewise formed a kind of Cabinet, but in fact the Executive retained the real power, particularly in matters of defence and foreign affairs. Top Yishuv politicians always sought a seat on the Executive rather than on the Directorship.

Here was the main reason for the lack of a single Zionist authority during the war. Since the World Congress, last convened in 1939, could not reconvene throughout the rest of the war, the question, who had final authority over the Zionist movement, remained undecided.¹

The American centre ought to have been run by the ZOA but that body was at the time hopelessly weak. In order to increase its influence, it joined with other and better organized bodies with similar Zionist aspirations. In January 1941 four such organizations--ZOA, Hadassah, Poale Zion, and Mizrachi--joined in an umbrella organization, the "American Committee for Zionist Affairs", in an effort to achieve a permanent working joint executive.² From that comparatively unimportant body, emerged the subsequent Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC). In future years, AZEC was to attain great significance as the prime mover of Zionist action in the United States.³

Other Jewish organizations, which during the war came partially under Zionist influence, joined some of their projects. Such were the Order of "Bnay Brith", the Jewish War Veterans; and sections of the traditional three big Synagogues.⁴ Even the élitist non-Zionist American Jewish Committee no longer remained solidly opposed to Zionist aspirations. Through a gradual process, later to be described, the

¹ Cf. Report to the 22nd Zionist Congress, 1946, CZA. The above description is also based on reading the whole series of the Executive minutes between 1939 and 1945, and upon my correspondence with the General Director of the Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

² AZEC Report, 9 May 1942, AZEC file, ZANY.

³ See below, pp. 103-109.

⁴ An American Jew usually belongs to a series of organizations, each covering different aspects of his Jewish life. When Zionist influence later increased, it reached him from more than one source.

Zionists became by the end of 1943 a mouthpiece for almost all American Jewry.

After the British about-turn on Zionism, the London and the Jerusalem centres differed on the future role of the American Zionists. While Weizmann traditionally confined this to manipulation of the United States Administration against the White Paper through confidential contacts, Ben Gurion's line was first to penetrate the grass-roots of the Jewish masses and get them to make their voice heard.

American Zionists themselves differed as to how to proceed. Veteran leaders like Frankfurter and Wise were inclined to support Weizmann's approach, while the younger leaders, particularly Silver and Neumann, were less committed to the Government and preferred Ben Gurion's line. For years the two schools of thought acted simultaneously.

Until 1942, the American giant was hardly asked his opinion. Weizmann went several times to the United States reckoning that he was going to tell Zionist leaders how to handle their Administration. The while, he never lost faith in Britain, which he still thought the chief future guardian of Zionism. He was much irritated by the American public.¹ Ben Gurion on the other hand was convinced that,

" . . . even if we used all our influence in London, we could not change much. If a change is possible at all, then it should come only through America."²

As early as 1941, his views were clear. He thought that

¹ See, for instance, Weizmann's lecture to AZEC leaders, in which he put up a strange assessment: "There is no doubt that the United States is going reactionary . . . while England is going left." Consequently, "in England we should expect a much easier atmosphere for Zionism." Lecture at St. Regis Hotel, NY, 15 January 1943, in Z 5/1400 CZA.

² Z. Exec. Minutes, 4 October 1942.

the goal was "the Zionization of American Jewry in order to be able to transfer millions of Jews to Palestine right after the war."¹

But it seems that neither Ben Gurion nor Weizmann had much idea of what American Jewry was like and how such support was obtainable from it. Both, for instance, were convinced, that by planting in its midst a branch of the Jewish Agency, in May 1943,² it might be activated in a "Comintern" manner. But that Agency body was for years far from exercising any real influence either on the American administration, which at first refused to recognize it,³ or on the rank and file of Jewry. Only a regeneration from within American Jewry, working in its own "American way", paved the way for subsequent change.

(b) The Impotence of American Zionism

For reasons, some of which we have already described, Zionism in America was virtually impotent until the second half of 1942. The entry of the United States into the war, in December 1941, produced no immediate change in its role.

There were basically three reasons for its impotence: fear of American anti-semitism, the war in the Middle East, and the focus of all Zionist attention on the project of a Jewish Army. When, late in 1942, its significance began to change, it did so chiefly because these three factors diminished in importance. The fear of anti-semitism gradually subsided or was at least eclipsed at news of the European holocaust. Simultaneously, the danger of German invasion of the

¹ Ibid., 16 March 1941.

² JTA bulletin, 26 May and Z. Exec. Minutes, 6 Oct. 1944. See also Memorandum of 11 May 1943, WA.

³ FRUS 1943, pp. 787-788.

Middle East was removed, while American Jewish leaders lost hope of bringing about the Jewish Army. Jewish fate outside the United States stimulated a search for a purposeful Jewish existence and the result was a Messianic ferment. When the idea of a Jewish State was injected into such an atmosphere, and when the war-front in Africa began to recede, the moment seemed ripe for fulfilment of earlier Messianic expectations.

When war had broken out in Europe, with the United States non-belligerent, American Jews were scared of being branded "war-mongers". Obviously, they stood in the front rank of those who sought maximum American involvement against Hitler but at the same time they feared exploitation of that inclination by the anti-semites among the strong isolationist groups.¹ In September 1941, not long before Pearl Harbour, they were caused great anxiety by a speech made by Colonel Charles Lindberg at Des Moines, Iowa. This celebrated national hero blamed "three groups pressing this country towards war." Lindberg, serving as a mouthpiece for many established convictions, named these as: "the British, the Jews and the Roosevelt Administration."²

Such expressions, bearing striking likeness to opinions voiced at the same time in Berlin, caused great unrest among Jews and caused them to make efforts to avoid prominence in foreign affairs.³ The fact that America was brought into the war by events for which no "group", least of all the Jews, could be blamed, was a source of profound relief to them. It

¹ Harold Beeley, "Research on American Jewish Opinion", 5 November 1942, FO 371/31380, E. 6663. See also comments in Prem. 4/14/9, pp. 1104-9.

² New York Times, 13 September 1941.

³ Beeley, op. cit.

helped to kill many fresh bouts of anti-semitism.

Yet full American alliance with the fighting British was not conducive to strong Zionist agitation. This was precluded by the war situation in the Middle East. Between September 1940 and October 1942, the Axis three times threatened to crush the British military build-up in that region and in the autumn of 1942, it also threatened the Middle East from the North. This pincer threat called for political appeasement of the Arabs, who were never fully committed to the Allies' cause. One of the chief concerns of the British had therefore been to stick to their White Paper policy, no matter what happened to the Jews in Europe.

British diplomats in Washington tried to put this point to the Roosevelt Administration not without success. At the same time, the British realized that the American Jews were their greater supporters among the American public. They therefore also tried to hedge by showing some favour to the Jews, listening patiently to their representations, made at the Washington Embassy. Relations between the Embassy and the American Zionist leaders were fairly good.

To get a hearing with the State Department was the easiest British task. Even before America entered the war, its members made various attempts to illustrate to Zionist leaders how delicate was Britain's Middle East position and why for their own benefit they should refrain from agitation.¹

Persuasion to this end was still easy enough. Not only non-Zionists but also prominent Zionist leaders were still, by tradition, wont to comply with any hint given by the

¹ Cf. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle to his superiors, 15 April 1941, FRUS, p. 598.

Democratic administration. Judge Louis Brandeis, for one, thought that any anti-White Paper agitation must, for the duration of the war, be regarded as an "anti-American activity."¹ That task, he held, must be left to the Palestine Jews. Rabbi Stephen Wise, who at that time was still considered a "daring leader", confined his activity to meetings with members of the British Embassy.

At all costs, the Jewish leaders wanted to avoid all suspicion that they were setting Americans against the British. When a storm broke over the fate of the ship Patria, for example, they could in no way be persuaded to swell it. When that ship, carrying 1,430 illegal Jewish ^{immigrants,} refugees from Europe was caught and its inmates were destined to be sent to detention in Mauritius, Felix Frankfurter, Brandeis's successor at the Supreme Court, refused to make representation to the British Embassy. When urged by Ben Gurion to do this, the Judge answered that he did not want "to spoil Anglo-American relations at such hour."²

The Zionist dilemma was great. The danger to the very existence of the Yishuv constituted by potential German success in the Western Desert or the Caucasus, stemmed both from Nazi hatred of Jews and from possible Arab riots, and paralysed all but one form of Zionist activity: demands to defend Palestine. From London, Weizmann fed Wise with telegrams directed at the President, regarding the "heavy responsibility which lay on America" should the Nazis, even for a short while, conquer Palestine. No one, not even Churchill, spoke any longer of a "dilemma" as between British support of the Arabs or of

¹ Ben Gurion's report, Z. Exec., 16 February 1941, CZA.

² Ben Gurion, ibid.

the Jews. There was no disagreement whatsoever between the Zionists and the British: the Middle East must be defended. "If the British retreated," wrote Wise to Roosevelt, "for them it could only be temporary . . . for us it would be the Third Destruction."¹ The key to the defence of the Middle East was in the British hands, however, and there was little that Roosevelt personally could do to reinforce it.

The British, for their part, were scared of another Arab uprising, after their narrow escape from disaster during the Rashid Ali revolt in Iraq in May 1941. When anti-British sentiments flared in many parts of the region, members of the Foreign Office blamed Churchill. They held him responsible for refusing to accede to Nuri's demand in the summer of 1940, that Britain should speed up, or at least re-affirm its intention to execute the White Paper policy.² Churchill himself was taken aback by the revolt in Iraq and so, once it was put down, sanctioned a pro-Arab statement by the Foreign Secretary at the Mansion House on 29 May 1941.³

"Britain's Arab policy should now be reconsidered," Eden told his Cabinet colleagues.⁴ His proposed new policy was not only a return to appeasement of the Arabs but a clear indication of intention to come to terms with the Arab nationalism.

In Palestine, Eden's Mansion House speech caused great alarm. "We thought that putting down the Iraqi rebellion

¹ Wise to Roosevelt, 13 May 1941. 867.01/1751 USNA.

² See above, pp. 45-46.

³ Text of main passage in A.H. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, p. 269.

⁴ "Our Arab Policy", memo by Anthony Eden, 27 May 1941 in Cab 66/16 WP (41)116. Tacit agreement with Eden's views among members of the Cabinet is suggested by the fact that his statement was made without prior discussion of Eden's memo in Cabinet.

would yield a profit," said David Ben Gurion, "and there is a loss. It is the worst thing that has happened to us since war broke out."¹ And the Zionist Executive reached a unanimous conclusion though with little idea how to execute it, that "an offensive must be immediately opened in the United States," since there was no longer any hope that the British might mitigate the White Paper policy. Eden's Mansion House speech, therefore, supplied the first impetus for stimulation of American Jewry by the Palestine centre. The Executive Chairman, Ben Gurion, at the time in the middle of writing his "Outlines of Zionist Policy",² was determined that the idea of an immediate post-war Jewish State must as soon as possible acquire the support of the American Jews.

Meanwhile, each Axis advance seemed to render the danger to Palestine more imminent. No American Jew, Zionist, or other, could venture to incur blame for doing any damage, real or imagined, to the Allied cause in the Middle East. In February 1941, Rabbi Wise was in sudden agreement with Cordell Hull that the British

"... must of necessity have the support not only of the Jews in Palestine, but also of a large number of Arabs in Palestine, Transjordan, etc."³

The American Jews could hardly be blamed for maintaining some anti-White Paper agitation, for they were not aware of the full gravity of the double threat created by British retreat into Egypt in the summer of 1942 (El Alamein was the last line at which the Germans could be checked before reaching

¹ Z. Exec. Minutes, 2 June 1941.

² David Ben Gurion, "Outlines of Zionist Policy", document stolen from his briefcase by the British intelligence in November 1941, when he left Britain for the United States. Found in the Foreign Office files, FO 371/27129, E. 8556.

³ USNA, 867.01/1751.

the Suez canal),¹ and the simultaneous and massive German offensive from the north that threatened to penetrate the Middle East from the Caucasus. They did not know that the British Chiefs of Staff reckoned a collapse of the Russian front to be an imminent possibility, or that these authorities had decided that Egypt and Palestine ranked as of only secondary importance in allocation of forces and might be abandoned; or that the oil wells of Abadan were to be defended even at the risk of losing Egypt.²

But even without knowing these full truths about the near future, American Jewish circles were deeply worried and Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, warned his Government of the possible impact of such catastrophies on the British image in the United States:

"If Palestine were invaded . . . while the US public had the impression that the Jews were not given sufficient chance to resist, the consequences here might be serious out of all proportion to any real damage done in Palestine."³

But the American Jews themselves seemed in the end to be satisfied that "new measures" were being taken for the defence of Palestine by the British.⁴ Rabbi Wise became

¹ Kirk, The Middle East in the War, p. 217.

² Cf. "Middle East Review of Situation", 29 July 1942, Cab 66/27, C of S (42)357. The appreciation ran as follows: "If we lost Persia, or Iraq, our position in Egypt would ultimately become untenable, but conversely, even if we were forced to abandon Egypt, this should not necessarily involve the loss of Abadan." An Annex to that appreciation by the British Oil Board revealed that "If we lost Abadan . . . we should have to draw oil from the Gulf of Mexico or California" which would have entailed risking an additional 270 tankers on the hazardous Atlantic route.

³ Halifax to FO, 2 July 1942, FO 371/31379, E. 4049.

⁴ Correspondence between Sumner Welles and Lord Halifax, 8 and 18 May 1942, with FO comments. FO 371/27127, E. 2346 and E.2709. Description of the co-operation between the Haganah headquarters and the British in that period and the preparation in the Yishuv for a possible German invasion are in Y. Bauer, From Underground to Resistance, pp. 163-164 and in Y. Slutzky, Seffer Toldot Ha'Haganah (Hebrew), pp. 221-225, 356-373.

convinced that Churchill and Roosevelt did all they could to plan for saving Palestine.

It is puzzling, therefore, to find a Zionist resolution like the "Biltmore" declaration springing forth in the middle of May 1942.¹ At that moment neither war conditions nor a suitable international atmosphere appeared to justify its timing. "Biltmore" can only partly be explained by appearance before the German assaults both in Egypt and on the Don got their main momentum. Its inspiration and motive was Messianic; it sprang from an irrational yearning for redemption and did not require any solid relation to reality.

For when the United States was thrust into the war in December 1941 there had been a great hush; "Zionism became a subject of taboo in Washington,"² as Rabbi Silver sarcastically put it. But Rabbi Silver himself, who was later to become the arch-militant leader of American Zionism had a share in creating that taboo. At the Zionist Congress of August 1939, he had himself advocated acquiescence in the White Paper "in the light of the imminence of the war."³ Indeed he, who later became so intolerant of demands for caution, had then been loudly booed from the floor for advising the Palestine Jews "to do nothing that might bring on . . . a conflict with the British Government."⁴

Silver was not the only one-time moderate who during

¹ Demanding the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine immediately after victory in the war and the immigration of millions of Jews into it. See below, pp. 96-102.

² A.H. Silver, Autobiography (unpublished) SA, Cleveland, Ohio.

³ New York Times, 20 August 1939.

⁴ Ibid. For Silver's position then, see also S. Brodetsky, Memoirs, p. 189 and Silver's own Autobiography.

the war switched from moderation to extremism. Similar dramatic and diametric switches characterized nearly all walks of American Jewry. This change was a result of deep and desperate frustration brought on by the White Paper, as already described, by the failure to form a Jewish Army to fight the Nazis, and by the world's failure to stop the massacre of the Jews in Europe.¹

(c) The Abortive Jewish Army

The idea of a Jewish Army, incorporated as a national unit within the British Army, was imported from abroad into the domain of American Jewry. It was there planted in most fertile ground.

When brought to the United States by emissaries from London and Palestine, it was a practical programme aiming at achievement in the near future. But long after it had been defeated on practical grounds, the idea continued, magnified to fantastic dimensions, to inspire vast sections of American Jewry.

Dialectically, these impracticable and fantastic flights of fancy brought about a practical result: they helped eventually to unite American Jewry around the Zionist leaders.²

Practically speaking, there was only a short period during which the project of a Jewish Army had a chance of materialising--this was between the collapse of France and America's entry into the war. Never again did a real chance

¹ For this deep feeling of frustration see Weizmann's speech before the AZEC Executive, 15 April 1942, WA.

² For an appreciation of this point by a contemporary, see Judge Levinthal to Weizmann, 17 June 1942, WA.

recur.¹

When in 1940 Britain found itself fighting alone and when the war seemed to be threatening the ill-defended Middle East, there was for a while, a serious inclination on the part of members of the British Government, to draft thousands of Jews from all over the world, but particularly from the United States, into a Jewish fighting unit, incorporated in the British Army. Zionist leaders nurtured the hope that it would obtain the status granted to some other exiled armies within the British Army, thus ensuring for them a seat at a putative peace conference. The Prime Minister saw it as a good way of bringing a reluctant United States into the war.

Other British Ministers feared hostile political repercussions among the Arabs. These Ministers--a majority of the Cabinet--viewed the project as "lacking any military significance" because of its counter-disadvantage--predictable Arab unrest. It should be judged, they held, on political grounds only.

There are, in consequence, two parts to the story of the struggle for the Jewish Army: the first is how the practical project failed. The second is how as an aftermath, that failure turned many American Jews from merely "embarrassing allies" into a major "political nuisance" to the United States

¹ My definition does not, of course, include the Jewish Brigade, a mere token unit by comparison with the initial project. The Brigade formed in September 1944 and managed to take part in the last stage of the Italian campaign. Its foundation had been attained as a result of vigorous pressure from Churchill, who fought alone against a battery of Ministers, particularly the War Secretary. But contrary to Zionist hopes, it was not allowed to return to Palestine intact, and was demobilized in Europe. For material on Weizmann's and Churchill's struggle to bring that Brigade into being, see Prem. 4/51/9, pp. 840-839, 841-843.

Administration.¹

The idea of a Jewish Army was first introduced several months before the war began, at the time of the abortive St. James's conference. Dr. Weizmann, who wanted to counter the growing inclination of the British to appease the Arabs, told the Colonial Secretary that, in Rabbi Wise's opinion, American Jewry was capable of rendering great military help to Britain. If war broke, Weizmann quoted Wise as saying, "a force of about a quarter of a million Jews will be fighting on the British side . . . within six months of war commencing."²

Weizmann himself cited the more "realistic" figure of an army 100,000 strong. When war actually broke out, he offered this to the British "unconditionally",³ but to no avail. Palestinian Jews were, however, allowed to volunteer to various regular units within the British army; their recruitment was limited by a "parity" arrangement with the Palestinian Arabs.

As the war developed, more attention began to be paid to Weizmann's offer. After the collapse of France in June 1940, American involvement became more urgently necessary. In the same month, the entry of Italy into the war immediately extended operations into the Mediterranean and Middle East. In September 1940, a positive development seemed likely in the light of Churchill's decision to reinforce Egypt. He talked not only of the good effect on opinion in America but also of direct Jewish help in defending the Middle East.⁴ Other

¹ Cf. I. Berlin, Zionist Politics in War-time Washington, p. 13.

² Minutes by Malcolm MacDonald, 4 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23223, E. 1049.

³ Weizmann's talk to General Ironside, 14 October 1939, WA. See also Weizmann's memorandum to Hore Belisha of 11 Sept. WA.

⁴ For Cabinet discussions in which pros and cons were heard see Minutes of 3 July 1940 in Cab 65/8 WM 192(40)9, and of 10 October in Cab 65/9 WM 269(40)5.

Ministers immediately opposed such ideas because of their simultaneous and growing concern about the Arab attitude toward the Allies.¹

Weizmann's hopes were also opposed from within the Zionist movement. Many in Jerusalem were not enthusiastic and argued that "the boys must be husbanded at home."² It was nevertheless agreed at the Zionist Executive that 3,000 members of the Yishuv should be recruited into the proposed Army, the rest of which must come from the United States and other parts of the world. That body agreed to approach the British Government with a plan for a Jewish Division.

At first Churchill seemed to be winning the battle. On 10 October 1940 the Cabinet accepted in principle a project which, although only a shadow of Weizmann's ambitions, was nevertheless big. An Army of some 10,000 Jews, of which the Yishuv's contribution was to be 3,000, was agreed upon.³ Relevant Government departments immediately began to deal with the practical side of its formation: the selection of officers, the appointment of a General Commanding Officer, the legal position, the future of American subjects serving with the British Army, and so on. Contact on such topics was kept up with the United States Government.⁴ Weizmann himself was summoned by the Prime Minister and asked to travel to the United States on his behalf, to prepare the ground for coming

¹ Various minutes in FO 371/24567 of 28 August 1940. Cf. also C. Weizmann, Trial and Error, p. 521.

² Minutes of the London Zionist Office. Various entries in August and September 1940, CZA.

³ Cabinet Meeting of 10 October, Cab 65/9 WM 269(40)5.

⁴ Correspondence between the Washington Embassy and the Foreign Office, 29 October and 30 November 1940, FO 371/24569, E. 2766.

recruitment there.¹ Announcement of the formation of the Army was immediately to follow the conclusion of the United States Presidential election.

But the final green light failed to materialize. Weizmann's mission was time and again postponed in face of the mounting dissatisfaction among Egyptian and Iraqi nationalists. Opposition to the project grew in all walks of the Government but particularly in the three main Offices concerned--the War, Foreign, and Colonial Offices. "What is the military value of that Jewish Army?" rhetorically enquired the Chief of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, "Is it going to help us to win the war?"--to which his Foreign Secretary (Eden had just moved into that office from his previous post as War Secretary) replied, "This question is purely political," adding:

"But if we proceed with this, we shall inevitably land ourselves in formidable political difficulties . . . we shall arouse serious apprehension among the Arabs and this will play into the hands of Axis propaganda."²

Meanwhile, though no official announcement was forthcoming, the prospect of the Army was enthusiastically greeted in the United States.³ No one could guess how the British appreciation was developing. When Ben Gurion left England for America, in September 1940, he was convinced that the creation of that Army was a matter of days, and that upon

¹ "How to manipulate Weizmann", the Prime Minister to the Minister of Supply, 11 June 1940, Prem. 4/51/9, pp. 1161-2. See also minutes of the London Zionist Office of 6 November, where it was said that "Lord Lothian thought that Weizmann's task was 'to enlist . . . a Jewish Army to defend the Suez'." Weizmann should see Roosevelt and "fix up with him various legal formalities." CZA.

² Minute by W. Baxter, 31 January 1941, with Eden's remarks in the margin, FO 371/27126, E. 93.

³ Report by Lord Lothian, FO 371/24569, E. 3025.

arrival in the United States his task would be to organize its recruitment.¹ Years later he was unable to give a full explanation why that announcement failed to materialize.²

Towards the beginning of 1941, the opposition of the three British departments grew more and more stubborn. They suddenly realised that if they wanted to stop creation of the Army, they must hurry since plans for it were nearly complete. A draft for the project's announcement had been prepared and was due to be laid before the Cabinet for final approval. It was to take the form of a reply to an arranged question in Parliament.³ The three Ministers concerned met in February 1941⁴ and decided to counter the Jewish Army project with a demand for speeding up constitutional development in Palestine.⁵

There is no clear evidence exactly what the three Ministers wanted--whether they wanted merely to compensate the Arabs for a pro-Zionist act, or whether they sought a bargaining counter so as to secure a mutual shelving of both projects. The second is what came about.⁶ None of the projects ever reached the Cabinet and the pre-arranged Parliamentary question was never asked.

The postponement of the Jewish Army was triggered off by General Wavell, the General Officer Commanding the British forces in the Middle East, who had been judiciously "guided" by a "questionnaire" sent to him by his superiors at

¹ Ben Gurion's report to the Zionist Executive, 16 March 1941, Minutes CZA.

² "Outlines of Zionist Policy", FO 371/27129, E. 8556.

³ FO 371/27126, E. 418 of 7 February 1941. See also Prem 4/51/9, p. 1092.

⁴ The three were Eden for the FO and Margesson for the WO: their representative in the negotiation with Churchill was Lord Moyne, the Colonial Secretary. See above, p. 47.

⁵ Report of the Second Ministerial Meeting, 28 February 1941, FO 371/27126, E. 589 and E. 739.

⁶ Ibid.

the War Office.¹ In reply, the General sent the Cabinet a telegram discounting the project for military reasons.²

Churchill's reaction was bitter but acquiescent.

He wrote to Moyne:

"General Wavell, like most British military officers, is strongly pro-Arab. . . . However, in the existing situation I do not want Wavell to be worried. Therefore Dr. Weizmann should be told that the Jewish Army project must be put off for six months. The sole reason to be given should be lack of equipment."³

When the six months elapsed Churchill could give Weizmann no good news. All he could do was to circulate to Cabinet members Weizmann's letter of September 1941, complaining that, "American Jewry waits for a word from His Majesty's Government . . . the response is nothing but rebuffs and humiliation."⁴

In November 1941, Weizmann finally lost patience and in an interview with the Editor of The Times, aimed at the attention both of Churchill and American Jewry, made the accusation that "We Jews are being penalized for our loyalty and devotion."⁵ The British Information Service in America warned London of "immediate repercussions" among the United States public.⁶

But within a month came the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the United States became a belligerent. There was no longer any question of American Jews serving the British Army, and the whole project of the Jewish Army lost its

¹ Ibid.

² Wavell's telegram is in Prem 4/51/9 (part 2), p. 1085.

³ Churchill to Moyne, 1 March 1941 in FO 371/27126, E. 739. The General was at that time engaged in an offensive in Libya.

⁴ FO 371/27128, E. 5746.

⁵ The Times, 11 November 1941.

⁶ FO 371/27129, E. 7359.

magnitude. Most serious American Zionist leaders soon lost hope and the idea was transformed from a practical programme into an advertising and propaganda campaign run by marginal American groups.

(d) The Holocaust

The European holocaust was the main factor that brought the Zionists victory over their Jewish opponents in America. It caused the Zionist theme, blaming the Dispersion for the existence of the Jewish problem, to seem to be dramatically vindicated. The remedy, most American Jews became convinced, was to create a national asylum, with full national sovereignty, where every persecuted Jew should be able to enter and rehabilitate his life.

The first effect of the holocaust was a shock. It was so not only in that six million Jews had been gassed or shot, but in that they hardly put up any resistance. And not only because the rest of the world watched it with indolence but because the American Jews themselves could render no help. Bit by bit the news leaked out. Many refused to believe it. And even when they believed, psychologically they set it aside. Only when the war ended did the full magnitude of the disaster become evident.

Ironically, it appears that America's entry into the war played a role in Germany's final decision to annihilate all the Jews in Europe. Long before that date Hitler "warned the Jews" that should they

"plot again another world war in order to exterminate the Aryan people of Europe, it would not be the Aryan people that would be exterminated, but Jewry."

¹ Quoted from A.D. Morse, While Six Millions Died, pp. 16-17.

Just like Colonel Lindberg and his like, Hitler believed that American Jewry was seeking a war of destruction against Germany. It is very likely that despite the manner in which America eventually became involved in the war, he still regarded its entry as at bottom a "Jewish plot".

America's entry came at a moment when Hitler could no longer see a prospect of quick victory. His blitz against Russia had failed to reduce it to submission before winter. For the first time since his attack on Poland in 1939, the German army began to suffer heavy casualties. Now America appeared to worsen his chances of winning outright.

The "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem", for which orders had been issued early in 1941, was by December already in full swing. But it does not appear that there was any clear idea what that "Solution" should become. Treatment of Jews had already involved the killing of hundreds of thousands by special death squads; their property had systematically been confiscated, and they were deported en masse to ghettos in the Slav countries, where they lived in conditions which quickly degraded them to sub-human status. But so far there was no total extermination.¹ Furthermore, it appears that the contemplated "Final Solution" was still mass deportation, when conditions allowed, to some desert and "inferior" countries--for instance Madagascar,² though the Nazis cared little how many of the Jews would eventually reach that destination.

But with both Russia and America fighting against him, Hitler's position became increasingly desperate; no

¹ Cf. R. Hilberg, The Destruction of European Jewry, pp. 1-3.

² Ibid. The name of Madagascar was mentioned at approximately the same time both by the heads of the Gestapo and by British experts on refugees, as a destination for the Jews of Europe. Cf. Lord Moyne, "Jewish Policy", 30 September 1941, Cab 67/9 WP(G) (41)104.

"territorial solution" was now possible, while controlling and feeding Europe became an ever-heavier burden for him.

In a context in which millions of "Aryans" were being killed, the value of Jewish life in Hitler's eyes became nil. A combination of frustration of his plans with his desire for "revenge", led him and his aides to seek a technical solution whereby, incidentally, their racial theory about the survival of the fittest would reach a climactic perfection. The end-product was the gas chambers..

These deeds were kept top secret and it took a long time for the news to leak out. Not until August 1942 did Gerhard Riegner, the Swiss Representative of the World Jewish Congress, use the State Department's wireless in order to cable Stephen Wise first-hand evidence about Nazi actions.¹

In that Department, where the cable was first received, the tendency was to keep it a further secret. Sumner Welles exerted considerable pressure on Rabbi Wise, to whom he broached the news, to keep his mouth shut, at least for a while; Wise acquiesced for several weeks.

But meanwhile it leaked to the press, which did not quite know what degree of authenticity to give it. Peter Bergson² recalls that he first found it on the back pages of Washington newspapers where it was said that perhaps two million Jews were already dead.

Stunned by even the possibility that this could be true, Bergson called on Adolph Berle at the State Department, who "off the record" not only confirmed it, but said that top

¹ Morse, op. cit., pp. 3-31.

² My interview with Bergson, Tel Aviv, November 1972. For his role, see below, pp. 85-90.

Jewish leaders knew it already. Catching like wild fire, the news caused general shock. It also caused heavy suspicion that still worse things were being concealed from the public.

But for many months there was still a hope that something would be done by the Allies to stop the killings. At the beginning of 1943 much discussion took place about possible emergency measures that might be taken with success. Hopes were hinged on the proposed Bermuda conference, which after several delays was fixed for April 1943. Among various measures proposed, the chief were: to relax the Anglo-American economic blockade of Europe, so as to permit supplies to reach the Jewish concentration sites; to cause the European neutrals to open their gates, under guarantee of a subsequent release from the burden; above all, the relaxation of the United States immigration laws and the lifting of restriction on immigration into Palestine.¹

The Allied war leaders, however, did not think these schemes practicable. Churchill himself shared the opinion of the Foreign Office and the State Department that such measures ran counter to war aims. Germany must be beaten and brought to surrender "unconditionally".²

The abortive Bermuda conference should be seen against this background. The British delegation, led by the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Richard Law, came determined

¹ L. Kohn to Arthur Lourie, 5 November 1942, WA. Cf. also Zionist Executive, Minutes of 4 April 1943 and Morse, op. cit., pp. 37-40.

² In April 1943, Oliver Lyttelton, a member of the British Cabinet told a member of the Zionist Executive that "it was simply a question of the length of the war. If it was going to be too long, he was afraid that all the Jews might be butchered." Zionist Executive, 25 April 1943, CZA. When in 1944 Churchill was asked to comply with the "Goods for Blood" deal with the Gestapo, in order to save the Hungarian Jews, he, fearing repercussions in Russia answered unequivocally: "On no account have the slightest negotiation with the Nazis!" See Churchill to Eden, Prem 4/51/10, p. 1364.

not to allow the Americans to insert the Palestine issue onto the agenda. But if that was their only fear, they could relax, since the State Department representative, Harold Dodds, simultaneously feared lest the British might press the United States to lift its strict immigration laws. Mutual cancellation of both disturbing questions eliminated all friction. From the point of view of Anglo-American relations, the conference proved a great success.¹

It is interesting to note, that in the secret report, submitted to the British Government after the end of the conference, there was no mention of any extermination of the Jews. The conference stuck to its original agenda, which was the "refugee problem".

Avoidance of uttering the truth about the extermination was typical not only of politicians, whose interest was to quiet public demands for what they saw as untimely action. It was also typical of many Jews who appeared to have known what was happening, yet to have repressed their knowledge. In the summer of 1944, the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem possessed many details about the manner in which the Hungarian Jews were transported and led to death in Auschwitz. It was known for instance that the rate of slaughter at one time reached 12,000 per day. And yet, when Izhak Grünbaum, a member of the Executive, suggested to the American Consul in Jerusalem that the Allies should bomb the death installations, he was unanimously reproved by his colleagues. "The Executive opinion," said the astonishing Minutes, "was that it must not be proposed to the Allies to bomb places where there were

¹ R.K. Law, "Report from the Bermuda Conference", Prem 4/51/3, pp. 133-136.

Jews.¹

Jewish reaction in America also was for a long time one of half-perplexity. Particularly was this so among the traditional leaders; they complied with the secret Allied "refugee diplomacy". True, they organized mass rallies in the big cities, with the demand to "stop Hitler now",² but no one went out of his way to try to do much more. Their inaction brought the eruption of an under-current in the Jewish public, which reacted with "unauthorized" and "wild" anger. This gradually gathered influence and eventually established itself as a new non-conformist line. During 1943 and 1944 more and more American Jews reckoned that all the world was either killing the Jews, or else deceiving them. The new militant leadership rode on the crest of that impression.

Zionism in the more extreme sense was the gainer by the new mood. The new Zionist leadership rejected secrecy and openly raised the demand to save the European Jews through a Zionist solution.

That such demands had till then not been practicable, did not worry the new leaders. For their plea was not primarily a rational one; it was rather an emotional rebellion, directed not outside but inside American Jewry. Its main objective was to redeem Jewry's violated honour and pride.

¹ Zionist Executive Minute, 11 June 1944. Much had been written on this issue, which nevertheless remained obscure. Weizmann raised the matter before Churchill in July, in consequence of which Churchill and Eden tried to carry the idea out; but to no avail. Churchill-Eden correspondence, Prem 4/51/10, pp. 70-136.

² Such as that in Madison Square Garden on 24 February 1943, where the crowd inside and outside the stadium was said to number more than a hundred thousand people.

(e) The Leaven in the Dough

During the first war years, American Jewry seemed to be waiting for a new Gospel. The confusion and lack of confidence shocked outsiders. In 1940, Ben Gurion told his colleagues:

"I found in the United States such Jewish cowardice as I have never seen before in any other country,"

adding,

"the Zionist Organization itself is a degenerate body . . . people are afraid to take any obligation towards us and they evade meetings. . . . there are many personal feuds and there is no accepted leadership at all."¹

The future looked gloomy and frightening. At a meeting of the Zionist Emergency Committee at the end of 1941, leading members expressed their desperate need for "a positive statement and a positive leadership, to give direction to Zionist thinking and action."² Given their compliance with the Allies' secret "refugee diplomacy", the traditional leaders of all shades tended to lose control over the Jewish community to much wilder elements.

The "Biltmore" programme was only one expression, and still a relatively moderate one, of that new mood of impatience. Others were Silver's anti-Administration campaigns and Peter Bergson's propaganda. The common characteristic of all of them was their appeal to the masses instead of the the United States Administration. Their techniques were based on a combination of lofty rhetoric with sound knowledge of the American communication media.

¹ To which he later added: "We must never leave America alone, without a person from Palestine." Report, Zionist Executive Minutes, 16 February 1941, CZA.

² AZEC, Minutes of 16 December 1941, ZANY.

Their methods appealed not only to Jews but also to non-Jews. There was great intoxication in suddenly dealing openly with subjects that had till then been thought to call for strict secrecy. In many cases non-Jews encouraged Jews to carry on with the publicity.

The technique of Peter Bergson was perhaps the most remarkable, though historically not the most significant. Building himself a propaganda empire, Bergson played the enfant terrible of American Jewry from near the beginning of the war until years after it ended. His political flair was the more remarkable in that he was a foreigner, living on false papers, ignored and hated by all the official Jewish establishment; what is more, he was only in his twenties.

The "Bergson group" consisted virtually of Peter Bergson alone. And yet it had its own Zionist objectives and programmes, Its own circles of Congressmen and newspaper men, and at one of the startling peaks of its career it opened an "Embassy" at the heart of the diplomatic hive in Washington, whence no one managed to remove it.

His real name was Hillel Kook, nephew of the esteemed Zionist Rabbi, Issac Kook. Hillel was a layman who in his youth immigrated to Palestine and joined the Revisionist youth movement. In connection with some illegal activities he had to take an assumed name and so he became Peter Bergson. When war broke out, he was sent by his Party to the United States and in July 1940 he reached New York in order to work with youth affiliated to the Revisionist movement.¹ But work with

¹ It was a custom of the various Jewish political parties in Palestine to send emissaries (shlichim) to influence and recruit to their ranks Jewish youth in the diaspora. In that way, the various Zionist youth movements outside Palestine reflected the political spectrum of the Yishuv. Relations between these zealot youth movements were none too good.

youth seemed too restricted for the young Bergson; he wanted to do bigger things. He therefore cut off, or at least camouflaged, his Revisionistic origin and sought a public career of a more "general" Jewish nature.

A letter by one of his contemporaries gives an account of the kind of activities Bergson began to engage in:

"I am now working for the Committee for the Jewish Army. Peter Bergson is the leading spirit of the group. . . . The Committee started in the following manner: a circular letter was written to a hundred prominent men, whose names were taken from 'Who is Who', explaining the necessity to form a Jewish Army and asking to join. Ten then joined. A second letter was then sent, now to thousands, on stationery bearing the names of the ten who previously replied 'Yes'. The same procedure was repeated several times until to-day we have something like 10,000 names of people . . ."

Thinking big helped Bergson to pretend that he was big. But his main gift was his sensitive ear, which monitored the topics that interested and excited the Jewish and non-Jewish public. By creating public bodies, one after another, and by recruiting people through propaganda pamphlets, he always managed to be the first to spread these topics.

The establishment of the Committee for the Jewish Army--his first baby--was publicly announced at a great ceremony only a week before Pearl Harbour. The size of the projected army was said to be a quarter of a million men. But once America entered the war, Bergson had to drop American Jews from his project, thus making it all the more fantastic. Nevertheless, he managed within a short time to enrol top members of the Administration onto his "Committee". His headed stationery included the names of Secretary for War Stimson,

¹ Eri Jabotinski from New York to "Dayag" in Jerusalem, 4 September 1943. The letter was caught by the British censor and is in FO 371/40129, E. 151.

Secretary for the Navy Knox, both leaders of the great Trade Union movements, Murray and Greene, and scores of prominent writers and intellectuals.¹

He also did well financially. A Cincinatti manufacturer with Revisionist sentiments supplied the group with its initial fund; soon it tapped many other sources and its members were able to enjoy the comfort of good premises and efficient services.

Bergson's success intrigued and troubled other Zionist organizations. In 1942 Ben Gurion was convinced that Bergson had a huge machinery at his disposal.² A year later Shertok was impressed by its influence in Washington. He told his colleagues on the Executive that,

"Washington is the nerve-centre, and no Jewish organization is as active there as the Committee for the Jewish Army . . . They make tremendous and noisy actions . . . feeding the public with bombastic slogans . . . acting according to their own fantasies, affecting people by their sheer impudence . . ."³

Gradually the established Zionist bodies began to imitate Bergson's techniques. They still (and always) called him "irresponsible", but during the periods of silence that followed the danger to Palestine, Bergson's was the only Zionist voice in America which continued to be heard in public. It was then that he started to be noticed both by admirers and by enemies. In May 1942, Senator Edwin Johnson, Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, delivered a speech on the Senate floor, praising Bergson's activities.⁴ Some Congressmen began to regard him as an electoral asset, especially since his

¹ FO 371/31380, E. 6663.

² Zionist Executive Minutes, 4 October 1942, CZA.

³ Ibid., 27 April 1943.

⁴ AZEC, Minutes, 5 May 1942, ZANY.

organization could sometimes afford to give financial assistance to some unlucky Senator who found it difficult to finance his election campaign.¹

The British Embassy on the other hand, was greatly disturbed by the extreme anti-British tone of Bergson's propaganda. In July 1943, Lord Halifax warned London that,

"The agitation for the Jewish Army, if further prosecuted with sufficient vigour, will tend to spill-over from Jewish circles to the general public."²

The Jewish Agency once tried to bring Bergson to court for assuming the role of representing the American Jews,³ and the ZOA tried to ruin him by publicising the facts about his identity and origin. But he always managed to slip aside and his "Committees" mushroomed and prospered.

Bergson changed his objectives several times during the war. After carrying on with the "Committee for the Jewish Army" for nearly two years, he produced a new project: "The Committee to Save the Jewish People", which saw as its task not only to tell the truth about Nazi atrocities, but also to condemn the Allies for doing nothing. The Bermuda conference soon became its main target. Later, riding the tide of sentiments favouring a Jewish State, Bergson established "The Committee for Free Palestine". Its theme was rather original: Palestine, it said, must become not a Jewish State but a "Hebrew" one, that is, with no future dependence on the Jewish

¹ My interview with Bergson. Outstanding were the cases of Senators Somers and Gillette. The first won his seat in 1944 after being helped by Bergson and remained a devoted supporter of his activities. The latter lost his seat in 1944 but regained it in 1948 after serving dedicatedly on Bergson's "committees".

² FO 371/31379, E. 4049.

³ Zionist Executive. Report by Shertok on Goldmann's message, 24 June 1944, CZA.

diaspora.

His technique was a variety of advertising devices of which perhaps the most successful was full-page advertisements in the most influential newspapers. By various tricks he managed to make these look as if half Congress and thousands of other prominent public men had signed his gigantic petitions.¹ Some of his advertisements took the form of "an open letter to (say) Roosevelt and Churchill". Others were big posters showing tear-jerking pictures. One of his most touching advertisements bore the slogan "We Shall Never Die!" and showed a desperate young Jew rising from a heap of his dead family, waving a sub-machine gun and mouthing a curse at the whole world.

His shrill anti-Administration and anti-British tone once caused Roosevelt to comment that "Hitler would be ready to pay for their advertisement."²

Bergson's colourful activities had a considerable effect on the public mood, Jewish and non-Jewish, in America. It illustrated to the "proper" Zionists that non-conformism paid, and that it could escape unpunished. Undoubtedly, this lesson had a great effect on the future activities of AZEC and particularly on its more militant wing.³

¹ Once he stirred a scandal on the Senate floor after a particularly bitter attack on the Bermuda Conference. A counter attack on him was launched by a Senator--a member of the United States delegation--who tried to tear off his mask, accusing him of forgery. But only a few withdrew their names from his list (among the latter was an inconspicuous Senator from Missouri, Harry S. Truman. FO 371/35035, E. 3205).

² Report by Dr. N. Goldmann, Zionist Executive Minutes, 28 September 1944, CZA.

³ In June 1942, a prominent Zionist leader, Judge Levinthal, wrote to Weizmann asking his permission to co-operate with Bergson, since "there can be no doubt that the J.A. Committee is attracting so many Jews who hitherto never had any Zionist interest." 17 June 1942, WA.

But Bergson's activities had other results. They greatly infuriated not only the British but also members of the Roosevelt Administration. The impatience of these last towards Jewish "extremism", not necessarily only Bergson's, caused the United States Government to try and join hands with the British in an attempt to stem Zionist propaganda. This development will be described in Chapter Three.

(f) A Jewish State

The idea of an immediate post-war Jewish State was born at almost the same time as that of the Jewish Army, but it took a full two extra years to reach America. Again, it was carried there by emissaries from London and Palestine, chiefly by Weizmann and Ben Gurion. Each of the latter, however, had his own concept of how that goal should be achieved.

Hesitant as Dr. Weizmann was to speed up his "gradualism", it appears that he was the first of the two to take active steps towards fulfilment of the long-standing Zionist dream. The danger created by the White Paper policy, combined with a demographic theory which he adopted, pushed Weizmann, though reluctantly, toward the conclusion that times had changed and that at the end of the war Zionism must make a great leap forward, despite the many risks involved.

When in December 1939, Weizmann met Churchill, at the time First Lord of the Admiralty,¹ both agreed that after the war they would want to build in Palestine a Jewish State of about four to five million Jews. Both later stuck to that idea. And although Churchill saw Weizmann only three times during the rest of the war, a high degree of tacit agreement

¹ See above, p. 34.

always existed between them.

Weizmann was aware of the holocaust, though not of its magnitude. He was sure the war was going to bring about an unprecedented destruction of Jewish life in Europe, as a result of which millions would be left homeless and penniless.

The father of the demographic theory which Weizmann adopted, was Lewis Namier, a well-known Professor of History in Britain, and one of Weizmann's devoted aides at the London Office.¹ "No one could tell," wrote Namier, "where Russia's future frontiers will be drawn." But assuming that the Allies would win the war, Namier correctly foresaw that they would be shifted further West. Thus, he continued, many more Jews would be included in the Soviet Union.

Namier did not feel greatly concerned for those Jews. He also did not feel concern for Jews living in the Anglo-Saxon world. For those ten to eleven millions "there will be no Jewish problem". But there would still remain, he thought, three to four millions in Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Slovakia, and other parts of Eastern Europe who would form "the most immediate and urgent part of the post-war Jewish problem."² After the war, these Jews would be economically ruined and psychologically broken, and would not be willing or indeed able, to go on living in their countries of origin.

Weizmann adopted Namier's theory, with one additional and horrifying assumption. At a meeting in October 1941 between his staff and the plenum of the British Jewish Board of Deputies,

¹ L. B. Namier, "Numbers and Exodus" in Conflicts. The essay had been written in 1941, directly after Hitler's attack on Russia, but was discussed earlier within Weizmann's circle.

² Ibid., pp. 148-150.

Weizmann predicted that "as a result of Nazi cruelty, perhaps one million Jews would perish."¹ Weizmann also assumed that some countries would, after the war, adopt a more liberal immigration policy, thus cutting the number of Jewish refugees by a few hundreds of thousands. But he warned his hearers that "in the happiest circumstances, there would still remain two or more millions . . . for whom there would be no home."² He saw no remedy for these millions but to let them rebuild their life in Palestine, where they would be happily accepted by their brethren and where means for their rehabilitation should be available. But in order to achieve that goal, the Jews in Palestine needed "fiscal autonomy, freedom of immigration and land purchase, and that meant a State."³

Asked about the rate of immigration, Weizmann immediately got into difficulties. He said he believed that one hundred thousand per annum was the ceiling,⁴ but if that was so, did Weizmann contemplate that some "broken Jews" would wait up to twenty years for their turn to immigrate?

Weizmann was a realist. He could not promise his audience anything more. But David Ben Gurion, who too was in London at that time, thought differently. His prognosis was that,

" . . . between three to five million Jews . . . should be absorbed . . . not over a long period, but within a short time, that is, within several years, as was done in Greece."⁵

¹ See paper stolen from Ben Gurion and now in FO 371/27129, E. 8556.

² Ibid. See also Antony de Rothschild to Weizmann, 3 December 1941, WA

³ Ibid.

⁴ In the peak year until then, 1935, some 60,000 immigrants were admitted.

⁵ Zionist Executive Minutes, 4 December 1942, CZA.

Weizmann refused to indulge in day-dreaming but Ben Gurion took it in his stride; not so much, perhaps, because he was less experienced than Weizmann but because he was going to the United States and intended to present "big things" to American Jewry. "You can buy America with big things," he told his colleagues at the Zionist Executive,

"because they are used to big magnitudes. If one tells them 'Palestine would solve the Jewish problem', then it is worth while."¹

Weizmann's and Ben Gurion's differing concepts of how to use American Jewry sprang from these differing points of departure.²

Both men spent a good deal of the war in the United States, working for the Jewish State idea, each according to his lights; there was a world of difference, however, in their position there. While Weizmann was recognized as the leader of the world Zionist movement, Ben Gurion was at best considered a great Palestinian labour leader. Weizmann knew and was known by most members of the United States Administration, whereas Ben Gurion needed an introduction almost everywhere. Weizmann could consort with top American personalities, including the President (whom he saw three times during the war), whereas Ben Gurion was snubbed when he once tried to see Roosevelt.³

Weizmann saw his task as diplomatically to bring Churchill and Roosevelt to a common platform on the Palestine

¹ Ben Gurion, "Outlines".

² It is hardly necessary to add that the Nazis refuted, and in fact "solved" Namier's demographic problem, by exterminating six million Jews, "instead" of one million, predicted by Weizmann. The creation of the problem of the Displaced Persons after the war were not exactly what Weizmann foresaw.

³ Miss Grace Tully to Judge Frankfurter, 6 July 1942, FDRL Box 3, OF.

issue. He was convinced that the President was already an ardent Zionist, just as was the Prime Minister. Ben Gurion thought that such a feat could not be achieved without strong pressure from the Jewish and non-Jewish public. But even if Ben Gurion had been in a position to adopt Weizmann's line, he personally could not have followed it up. The two men each conceived what was possible in terms of what each could do in practice.

Weizmann's first trip to the United States was made early in 1940. He met Roosevelt, at the time keyed up for the Presidential election of that year, and admitted that he achieved very little.¹ His second visit was, as we remember, "on Churchill's behalf", in connection with the Jewish Army but it turned out that "in that case there was hardly a point in his going."² Weizmann's basic conviction of Britain's central role in Zionism remained unshaken. He therefore went again to the United States in April 1941, if only to maintain some degree of contact between the two heads of state.

Meanwhile the idea of a Jewish State had ripened in his mind and he gave it expression by publishing his celebrated article in the journal Foreign Affairs.³

The chances of attaining a Jewish State at the time looked gloomy and Weizmann--always a realist--was somewhat taken aback. In February 1942 he was on the eve of going yet again to the United States when he lost a son, serving with the Royal Air Force, and was deeply distressed. Sixty eight years of age and in declining health, he began to feel the

¹ Trial and Error, p. 516.

² Minutes of the London Zionist Office, 2 December 1940, CZA.

³ Issue of January 1942.

burden of his years. He decided to accept Roosevelt's invitation to return to his old profession of chemistry research and to settle in America for a longer period, working for the war effort in that way. He left England in March 1942 and spent fifteen months in the United States. But the harvest of those long months was not particularly rich. His chemistry project did not go well, and what was worse, events of great significance to the future of Zionism occurred during their course--events that he seemed only half to notice. He appeared to misread both the chances of recruiting the administration to Zionism and the mood of American Jewry. Not surprisingly, therefore, American Jewry scarcely noticed his presence. And when he spoke to them "he was not well received."¹

One of his great admirers, who served as First Secretary at the British Embassy, gave the following description of his speech at the "Biltmore" conference:

"The American Jews regard him as becoming more and more hopelessly Anglophile, more and more prone to appease the British Government which is a source of particular annoyance and frustration to them."²

When he sought to manipulate the American Jewish Emergency Committee to suit his needs, Weizmann was almost insolently rebuffed by its members, who refused to serve on a sub-committee under his chairmanship.³

From the "Biltmore" rostrum, Weizmann went back to

¹ I. Berlin, "Weizmann's Policies", a despatch to the FO, July 1942, FO 371/31397, E. 4254.

² Ibid. Weizmann told his audience, "So long as I am in control, I shall do my best to see that a break between Zionism and Britain does not occur." But many were not sure that he was still in control of the movement.

³ AZEC, Minutes of 7 January 1943. It was Stephen Wise's intervention which helped to save Weizmann's face. A few were sufficiently convinced to serve on that sub-committee but the body petered out after two meetings.

his laboratory; only when his project there failed did he decide to re-assume full political involvement. But by now it was the fall of 1942 and the elderly leader resembled Hony Ha'Meagel, the legendary Jewish wonder worker, who slept for seventy years and on awakening found the world so changed that he sought death.

His lack of political orientation led him into various political mistakes, the chief of which was probably the adventure of sending Colonel Hoskins to see King Ibn Saud.¹

Ben Gurion, on the other hand, who had found most doors in America open for him only reluctantly, managed to find one important audience for his own Jewish State concept. This was the Zionist Emergency Committee (later the Zionist Emergency Council-AZEC), which soon became the prime mover of all American Jewry towards Zionism. Members of that body perceived a new gospel in Ben Gurion's "Outlines", and they were the people who gave him the chance to present it at the "Biltmore" conference.

(g) "Biltmore"

In later years the "Biltmore" programme was to be accorded a historical significance almost equal to that of the Basel Programme of 1897.² It was not so when that gathering took place in a New York hotel of that name.

For the American Zionist, the meeting was an ambitious undertaking: it was said to serve as a substitute for the World Zionist Congress, which could not be held during the

¹ See below, pp. 146-149.

² Accepted at the first World Zionist Congress, called by Dr. Herzl and convened at Basel in 1897.

war.¹ But it did not play this role for the other two Zionist centres, though their heads were present at it. Only a few out of the many hundreds of delegates who attended it came from countries other than the United States; Weizmann and Ben Gurion were there not because they travelled especially for it but because they happened to be in America when it was held.

When Ben Gurion left Palestine in July 1941, determined to present his "Outlines" to American Jewry, he had no idea that such a conference would take place. It was only at the ZOA conference of 9 September 1941 in Cincinnati that a decision to hold it was first put forward.² (Ben Gurion was at that time in London.) It also seems that Weizmann did not at first, or even afterwards, attach much importance to ZOA's ambitions.

Ben Gurion visited the United States twice during the war with a comparatively short break between the two visits. But during that break, he crystallised and put on paper his plans for the post-war Jewish State. As he failed to convince either the six members of the Executive or the Vaad Poel Zioni that the time had come publicly to raise the demand for a Jewish State, he decided to try his luck with American Jewry.³

Ben Gurion's trips were an improvisation, not scheduled

¹ M. Weisgal, "Memorandum on the Extraordinary American Zionist Conference", submitted to the Emergency Committee on 20 March 1942, AZEC file, ZANY.

² See London Executive report, 4 December 1941, WA. Also CO 733/444 (part I) 75872/102.

³ Debates took place on 9 and 16 March 1941 and on 16 and 28 May of the same year. When saying farewell to his colleagues on 27 July, some members warned him not to present his "Outlines" abroad, since there was no decision about it yet. Ben Gurion, however, had it his own way. See Zionist Executive Minutes of these dates, CZA.

diplomatic voyages. Their duration was approved by the Executive only retrospectively. On the spontaneity of his first decision, he himself reported that:

"I had the intention of spending ten days in England. Instead, I went to America and spent ten months there."¹

No one could tell how the war situation would develop from day to day. When he left Palestine on his first trip, France was still considered a strong ally. By the time he came back, Britain was fighting alone, while America served as a beacon of hope for the democratic world. On return, he was convinced that:

"America will play a major role, perhaps a dominant one, in post-war affairs, for the simple reason that she will be less exhausted than the other two powers."²

Zionist weakness in America only strengthened his determination to harness and exploit the as yet unused but tremendous political potential of American Jewry. Before leaving the United States in January 1941, he first mooted the idea that a Jewish State must be established immediately after the war with the support of the big Democracies. In a letter of farewell to Dr. N. Goldmann, Jewish Agency Representative in the United States he wrote:

"After the war a Jewish Commonwealth must be formed in Palestine . . . it will join the British Empire as a new Dominion, if the British agree, or an Arab Federation, if the Arabs acquiesce."³

In the same spirit, but greater precision and perfectionism, he wrote his "Outlines" when back in Palestine.

"Outlines" was basically an optimistic document,

¹ Zionist Executive Minutes, 16 February 1941, CZA.

² "Outlines".

³ Ben Gurion to Goldmann, 17 January 1941. B.G. file, ZANY. The letter was written in Hebrew, with the word "Commonwealth" written in the same language.

considering the period at which it was written. It contained several surprising hypotheses. It predicted, for instance, the possibility of general approval of the State by an international forum, including the approval of the Soviet Union. It foresaw the manipulation of American influence on Britain to that end, which would come as the result of organized Zionist pressure. But it included very little about how to achieve Zionist strength in the United States.

The bedrock of the "Outlines" and of his confidence was a simple syllogism, upon which

- (a) America was going to become the strongest power in the world, and could therefore, if she wanted, influence future British Palestine policy.
- (b) Zionism, if strong in America, was potentially capable of influencing American foreign policy as a pressure group.
- (c) Therefore there was, without question, a chance of influencing British Palestine policy through America.

There is still an apologetic "Weizmannite" undertone in Ben Gurion's case for a State; this was soon to disappear. He denies that a State was for him an end in itself and insists that it is only a "means" of making possible a solution to the Jewish problem. He rejects the idea that there is a need for "transfer of population", unless some Arabs transfer of their own free will. The absorptive capacity of Palestine, he is sure, will continue to expand, as it did in the past, so that even within the boundaries of 1922 there should be enough room for both people. Jews, however, must quickly become a majority in the country.¹

¹ One of his far fetched hypotheses was that once the Jews obtained a majority in Palestine "the conflict with the Arabs would disappear" (sic). See his speech at the Executive meetings of 18 and 20 November 1944.

Ben Gurion arrived in the United States for the second time in November 1941, having first discussed his "Outlines" with Weizmann in London. On his departure, the British authorities searched his luggage and made themselves a copy of the "Outlines". They realized that he was a "dangerous man". Once the High Commissioner asked permission to detain him.¹

The British thus became aware of the "Biltmore" programme from its embryonic stage. They traced its subsequent approval at the Vaad Poel Zioni, in November 1942, and always regarded it as a conspiracy against their rule in Palestine.

The "Extraordinary" conference convened at the "Biltmore" hotel was well prepared. Its sponsors were the four bodies forming the Emergency Committee: ZOA, Mizrachi, Poale-Zion and Hadassah. It did not, in the first place, intend to become a forum for decisions about foreign affairs; the main stress was put on matters affecting the inner life and strength of the Zionist movement in the United States.²

The conference's originators, despite their excellent preparatory work, did not foresee precisely what course it was going to take. They therefore prepared a debate of a very general nature, with no special stress on any one issue. The topics they chose had "to cover all shades of Jewish life, and . . . clarify our ideas."³ They also saw to it that no surprises would occur and therefore allocated the subjects for the opening lectures in what they considered a "balanced manner". Ben Gurion was merely allotted the chance to "report on the

¹ Minute, June 1941, FO 371/31380, E. 6946.

² M. Weisgal, op. cit.

³ Ibid.

situation in Palestine", while the final speech, bearing the title "The great task ahead" was reserved for the retired and inconspicuous ex-chairman of ZOA, Solomon Goldmann,¹ a "harmless" man. All these arrangements were probably precautionary, lest the Weizmann-Ben Gurion dispute (and some others) might flare up in the course of the proceedings.

Outside the United States, the other Zionist centres felt no excitement about the conference. Leading members of the Jerusalem Executive expressed concern lest it should "assume authority to make binding decisions."²

Even inside thickly-Jewish-populated New York, the press gave hardly any coverage to the preparations for it and remained reserved towards it during its course.³ All in all, it was hard to realise that something of great historical importance was in creation, particularly in face of the din of statements simultaneously being made by the Bergson group.

Even after the conference ended, many, with some reason, doubted the significance of the newly accepted resolution about the future State. One devoted member of AZEC Executive remarks: "They did nothing, but did it nicely."⁴ Indeed there was as yet nothing binding on the whole Zionist movement, nor any resolution entailing immediate implementation.⁵

¹ Ibid. The final address was afterwards carried by Weizmann.

² Zionist Executive Minutes, 4 October 1941.

³ The opening of the conference was reported on p. 37 of the New York Times of 10 May. Emphasis was put on Weizmann's prediction that 3 million Jews might after the war remain homeless, and not on his conclusion that a Jewish State was needed. Ben Gurion's speech next day was given somewhat wider coverage on p.6 of 11 May and the resolutions appeared on p. 3 of the issue of 12 May. News of it never reached the front page.

⁴ Zionist Executive Minutes, 4 October 1942.

⁵ It officially became binding on 8 November 1942, when the Jerusalem Zionist Executive (and a few days later the Vaad Poel) approved of it. See Zionist Executive Minutes of that date. See also FO 371/31380, E. 6946.

Ben Gurion stole the conference's thunder. His speech became its pivotal point. He first did his duty so far as "reporting" was concerned but thereafter carried on with his "Outlines", both from the conference's rostrum and in committee. His position was strengthened by the sharp anti-British sentiments aroused at the time by the news of the sinking of the illegal immigrants' ship Struma, after being denied all help in distress.

The conference received, on 11 May, a voluminous resolution, in which only an experienced eye (such as that of the British) could at once spot the highlights. Of its eight articles, the important ones were three (or perhaps only two). They were the demands for (1) a Jewish Army (from Palestine alone), (2) for transfer of control of immigration to the Jewish Agency, and (3) for the establishment, immediately after the war of a "Jewish Commonwealth" in Palestine.¹

When Ben Gurion went back to Palestine, he found that opposition to these resolutions was no longer substantial. The cataclysm of the extermination in Europe contributed greatly to their final acceptance. As one Foreign Office official commented:

"It means that the demand of the extreme wing in Zionism have now become an official policy."²

¹ In January 1943, Dr. Nahum Goldmann explained to members of AZEC that "for all practical purposes the term 'Commonwealth' is identical with 'State'." "Commonwealth," Goldmann further explained, "was chosen because it had a more liberal and democratic connotation, but it implies a Jewish State with a Jewish majority." Minutes of that date. In Palestine similar "precautions" were taken. FO 371/31380, E. 6946. People using the substitute term were said to "speak algebra".

² Minutes by Caccia, FO 371/31380, E. 6946 of 26 November 1942.

(h) The American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC)

AZEC served as the main organ through which the new Zionist line was subsequently implemented. It was an umbrella beneath which the frustrated elements of American Jewry sought new ways both to help their brethren in Europe and to push more and more vigorously for a Jewish State.¹ While the refugee policy of both Britain and the United States sought to separate those two issues, it was AZEC's line to prove that they were inseparable.

After "Biltmore", but particularly from the end of 1943, AZEC became more and more independent in its concepts, and in creating its own strategy. Both Ben Gurion and Weizmann, having fertilized American Jewish soil, had less and less practical say in guiding AZEC's actions. The regeneration of Zionist independence in the United States was a necessary precondition for winning for the American Zionists real influence over their country's policies.

One of AZEC's first and most important achievements was the revival in December 1942 of a united Christian pro-Zionist organization. This was the American Palestine Committee

¹ The creation of "Emergency" bodies, to serve at times when the regular organs of the world Zionist movement would not be able to function, was one of the guiding principles enunciated by a special session of the Zionist General Council, which assembled at the end of the Zionist Congress in August 1939. Cf. ESCO, pp. 1078-9. After forming the American Committee for Zionist Affairs, ZOA in 1941 joined with three other bodies and established the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs. After "Biltmore", other organizations of non-Zionist affiliation began to show growing interest in the Emergency Committee's activities. In October 1943, after the American Zionist Conference, it became an umbrella for nearly all the Jewish Organizations. It then received its final name; the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC). See, "Report to the Extraordinary Conference", 9 May 1942, cf. also, D. Bierenbrier, "The American Zionist Emergency Council", Ph.D. Thesis, Brandeis University, 1968.

(APC). At its head stood the influential New York Senator, Robert Wagner.

A sociologist who has studied contemporary American Jewry, doubts whether Zionism could have achieved its dominant position within Jewry without the psychological support and encouragement afforded it by the non-Jewish Zionists.¹ But one thing is sure, all their foreign policy objectives could never have been obtained without the help of all the Senators, Governors, Members of the House, and high-ranking members of the Administration, who openly or secretly sympathised with Zionist aims. As from the end of 1942, prominent figures who included Stimson, Knox, Attorney General Jackson, Secretary for Agriculture Wickard, William Greene, Philip Murray, the Republican Presidency candidate Wendell Wilkie,² and "over 150 members of the Congress, including both majority leaders,"³ considered themselves members of APC.

True, there was a difference between belonging to APC and supporting all Zionist demands; Christian Zionists were only sympathisers and did not commit themselves strictly to any Zionist programme, but their very affiliation to organizations such as APC greatly helped to erode the sacred principle of the State Department that British Palestine policy was none of America's business.

At the start, AZEC's leadership was in the hands of Stephen Wise, who for years was considered a "militant" leader. But soon militancy became a matter of relativity, and Wise "turned moderate". As from August 1943, on Weizmann's advice,⁴

¹ S. Halperin, op. cit., pp. 177-188.

² Memo in the FO files of 10 Dec. 1942. FO 371/31380, E. 7308.

³ FO 371/31378, E. 967.

⁴ Wise to Weizmann, 10 February 1943, WA.

Wise shared the chairmanship with the more dynamic Abba Hillel Silver. Serious rivalry soon developed between the two men, not unlike that between Weizmann and Ben Gurion. Their struggle was one between the old and the new generations of leadership, but also between the pro and the anti-administration way of operating.

Wise's "moderation" was chiefly the result of long service to the New York Democratic Party and in particular to Roosevelt himself. An older man, he was already Roosevelt's henchman when the latter served as Governor of New York. He used, half jokingly, to call him "Boss", and took great pride in his access to the President from time to time.

Silver inclined rather toward the Republican Party, with which activities he had been involved, earlier in his career, in Cleveland, Ohio. But unlike Wise, he was careful not to commit his Zionist activity to any particular political party. In future years this aloofness was to pay him and Zionism a handsome dividend.

Silver was the most active figure in American Zionism between 1943 and 1948. He was hardly a pleasant man, though extremely impressive when speaking from a rostrum. He was admired from a distance but hated by many and feared by his enemies. Like most zealous Zionist leaders, he lacked humour and was seldom self-critical. His outstanding virtues were his courage when facing top politicians and his ruthlessness in pursuing his political aims.

Silver fitted the urge for a new figure as rebel leader. His bitter non-conformity with the existing consensus in regard to Jewish matters greatly contributed to restoring his people's pride and abated their humiliation. Himself a

great admirer of the early Messianic movements in Judaism,¹ he gave them the feeling that the disaster offered an opening for redemption.²

The mysticist Silver, like the day-dreamer Ben Gurion, can be condoned for giving free rein to their imagination. For prophetic mysticism, however unrealistic it may seem, often leads to fulfilment of ends because of its appeal to great masses of people. During World War II, "rationality" and "irrationality" were relative. Certain kinds of lunacy, fanaticism, and passionate attitudes, on occasion served political purposes better than did "reasonableness".

Silver's understanding of the Palestine problem was limited. In 1943 he is recorded as saying that the Arab national movement was nothing but a "British creation" aimed at "serving their imperial purposes, such as liquidating the Jewish National Home." He did not say so in public but in the course of a matter-of-fact conversation with an American Senator.³ ^{For years} he had no inclination to run any Zionist affairs outside the United States but claimed with vigour the right to guide American Jewry along the lines that he thought would best serve Zionism.

The cardinal difference, however, between the two chairmen of AZEC was not their ultimate objective, which was the Jewish State, but their tactical approach to attaining it.

¹ His Ph.D. Dissertation, later published as a book, was called "A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel".

² In 1943 Silver wrote in his notes: "I was always confident that the inescapable logic of events would, in due time, make Palestine a Jewish State . . . When all the doors of the world would be closed to our people, then the hands of Destiny [sic] will force open the doors of Palestine. And that hour, I believe, is rapidly approaching." Silver, Autobiography, p.131.

³ Talk to Henry Cabot Lodge, 19 November 1943. Silver, "Notes".

Wise was determined not to impair relations with the Administration, while Silver reached the conclusion that this attitude led nowhere. His own theme was that the Administration was plying the Zionists with empty words and that unless it was forced to take action no Jews would be saved and the gates of Palestine would remain closed. His favourite motto was a sentence from Psalm 146: "Put not your trust in Princes."

In their daily work, the two chairmen at first observed a division of labour. Wise handled foreign relations and kept contact with the Government; Silver took charge of the reorganization of AZEC's machinery. In so doing, Silver not only secured increasing personal control over an ever-growing machine but also managed to plant his own henchmen in the provinces. His approach fitted Ben Gurion's concept --to get to the grass-roots of the Jewish people.

Silver's reorganization took three forms:

(1) building an efficient executive in AZEC's New York main office, (2) establishing a permanent office for outer relations in Washington, where till then only Bergson's people had made their mark, and (3) spreading AZEC activities throughout the United States.¹

He proved a first class organizer. He managed to establish local Emergency Committees (ECs), each chaired by a local man, in literally every Jewish community in the country. By the end of 1943 there were about 200 ECs and that number doubled a year later.² AZEC held regular semi-annual conferences for EC representatives, for purposes of exchange of experience and giving guidance.

¹ Halperin, op. cit., pp. 270-273.

² Biernebrer, op. cit., p. 38.

There was another reason for Silver's tremendous success--he brought with him to AZEC control of vast funds and the assistance of a well oiled fund raising machine. He was for years the Chairman of the United Palestine Appeal (UPA) and had no intention of dropping the role.¹

Before long he was able to harvest where he had sown. The local ECs fulfilled two functions at once: they spread Zionist propaganda inside the Jewish community and at the same time lobbied local Governors and Congressmen at home, instead of in Washington (where these last were less available to AZEC men).²

Silver's contribution to Zionist progress was three-fold: he broke the tradition of adherence to one political party, and brought about free bids for support from the two main parties.³ He greatly helped to mobilize American Jewry in support of Zionism by his eloquence in public and by his able and tireless executive work. He can be personally credited with converting some important political figures to Zionism.⁴

¹ AZEC, Minutes, 28 September 1944. It is interesting to note that whenever he reached a new public post, Silver never gave up an old one. By the end of 1946 he held among others the positions of: Rabbi of the "Temple", Cleveland, Chairman of UPA, Chairman of AZEC, Head of the American Jewish Agency, President of ZOA, etc.

² AZEC, Minutes, 13 January 1944.

³ See below, pp. 181-184.

⁴ One of Silver's converts was Senator R. Taft of Ohio, subsequently the Senate majority leader. On that conversion Taft's biographer comments: "Taft's conversion, like that of many other prominent American politicians could only partly be explained by their pragmatic calculations. There was something in Zionism, perhaps the same thing which made it stale for Britishers, that made a great appeal to American Christians: probably the idea of Jewish self-redemption in the way of pioneering and frontier-conquering." J.T. Patterson, Mister Republican, Biography of R. Taft, pp. 280-282.

(i) From "Biltmore" to the American Jewish Conference

The crucial metamorphosis in the attitude of American Jewry took place between May 1942 and September 1943. Its turning point was a battle between the Emergency Council and the American Jewish Committee (AJC), held around the convening of the American Jewish Conference. That meeting, which after many delays took place at the end of August 1943, was convened to form an all-Jewish action body. It was supposed to include representatives of the entire strength of American Jewry and to take action in an attempt to help the Jews of Europe.

In its course, the AJC fought a losing battle. As a result of an avalanche of shocking news from Europe which came during negotiation about the meeting, the AJC gradually withdrew from its traditional stand and became ready to support the demand for opening the gates of Palestine.¹ At the same time, many calm, contemplative Jews had ceased to vacillate and joined in the demand for drastic action. "Biltmore" was in tune with that cry for action, whereas the AJC's tendency to compromise seemed to go only half way towards a radical solution.

Nevertheless, the defeat which the AJC suffered at the conference took the Zionists themselves by surprise. It rendered many of their leaders ill at ease and anxious lest they themselves were losing control over their own hysterical following.

Spurred on by the plight of European Jewry and guided by the "Biltmore" resolution, the Zionist from May 1942 on

¹ Because of this change, a small and noisy faction had split from the AJC and formed the American Council for Judaism. It remained the only Jewish organization in the United States consistently to oppose Zionism.

approached other Jewish organizations with their plea for joint action. They got a ready response from organizations such as Bnay Brith, but met with deadlock when they tackled the AJC.

The origin of the idea to hold this all-embracing conference came from Weizmann.¹ He contemplated a General Assembly of all American Jewry to discuss joint action. But it was AZEC's tacticians who dressed his idea in new and brilliant clothing. To form his Assembly, they proposed use of a regular American democratic electoral process. The arrangement, if accepted, would completely liquidate the otherwise influential AJC.

The AJC consisted of an élite. Its power emanated not from the broad masses but from the high positions that its members held in American public and political life. It had only a few hundred members all over the country, as opposed to the hundreds of thousands belonging to pro-Zionist organizations.² Polling boxes and ballot papers were bound severely to reduce the AJC's future influence in the United States. Thus it had no choice but to reject AZEC's proposal and the plan for a Jewish Assembly was side-tracked into a blind alley.

But the situation was saved from an unexpected quarter. The leader of an organization of a most "neutral" kind suddenly volunteered to further the creation of the Assembly. This was Henry Monsky, leader of the 150,000 strong Order of Bnay Brith, a non-Zionist body and one of the most

¹ Cf. Report by Dr. N. Goldmann, Zionist Executive Minutes, 28 September 1944. See also, Weizmann to Locker, 3 June 1942, WA.

² One needed substantial wealth, or a prominent position, or both, in order to be accepted as a member of the AJC.

reputed Jewish organizations in the country. The Order, far older than any Zionist organization in the United States, was ready to discuss a vigorous campaign aimed at opening the gates of Palestine and its leader believed that the gap between AZEC and the AJC was not unbridgeable. Monsky, who had perhaps an eye on the empty seat of Louis Marshall (who until his death in 1929 had served as a recognized leader for all American Jewry)¹ decided to handle the matter himself.

The Zionists grew confused. Many of them regarded Monsky's initiative as a trap. AZEC's Executive committee wholly failed to agree on how to treat it. The meeting reached no decision and hoped that the proposal would die a natural death.

But Monsky then alarmed AZEC: he decided to campaign for the Assembly without getting prior approval from all the Jewish organizations concerned. Towards the end of 1942 he sent invitations to no less than 24 Jewish organizations calling on them to convene in January at the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, in order openly to discuss how to prepare the Assembly.²

The Zionists had no choice. Despite reservations,³ they decided, on 7 January 1943, to go to Pittsburgh. Under Monsky's supervision, the preparations for this began. In their course, he saved the face of the hesitant AJC by changing the name of the meeting to the "American Jewish Conference",

¹ Weizmann to Locker, ibid. See also Zionist Executive Minutes, 28 February 1943, also Lourie to Lautenbach, 14 January 1943, WA.

² Lourie to Lauterbach, op. cit., WA.

³ One ^{AZEC} member said he thought "the matter was fraught with dangers." Strong criticism was head on "the failure of those who were aware of the planned gathering to keep AZEC informed", etc. Cf. AZEC Minutes, 7 January 1943.

so managing to include them. Complicated arrangements for the election to be held lasted through the summer of 1943, for it was the first time in the history of American Jewry that a general election of the kind was to take place.

The conference, when it opened on 29 August, in the end took place in the Waldorf Astoria, New York, and proved a Zionist success so great that it made AZEC's original unwillingness to attend seem paradoxical. In fact, the electoral system chosen at a prior meeting weighted the poll in AZEC's favour¹ and furnished the Zionists with a real chance to speak for the whole of American Jewry. Nevertheless, the result surpassed their wildest dreams. Of the 379 delegates elected, 240 were persons directly affiliated to the ZOA. In addition, more than a hundred delegates were elected on the slates of the other three organizations within AZEC. So complete was the success, that some Zionists wished a few more non-Zionists had been elected "for the sake of appearances."²

The Zionists' original intention was to reach a "generous" compromise with the non-Zionists, who had no chance if a vote took place.³ They also intended to mollify the Administration, which had given more than a hint that it did not care for the Zionists' noisy propaganda. A main question was whether to drop "Jewish Commonwealth" from the conference resolutions and to be satisfied with the demand for "opening

¹ The arrangement was that 75 per cent of the delegates were to be elected by normal democratic means, which gave a majority to AZEC's ECs. The other 25 per cent were to be chosen by so-called "national representation"--that is, by nominations, made by a joint executive committee of all the parties, from among a nation-wide range of notables. Among this 25 per cent, too, the Zionists could reckon on numerous supporters.

² Halperin, op. cit., p. 230. See also Halifax to FO, 8 February 1943, FO 371/35032, E. 1027, and Weisgal to Weizmann, 11 August 1943, WA.

³ AJC had only four delegates, one on the executive committee.

the doors of Palestine". The majority of AZEC's leaders, upon Monsky's advice, first appeared to acquiesce in this moderate line. Asking too much, they feared, might set at risk all the effort made and most of the success till then obtained.¹

But events at the conference turned out otherwise because of Silver's moving speech. The Rabbi, who only a few days earlier became, together with Wise, co-chairman of AZEC, played a role similar to that of Ben Gurion at "Biltmore" --he stole the thunder and rendered the resolutions much more extreme.²

Borrowing the right to speak from another organization, Silver, on the last evening of the conference came out with a forthright demand that the full "Biltmore" resolution should be adopted.³ "He spoke with great eloquence" and his speech "marked the turning point of the conference," reported the British Embassy.⁴ "We cannot save the Jews from Europe," Silver said,

"unless we have free immigration into Palestine. We cannot have free immigration . . . unless our political rights are recognized there. Our political rights cannot be recognized unless our historic connection with this country is acknowledged . . . All these are inseparable links. The whole chain breaks if one of the links is missing!"

He mocked at those who sought a compromise:

"Is this Jewish statesmanship? Is this Jewish vision, courage, faith? Or are we to declare that this great Assembly that we stand by those who gave their tears and blood and sweat to build for them and for us and for the future generations, at long last, after the weary centuries, a home, a national home, a Jewish commonwealth; are we going to take counsel here of

¹ Cf. New Palestine, vol. xxxiii, no. 18.

² Halperin, op. cit., p. 234.

³ Except for the Jewish Army, to which little importance was now attached by American Zionists, New Palestine, op. cit.

⁴ Report by Campbell, FO 371/25039, E. 5926.

the fear of this^{this} one or that one might say, of how actions are likely to be misinterpreted? or are we to take counsel of our inner moral convictions, . . . and go forward in faith to build and to heal?"¹

He had to stop his speech several times because of mounting applause, followed by the singing of "Hatiquva". People in the hall were weeping for joy.² When, on Silver's demand, the full "Biltmore" resolution was put to the vote, the AJC men were taken completely by surprise and had no time to prevent its passage. When Rabbi Wise, who presided over the Palestine session called for a vote for it, "a sea of cards appeared waving madly". And when he said "All opposed"--from the platform Judge Proskauer of AJC raised his card shoulder high. Delegates turned in their seats, craning their necks to locate the other three voters who joined him.³

Thus suddenly the Zionists achieved what they had always wanted. "From now on," a triumphant Silver told AZEC members, "the voice of American Jewry ought to speak for us."⁴

¹ Conference proceedings, quoted from Halperin, op. cit., p. 230.

² Campbell, ibid.

³ New Palestine, op. cit.

⁴ AZEC Minutes, 20 September 1943. The American Jewish Conference itself did not develop much further after its creation. Towards the end of the war it concentrated on pressing for a Jewish seat at the supposed post-war peace conference, which never took place. Historically its greatest significance lay in giving the Zionists legitimacy to represent American Jewry. The moving force of action continued to concentrate around AZEC.

Chapter Three

A CHALLENGE OR A NUISANCE?

(Separate and Joint Anglo-American Attempts made
during the War to Tackle the Problem of Palestine)

The growing demand for a Jewish State, followed by the Zionists' first political steps towards that end, could not remain unanswered. Zionism's growing strength and increasing militancy became evident at both ends of the spectrum--in the United States as well as in Palestine. Consequently, both the British and United States Governments, despite their concentration on their war aims, were obliged to take up the challenge.

There were generally two schools of thought among the Allies as to how it should be answered. One maintained that every decision about the future of Palestine must be postponed until the war was won; the other held that from the moment victory seemed assured, it would be advisable to work out a solution without delay. Those who held the second view saw the final phase of the war as a better chance to tackle the problem than would be the post-war era. Supporters of each school existed on both sides of the Atlantic but each Government eventually adopted a definite stand.

The British Cabinet took the second line but made their stand secret, while the American President, for lack of

knowledge of the Middle East, took the first. An asymmetric relation developed between the two powers in that the British were told about American schemes and plans but did not tell the Americans their own. The British had a definite plan awaiting an opportune moment for implementation, whereas the Americans who merely improvised, found all their attempts frustrated, not least because of lack of serious British response.

The essence of the British approach was that the White Paper must be abrogated. Churchill, who had never forgotten his early promise to Weizmann, caused his Cabinet to plan a division of Palestine between Jews and Arabs, thus enabling the former to run their own independent State. But this plan was to constitute only part of a much wider design, according to which both the Arabs and the Jews were to gain independence under a British umbrella. The subsequent failure of this design seems to be the result of deviation from the principle that it was to be enacted, even enforced, while war was still being waged. Consequently, when the war ended, the White Paper remained intact.

On one point, however, there was full agreement and a great readiness for cooperation between the two Governments; this point was agreement about "Zionist Extremism". Both Governments reached the conclusion that whatever final solution might be brought about, and whatever timing be fixed for it, Zionist militancy was a disturbing factor and must therefore be curbed.

Their basic reasons for thinking so were two: first, both Britain and the United States thought that Zionist agitation frightened the Arabs to a degree that hindered the

Allies from achieving victory as quickly as possible. Secondly, the Zionists, the Allies thought, must be made to realise that they must not expect too much; after all, even Churchill could promise them only half of Palestine, whereas they now claimed the whole.

What the Allies did not fully realise was the change that Jewry had by now undergone. Consequently they under-estimated the strength possessed by the so-called "Extremists". And while many Zionists were at first bewildered by realisation that their new militant line was becoming counter productive, they were in the end encouraged by failure of joint Anglo-American efforts, and set out on new and more vigorous offensives.

The attempt to stem the "Extremists" was two-pronged. In Palestine it entailed the imposition of severe punishment on Haganah members found in possession of arms, while in the United States it took the form of a joint Anglo-American statement aimed at silencing Zionist agitation.

Meanwhile the United States, divested of her earlier isolationism, began to penetrate the politics of the Middle East. She had for long supplied most of the war material used by the British forces in the area; she used the region as a route through which supplies went to Russia; in November 1942 she took a large part in the conquest of the whole of French North Africa, thus becoming, for the first time in her history, directly involved in local Arab politics. Over and above all this, American authorities were growing more and more disturbed by the prospect of exhaustion of oil supplies in the Western Hemisphere; these they hoped to supplement from Arabian sources. As a result

of this accumulation of factors, America demanded more say in the region's politics. The coincidence of growing Zionist influence in the United States with America's growing involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, was a source of profound embarrassment to its foreign policy-makers.

Yet this closer involvement in the affairs of the Middle East caused the United States to sense some of the realities of the Palestine dilemma. It stimulated her ambition to try her hand at devising a solution, "free of the limits that British Imperialism was confined to," but closer investigation combined with British non-cooperation rendered these attempts short-lived.

One such brief initiative was Roosevelt's attempt to persuade none but King Ibn Saud to comply with Jewish immigration into Palestine. The attempt looks all the more curious in that Dr. Weizmann believed in its feasibility, and since even Churchill did not oppose it.

By the end of the war, however, no matter how ingenious some of the solutions proposed during its course, or how far-fetched were others, all came to nothing.

(a) The "Dangers of Zionist Militancy"

As the war progressed, and with the removal of the danger to the Middle East, the chances that the White Paper would survive seemed small. Not only had the President of the United States claimed that his country had never given its approval to it;¹ the more anti-Zionist members of the British Government came to admit that "the White Paper could

¹ Wise-Silver's statement on behalf of the President, 9 March 1944, FRUS, p. 588.

be regarded as more or less dead."¹

But such was not always the Zionists' impression. Lacking access to the secrets of the British Government, and disturbed by rumours about new plans being concocted by the Arab nationalists, they felt obliged to prepare some immediate counter-measures to forestall the assumed dangers. But so did the Arabs, who likewise claimed independence. A chain reaction developed in which each party watched his opponent's steps with mounting suspicion; it was hard to tell "who started" the process.

At the time of the "Biltmore" Declaration of 1942, Nuri es-Said, the Iraqi Prime Minister came out with an ambitious scheme, which was said to be the prelude to an Arab Federation of states. When the Germans were beaten in Egypt, Nuri inaugurated a series of moves aimed at reaching the other Arabs as well as gaining British support for his plan.² In January 1943, Nuri led his country into the Allied camp, by declaring war on Germany and thereafter made a comprehensive tour of the Middle Eastern capitals.

His plan was conceived in two stages: first--Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan were to join together into a single "Greater Syria". Then, at a second stage, Greater Syria was to join further Arab countries, he hoped under Iraqi leadership, so forming a wide Federation.³

For the Jews in Palestine, Nuri's scheme promised little more than did the White Paper, namely, "semi-autonomy",

¹ Eden to Cornwallis, 4 Feb. 1944, FO 371/35042, E 8139.

² Richard K. Law, "Iraqi Prime Minister's Proposals Relating to Arab Unity", and a letter from the Prime Minister of Iraq to the Minister Resident in Cairo, 14 Jan. 1943, both in Cab 95/14 P(M) (43)11.

³ Ibid.

dependent on an international guarantee, but nevertheless subordinate to the Government of Greater Syria.¹ Such a scheme left no room for large scale immigration, if indeed it allowed for any, let alone for Jewish statehood.

Rumours of Nuri's plan came at a time when leaders of the Yishuv had after long hesitation adopted the "Biltmore" programme. They still bore in mind Eden's Mansion House speech² and regarded Nuri's ideas as inspired by the British Government.³ The Haganah headquarters accordingly took steps to prepare for a possible showdown with either the British or the Arabs or both⁴ should such a scheme be attempted. Orders were issued to re-plan the whole scheme of future Jewish settlement so as to fit a new concept of defence.⁵ At the same time, Haganah operations for arms acquisition, which began in 1942, were speeded up⁶ and training of the Yishuv youth was intensified. Vast amounts of arms and ammunition, left on the battlefields of Egypt and Libya served as the chief sources of supply for their arsenals.⁷

Such preparations could not be altogether hidden from British eyes. In March 1943, two Australian army deserters, who were systematically smuggling arms for the Haganah, were caught red-handed. Their trial provided an opportunity

¹ Ibid.

² Of May 1941. See above, pp. 67-68. See also report by Shertok about meeting with Sir A. Kirkbride, Z. Exec. 22 Nov. 1942.

³ Nuri for his part claimed that his plan was formed to anticipate "recent activities of the Zionists . . ." Law, op.cit.

⁴ Y. Slutsky, Seffer Toldot Ha'Haganah (Hebrew), III, pp. 215-216.

⁵ Ibid., p. 1876

⁶ Said to be the lesson the Palestine Jews had learned from the inconclusive results of their "Havlagah" policy during the 1936-9 Arab riots, Ibid., pp. 259-269.

⁷ The Arabs used similar sources, cf. Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 117.

for the defence counsel to accuse the Jewish Agency and its head of "running arm trafficking."¹ Relations between the Agency and the mandatory Government reached an unprecedentedly low ebb.

But the main effect of the tension between them was to increase the worry of the British Middle East authorities about the likelihood that it would become impossible to stop the escalation of violence. Their attention was diverted from the small dissenting Jewish terrorist groups, to the Agency controlled Haganah. The Minister Resident in the Middle East, the Australian Richard Casey, more and more often warned the Government in London of the dangers emanating from the Agency's new and militant line.²

Though with no real co-ordination, developments in America matched those within the Agency. American Zionists shared the same mood of exasperation and impatience. In May, Rabbi Silver explained to a Philadelphia audience why it was no longer possible for him to remain "moderate", and why he was pushing forward vigorously, regardless of what others might say:

"In some quarters our zeal is interpreted as an organized pressure upon the Government; but that cannot be helped. We are not professional lobbyists for some

¹ Ibid. See also NYT, 18 Aug. 1943.

² He was greatly influenced by the Palestine High Commissioner who already at the end of 1942 predicted that, "the critical period in Jewish politics would come when it became evident that the [Allies] are winning the war, but still had their hands full." FRUS 1942, pp. 551-552. What followed in early 1943 seemed to justify these predictions. In January, an expert in Casey's office wrote: "Leaders of the Jews are deliberately leading their people along a path which must end in a disaster." He added: "Carrying out of the 'Biltmore' resolution in Palestine would be, in my opinion, a complete violation of the Atlantic Charter principles." Hopkinson to Hoyer-Miller, FO 371/31380, E 7684. For further illustration of British worries, see Weizmann's interview with Oliver Stanley, 31 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35038, E 5389.

profit-seeking corporation . . . we are spokesmen for a sorely tried and imperilled people, condemned to death but determined to live, whose last hope of salvation is a national home."¹

Many Britishers were bound to see in the two developments a two-pronged assault, conducted and operated by a single brain. Every pro-Zionist utterance in the United States was anxiously recorded by British Middle Easterners; with even more anxiety, so was Arab reaction to them. Similarly, every development in the Middle East which indicated increasing militancy on the part of the Yishuv, was closely watched by members of the Near East Division of the State Department.

The group of diplomats, economists and military men that ran British affairs in the Middle East--sometimes called the "Middle Eastern War Council"--was small but had considerable influence on the British Cabinet. Casey was the centre of it; other influential members were Sir Harold MacMichael, Palestine High Commissioner, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, British Ambassador in Baghdad, and Sir Miles Lampson (later Lord Killearn), Ambassador in Cairo.² All of them shared the feeling that Zionism was blocking Britain's way to achievement of her war and post-war aims.

During 1943 and part of 1944, the group's task was not easy, since Churchill's anti-White Paper approach became dominant in London. Nevertheless, they never tired of reminding the Cabinet of the "dangers of Zionist militancy". In the middle of the Cabinet debate about the future of Palestine,

¹ Silver, Autobiography.

² In his diary, Lampson wrote: "The Balfour Declaration has from the start been a mill-stone round our neck." The Killearn Diaries, p. 95. He used to admit frankly that he "never pretended to see Palestine from any but the purely local [i.e., Egypt's] angle." Ibid., p. 281.

Casey injected a warning that,

"Whatever long-term policy might be adopted in respect of the Jewish problem, our short-term policy in Palestine should be to restrain the extremists . . . the first need [is] to damp down the existing agitation."¹

Through American diplomats, Casey's ideas were diffused in the United States also.

(b) America Enters the Middle East Arena

For nearly a hundred years, American activities in the region had been confined to educational, missionary, and philanthropic work. Direct political interest had first been shown by President Wilson who included an article in his famous "Fourteen Points", dedicated to the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, and who later took a close interest in the future of Palestine and Syria. But his interest proved a mere flash in the pan.

The status of a power with spiritual rather than material interests, gave both the United States and the area's inhabitants a feeling that America possessed some sublime virtues in running foreign affairs, which the "Imperialist" powers lacked. When the Germans stood at the gates of Cairo, and Arab support for the British was in doubt, the State Department seriously proposed that the presence of a handful of United States military men in Arab capitals would improve the Allies' image.²

In fact the old legend had by now no roots in reality. America already had "regular" interests in the area and as from the end of 1942 she began to penetrate it in the way a

¹ Cabinet meeting, 2 July 1943, Cab 65/39 WM 92(43)2.

² Memo by Hull, 28 July 1942, FRUS, pp. 26-29.

"regular" power could be expected to do.

Once on the stage, America faced three kinds of problem: first--the maintenance and defence of her interests; secondly--the stand she should adopt in regard to Arab national aspirations; and thirdly--her conduct over Palestine. In regard to the first two, policies were soon crystallized; not so as regards the third.

United States interests, at that juncture were at bottom two: winning the war and extracting oil.¹ Treating those interests in a manner befitting a great power, the United States immediately reinforced her diplomatic staff in many Middle Eastern capitals, and intensified her activities.

The Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo was America's first foothold in the area's politics. That body, originally constructed by the British in order to maximise the area's self-supply, soon became as well the vehicle for local allocation of American Lend-Lease goods. American tanks and aircraft played a decisive role in the victory of El-Alamain.² The United States, which was now paying the bill, gradually acquired a taste for calling the tune.³

Though American dealings over oil had a long history, acquisition of supply for home purposes only became an American national interest at the beginning of 1943. The theory was that over-use and exhaustion of her regular sources of supply spelt a threat to her military potential as well as to her standard of living.⁴

¹ There was still little thought of keeping the Russians out.

² Kirk, op. cit., p. 177.

³ G. Smith, American Diplomacy During the Second World War, p. 101.

⁴ Roosevelt-Leahy correspondence, June 1943, FRUS, pp. 921-925.

In the spring of 1943 a committee on International Oil Policy was established in Washington, and soon a Petroleum Reserves Corporation was formed on the instruction of the President himself.¹

Most American efforts in pursuit of oil boiled down to a growing interest in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the difference between the treatment which the chieftain-king of that desert country received in 1941 and in 1943, was evidence of the oil fever that came to possess the United States Government. Whereas in 1941 America persistently refused a modest loan to the King, in 1943 she offered him a generous one. She made the country eligible for Lend-Lease assistance (although Saudi Arabia did not at that time declare war on the Axis); she entertained two of the King's sons in Washington and she appointed a Minister Resident in Jidda.²

In regard to the national aspirations of the Middle Eastern people, America stuck to her Wilsonian dogma; her message was "anti-Imperialism". She blamed the British and the French for "selfish attitudes" and was still somewhat naively convinced that she herself was acting chiefly for the benefit of the area's inhabitants.³

But this standard approach was somewhat offset by a contradictory trend. American diplomats were impressed by the skill and dexterity with which the British were running their affairs. They envied British diplomats their knowledge

¹ Ibid. The State Department supplied the umbrella for those bodies but louder voices were those of the Secretaries of State for the Navy, War, and the Interior. For a brief history of their anxieties and the resultant action taken, see Benjamin Shwadran, The Middle East, Oil, and the Great Powers, Ch. XII (1956 ed. pp. 301-317 and in particular pp. 310-315).

² FRUS 1943, pp. 830-854.

³ Cf. Hull, Memoirs, p. 1500.

of the Arabic language and customs, and soon tried to match it. The two trends became characteristic of American diplomacy in the Middle East for some years to come.

Both the British and the Americans placed tremendous value on advice of scholars who knew Arabic and were acquainted with Islam and with the history of the area; Britain, however, had a wealth of these, whereas the United States had very few. No wonder, therefore, that any American who spoke Arabic easily became an "expert" on Middle Eastern affairs; in fact, most of them were beginners in politics.

Thus, in spite of growing British economic dependence on America, Britain, not the United States continued to call the tune, and did so all through the war.

But America completely lacked a resolute policy in regard to Palestine. Her hesitations were the outcome of conflicting trends in her own domestic politics. At the same time as her interests in the Arab world were increasing, Zionist influence, with the clear aim of swaying American policy in the Middle East, was growing likewise. Zionism, then, more than ever before, became a thorn in the flesh of the State Department.

Generally speaking, most Americans saw nothing wrong, or particularly new, in attempts by ethnic groups to shape foreign policy.¹ But in regard to Jewry there was no consensus in America as to what kind of group, if any, it constituted. Its eligibility to practise such pressure was in doubt.

¹ According to the 1940 census, more than 20 million Americans gave some language other than English as their mother tongue, and were therefore liable to attempt the exercise of some influence on foreign policy. Cf. G. Almond, op. cit., pp. 183-184

The State Department turned this doubt to account in order to raise objections to the exercise of Zionist pressure upon policy. Its members claimed that the Jews were "not a nation" and that Zionism formed merely a minority opinion among them.¹ This contention was in fact just a cover for the Department's apprehension lest the Zionists should reduce the acceptability of America in the area.² While some members of the Administration still thought, as did the President, that a compromise between Arab and Jewish national aspirations was possible, most State Department officials entertained no such illusion.

(c) The Un-Published Anglo-American Statement

In the summer of 1943, Anglo-American attempts to muffle Zionist agitation concentrated chiefly on the issue of some joint statement, warning the Zionists not to press their case too forcefully. But the idea had been conceived much earlier, in the days prior to the victory in the Western Desert. It had from the start been connected with the activities of a United States Army Lieutenant-Colonel, Harold B. Hoskins, who came of missionary stock.

The Axis, upon advance into Egypt, issued on 2 July 1942 a declaration "to the people of Egypt", promising "Egypt to the Egyptians" and condemning British Imperialism.³ This Nazi propaganda did not fail to remind the

¹ E.M. Wilson, op. cit., p. 35.

² The State Department's anxieties were particularly acute because they found no group within the American public capable of countering the Zionist pressure. Only about 200,000 Arabs lived in the United States in 1943, most of them Christians; ethnically they were poorly organized. FO 371/35037, E 4820. The anti-Zionist oil lobby was still embryonic.

³ FRUS 1942, p. 24.

Arabs of the connection between the United States, Britain, and Zionism.

At that point, the State Department thought that America could render some help to the British cause by pointing out to the Arabs that they themselves were champions of "anti-Imperialism" and no sponsors of Zionism. The chief of the NED, with encouragement from Hull, called a series of meetings to discuss what to do. In the course of these, Colonel Hoskins, who was in charge of Foreign Correlation Activities in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), broached the idea that the President should be persuaded to throw his weight into the scales against Zionist agitation.¹

But when the suggestion was made to Roosevelt he did not care for it, and on 7 July replied:

"The more I think of it the more I feel that we should say nothing about the Near East or Palestine or the Arabs at this time."²

The advancing Germans, however, continued to harp on anti-Imperialism and anti-Zionism, and in so doing made good use of Zionist agitation in the United States. In August, therefore, the State Department proposed to the British that in order to extract a more favourable response from the Arabs, the American military missions in various Arab capitals should be drastically increased for propaganda purposes. The State Department was sure that the step would help because "the United States holds a unique position in the Near East," since its repute "had never been tarnished by any material motives

¹ Ibid. From 1941 Hoskins, who was used as an expert on Zionist matters, had been borrowed by the State Department, and served as "Chief detective and investigator" for Assistant Secretary of State Berle. Drew Pearson, Washington Post, 9 August 1943.

² Roosevelt to Hull, FRUS 1942, pp. 543-544.

or interest," and since "no other member of the united nations is in a similar position."¹

Since the American proposal did not produce any additional military help, and since it was in both form and substance a virtual insult to the British, they were in no hurry to answer it. When they did so, after more than a month, their reply was a cool dismissal.²

One small item, however, survived: the British agreed to bring one or two American military men into their Cairo orbit "to work together on all these matters."³ Hoskins, though little versed in diplomacy but who spoke fluent Arabic,⁴ was an obvious choice. By their standards he had another advantage; he was frankly pro-Arab. But by the time Hoskins arrived in Cairo in November 1942, the Germans had been turned back and few of the original objectives of his mission survived. Still he, as well as his British hosts were sure, he could do a lot to bring the public and the Government of the United States "closer to the realities of Palestine."⁵

But the victory in North Africa signalled to the American Zionists that they need no longer be shy. The 2 November, which coincided with General Montgomery's success, was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, and served as an opening for a big Zionist campaign in which many prominent non-Jewish citizens took part. Wendel Wilkie, the Republican leader, delivered the main address at a New York

¹ Letter delivered by Winant to Eden, 11 August 1942, FRUS, pp. 26-29.

² Winant to Hull, 15 September 1942, ibid., pp. 30-33.

³ Ibid. See also Hull, Memoirs, p. 1500.

⁴ He was born in Beirut where he lived until the age of 16.

⁵ My interviews with Colonel Hoskins in Connecticut, United States, 22-23 August 1972.

mass rally, calling for the opening of the gates of Palestine to the European Jews. Sixty-three Senators and 182 members of the House of Representatives signed a corresponding petition calling on the President "to support the purpose and principles which the Declaration embodied."¹ Confronted with such developments, British authorities in Cairo found Hoskins an excellent channel through which to pass their concern and their ideas to the United States Government.

After eight weeks in the Middle East, most of which he spent in Cairo,² Hoskins felt sufficiently well-informed to make a report to his Government passing judgement on the situation. He gave an alarmist verdict, even by British standards.³ "Unless positive steps are taken to prevent it," Hoskins cabled Washington on 23 January 1943,

"there might be renewed outbreak of fighting between the Zionists and the Arabs, perhaps even this spring. . . . A very bloody conflict is in the making that will inflame not simply Palestine but, in varying degrees all the Moslem world from Casablanca⁴ to Calcutta."⁵

Sounding like an obvious mouthpiece for Casey,

¹ Halifax to FO, 15 December 1942, FO 371/31380, E 7501.

² In a letter of introduction later provided by Hull to Hoskins, it was said that he had "visited all the Near East and Africa" during which he "talked to leading Arab and Jewish officials." FRUS 1943, pp. 781-782. In fact there is little evidence that Hoskins spent his time in capitals other than Cairo. He definitely did not meet any leaders of the Yishuv, who first heard of him a year later. Shertok report, Z. Exec. minutes of 27 April 1943, and that of Ben Gurion, 4 Oct. 1943.

³ Casey-MacMichael correspondence, 19 and 23 January 1943, Prem 4/52/2, p. 1121, reveals that in some cases Hoskins read too harshly reports sent by the High Commissioner to Cairo. While the latter merely said the Jews were now confident that they could beat the Arabs, Hoskins made it look as if they were "deliberately goading the Arabs into turbulence" and wanted to provoke them into an early showdown.

⁴ The United States Army was at the time on duty in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, and in the event of troubles there, the United States might have been directly affected.

⁵ Hoskins's Report, FRUS 1943, pp. 747-750.

Hoskins added that:

"American public opinion must realize that Palestine is not an uninhabited area, into which several million Jews from Europe [could] at the end of the war be dropped . . ."¹

To meet the dangers that he foresaw, Hoskins proposed two gambits: first, to invite to the United States "Moderate Jewish and Arab leaders" to present their views before the United States public,² and secondly that the united nations should publish a joint statement with Britain which would (a) say that expression of "certain views" in regard to Palestine would, while the war was still in progress, reduce Allied prospects of winning it, and (b) that "no decision altering the basic situation of Palestine should be considered until after the conclusion of the war." Even then, no such action should be taken until both Arabs and Jews "were fully consulted."³

The report, though it puzzled the British, did not unduly disturb them. But it greatly impressed Roosevelt. Admittedly he was at the time eager to find "a formula not yet discovered"⁴ that would solve the growing volume of problems in Palestine and the Middle East; now he was sure that he had found an ingenious one.

Sticking to the status quo is always a way of playing safe for politicians beset by pressures from conflicting

¹ Ibid.

² Among the relevant Arab leaders, he mentioned Emir Abdulla; for the Jews, only some figures with marginal influence in the Yishuv were mentioned. Their names and the names of their organizations were sometimes spelt in ways that rendered them almost unrecognisable. This part of Hoskins's proposals was dismissed outright by Hull as "inadvisable". FRUS, 1943, p. 751.

³ Ibid.

⁴ S. Adler, "FDR and Zionism, the War Record", in Judaism, vol. 21, no. 3, Summer 1972, p. 271. See also E.M. Wilson, op. cit., p. 38.

directions; the "Full Consultation" formula struck Roosevelt as a simple yet excellent way to do nothing. Before long, he made use of the formula in his reply to Ibn Saud's letter of April 1943,¹ and henceforth it became part and parcel of his contact with any Arab leader.²

Hoskins's report caused Roosevelt finally to accept the idea of the anti-Zionist statement that he had earlier refused to make. He swallowed whole Hoskins's story of the imminence of hostilities in Palestine and became convinced that both for the sake of conducting the war and for the safety of the Yishuv itself, it was better that Zionist "Extremism" should be curbed.³

But before embarking on any such statement, he wanted to be doubly sure. He therefore instructed Hull to telegraph to the United States Consul-General in Jerusalem, asking him to ascertain the view of the High Commission on the likelihood of trouble.⁴ At the same time Roosevelt asked his war-time troubleshooter, General Patric J. Hurley, who was going to Iran, to visit Cairo and Palestine as well, and to report directly to him.⁵

¹ Roosevelt to King Ibn Saud, 19 June 1943, FRUS, p. 790.

² On the very day of his death in April 1945, Roosevelt signed two such letters to Arab leaders. Truman, who took over, did not at first dare to violate the long tradition, and followed suit. Only in mid-1946 was the formula expunged from the State Department's lexicon.

³ "I told Silver where to get off. I said to him: do you want to be responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of men through this?" Roosevelt, reported at a Cabinet meeting, 10 March 1944. "Jewish Evacuation", Morgenthau Diaries, pp. 16-19, vol. 709, FDRL. Roosevelt also sent his son James, a staunch pro-Zionist to Palestine at almost the same time. His son's impression was that "although the Zionists were working wonders," it was hopeless because "they lived in an ocean of hatred." Z. Exec. Shertok report, 27 Apr. 1943, CZA.

⁴ Hull to Pinkerton, 10 Apr. 1943, FRUS, p. 768.

⁵ FRUS, 1943, pp. 363-370, 776-780.

Hurley, who, unlike Hoskins, took the trouble to meet Arab and Jewish leaders in Jerusalem,¹ but who also "conferred at length" with Casey, saw no immediate danger of hostilities.² He admitted, however, that America's prestige was no longer high in the Arab world, as a result of highly vocal support recently given to Zionism by many American politicians.

From Palestine, the American Consul sent a similar opinion, obtained from the chief of the Palestine Criminal Investigation Department (CID). "Serious troubles need not be expected," wrote this chief, "until the end of the war, but an eventual showdown is inevitable unless extremism is checked."³

Roosevelt, "who seldom studied papers deeply,"⁴ preferred Hoskins's version and on 9 June approved a draft statement to be issued on behalf of the united nations;⁵ this the United States Ambassador in London presented two days later to Eden.

This was not the first time that such a proposal was passed to the British by the Americans, though never before had one come from their President. On all previous occasions, the British had quickly dismissed the idea, because,

¹ He saw Ben Gurion and his Arab counterpart Auni Abdul Hadi. Ibid. See also, Z. Exec. Minute of 4 Apr. 1943, CZA.

² Ibid. Hurley's impression was, for instance, that "a significant number of Jews in Palestine might accept Nuri's plan," and that many others were eager to emigrate back to Europe, once conditions allowed of this.

³ Pinkerton to Hull, 17 Apr. 1943, FRUS, pp. 771-772.

⁴ G. Smith, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵ By adding his usual OKFDR initials to the draft. FRUS 1943, p. 790. A detailed account of the whole story of the joint statement is in a Memo by Acting Secretary for War Patterson, Confidential file, 867.01/1908 1/2, USNA.

like Roosevelt, they were convinced that "it could only provoke controversy in the Middle East, and do more harm than good."¹ But now, principally owing to Casey's influence, the British changed their mind. Casey, though not thinking particularly highly of Hoskins's report, was nevertheless rather glad "to exploit the warning that President Roosevelt's Administration have received from their agent Hoskins."²

On 10 May Eden, still unaware of what Roosevelt had in store for him, proposed to the Cabinet

"to approach the US Government with the objective of inducing them to do their best to damp down Zionist utterances by American public men."³

It was thus a happy surprise for the British, when Winant produced out of the blue an official proposal from Roosevelt about jointly declaring that Zionist agitation was disturbing the war-effort.⁴ The only passage that the British did not like was the involvement of all the so-called united nations in the statement. Their counter-proposal, to which the Americans readily agreed, was that it should be solely an Anglo-American one.⁵

After various embellishments on the way, Churchill himself approved it,⁶ and the statement was ready for launching.

¹ Eden to Halifax, March 1943, FO 371/35032, E 1027. He was writing in reply to a proposal made by Rabbi Morris Lazon of the American Council for Judaism (a splinter of the AJC) which the British Ambassador had endorsed. Still earlier, Churchill had reacted indignantly when a similar proposal, passed to Eden by the United States Minister in Cairo, Kirk, was brought to his attention. C. of S. to CID, Cab 66/17. Churchill's reaction is reported in FO 371/27131, E 2668.

² Cab 66/36 WP(43)200.

³ Eden to Halifax, 11 June (sic) 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4718.

⁴ Hull to Winant, 9 June 1943, FRUS, p. 791.

⁵ "Joint Statement on Palestine", Memo, FO 371/35036, E 4718 and Winant to Hull, 14 July 1943, FRUS, pp. 797-799.

⁶ He noted "Good" on the draft's margin. FO 371/35036, E 4249.

The 28 July was fixed as the date on which it would be simultaneously published in London and Washington.

Suddenly, things went wrong. At the eleventh hour, the Foreign Office received a telegram from Halifax announcing that the Americans wished to postpone the issue of the statement for one week. The reason given was that the United States Government wanted "to emphasise military aspects more strongly."¹ But an experienced eye could not fail to spot trouble; "Can you do anything?" Eden cabled back to Halifax.² It turned out that the latter could do very little. After a few days of British gloom, Winant on 9 August rang up the Foreign Office to tell them that his Government, "after consulting the Army," had decided to call the statement off, because "the US War Department considered that the situation in Palestine had improved," and that such a statement was no longer necessary.³

The drama that ended in postponement of the statement constituted the first direct conflict between Zionism and the United States Administration. It was to spill over far beyond American Zionist circles and to engulf many persons who had earlier shown little regard for Zionism. Eventually the wide range of these repercussions tipped the scale in favour of the Zionists. The developments that took place between 26 July and 9 August reveal how unaware was each side of the impact of its action upon the other. As it were in a flash, the conflict of these days revealed who was really on whose side. It turned out that pro-Zionist sentiment among members

¹ Halifax to FO, 27 July 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4347.

² Ibid.

³ Cadogan to Eden, 9 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4718.

of the Administration itself was much stronger than either Roosevelt or the State Department had judged it to be. It is therefore worth while to go into some detail and describe how matters developed during those few days.¹

From the beginning of July, vague rumours of something in the wind reached Zionist ears. Sumner Welles, who was perhaps not fully informed, managed to soothe Dr. Nahum Goldmann by promising to give him due warning of any fresh development.² A week later more detailed news came from London: members of the Zionist Office there had word from Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information, and immediately telegraphed it to Stephen Wise.³ Wise, who had an interview fixed with Roosevelt long before the news arrived, decided to take up the matter with the President.

The latter's reply to Wise was that "contrary to what was alleged it was not such a sinister thing for the Jews," only served to increase Wise's fears; Wise was refused a sight of the draft statement, likewise to have its issue postponed for a few days.⁴

Meanwhile the State Department took some precautions with the press, particularly that of New York, and informed a carefully selected circle of newspapermen what impended.⁵ In this way the news reached Herbert B. Swope, a distinguished

¹ This narrative is based on the following sources: (a) Drew Pearson, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round", Washington Post, 9 Aug. 1943. (b) Isaiah Berlin, despatch from Washington, FO 371/35037, E 5043. (c) Zionist Executive, Minutes of 4 and 31 Oct. 1943, CZA. (d) Confidential File 867 N. o1-1146 and 1920, USNA, and (e) Weisgal to Weizmann, 11 Aug. 1943, WA.

² Weizmann's interview with Stanley, 31 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35036, E 5389. Also in Berlin, op. cit.

³ Zionist Executive, op. cit.

⁴ Ibid. Also Pearson, op. cit.

⁵ Berlin, op. cit. Pearson, op. cit.

public-relations officer, who thought it likely to cause trouble not so much to the Zionists as to Jewry as a whole.¹ Swope decided to spread the news to some Jewish members of the Administration, namely to Justice Frankfurter and the well-known economist Bernard Baruch.² The three of them met together and agreed that the move was likely to encourage anti-Semitism; consequently they applied to the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr.,³ who "was inexpressedly shocked" and promised to do all he could to stop issue of any such statement.

A day before its intended publication, therefore, the statement was no longer secret and many forces were at work against it. Nevertheless, the Zionists panicked: Arthur Lourie, AZEC's secretary, wrote a desperate letter to Weizmann, predicting a terrible blow to all that Zionism had so far achieved in the United States.⁴ Wise was ready to go far out of his way in order to appease Roosevelt but by now matters were out of the Zionists' hands and they had to watch the struggle in the role of by-standers.

The pressure exercised by Morgenthau and Swope began to be felt on the afternoon of 27 July. Suddenly, Secretary for War Stimson refused to keep his earlier promise to Hull and endorse a confidential letter supporting the statement "for military reasons". Acting Secretary for War Patterson and Assistant Chief of Staff General Strong, who had

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. See also Zionist Executive, op. cit.

³ Ibid. Morgenthau was originally non, or even anti-Zionist, but as from 1942 he became more and more disturbed by the Allies' inaction over the plight of the European Jews, and came close to Zionism towards the end of the war. From the Morgenthau Diaries, pp. 207-222. General exposition from Sir Isaiah Berlin.

⁴ B. Locker report, Zionist Executive, op. cit.

already signed the letter, began to hesitate likewise. The hyper-cautious Hull feared a public scandal and decided to postpone publication until he could find out Stimson's motive. When he did so, he passed the matter through to the President,¹ on whom it now became incumbent to persuade Stimson to sign the letter. To Roosevelt's surprise, Stimson remained adamant.²

During the following day, erosion of the Administration's intention increased. Swope, a close friend of Patterson, managed to persuade him that "it was silly for the War Department to stick its neck out" for the sake of the State Department³ and to let it use military arguments as a ramshackle cover for dubious interests. At the same time, Morgenthau, reinforced by Baruch, pressed Stimson not to give up.⁴ In such circumstance, and after several days of deadlock, Roosevelt preferred not to reveal himself as the person chiefly responsible for the statement, and hinted to Hull that he must call it off altogether.

This act rendered even Churchill furious:

"this is a deplorable example of American methods, seeing that they themselves proposed the statement to us!"⁵

and when on 24 August he conferred with Roosevelt in Quebec, he said as much. As a result, the Big Two decided not to cancel the statement but rather "to hold it in suspension on

¹ Memo by Hull, 6 August, and by Patterson, 12 August, Confidential file, op. cit.

² Halifax to FO, 10 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4718. See also, O.F. 700, Box 3, FDRL.

³ Confidential file, op. cit.

⁴ Ibid. Berlin, op. cit., Zionist Executive, op. cit.

⁵ FO to Halifax, 11 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4718. Churchill was kept informed daily about the affair. See Prem 4/51/6, pp. 285-313.

a month-to-month basis.¹

Attempts to re-introduce it were made on both sides during the rest of 1943 and early 1944; they entailed variants with a softer tone towards Zionism. For some officials, issue became a matter of prestige: "The Zionists should not be given ground to believe," wrote one Foreign Office official, "that they can paralyze the action of America and Britain."² But as 1944 was a Presidential election year in the United States, and as the British were for a while confident that they would soon solve the problem of Palestine,³ the topic gradually died away.

The Administration tried to gain some concessions from the Zionists in return for shelving the statement. When the final decision was passed from Hull to Roosevelt on 29 July, the latter instructed Sam Rosenman to go to see Wise in New York, and to extract from him, on behalf of the President, undertakings that (a) "Jewish Army" propaganda would stop, and (b) that the American Jewish Conference would be called off.⁴ Wise, much shaken, may have been ready to do what the President asked but he admitted that he had no control over Bergson; almost the same applied to Monsky. Rosenman tried at least to obtain a promise that the "Biltmore" resolution would not be presented at the Conference--something that Wise thought could be fixed. But as we have seen, even that idea was set at naught owing to the unexpected spell cast by Silver.⁵

¹ A footnote in FRUS 1943, p. 804. Also in Patterson to Winant, 12 Oct. 1943, FO 371/35039, E 5488.

² FO 371/35036, E 4718.

³ See below, pp. 154-162.

⁴ Berlin, op. cit. Zionist Executive, op. cit.

⁵ See above, pp. 113-114.

All parties tried to derive some lesson from the affair. Some of the Zionists were at first frightened but most came to think that militancy paid. The Administration now knew that they had to expect hard times in dealing with the Zionists during an election year. The lesson derived by the British was confirmation of their inkling that it was impossible to admit the Americans to the secrets of their Palestine planning.

The affair, when it began to receive publicity, also served the purposes of those who wanted to believe and to prove that it represented just the tip of the iceberg constructed by a conspiracy of "World Jewry", of which Zionism supposedly served as spearhead.

(d) From Philby to Hoskins

The Anglo-American statement was said to be only one facet of Roosevelt's intended initiative in regard to Palestine; another was his attempt to mediate between Weizmann and King Ibn Saud. After seeing Weizmann on 11 June 1943, the President ordered Colonel Hoskins, whom he now considered his most experienced Arabist, to undertake the task of making peace between Jews and Arabs; on 7 July Hoskins was briefed by him to travel to Riyadh and

"make an inquiry . . . will the King Ibn Saud enter into discussion with Dr. Weizmann or another representative selected by the Jewish Agency for the purpose of seeking a solution of the basic problems affecting both Jews and Arabs?"

The President who had some notion of the King's anti-Jewish sentiments, tried to gild the pill of his straightforward question by taking two preliminary steps: the one,

[†] Hull to Colonel Hoskins, FRUS 1943, pp. 796-797.

by issuing the Anglo-American statement; the other, by sending a soothing personal letter to the King.¹ His use of the "Full Consultation" formula in both communications was intended to illustrate to the King that although a détente between Jew and Arab was what the President wished, he had no intention of forcing the policy upon the King if he did not want it.

The mission, however, was basically Weizmann's idea, not Roosevelt's. The former, imbued with his fundamental concept that the basic condition for a Jewish State ought to be a firm word from Roosevelt and Churchill to the Arabs,² tried his best to inject his idea into Roosevelt's mind. As things turned out, he was mistaken in thinking that he had managed to do so.

Weizmann cherished a myth that history was now repeating itself. In his imagination, there was similarity between the constellation that existed prior to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and that of 1943. Roosevelt and Churchill, in the latter pattern, played the roles of Lloyd George and Lord Balfour, while Ibn Saud acted the part of Emir Feisal.³ Colonel Hoskins was some kind of T.E. Lawrence and Weizmann's chemical work on synthetic rubber was a repeat performance of his 1916 work on acetone. He may even have extended the parallel to further characters.

His concept was of course utterly mistaken. He did

¹ See above, p. 132, fn. 1.

² On 23 January 1943, Weizmann told Welles that he would be ready to meet Ibn Saud "provided the Arabs are told that the united nations considered [a Jewish State] a just [solution] . . . and will see that it is carried out." Report to AZEC members, Z 5/1400, CZA.

³ "It is my hope that Ibn Saud, like the Emir Feisal might understand our aspirations and the benefit of a Jewish Palestine." Weizmann to Wells, 1 Feb. 1943, WA.

not at that stage know what Churchill had in mind and he was virtually deceived by Roosevelt. He was absolutely wrong in his judgement as to who was going to call the tune in the post-war Arab world but on the last score his error was shared not only by Roosevelt but by Churchill. Weizmann made also a tactical mistake. He did not tell Roosevelt and Welles all that he knew about Ibn Saud, or of their earlier contacts. When the President discovered this from another source, he was much put off Zionism.

In order to understand Weizmann's and Ibn Saud's conduct in 1943, we must go back to 1939 and search for the thread connecting the doings of a hot-tempered and strange Englishman, St. John Philby, with those of the shrewd American careerist, Colonel Harold Hoskins.

During the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine, Ibn Saud enjoyed much favour in British eyes, for being "very helpful, assisting HMG, by acting as intermediary with various Arab groups in Palestine."¹

In 1939, as a result of the outbreak of war, the King became the victim of a likely loss of income as a result both of a decline of his revenue from the Pilgrimage, and of a shut-down of oil production by the California-Arabian Standard Oil Company.² Shortage of finance might set at risk the King's control over his tribes whom he was subsidizing. Philby, a British Arabist who served in the King's courts and had Ibn Saud's interests greatly at heart, was on the look-out for means of offsetting these losses. According to Philby's

¹ "Relations with Saudi Arabia", Memo in FO 371/23222, E 998, January 1939.

² See J. Moffett of California Standard Oil to Roosevelt, 16 April 1941, FRUS, pp. 624-627. See also Shwadran, The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers, pp. 301-302.

biographer, he was a person who throughout his life tailored his views to fit the cause of the moment; though far from being a pro-Zionist, he therefore thought that the Zionists might be of help.

At the end of September 1939, while in London, he began to negotiate with them, and in October fixed a meeting with Weizmann whom he already knew. He proposed that in return for a grant of £20 million, Ibn Saud might be persuaded to acquiesce in a Jewish state in western Palestine from which considerable numbers of Arabs would have been transferred to other Arab states.¹

Weizmann, who could not imagine Zionist success without Arab consent, was enthusiastic. On parting, he was promised by Philby, who was leaving for Arabia, any news of success with the King; this Weizmann hoped to receive before leaving for America in December 1939. As no definite message came,² he could, when he met Roosevelt, say very little.³

Meanwhile Weizmann had mentioned "the plan" to Brendan Bracken, MP, who immediately passed it on to Churchill, describing it as "daring, not to say mad." Bracken added, nevertheless: "We live in such an ill-contrived world, that it might well work."⁴

¹ Elizabeth Monroe, Philby of Arabia, pp. 221-222.

² In January 1940, Philby broached "the plan" to the King who did not say "no". Philby "typically interpreted silence as consent" and cabled Weizmann he was "making progress". Ibid., pp. 222-223.

³ See Weizmann, Trial and Error, p. 527. Roosevelt nevertheless knew something, since in the following year he was on record as saying that "the Arabs were purchasable," and that the whole question of Palestine was merely a matter of "a little Baksheesh." Cf. report of conversation with Oliver Stanley in the summer of 1941, FO 371/31379, E 6097; see also Adler, op. cit., p. 269.

⁴ Bracken to the First Lord of the Admiralty, 30 Oct. 1939, Prem 4/51/9, pp. 1278-9.

Bracken's impression was that "the plan" envisaged a large transfer of populations; alternative homes were to be financed in Arab countries for Palestinian Arabs who would be replaced by Jews in Palestine. He added that such a scheme "fits Roosevelt's search for a home for the persecuted Jews."¹

But the whole matter went awry when Philby first failed to observe the secrecy that Ibn Saud had enjoined upon him, and later, in fulfilment of his anti-war views, so incensed his compatriots that, on arrival in India en route for the United States, he was in the summer of 1940 arrested and detained under the British Defence of the Realm Act.² He met Weizmann again only after his release in Britain in March 1941. But by then the war was in full swing in the Middle East and all chance of serious discussion of any such plan was hopelessly remote. When the two men tried to interest Lord Moyne, then Colonial Secretary, in their "plan", the latter merely reported disapproval to Churchill.³ Philby and Weizmann did not give up and almost at once pressed the idea on the Prime Minister through his Private Secretary, J.M. Martin.⁴

But by now Philby knew that the King was no longer desperate for money,⁵ though he remained wedded to power. Philby accordingly proposed that part of the £20 million should go "to build homes and industry in other Arab countries" for transferred Palestinian Arabs. The significant change here made the "Philby plan" more attractive to the imperially minded

¹ Ibid.

² Monroe, op. cit., pp. 228-230.

³ Moyne to the Prime Minister, 6 Nov. 1941, Prem 4/52/5, pp. 1328-30.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Due to a substantial British subsidy.

Churchill, who favoured the notion that in return for Ibn Saud's acquiescence in a Jewish Palestine, the King should get control "over the remaining Arab countries."¹

Here was the context in which Churchill, in March 1942, told Weizmann that "he had a plan," which "of course could only be carried into effect when the war is over."² It was, Churchill continued, "to make Ibn Saud Lord of the Middle East, the boss of bosses, provided he settles with you."³

Weizmann, who was on his way to America,⁴ was as puzzled as he was cheered by these remarks. Did Churchill want him to prepare the ground with Roosevelt? Churchill did not say. But half a year later, after a long illness and many disappointments in America, Weizmann achieved a political comeback and decided that he must not wait until the war was over.

Why he took that decision is unclear. No one in his entourage thought immediate action a good idea. Shertok opposed it,⁵ heads of the NED reckoned that he was daydreaming⁶ and so did Foreign Office officials.⁷ Churchill himself, whose aim in March 1942 had perhaps been rather to cheer up a bereaved Weizmann than to point to the desirability of some political move, gave no further signs of encouragement.⁸

¹ Prem, 4/52/5, pp. 1328-1334.

² Weizmann, Trial and Error, pp. 525-526.

³ Ibid.

⁴ For his third visit in the course of the war. The other two were early in 1940 and in the spring of 1941.

⁵ Z. Exec. Minute, 27 April 1943, CZA.

⁶ Murray to Welles, 17 Dec. 1942, FRUS, pp. 553-556.

⁷ Minute by Hankey, FO 371/35035, E 3464.

⁸ Churchill refused to see Weizmann when he visited Washington in the spring of 1943. See Weizmann's melancholy remark during his interview with Roosevelt, 11 June 1943, WA.

Yet Weizmann's confidence in "the plan" remained unshaken. From November 1942 he began to work diligently to further it and to infuse his ideas, little by little, into Roosevelt's mind. He assiduously lobbied Sumner Welles,¹ and tried every nook in Washington, even tackling Mrs. Roosevelt,² in order to obtain an interview that would further his ends.

But his progress was very slow. The Americans made contact with the British, who were sceptical. First, it turned out that Eden knew nothing about "the plan",³ and that when he learnt of it, he did not believe in it. Churchill, too, merely referred the matter back to the Foreign Office, bidding them ask their experts' opinion. And in reply, the British Ambassador in Jidda wrote, as had been obvious to many Arabists all along, that:

"Ibn Saud, if only to retain his position in Saudi Arabia must oppose Zionist policy in Palestine."⁴

Nevertheless, the British finally acquiesced in American advancement of the proposal, possibly because it was part of a "package deal", the other part of which was the joint statement, or possibly because they hoped the failure of an American attempt to launch it, of which they were sure, might teach the Americans a lesson. On reading the record of Weizmann's interview with the President, one Foreign Office

¹ Exchange of letter with Welles, 1 Feb. 18 May 1943, WA. Meetings with him, 4 Dec. 1942, FRUS, pp. 550-551 and 26 Jan. 1943; Z5/1400 CZA.

² "I am like someone trying to get into a room with his leg half way in at the door . . . the leg is squeezed, but I won't take it away." Weizmann's metaphor at a lunch with Mrs. Roosevelt, Feb. 1943, Z5/1400, CZA.

³ Eden to the Prime Minister, 3 March 1943, FO 371/35031, E 826. The fate of "the plan" suggests that Churchill held it to be virtually a private affair between Weizmann and himself, and had no intention of implementing it in any near future.

⁴ Wikely to Foreign Office, 3 May 1943, FO 371/35034, E 3183.

official noted:

"The record suggests an atmosphere of complete unreality . . . but if Colonel Hoskins's proposed visit results in educating the President and Mr. Welles, so much the better."¹

Weizmann's interview with the President did not add much to his understanding of Roosevelt's mind. He seems to have left the White House convinced that he was on the highway to recognition of a Jewish State by the Big Two. He gained this impression owing to a remark by Roosevelt that he had "had long talk with Mr. Churchill about our business," in which he had "told Mr Churchill Weizmann's idea about calling a conference of the Arabs with himself and Mr. Churchill present" and in which "he will tell them what we both decided."² Adroit as ever, the President did not allow Weizmann to launch into any topic, and rounded off the interview with the suggestion that he would send Colonel Hoskins "to prepare the ground" in Saudi Arabia, for the conference he had mentioned.

After it, Weizmann felt he had nothing more to do in the United States; he went back to England, and never saw Roosevelt again.

(e) Hoskins's Mission to Saudi Arabia

The "plan" thereafter went ahead much as the British had envisaged, except that Ibn Saud's refusal was more patent than even they had anticipated. Hoskins was inept; moreover, he had been informed only of half the history of the negotiation

¹ Minute by Baxter, 25 June 1943, FO 371/35035, E 3689.

² No record was taken of interviews with Roosevelt. After the meeting between them, Weizmann prepared two reports; there were some significant differences between them. One was called "off the record" and contained the above passages. The other was more formal and was later handed to the Foreign Office. Both reports are in the WA; both are dated 11 June 1943.

that he was now to conduct. He soon found himself without any negotiable argument. His task was in fact confined to that of a humble courier carrying a Presidential letter.

But from the point of view of American-Saudi Arabian relations, his mission went well enough. After a short stay in Cairo, where he caused some further corrections of style to be made in Roosevelt's message,¹ he arrived in Jidda on 4 August; here also he stopped for what he thought was further elaboration of his mission. He met several members of the British Embassy, who tried to give him more advice and assistance.² Then, escorted by United States military vehicles, he crossed the desert and reached Riyadh in the second week of August. He spent another courtesy week in the King's camp before the latter was ready to receive him.³

The King was most cordial to Hoskins and most largehearted about Roosevelt, but his reply to the President's question was a blank negative. He said that he was prepared to receive anyone, of any religion, except a Jew.⁴ As for Dr. Weizmann, the King said that the Zionist leader was "his personal enemy" for "it was he who had the outrageous insolence" to ask Ibn Saud "to become a traitor to his religion and his country, by putting a base suggestion . . ." Weizmann was

¹ Hoskins was uneasy about Roosevelt's straightforward question, and wanted it rendered less explicit. He obtained the NED's permission to change the key sentence in the message: instead of "whether or not the King will enter into discussion with Dr. Weizmann" it now went "whether or not in your opinion it would be desirable and useful for you to see Dr. Weizmann." It is obvious that the change had further eroded the President's firmness. FRUS 1943, pp. 800-801.

² Wikely to FO, 10 August, Prem 4/28/3, pp. 190-191. Hoskins's message, for instance, had been translated into fluent Arabic by a member of the British Embassy's staff. Ibid.

³ Hoskins's report, FRUS 1943, pp. 807-810. Also my interview with Col. Hoskins, 1973.

⁴ Wikely to FO, 28 Aug. 1943, Prem, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

blamed for "impugning the King's character" through an attempt to bribe him, with Roosevelt's guarantee of that bribe.¹

The King's outburst was the first Hoskins had heard of the bribe story and he had no way of checking it. Upon returning to Washington, he passed it, as he had heard it, to Roosevelt, who flew into a rage. At the time, Roosevelt was already bitter about Bergson's and Silver's public attacks on him, and about the failure of the Joint Statement, which left him without means of curbing Zionist agitation. Now it appeared to him that Weizmann too was playing games with him. In a Cabinet meeting of September 1943, he is on record as telling his colleagues indignantly that "Dr. Weizmann tried to involve him in bribing Ibn Saud through an English archeologist."²

When Roosevelt conferred at length with Hoskins on 27 September, he was now fully ready to listen to new ideas; these Hoskins proffered. They both agreed that it was a shame that the President's name had been attached to an improper deal and the President seemed to concur with Hoskins's assertion that "a Jewish State could only be imposed and maintained by force."³ That of course was too far-reaching a move to suit United States intentions. The President also

¹ Ibid. See also Hoskins's report, op. cit. One can only guess where Philby's muddle ended and Ibn Saud's fancy began.

² Morgenthau to Roosevelt, 13 Nov. 1943, PSF/FDRL. See also record of a telephone conversation between Morgenthau and Rosenman, 8 March 1944, Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 707, pp. 111-114, FDRL. Morgenthau tried hard to find out the truth and used Goldmann to that end. As a result, Weizmann wrote a long letter to Welles, in which, for the first time, he told the full story of "the plan". Weizmann to Welles, 13 Nov. 1943, FO 371/40139, E 206. Other Zionist leaders too lacked many of the details. See Ben Gurion's report, Z. Exec. 8 Aug. 1943, CZA.

³ Hoskins's interview with the President, his own record. FRUS 1943, pp. 811-814.

"realised, that any additional Jewish settlement [in Palestine] can at best only be accomplished slowly." He expressed his opinion that "because of the large number of Jews that have been massacred by the Axis . . . the number of Jews pressing to enter Palestine may be substantially less than originally anticipated."¹

All in all, the President agreed, a Jewish State was out of the question; even immigration was an extremely difficult matter. He now shot out a new idea: Palestine should not become a Jewish National Home, but rather, a "Holy Land for all three Religions". That, he thought, was possible if Palestine were turned into an international trusteeship.² With that sweeping notion the discussion ended.

Hoskins's activities during 1943 were thus the pivot around which the United States High Executive gradually changed course. After the conclusion of Hoskins's second mission, Roosevelt's views were no longer much removed from those of the NED. The unhappy termination of Sumner Welles's career at the end of 1943, left the State Department solidly anti-Zionist and the President increasingly under State Department influence.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. Roosevelt did not take any step towards the implementation of that idea though the State Department did so. See below, pp. 167-168.

³ In face of the utter failure to make Ibn Saud even agree to see Weizmann, one might well ask why Churchill and Roosevelt had never thought of bringing other Arab leaders into conference with the Zionists. True, everybody remembered the poor look of the St. James's conference, but since then many things had changed, not only in the world power-relations but also in Arab-Jewish relations in the Middle East. During the war, which brought true peace to Palestine, the Political Department of the Jewish Agency developed intensive diplomatic contacts with Arab leaders, excluding Ibn Saud; this last remained in his desert fastness in matters regarding Arab nationalism also. The following are only the most outstanding contacts made

(f) Roosevelt's Zionism

As we saw, the attempt to implement "the plan" was the result of a Weizmann leap in the dark. Not only did he misread Churchill's mind; he also misjudged Roosevelt's when he prepared the Hoskins move. But Weizmann was not alone in making the second mistake; Roosevelt's Zionism was a puzzle to everybody. Everything he said about Palestine was open to many interpretations; to those who sought a clear line from him, interpretation was not easy.

Until the end of his days, Roosevelt enjoyed a reputation as a great Zionist. When previous admirers later found that this was not so, many vented bitter disappointment, blaming him for all sorts of villainy, even for anti-Semitism.

The truth probably was that Roosevelt had very little time, during the war, to think of Palestine¹ and when he did so, proved virtually ignorant of its problems. In addition, although Roosevelt loved to be regarded as defender of the weak and the persecuted, his real mind was always focused on power politics and electoral issues.

during that period:

(a) In August 1941, a member of the Zionist Executive spoke at the opening of a Palestine pavilion in a Cairo fair, where later the Egyptian Royal Couple paid a visit.

(b) In November 1941, Shertok travelled to Amman to discuss with Abdulla ideas of Arab Federation.

(c) After the defeat of Rashid Ali, Shertok more than once met Nuri es-Said to discuss the position of Iraqi Jewry.

(d) During 1943, particularly intensive trips were made by Shertok to Arab capitals in the area. He met the Prime Ministers of Lebanon and Egypt, discussing Greater Syria and Arab Federation; he was in Damascus to meet the Syrian Foreign Minister and he sat next to Nuri at a dinner arranged by Richard Casey in Cairo. Other members of the Agency's staff too paid visits, during that year, to Syria and Lebanon.

Z. Exec. Minutes of 31 Aug. 1941, 4 Jan., 8 Aug., 26 Oct., and 30 Nov. 1943.

¹ There is hardly any mention of Palestine in all the heavy volume of telegrams exchanged between Roosevelt and Churchill from the President's Map Room. MR.FDRL.

He was, in any event, not a man to stick to a rigid line. He was "contradictory to a bewildering degree"¹ and in shooting down policies he was "flexible as a broker".² No wonder, therefore, that after learning some facts of life from Hoskins, his views underwent a change. If we look carefully into the timing of his "inconsistent" utterances about Palestine, we see that his "contradictions" were not so shocking.³

It is possible, I think, to detect two periods in Roosevelt's approach to Zionism. The first runs until the end of 1942, that is, until the receipt of Hoskins's first report; the second covers the years 1943 to 1945. During the first, Roosevelt was light-hearted about Palestine and highly cordial to Zionist leaders. He was at the time convinced that solution of the problem was fairly simple. At the end of 1942 he told Morgenthau:

"I would put a barbed wire around Palestine, and start to move the Arabs [out]. I would provide land for them in some other parts of the Middle East. . . . Each time we move out an Arab, we would bring in another Jewish family. I don't want to bring in more than they can economically support. . . . It would be a nation, just like any other nation. Naturally, if there are 90 percent Jews, they would dominate the Government . . . there are lots of places to which you could move the Arabs; all you have to do is to drill a well."⁴

He expressed similar ideas to the British Minister of Production, Oliver Lyttelton in 1941,⁵ and spoke in the same vein of permanent and temporary shelters for Jewish refugees in the

¹ J.M. Burnes, Roosevelt, The Lion and The Fox, p. 472.

² Ibid., p. 474.

³ As, for instance, S. Adler sees it. See Adler, op. cit., pp. 269-271.

⁴ J.M. Bloom, From the Morgenthau Diaries, entry of Dec. 1942, p. 208.

⁵ "The Arabs could be tempted away from Palestine by offers of land in the Aleppo region . . ." FO 371/31379, E 6079.

near-by Arab states.

During the second period, he came to think that a Zionist solution was impossible; the most that could be done, he now reckoned, was to absorb a small additional number of Jewish refugees. He therefore became more careful in his utterances and more selective in granting interviews even to top Zionist leaders. But unfortunately for him, at that very stage he began to be "besieged by both the Jewish and the Arab camps,"¹ and had at times to "talk both ways" to them.² His practice took the form of supplementing any open promise to the Jews with a secret assurance to the Arabs along the lines of the "Full Consultation" formula.

As from the end of 1943, Roosevelt became less and less disposed to speak of any general solution³ for Palestine. The issue became an increasingly unpleasant snag in his path and he tried to evade the subject whenever he could. He somewhat saved his face in the welter of reaction to the holocaust by setting up, in January 1944, the War Refugee Board which although established distressingly late, nevertheless assisted thousands of Jews to escape Nazi extermination;⁴ but in regard to Palestine he adopted an escapist line.

Typical thereof was the idea that he tried to sell to the British Government at the close of 1943, through his anti-Zionist Jewish friend, Ernest Morris:

"The President had found a solution to Palestine so simple and so effective that he could not think why no one had thought of it before."⁵

¹ Hull, Memoirs, p. 1536.

² Ibid.

³ For the State Department's attempted interpretation of Roosevelt's utterance to Hoskins about trusteeship, see below p. 167.

⁴ A.D. Morse, op. cit., pp. 88-90.

⁵ Morris's talk with the Colonial Secretary. Minute by Staley, 20. Nov. 1943, FO 371/35042, E 7767.

The new "solution", which if anything, looked like a desperate attempt to escape Zionist pressure during the impending election year, was framed in two parts: first, it proposed "to evoke the interest of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant world in Palestine," by which it was "hoped to counter the Mohamedan and Jewish claims." Secondly, it proposed to illustrate to the American public how costly Palestine might become for them. It envisaged

"the formation of an international commission [to] inquire into the financial side of the problem. The results [Roosevelt was sure] would stagger American tax payers and consequently they would lose much of their enthusiasm for Zionism."¹

Along the line of evading any definite policy or any binding decision, Roosevelt carried on in these tracks until his death.

(g) The Partition Plan of the British War Cabinet

Roosevelt's escapism suited the British, since they did not want America to intervene in Palestine and sought to check her influence in the whole of the Middle East. The guiding spirit of the British Cabinet in 1943 was that it wanted, and thought that Britain was capable of, giving the Middle East a new look under sole British auspices.² Palestine was to constitute part of that general pattern and the question about it seemed to be what share in the general post-war state of well-being was to be handed out by the British to the Zionists. This optimistic spirit was enhanced by the series

¹ Ibid.

² Cf. "Colonial Policy", a joint Memo by Eden, Cranborne, Attlee, and Stanley, 5 Dec. 1942, Cab 66/31 WP(42)544. About Britain's intention to play the hand in the Middle East, see Eden's Memo of 12 July 1943, Cab 66/39 WP(43)301.

of Allied victories; it offered fertile ground for pro-Zionist ideas. Future international discord was as yet unseen and to many--as thirty years earlier--Zionism and pan-Arabism did not look so irreconcilable. Thus, while blinkered nationalism began to mount in both the Arab and the Zionist camps, the British Cabinet tried for a while to think in "moderate" Zionist terms.

There were various reasons for this change of Cabinet attitudes. Britain was riding on the crest of a wave of victory, while many Arabs seemed profoundly embarrassed at having backed the wrong horse and not giving the British their support during their time of trials.¹ The White Paper now looked to some like the biased result of a short-lived panic; most Cabinet members saw it as outdated. In particular, the Labour and Liberal members of the Coalition Government traditionally adopted this attitude;² by 1944, a growing proportion of Conservative Ministers agreed with them. The plight of the European Jews, and guilty memories of Allied inaction about it (which some saw as tragic force majeure) increased the conviction that the Jewish people must be compensated for their suffering in a way that would render disasters of the kind less likely to recur.³ In some Government quarters even

¹ "The Arabs have done nothing for us during this war, except for the rebellion in Iraq . . ." Churchill to Eden, 12 Jan. 1944, Prem 4/52/5, p. 1029.

² Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and Social Services, in 1941, favoured a Jewish State. At a Cabinet meeting of 2 Oct. 1941 he said: "If an autonomous Jewish State could be set up, the question of regulating the flow of immigration would be a matter to be settled by . . . that State. This would greatly ease our difficulties." Cab 65/19 WM 99(41)2.

³ Sir Maurice Peterson, a veteran, and usually anti-Zionist FO official wrote in mid-1943: "Is it essential that there should be a Jewish State? the answer is 'yes' . . . world opinion expects it. The theory that we have done enough for the Jews if we have made the world safe for them . . . is not of itself a sufficient guarantee for their future." 28 July 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4336.

anti-British agitation by the Zionists was viewed with tolerance.¹

But the prime factor in determining the new spirit was Churchill's attitude. He was now at the height of his career, enjoying unchallenged prestige inside and outside his Cabinet and commanding an influence by far greater than is usual in a British Prime Minister. He became convinced that the time was ripe to carry into effect "the inheritance left for him by Lord Balfour;"² his determination affected others.

The initial reason why the Cabinet began to discuss Palestine was the approach of May 1944, at the end of which month, by the terms of the White Paper, no more Jewish immigration would be allowed into Palestine without Arab consent. The future of Palestine was raised by Weizmann in one of his long memoranda sent to the Prime Minister from the United States.³ Weizmann pointed out that execution of such a decree was not feasible at a time when Hitler's death industry was in high gear, and when not even all the 75,000 immigrants allowable under the 1939 policy had managed to reach the haven of Palestine.

This memorandum provoked an intensive exchange of opinion which quickly turned into a wide-ranging and intelligent discussion; it involved nearly all members of the

¹ In response to an offensive full-page advertisement in the New York Times, blaming him for adopting the White Paper policy, Churchill wrote to Eden: "It is a strained construction. Nevertheless, I fear it will be necessary for me to make it clear to the Zionists that the inference that I am converted to the White Paper is not true." Churchill to Eden, 27 April 1943, FO 371/35033, E 2555.

² Churchill's talk to Weizmann at dinner, 25 Oct. 1943, Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 714, pp. 131-135, FDRL.

³ Weizmann to the Prime Minister, 2 February 1943, FO 371/35033, E 2340.

Cabinet.¹ They discussed the White Paper against the wide background of Arab and Jewish national aspirations. Churchill himself, who took part in the debate, noted that neither he nor his Cabinet had ever given their approval to the White Paper and that the time had come to discuss better policy.² The debate in the end boiled down to a proposal by Attlee that a Cabinet Committee be set up to work out a long-range solution for Palestine.³

The terms of reference of the Committee, which the Cabinet established on 2 July were "to consider and report to the War Cabinet on the long term policy for Palestine." It was to "start by examining the Peel Commission Report" and see "whether that scheme or some variant of it can be adopted."⁴ The Cabinet gave the Prime Minister a free hand to select the Committee members.⁵

The Committee thus started work on a basis of clear guidance where to look for a solution. With a membership chosen by Churchill, it was bound to consist of such Ministers as he trusted to work out a solution to his liking. Indeed,

¹ Apart from the Memos mentioned, see also others by the following:

Eden: WP (43)200; WP(43)278, and WP(43)301.

Stanley: WP(43)192 and WP(43)277.

Casey: WP(43)302.

Cranborne: WP(43)187.

Cripps: WP(43)288.

They are in the following volumes of Cabinet Papers, 66/36; 66/38; 66/39, and 65/39. Apart from these, the deliberations of the Cabinet Committee are all contained in one volume, Cab 95/14.

² "Note by the Prime Minister", 28 Apr. 1943, Cab 66/36 WP(43)178.

³ Memo by the Deputy Prime Minister, 23 June 1943, Cab 66/36 WP(43)266.

⁴ "Report by the Cabinet Committee", 20 Dec. 1943, Cab 95/14 P(M)(43)29.

⁵ Memo by the Cabinet Secretary (Bridges), 14 July 1943, Cab 66/39 WP(43)310.

Churchill took no chances and his first list of six members included only one who had in 1939 voted for the White Paper but who now strongly supported partition.¹ Protest from Eden about this appointment² caused Churchill to add one Foreign Office man to the Committee--Richard K. Law.

Its chairman was the Labour Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison,³ whose first step was to ask that its deliberations, and indeed its very existence, should be kept secret. He did so, he explained, to avoid the shortcomings of previous committees, where leakage of information had brought premature pressure to bear on committee members.⁴ The Cabinet approved his suggestion; thus, an efficient smoke-screen of secrecy excluded both Roosevelt and Weizmann from knowledge of its work. Secrecy was later so orthodoxly preserved by Cabinet members, that even the excellent intelligence of the Zionists and that of the OSS (which, however sensed something), never managed to penetrate it.⁵ Both Morrison and Churchill had to give their permission before any new person was let into the secret. As late as September 1944, Churchill refused, for instance, a request from Amery, that he might inform the Viceroy of India of the Committee scheme.⁶ Senior British diplomats in the Middle East (apart from Casey) were not told

¹ It was Oliver Stanley, Colonial Secretary.

² Eden to Churchill, 12 July 1943, Prem 4/52/1, p. 201.

³ Other members were: the Liberal Secretary for Air Sinclair, Secretary for India Amery, and Lord Privy Seal Cranborne. Lord Moyne joined it only in September. Prem, op. cit., p. 199. The three last named had all served at one time or another as Colonial Secretaries.

⁴ FO to the Deputy Minister of State ME, 20 July 1943, FO 371/35030, E 3852.

⁵ For the puzzlement of the Zionists, see Z. Exec. minutes of 20 Feb., 12 Mar., 7 May, 21 Sept. 1944, CZA.

⁶ Churchill to Amery, Prem 5/52/1, p. 108. See also FO 371/40136, E 3146.

of it until their expertise was called for in February 1944.¹

But the high degree of secrecy had its shortcomings: curiously, hardly anybody outside the close circle of the Cabinet and Foreign Office officials knew for some time that the Cabinet was reappraising the White Paper. On the contrary, Britain looked doggedly determined to carry on with it, or at least uncertain what to do next. The uncertainty thus caused helped to increase anti-British sentiment among Jews both in Palestine and the United States; among the first, impatience and anger found expression in growing terrorist activities, and in the United States most AZEC members grew more and more determined to induce the United States to move against British policy. Both developments were to increase British difficulties in maintaining, let alone extending, their rule in Palestine.

The Committee began work early in August 1943 and quickly reached general agreement that the solution must be along the lines of a partition. Outstanding in his scepticism about success was the Foreign Office nominee, Richard Law, who in a minute to Eden poked bitter fun at the prevailing mood of over-confidence and optimism:

"The general atmosphere was that the Zionists should take over Palestine. The Committee wanted to know whether we could trade a Jewish Palestine against support for our Arab Federation . . ."²

Before long, disagreement arose even between those who were all for partition; the question was, as before, what were to be the boundaries of the Jewish State. The first scheme, proposed by Amery,³ was probably inspired by Churchill's

¹ Eden to Cornwallis, 3 Feb. 1944, FO 371/35042, E 8139.

² Minutes by Law, 5 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35036, E 4336.

³ "Palestine", Memo by the Secretary of State for India, 31 Aug. 1943, Cab 95/14 P(M)(43)3.

decision to give the Jews "the biggest plum".¹ It envisaged giving them, in addition to the area proposed by the Peel Commission, the whole of the coastal strip from Jaffa down to the Egyptian border and the whole Negev down to the Red Sea as well. Amery also suggested making provision for additional settlements of Jewish refugees in other parts of the Middle east, but not before partition had been enacted. Those who opposed Amery's plan said the Jewish "plum" was far too big and was likely to increase Arab hostility to partition.

Next came a scheme proposed by Oliver Stanley.² Its plan was to allocate Gaza and Beer Sheba to the Arabs and to place the Negev temporarily under a mandate to be held by an international commission; the task of this last would be to investigate the area's potentials. If it proved capable of absorbing large-scale Jewish immigration, it should be handed at a later date to the Jews.³

When its work reached the stage of details, including constant criticisms from the Foreign Office, the Committee's enthusiasm somewhat cooled. Mr. Law, for instance, raised the old argument that if Stanley's plan were adopted, the proportion between the Arab and Jewish populations within the Jewish State barely left the Jews a majority there, and also that most of the fertile land of Palestine would go to the Jews. He was convinced that there was no chance of Arab acquiescence with any partition plan, and therefore that it "did

¹ The phrase was Churchill's at his dinner with Weizmann on 25 Oct. 1943, Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 714, pp. 131-135, FDRL.

² "A Plan for Partition", Memo by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 Nov. 1943, Cab 95/14, P(M)(43)14.

³ There was a great resemblance between Stanley's scheme (excluding the Negev) and that rejected by the majority of the Woodhead Commission (Plan B). See Cmd. 5854 of 1938.

not fit into the framework of British general Middle Eastern policy."¹

At this point the Deputy Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Moyne,² stepped in to save the partition plan. His idea was that partition could "fit into the framework of British Middle Eastern policy" if combined and enacted simultaneously with the rest of the British Grand Design.³

The idea was to constitute in a single act, four new states: (1) a Jewish State, more or less on the lines proposed by Stanley. (2) Greater Syria, composed of Syria, Transjordan, the Arab residue of the divided Palestine, and the Moslem residue of a divided Lebanon. (3) A small Maronite State of Lebanon, and (4) the City of Jerusalem, which should come under international mandate. All four states were to be guaranteed by a mutual treaty, which should, among other things guarantee British (and French) interests. Moyne hoped that he had managed to combine in his scheme the biggest possible degree of satisfaction for Arab and Jewish aspirations within an arrangement that might be accepted by moderates on both sides. He added, nevertheless, that its enactment should not be conditional on the consent of any party and had, if necessary, to be enforced.

Moyne's plan impressed almost everybody in the Cabinet and as a result Amery withdrew his proposal.⁴ He stressed, however, that he did so only provided no further

¹ Memo by Law, 1 Nov. 1943, Cab 95/14, P(M)(43)16 and P(M)(43)18.

² Soon to become Minister Resident proper.

³ "Palestine and the Proposed Syrian Union", Memo by the Deputy Minister of State in the Middle East, 1 Nov. 1943, Cab 95/14 P(M)(43)15.

⁴ Memo by Amery, 10 Nov. 1943, Cab 95/14 P(M)(43)20.

erosion was allowed in the size of the Jewish State.

That indeed, became the underlying tone of the Committee Report which was submitted to the Cabinet on 20 December 1943. Six members endorsed it while one (Richard Law) dissented.¹ But the Committee made no recommendation about the timing of implementation, leaving it to the Cabinet to decide about "the opportune moment" for taking action. At this point erosion set in.

A spirit of resolution still prevailed a month later, when Churchill, who had been absent on more weighty business, became available. The Cabinet, when it endorsed the report on 21 January 1944, used bold words: the Cabinet

"should be prepared to go forward with the scheme and not allow themselves to be deflected by opposition . . ."²

But at that very meeting it in fact "let themselves be deflected", for it gave Eden permission to postpone implementation while he consulted two senior British diplomats in the Middle East, Lampson and Cornwallis.³

The Cabinet was already aware of a series of difficulties in the way of immediate implementation: Syria was now subject to increasing control by Free France, through its Délégué-Général,⁴ and enactment of any such scheme had to take the Free French into consultation. Some members began to think that the "opportune moment" might come only after the invasion of France itself proved successful.⁵ Further

¹ "Report of the Committee", 20 Dec. 1943, Cab 95/14 P(M)(43)29.

² Cabinet Meeting, 24 Jan. 1944, Cabinet's Secretary's Standard File, Cab 65/45, p. 27.

³ Ibid. They were respectively the British Ambassadors in Egypt and Iraq.

⁴ For his powers, see A.H. Hourani, Syria and Lebanon, "Postscript", pp. 279-282.

⁵ Amery to the Prime Minister, 21 Jan. 1944, Prem 4/52/1, p. 174.

difficulties involved Emir Abdulla whose ambition was to become head of the Syrian Union, but whom the British knew, the Syrian nationalists would not accept as such.¹ Confronted with these difficulties, Cabinet members, who still thought they had plenty of time at their disposal, were somewhat relieved to accept Eden's proposal.²

Their sense of relief proved to be the death of the scheme. Britain, who seemed to have a historical chance to reach a solution for Palestine, here missed it. She was at her last zenith of local power. No better chance ever came her way and from then on conditions for implementation of any such scheme became worse and worse. In the course of 1944, both Jewish terrorism and Arab anxiety grew tremendously and more and more force would have been needed to impose such a plan. The spreading shadow of a Soviet threat to the area caused the Foreign Office to revert to its tendency to obtain Arab sympathy through appeasement.

Another new obstacle was the formulation of the United Nations Charter,³ according to which Britain could no longer unilaterally change the status of mandated territories.⁴ Lastly, Jewish influence in the United States soon impelled America to intervene in British Palestine policy, thus further limiting Britain's freedom of action.

The rest of the story tells how Eden, after the narrow squeak that he had in January 1944, fathered the erosion

¹ Eden to Moyne, 29 March 1944, FO 371/40135, E 1934. Also Prem 4/52/1, p. 82.

² The question whether forthwith to inform Roosevelt was again discussed; it was decided not to do so, but to reconsider the matter again in 3 months time.

³ Framed in April and adopted in June 1945.

⁴ Cf. Memo by Douglas Harris, August 1945, FO 371/45379, E 6622.

that gradually reduced the Cabinet plan to atoms. In reply to Eden's inquiry, Lampson and Cornwallis replied, almost identically, that they thought there was no immediate danger of Arab opposition by means of force, but that they were sure, nevertheless, that the scheme must undermine, not reinforce, Britain's position in the area.¹

The Committee remained on the watch for an opportunity for action but all it perceived amounted to bad omens. In April 1944, Lord Moyne, now Minister Resident, summoned a special conference of British Middle Eastern diplomats and military authorities in Cairo, and was there confronted with a unanimous demand for separation of the Greater Syria scheme from the rest of the design.² In October this pattern was accepted by the Cabinet.³ Further piecemeal erosion was caused by a constant and growing demand from the British military for concessions in the body of the divided Palestine, in the form of "enclaves"⁴ and military zones.⁵

But the severest blow to the scheme was inflicted in November 1944 by the murder of Lord Moyne by Jewish terrorists, members of the Freedom Fighters of Israel (FFI).⁶ At

¹ Lord Killearn to Eden, 16 Feb. 1944 and Sir K. Cornwallis to Eden, 24 Feb. 1944, Cab 66/50 WP(44)253.

² "Report of the Committee", 16 Oct. 1944, Cab 95/14 P(M)(44) 14. Instead, the conference proposed the creation of only 3 states: a Jewish one, Jerusalem, and "Southern Syria", which should exclude the Levant states yet save Abdulla's face.

³ Cab 94/14, ibid.

⁴ Cf. Reports of Chiefs of Staff, 22 Jan. and 23 Nov. 1944, Cab 66/45 WP(44)46 and Cab 66/56 WP(44)678 respectively.

⁵ Lord Killearn bluntly enquired: "Why not then approach the whole question on the lines of Imperial Defence strategy? My thought would be to scrap the Mandate and the White Paper and come out boldly with a decision to keep Palestine to ourselves." Killearn to Eden, 16 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40134, E 1532.

⁶ The tragedy was the greater in that Moyne was now the moving power behind the idea of including a Jewish State within the British post-war design. The terrorists for their part, took him to be their chief enemy; he was thus a direct victim of

that, even Churchill, who had always spurred on the Committee and the Cabinet, began to hesitate.¹ The words he used in the House of Commons to condemn the murder, were the severest that he ever levelled at the Zionists,² and to the circles immediately around him, he now intimated that it was no longer possible to consider partition until terrorist activities had been brought to an end.³

But although there was for a while a lull in British attempts to implement the plan, the Cabinet Committee carried on with its activities. By February 1945, when it appeared that, with the help of the Agency, terrorism had been brought under control,⁴ Morrison and Stanley raised the issue again. Morrison, who had begun to worry about prolonged delay, warned his colleagues that he could not procrastinate endlessly,⁵ and urged the Prime Minister to act. Churchill, by now less bitter, requested the expert advice of the new Minister Resident in Cairo, Sir Edward Grigg.⁶

In April, Grigg cabled the Prime Minister a negative verdict.⁷ Nevertheless, Churchill decided to make a fresh the secrecy imposed by Morrison. Curiously, as late as 1972, the ex-commander-in-chief of the FFI, Nathan Yelin-Mor still held that view. My interview with Mr. Mor, Kibbutz Lahav, Israel, December 1972.

¹ Cf. Memo by Douglas Harris, Aug. 1945, FO 371/45379, E 6622.

² Hansard, Commons, Vol. 404, cols. 3342-4.

³ Memo by Douglas Harris, Aug. 1945, op. cit. Churchill, however, balked a proposal by Killearn and the military, to punish the Jews by suspending all immigration, Prem 4/51/11, pp. 1483-1519. He also dismissed the idea of holding a wholesale search for arms in the Yishuv on the grounds that forces would need to be diverted to that end from Italy, Cab 65/48, p. 35 and Cab 64/44, WM 155(44)1.

⁴ Following Moyne's murder, no fresh terrorist outburst occurred until after V-E Day. Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 199.

⁵ Morrison to Churchill, 26 Feb. 1945, Prem 5/52/1, p. 50.

⁶ Soon to become Lord Altrincham.

⁷ Grigg to Churchill, 4 Apr. 1945, Prem 5/52/1, pp. 19-20

attempt to get a decision from his Cabinet, but an unfortunate illness on the part of Stanley caused postponement yet again. Meanwhile, Grigg developed his counter-offensive; he worked out a plan for Palestine, based upon the extension of the mandate by many years, under the auspices of the United Nations.¹ Eden, for tactical reasons, was quick to endorse Grigg's proposal, and the Prime Minister had to give up.

Nevertheless, he continued to think of postponement of action as only temporary, for near to the General Election on 25 May 1945, he wrote to Weizmann that he was sorry not to have been able to carry out his promise during the war, but that

"it is my intention that when, as I confidently expect, His Majesty's Government have received a fresh mandate from the electorate, one of the first tasks to which their attention will be turned . . . will be that of reaching a full and just settlement in Palestine."²

(h) A Dialogue of the Deaf

From mid-1943, the pattern of Anglo-American relations over Palestine was set for the rest of the war; Britain had her own design, which she struggled to apply as soon as opportunity arose, but in which she did not want any foreign power to become involved.³ The President of the United States did

¹ "Note by the Minister Resident", 4 Apr. 1945, Cab 66/64, WP(45)214.

² The Prime Minister to Weizmann, Prem 4/52/3, p. 213. He wrote in reply to a memorandum Weizmann sent on behalf of the Jewish Agency, setting out Zionist aspirations as at V-E Day.

³ When it proved impossible to create a "Greater Syria" without French co-operation, the Cabinet preferred to lop off that part of its scheme from the rest of its Grand Design. As for America, the revised Committee Report of 15 Oct. 1944 said: "The decision must clearly rest with HMG . . . we fully realise the immense advantage which will occur if American support can be enlisted . . . [but] reference to the US should, in our opinion, take the form of an attempt to secure [their] support when [the policy's] main outlines have been finally determined." Cab 95/14, P(M)(44)14.

his best to evade any decision, let alone intervention in the matter. The irony was that both the British and the President's systems of approach added up to nil.

But American inaction applied rather to Roosevelt than to lower levels of his Government. These echelons, less exposed than he to Zionist pressure, and which included the State Department and the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Affairs,¹ continued to try and interest corresponding levels in British Government departments in their ideas about Palestine. But since their British colleagues were subject to a discipline of total secrecy, these contacts took the form of a dialogue of the deaf. As the schemes and ideas that they launched on the British bore some significance for subsequent dealings, the contacts that they made are worth surveying.

Owing to a major reshuffle at the top of the State Department,² and to the increase in the importance of Colonel Hoskins's advice already described, both he and the NED managed to induce the new heads of the Department to adopt their view. Attempts to convey this to the British, which failed in November 1943,³ were renewed when planning Stettinius's Mission to London in April 1944.

Early in 1944, Hoskins managed to interest the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Affairs in the plan for

¹ Founded after Pearl Harbour and chaired by Hull, the Committee consisted of Government officials and politicians of both political parties. Hull, Memoirs, pp. 1623-5.

² Sumner Welles left the Department in the autumn of 1943 and Hull resigned a year later. Edward Stettinius Jr., who leapt within that year from the post of Acting Secretary to that of Secretary of State, was on his own admission ignorant of affairs in Palestine.

³ Hoskins went to London in that month to try and revive the Joint Statement and the idea of trusteeship, but both Churchill and Eden refused to see him. Prem 4/28/3, pp. 180-188.

international trusteeship which Roosevelt once voiced, and to make it the cornerstone of their planning. By this means, the question of Palestine was inserted onto Stettinius's agenda for London.¹ In conjunction with the Advisory Committee, the NED hastily worked out a scheme for international trusteeship,² the essence of which was that no immediate independence should be given to Palestine. Instead, the British mandate must be converted into a trusteeship, with Britain as trustee, but with closer supervision by the United Nations than had ever been given by the League. Within that arrangement, their document suggested, "the Arab and Jewish communities would be established as autonomous political entities, with power of self government."³

The Stettinius mission, the original task of which was to deal with the future of the French colonies,⁴ thus also carried with it several proposals in regard to Palestine. These included a variant of a renewed Anglo-American statement based on the "Full Consultation" formula,⁵ a plan for trusteeship and also, for the time being, a proposal for the retention of the White Paper régime.⁶ It is noteworthy that at this

¹ Stettinius to Hull, 10 March 1944, FRUS, p. 587.

² Cf. Memo by Murray, Oct. 1943, FRUS, pp. 817-821. For further deliberations of the scheme of trusteeship see FRUS 1944, pp. 592-595. The idea was also strongly backed by Isaiah Bowman, a lecturer on Geography, who, in the Advisory Committee became in charge of territorial planning and in that capacity was also on Stettinius's staff.

³ Memo by Evan Wilson, 17 March 1944, FRUS, pp. 592-595. The plan bore some resemblance to that proposed a month later by Sir E. Grigg. See above, pp. 165-166.

⁴ Hull, Memoirs, pp. 1427-9.

⁵ Stettinius to Roosevelt, 4 March 1944, FRUS, pp. 586-587.

⁶ Memo by Wilson, 17 March, op. cit. For a more explicit demand for extension of the White Paper period, made by Hoskins, see Prem 5/28/3, pp. 180-183.

point hardly any segments of the British Government matched the anti-Zionism of these Americans.

The American Middle East men on the Stettinius mission, tried to establish touch with the top levels of British foreign policy-making; but the British did all they could to confine the talks about Palestine to lower levels. In the two meetings which took place on 11 and 19 April, the British plied the American with vague statements. The head of the British delegation, Sir Maurice Peterson, made no mention of any British planning in regard to Palestine and tried to evade inquisitive questions by "expressing only his personal opinions," and by saying that the matter was in the hands of higher authorities.¹ To make his vagueness more plausible, Peterson summed up matters by saying that "the Foreign Office does not consider the question of Palestine urgent;" this the Americans took to mean that the British adhered to their White Paper policy.

In these conditions of hide and seek, the conference came to an end. The Americans learned little and managed to propound nothing. Yet, they went home happy, thinking that at this juncture the British "imperialist approach" dovetailed with their own thoughts.²

¹ Minutes of the two meetings are in FO 371/40135, E 2318 and FRUS 1944, pp. 600-603.

² It is remarkable how efficient was the British screen of secrecy and how misjudgement of British intentions endured in America. In a paper, published in the summer of 1973 by the man who was in charge of the Palestine desk at the State Department at that time, we find the following description of the London parleys: "Trusteeship . . . was among the topics broached to the British during the London talks. . . . The Foreign Office reacted with enthusiasm to this . . . solution, but like so many other things it was overtaken by events." E.M. Wilson, "The Palestine Papers, 1943-1947", in Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. II, no. 4, Summer 1973, p. 40.

Chapter Four

ZIONIST DISILLUSIONMENT

As we have noted, 1944 was not going to be an easy year for Roosevelt so far as Palestine was concerned. The same was true of the American scene. His great prestige as a war leader was not in itself a guarantee that the American public would approve of his unprecedented move of seeking a fourth term as President. To succeed, he badly needed the vote of some key States in which Jewish voters were in a position to tip the scale. The combination of Jewish demographic distribution with a special trait of the American electoral system, made him depend on the Jewish vote to a far greater extent than seemed warranted by Jewish numerical strength--a mere five and a half million people. Since by now American Jewry had become almost solidly pro-Zionist, Jewish voters had to be paid in the currency of pro-Zionist promises.

The heads of American Zionism fully realised their advantage. They failed, however, to draw a distinction between words and deeds; they were easily taken in by public utterances made by Roosevelt, which they interpreted as fulfilment of the foreign policy that they desired. They knew little of the growing pressure exerted by the heads of the Arab states on the United States and nothing of the reassuring messages that Washington had taken to sending to these Arabs whenever it indulged in an openly pro-Zionist statement.

Silver, who led the Zionist offensive against the Administration, adopted the model of 1922 and sought to use the same tactics. He hoped to force Roosevelt's hand just as the Zionists had done to Harding,¹ and, to do so, provided him with a ready-made Congressional resolution, cast in the spirit of "Biltmore". He naively held that once such a resolution was put before the President, the latter would have to endorse it, and once this was done, that he would be bound by it and begin to exert pressure on Britain to change her Palestine policy.

But things did not develop in quite this way. In the first place, Silver misjudged the readiness of some influential Congressmen to act against the President's wishes; in the second, he miscalculated the reactions of the State and War Departments and their readiness to thwart his project. As a result, Silver's initial attempt failed.

The Administration's success in warding off the Zionist assault cost them dear. Roosevelt had time and again to pay its price by making pro-Zionist statements, which he had in turn to match with further secret reassurances to the Arabs.

One result of Silver's failure was a deepening feud inside the Zionist camp. But for the time being Silver remained in control of this and saw no reason to refrain from pushing forward in other directions. Next, the target became the election platforms of the two Parties and here his tactics proved more successful. By sticking rigidly to the principle that Zionism must remain aloof from the inter-party political struggle, he in fact put the Jewish vote up to

¹ See Introduction, pp. x-xi.

auction. He managed to cause the two Parties to compete in expressions of sympathy for Zionism, until both ended in explicit support for a Jewish Commonwealth. What these expressions were worth was another question but meanwhile they made the State Department's task of reassuring the Arabs burdensome in the extreme.

For a short while, the Messianic American Jews thought they had obtained a "second Balfour Declaration". But when the election dust settled, they realised that its sole firm outcome was that Roosevelt was safely back in office.

It was nevertheless impossible for Roosevelt completely to ignore the Jewish contribution to his re-election as President. Therefore, when the Yalta Conference fell due, he undertook to introduce the Palestine issue at that meeting. He went to Russia well briefed, both by the Zionists and the State Department, but was firmly deterred by Churchill from raising the issue; the latter was not ready to handle it until the British had made up their minds what to do with Palestine.

Baulked by Churchill, Roosevelt resorted to another move in order to demonstrate his zest for a solution; he tried a meeting with Ibn Saud whilst on his way back to the United States. But the great cordiality of their meeting could hardly mask its inconclusiveness.

Returning empty-handed, Roosevelt once again had to resort to his ambiguous language with the Zionists and the Arabs and was hard at it when death came to him. A month later the war ended.

By degrees, the Zionists had sobered down and had lost some of their Messianic war-time illusions. They

discovered that neither Roosevelt nor Churchill had anything in store for them. All the seeming achievements of Silver, in the form of platforms, planks, and resolutions, suddenly seemed to vanish into thin air. Palestine was not discussed at Yalta and the San Francisco conference, which the Zionists at first thought was going to be another Versailles, proved to be very limited in scope. As far as they could see, no change was visible in the position of Palestine or of the Jewish people; all that they knew was that one third of European Jewry lay dead.

(a) American Zionists' Abortive Attempts and Their
Supposed Successes in 1944

In 1944, the President and the Administration needed the Jewish vote. Lessons of the past had taught them that injunctions to forget domestic matters for the sake of "finishing the job" of war were not popular with the voter,¹ and that therefore Roosevelt's leadership was not in itself a guarantee of a Democratic victory. The coming election campaign, they feared, would be narrowly won, if at all. The Democrats needed every bit of support that they could mobilize. In particular they needed to win a series of key States where even a small majority would produce them a significant number of electoral votes.² It so happened that most of these States had substantial, and politically influential, Jewish communities.

¹ A call, in the 1942 biennials "to end partisan domestic policies for the duration of the war," had later been considered damaging to the Democrats. Cf. J.M. Burnes, op. cit., p. 465.

² Such key States were for instance New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio, with respectively 47, 36, 27, and 23 electoral votes each, towards 266 needed to elect a President.

At the same time, Zionist sentiment within Congress was growing, as was evident from a mounting volume of pro-Zionist petitions, endorsed by a majority of members of both Houses. Silver became convinced "beyond any doubt," that "when and if a pro-Zionist resolution came to the vote, it would pass by a large majority."¹ The election year of 1944 which many believed was going to be the year of victory, looked to him to be a unique chance of getting matters moving on behalf of Zionism.² He was now highly self-confident and thought that no other Zionist leader, inside or outside the United States, knew better than he what was good for Zionism.³ And although he still shared AZEC's chairmanship with Rabbi Wise, he now called the tune in all new Zionist ventures.

His strategy, inspired by a strong sense of mission, was simple and straightforward: he wanted to transform vigorous and, he hoped, permanent domestic pressure into a foreign policy aimed at inducing Britain to change her approach to Palestine. In his own words, his plan was:

"to influence and change the Administration's policy of inaction and to inform Great Britain and the world what the true sentiments of the American people were, through their chosen representatives."⁴

He saw the omens as encouraging. Non-Jewish politicians pointed the way;⁵ Weizmann seemed to like his idea⁶ and

¹ Silver, Autobiography, Part II.

² "A Historic Hour had struck!" Silver to AZEC members, minute 13 Dec. 1943, ZANY.

³ See his remarks at AZEC meetings of July 1944, minutes, op. cit.

⁴ Silver, Autobiography.

⁵ "Watch for the Senate; they are growing in influence. There are only 96 persons there, and you need only two thirds to pass a resolution. You should be able to overcome that." William Bullitt to Zionist leaders. Shertok report, Z. Exec. minute, 27 April 1943, CZA.

⁶ In October 1943, Churchill intimated to Weizmann that before

--what is more--Silver's inexperienced ear did not detect any note of disapproval from the White House or the State Department.¹ He therefore took up the matter with some of his APC associates and early in January 1944 induced AZEC to agree to the launching of pro-Zionist resolutions in both Houses of Congress.

Resolutions numbers 418 and 419, which were submitted to the Foreign Relations Committees of both Houses read:

"The United States shall use its good offices and take appropriate measures to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be opened for free entry of Jews into that country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization, so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth."²

The successful passage of such resolutions through the United States Congress called for several attendant conditions which Silver and his APC aides believed to exist. In the first place, the matter had to be one of "national" importance, that is, that it must not be thought to be in the interest of one political party only. One of Silver's main themes was that Zionism must cease to be considered as connected solely with the Democrats. When selecting Congressmen to introduce his resolutions, therefore, Silver saw to it that

he could give the Zionists their "plum", "certain people in America should be first won over." He clearly meant the Administration and so did Weizmann when he passed the word on to Silver. Silver, however, decided to start with Congress. Ministry of Information, 4 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40129, E 724 and Berlin's talk to Silver, 13 March, FO 371/40135, E 1994

¹ Silver made various attempts to take Roosevelt's pulse but never asked his direct permission to proceed. Morgenthau, Postmaster General Frank, Sam Rosenmen and Leader of the House MacCormack, were all asked to tell the President of Silver's intentions. The draft of his resolution was also shown to Hull. Silver noted that there was "no indication of disapproval." Cf. AZEC, minutes 15 Nov. and 13 Dec. 1943, and 3 Feb. 1944, ZANY. See also Notes, op. cit., entries between 11 Nov. and 3 Feb.

² 78th Congress, 2nd Session. Copy from FDRL.

the two Senators and two members of the House of Representatives concerned should come equally from both political parties. Representatives Compton, a Republican from Connecticut, and Wright, a Democrat from Pennsylvania were charged with introducing it in the House, while the well-known Senators Taft and Wagner were to do the job in the Senate.

A second, and obvious condition of success was that an overwhelming majority in each House must be ready to support the resolutions. This seemed assured thanks to the diligent work of AZEC's local ECs.

There was, however, a third and no less important condition, without which the whole project had no chance of getting off the ground; it needed the personal approval and support of the Chairmen of both the Senate and the House Committees on Foreign Affairs.¹ Silver believed that he was safe in counting on the two Chairmen to behave as he wished. Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee, was a Jew from New York and was known to be eager to improve his image in his constituency in order to remedy the damage done to it by his services on the American Delegation to Bermuda. Tom Connally, his counterpart in the Senate, had earlier subscribed to APC.² But here Silver miscalculated.

AZEC's strategy, though it had a reasonable chance of success, had one big drawback: all the parts of it must function exactly as planned. But since its organisers had neither full information, nor any control over the confidential dealings between each Chairman and his entourage during the

¹ Cf. David Truman, The Government Process, pp. 369-372.

² For Bloom's attempt to improve his image see Halifax to FO, 13 and 21 Nov. 1943, FO 371/35041, E 6951. For Connally's subscription to Wagner's APC see "Survey" by Beeley, 7 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31378, E 967.

preliminary stages before the hearings began, they were not able to detect a flaw in the progress of any one item until it was too late. If one part lapsed, the whole project was bound to collapse like a card-house.

When the hearings in Bloom's Committee were about to start,¹ a series of Arab protests, combined with bitter criticism from United States envoys in Arab capitals, were immediately forthcoming.² The State Department took pains to instruct its men to say, in addition to giving reassurances about "Full Consultation", that "the passage of the resolutions by either or both Houses would only be an expression of the opinion of individual members of that House, and would not be binding on the Executive, or an expression of the foreign policy of the United States."³

What was more, the Department spared no effort to ensure that the whole Zionist attempt should fail. Its first step was to warn the President of the likely adverse effect of the resolutions on American-Arab relations.⁴

The situation now resembled that of the previous August when the Anglo-American statement had failed: most of the characters in the drama took up their traditional positions but--and this is important--Secretary for War Stimson now changed sides. When he did so, the scale tipped against Silver.

¹ The hearings took place on 9 and 15 February but the intention to pass the resolution in the House Committee became publicly known a week earlier.

² Minute by Stettinius, 9 Feb. 1944. Telegrams from Henderson (Baghdad) 14 Feb., from Wadsworth (Beirut) 18 Feb., and from Earle (Damascus) 24 Feb. FRUS 1944, pp. 565-569.

³ Stettinius to Henderson, 14 Feb., ibid.

⁴ Rosenman to Roosevelt, 7 Feb. 1944, Rosenman Papers, Palestine, FDRL.

The State Department obtained an initial breakthrough when it managed to persuade Connally to hold the hearings of the Senate Committee in camera.¹ This move enabled it, with the full backing of Roosevelt, to bring military experts to testify, including the Chief-of-Staff, General Marshall. Reinforcing its political argument with the military claim that the passing of the resolutions was likely to cause disturbances in all of the Middle East and North Africa,² the State Department could rest assured as to what the Committee's final verdict was going to be.

Meanwhile, the open hearing in Bloom's Committee took place; constitutionally, Bloom had no obligation to follow Connally's conduct. But on 16 February he voluntarily decided to hold his horses, and to wait.³ Meanwhile, the secret hearing in the Senate Committee continued, until on 23 February Roosevelt was sure the resolutions were a dead letter.⁴ But to be on the safe side, he permitted publication on 3 March of Stimson's letter containing arguments against the resolutions.⁵ The Zionists were thereby shown in the very light

¹ A similar request, made earlier from Bloom had been rejected. Consequently Hull refused to testify in Bloom's Committee. E.M. Wilson, op. cit., p. 41.

² Matters developed in the following order: at Hull's request of 7 Feb. Roosevelt engineered a hearing for Colonel Hoskins before the military (Wilson, op. cit., pp. 36, 41). General Marshall was persuaded of the gravity of taking any risk and expressed readiness to testify before the Senate Committee. At the same time Roosevelt induced Stimson to write a letter to Connally, stating that the resolutions were damaging to the Allied war effort (Stimson to Connally, 7 Feb. 1944, FRUS, p. 563). Marshall testified on 13 February. For a summary of the military arguments against the resolutions see Mackloy to Marshall, 22 Feb. (FRUS, p. 574). When Stimson's letter reached Connally, the latter did not think twice and approved the secret hearing, failing even to invite Taft and Wagner to attend it (Silver's account, 13 March 1944, FO 371/40135, E 1994).

³ Silver's account, op. cit.

⁴ Roosevelt-Stettinius correspondence, 4 and 5 March 1944, OF/700, Box 3, FDRL.

⁵ Ibid.

that they had managed to avoid in the previous August--that is of "impeding the Allied war effort."

Obviously, though in a fix, they could not remain idle. They had to make Roosevelt pay a price for his success, and the sooner the better. Since the heads of American Zionism had a long-standing promise of an interview with the President,¹ they pressurised Wagner and other influential Democrats in order to bring this off.² On 9 March 1944 AZEC's two Chairmen were invited to a face-saving meeting at the White House.

The encounter was characteristic of the new tension which developed between Roosevelt and the Zionist officials. Since Silver was now calling the Zionist tune, a somewhat heated argument took place: Silver blamed the Administration for "selling ideals for the sake of Arabian oil," while Roosevelt retorted by asking did Silver want "to let millions die in a Jehad."³ Roosevelt rebuked Silver for "spreading rumours in Washington to the effect that the President was behind the shelving of the resolutions," while Silver swaggeringly threatened to withdraw Jewish support from Roosevelt in the coming election.⁴ Scandalized but yet impressed, Roosevelt eventually agreed to allow the two leaders to make a public statement on his behalf that,

¹ Wise-Rosenman correspondence, and General Watson to Wise, Feb. 1944, Rosenman Papers, Palestine, FDRL.

² AZEC, minutes 21 Feb. and 27 March, ZANY. See also consecutive entries in Notes, op. cit., 10, 23, 24 and 28 Feb. 1944.

³ Report by Wise and Silver to the Interim Committee of the American Jewish Conference, made a few hours after leaving the White House. The document found its way into the British files. See FO 371/40135, E 1994. See also Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 709, pp. 16-19, FDRL.

⁴ Ibid.

"... the American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of 1939 [and that] the President is happy that the doors of Palestine are to-day open to Jewish refugees¹ and ... when future decisions are reached, full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home."²

An Arab reaction to the statement did not fail to follow.³ Once again the State Department had to elaborate a compound reply; it now said that although it was true that the United States had never given its approval to the White Paper, it was equally true that "the US had never taken any position at all in regard to that policy."⁴

Meanwhile, AZEC wondered what to do next. Their obliviousness to the organized Arab pressure on the United States Government made them wonder what "obscure powers were at work against them," and many thought that they should slow down their pace for a while. There was considerable criticism of Silver's tactics both inside and outside the United States Zionist camp. Both Weizmann and Ben Gurion expressed their dissatisfaction with his conduct.⁵ Nevertheless, Silver

He was probably alluding to Stanley's statement of 10 November 1943 extending the period in which the 75,000 immigrants allowed by the White Paper would be able to enter. House of Commons, Hansard, vol. 939, col. 1152. The Americans, unjustifiedly took credit for that British concession.

² FO 371/40134, E 1994. When Churchill read these words, with no idea of the circumstances in which the statement was obtained, he remarked "Cordially concur with the President. Like him I have never given my approval to the White Paper." Ibid.

³ The Arab countries were now all out for unity, and all were paying great attention to Zionist agitation in the United States. The British had to apply press censorship wherever they were in a position to do so, to prevent that statement from reaching the Arab public. But there was enough vigour to worry the State Department in representations made by Arab envoys in Washington. See FRUS 1944, pp. 588-491.

⁴ Hull to Kirk, 15 March 1944, ibid.

⁵ "Silver is making mistakes, he has got no political sense, but people in AZEC do not dare to oppose him." Ben Gurion at the Z. Exec. 23 April 1944, CZA. "Weizmann was furious he was not consulted about the resolutions. He thought it was a great mistake." Shertok report from London, ibid., 21 May 1944. For the argument within AZEC see its minutes of 27 April and 1 May 1944, ZANY.

still had the upper hand and was all set for his next offensive.

His new target was the two Parties' election platforms. Here conditions looked more favourable to the Zionists --all they had to do was to sit firmly on the fence and send their representatives to each Party's National Convention to push through a Zionist plank. They were also lucky in that the Republican Convention was being held first; Silver, who had good relations with Republican leaders, was able to show by example how the "neutrality" principle should be worked. His tactics impressed the Democratic wing of AZEC, who when their turn came, also spoke with one voice. In a word, party political rivalry within AZEC helped to create a double Zionist success, since representation in each Party looked the more "sincere".

The timing of the two Conventions was ideal; the Republicans met in the last week of June, the Democrats a month later, both in Chicago. Other circumstances were favourable too: Silver's friend, Senator Taft, became the Chairman of the Republican Party's Platform Committee.¹ But even so, Silver did not get the results he wanted. He spent days and nights in an improvised headquarters in a nearby Chicago hotel, alert and tireless, and watching the proceedings of the Convention. He was determined not to give up one iota of the plank he planned to insert into the Republican platform. When the moment for voting on the Palestine plank approached, Silver noticed various attempts to dilute the text. Typically, his reaction was "he would rather have no plank at all."² Finally

¹ Silver was also granted an interview with the Republican's most obvious presidential nominee, Governor Dewey of New York. For a chronological description of Silver's action, step by step, see his Autobiography and AZEC minutes of 19 June and 27 July 1944, ZANY.

² Ibid.

he won a complete victory. Next day, the Republican Palestine plank read:

"In order to give refuge to millions of distressed Jewish men, women and children, driven from their homes by tyranny, we call for the opening of Palestine to their unrestricted immigration and land ownership, so that in accordance with the full intent of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the resolution of the Republican Congress of 1922, Palestine may be constituted as a free and democratic Commonwealth."

Silver's success did half the work for AZEC's Democratic members. Nevertheless their task was somewhat more uphill; they enjoyed none of the advantages that Silver did with the Republicans. Roosevelt was not available to them at all and nearly all the Platform Committee avoided seeing them. To increase their trials, Silver doggedly watched their steps, telephoning them hourly and forbidding them to yield to any proposal entailing compromise.²

The final outcome, however, was just as good. When Wise, Schulman, and their associates came back to New York, they deserved credit for a no less impressive plank, reading:

"We favour the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization, and such policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth."³

Though AZEC members of both colours were now satisfied, they were still far from being united. Wise thought that since traditional Zionist support for the Democrats was now fully justified, the Jewish vote must go to them. Silver challenged that view and was determined not to allow Wise to use his

¹ Notes, op. cit., 27 June 1944. The plank included also a passage "condemning the failure of the President to insist on Britain's fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration."

² "They are shivering in their boots," Silver wrote with repugnance, "and they are mad with envy at the fact that I have succeeded." Notes, op. cit., 18 July 1944.

³ Ibid., 20 July. See also FRUS 1944, p. 606.

position in order to afford Roosevelt a heyday.

But once again, discord helped the Zionists. Silver, learning that Wise was planning to see the President alone, not unduly wrongly concluded that Wise was about to ask for a special last-moment pro-Zionist statement which might hand the whole prize to the Democrats.¹ He therefore forthwith got into touch with the Republican Party "bosses", proposing to them that Dewey should likewise make such a statement but that he should do so prior to that of the President. A few hours later, Silver received a telephone call from the Republican candidate saying, "Dr. Silver, I shall never let you down."² On the eve of the ZOA annual conference in Atlantic City, on 13 October, Dewey was as good as his word; he announced publicly that he endorsed the Palestine plank of his Party's platform, adding:

"As a President I will use my best offices to have our Government working together with Great Britain to achieve this great objective for the people that have suffered so much."³

To leave matters at that was now unthinkable for the Democrats. Roosevelt was immediately pressed by his political advisers to follow suit; he had just enough time to manage to send a statement for issue at the opening of the Zionist conference. At that opening session, Senator Wagner stepped onto the rostrum to read a message which he himself had drafted two weeks earlier⁴ on behalf of the President.

It ran:

¹ Silver was right in his assumption. Wise was trying to get such a statement. Wise to Roosevelt, 16 Sept. 1944, and a Memo by Sam Rosenman OF/700, Box 3, FDRL.

² Notes, op. cit., 12 Oct. 1944.

³ Halifax to FO, 13 Oct. 1944, FO 371/40132, E 6285.

⁴ Wagner to Roosevelt, 29 Sept. 1944, OF/700, Box 3, FDRL.

"Dear Bob. Knowing that you are to attend the 47th Annual Convention of the Zionist Organisation of America, I ask you to convey to the delegates assembled my most cordial greetings . . . I know how long and ardently the Jewish people have worked and prayed for the establishment of Palestine as a free and Democratic Jewish Commonwealth . . . and if re-elected, I shall help to bring about its realization."¹

Inside and outside the United States, the whole Zionist camp was now jubilant. Voices criticising Silver suddenly hushed and telegrams from Weizmann and Ben Gurion, congratulating him on the "historic statement", were joyfully read at the next AZEC meeting.² This time Silver himself was satisfied and triumphantly told the conference:

". . . there were timid souls among us who said: 'Oh, don't talk about a Jewish Commonwealth. It is extreme. It will alienate friends.' But we were 'extremists' and . . . well, now the program of those 'extremists' had become the accepted political position of the greatest power on earth!"³

How little he knew what was in store.

Naturally, Silver now demanded the fresh pressure that would keep the Congressional resolutions in the forefront until polling day; he was sure that he could manage this. His conviction was strengthened in that Stimson, who had never liked the task of using military arguments as a cloak for the State Department's anti-Zionist interests, decided to waive the military objections to them.⁴ Representative Sol Bloom, too, was eager to get them debated in the House,⁵ but the

¹ Halifax to FO, 16 Oct. 1944, FO 371/40132, E 6310.

² AZEC, minute, 30 Oct. 1944, ZANY.

³ Silver, Autobiography.

⁴ Stimson to Taft, 10 Oct. 1944, FRUS, p. 618 footnote. AZEC, minutes 14 and 30 Oct. ZANY.

⁵ Stating that "no less than 318 Members of his House had already expressed their readiness to endorse a pro-Zionist resolution." Bloom to the State Department, 2 Dec. 1944, 867 N.01/12-244, USNA.

Democrat flank of AZEC, who were in a majority, opposed doing so. Disagreement continued until Roosevelt had won the election. According to the angry Silver, quarrelling at such a time was unforgivable.

As for Roosevelt, back in Office for another four years, he no longer needed to play so safe. When asked his opinion regarding the resolutions, he replied that "he thought nothing should be done about it at this time."¹

The Executive objection did not deter Silver, but few supported him now. A violent controversy developed within AZEC and Silver, who found fewer and fewer people ready to co-operate with him, began to act more and more independently. Helped by Bloom, he began to press for passage of a resolution through Congress but was again blocked by Connally. Secretary of State Stettinius, who chose to testify in camera, went to the Senate Committee and presented it with a desperate report about the state of United States-Arab relations resulting from the "unrestrained" pro-Zionist agitation during the election campaign.² As a result, the Senate Committee again shelved the resolutions.³

Bloom, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee, was nevertheless ready to push a resolution through in his own House; he was sure of a positive result but before

¹ Report by Stettinius, after inquiry made by Rabbi Wise. AZEC, minute 21 Nov. 1944, ZANY.

²

One example of the consequences of pro-Zionist competition at election-time was an Arab boycott of the Culbertson Mission, a body constituted to establish economic and financial relations between the United States and Middle Eastern countries. See "Special Economic Mission to the Middle East", Sept.-Nov. 1944, FRUS, pp. 38-40. Also correspondence with the US Consul, Jerusalem, Oct., *ibid.*, pp. 616-619.

³ Connally put one condition to Stettinius: he must denounce the resolutions publicly, which Stettinius did. Roosevelt-Stettinius correspondence, 6 and 8 Dec. 1944, FRUS, pp. 643-646, and a Press Release of 11 Dec., *ibid.*, pp. 646-647.

putting the matter to a vote, wanted the backing of the whole of AZEC, particularly of Wise. But the Democrats in AZEC were firmly against a vote.¹ Suddenly Silver was opposed by a united front; on 20 December 1944, therefore, he had to resign.² Rabbi Wise was once again the sole Chairman of AZEC and immediately set about taking steps to appease the President. On 21 January, when he obtained an interview, he said to Roosevelt: "We stand behind you; we expect you to support us."³

(b) Thoughts and Actions of Roosevelt and Churchill
in Regard to Palestine as the War Neared its End

Even if Roosevelt was not the "modern Moses" that many Jewish voters still regarded him to be, he could not remain completely ungrateful to those who put their trust in him.⁴ His bitter experience with the Zionists during the previous election year had taught him that escapism does not always work. And while he still had little idea how to dovetail Arab and Jewish pressures, he longed for some way of proving himself consistent. His hopes now dwelt on a tripartite agreement of some nature or other, to be reached jointly with Churchill and Stalin.

¹ "Why do we have to oppose the President? He can do more things for us than Congress. He can get us ships, he can shape up the future of Palestine . . . we need a friendly, not unfriendly access to him." Dr. I. Goldstein, President of ZOA in New Palestine, 19 Jan. 1945.

² AZEC, minute 20 Dec. 1944, ZANY.

³ Minute by Wise, President's file, ZANY.

⁴ "These people voted for you as though you were a modern Moses . . . they prayed for you in their synagogues. You can't forget their sincerity and their enthusiasm. Or shall I tell them that the Platform is not something to stand upon but something to get in on?" Representative Celler (of Brooklyn, NY) to the President, 15 Dec. 1944, PSF, Box 49, FDRL.

The Yalta conference was by now on his agenda, and at it, post-war arrangements were to be decided; why should not Palestine constitute part of these arrangements?

After listening patiently to Wise and Wagner,¹ Roosevelt promised them to put Palestine on the Yalta agenda, and asked the State Department to brief him again on the whole issue.² The Department endorsed the idea of raising the issue with Churchill and Stalin but not the idea that America should propose a Jewish State. Its experts warned the President of a possible Soviet attempt to exploit the Arab-Jewish dispute in order to augment Soviet influence in the Middle East.³

But just in case the other leaders should prove unable or unwilling to include Palestine on the agenda, Roosevelt needed an alternative means whereby to demonstrate his diligence about solving the problem. He therefore instructed the State Department to improvise an additional conference in which he hoped for a personal meeting with Ibn Saud.⁴ It appears that he reserved his final decision whether to hold that second conference or not until he had met Churchill.

Simultaneously, Weizmann too perceived advantage in a tripartite conference. He realised that the British too had

¹ Wagner demanded immediate imposition of a Jewish State by the "Big Three", "while the power and prestige of the united nations are still at their height." Wagner to Roosevelt, 15 Jan. Their meeting is also mentioned. 15 Jan. 1945, PSF, Box 49, FDRL. Wise's interview was held on 25 Jan. President's file, ZANY. Also among those calling on Roosevelt to raise the subject at Yalta was Professor Albert Einstein, OF/700, Box 3, FDRL.

² "Suggested Procedure Regarding the Palestine Question" (n.d.), MR, Box 165, folder 1, FDRL. An earlier draft of its brief is in FRUS 1944, p. 655.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Possible Meeting with King Ibn Saud (and the Emperor of Ethiopia)", Memo for the President, MR, op. cit., folder A, FDRL.

begun to fear Soviet exploitation of a possible pro-Zionist move on the part of the Soviets in order to gain Arab sympathy and jeopardize British designs in the area. Weizmann hoped, however, that if the Russians could be persuaded to agree to a Jewish State, the hard core of British objections would be removed.¹ Weizmann therefore decided to obtain Stalin's approval, by meeting him personally, and thought the coming conference was an ideal opportunity to reconcile everybody.

On 20 January 1945, when the British Minister Resident (Grigg) paid a visit to Palestine (where Weizmann was staying, trying to fight Jewish terrorism), Weizmann met him in Jerusalem and asked that he would raise the question of a visit to Russia with Churchill and Eden.²

Eden summarily rejected the idea. First, he explained, a contact between Weizmann and Stalin "would encourage both Arabs and Jews to play off Russia against Great Britain."³ Secondly (and this was why Churchill concurred with him), Britain still hoped to manage the Palestine problem not only singlehanded, but soon. But Britain had not yet made up her mind just what she wanted to do. Her ruminations were supposed to be a secret. On 8 February, therefore, at a moment when the Yalta conference was nearly over, Eden said "No" to

¹ Weizmann's hope of a rapprochement between the Zionists and the Soviets was based on various contacts made during the war between Agency officials and Soviet diplomats; Stalin's own pulse was taken when Shertok, while in America, met Edward Benes, Head of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile, who was about to go to Moscow. Back from his trip, Benes told Zionist leaders that Stalin "denied the existence of a Jewish problem within the USSR, but admitted it in other countries." Stalin added that "if both Britain and the US were to come to the conclusion that they really wanted a Jewish State, he would not oppose it." Minutes, Z. Exec. 14 Oct. 1942, 25 Apr. and 7 May 1944, CZA.

² Grigg to Churchill, 27 Jan. 1945, FO 371/45376, E 1609.

³ Eden to Churchill, 2 Feb. 1945, FO 371/45376, E 1610.

Weizmann.¹

No wonder then, that when Roosevelt raised the question of Palestine with Churchill, their talk was mere froth;² it was another dialogue of the deaf.

It was in Malta, en route to Russia, on board the USS Quincy, that Palestine was erased from the Yalta agenda; in all probability this was done at Churchill's wish.³ After meeting there on 2 February, both Churchill and Roosevelt flew the next day to the Crimea, leaving the settlement of Palestine's future to the British alone.

Roosevelt, therefore, turned to his alternative plan. On 3 February he instructed Acting Secretary of State Grew (who had stayed behind in Washington), to ask his Minister in Cairo to arrange for a meeting between the President and three monarchs: Ibn Saud, Farouk, and Haile Selassie. The meeting was to take place at the Great Bitter Lake, half way along the Suez Canal.⁴ Further instructions were urgently sent to United States envoys in the relevant capitals, and the United States Commander-in-Chief of the American forces in the Middle East was put in charge of arranging transport for the three rulers.⁵

It appears that Churchill became "deeply disturbed"

¹ Ibid. Annexe subsequently added.

² See W.D. Leahy, I Was There, pp. 342-370.

³ There is no clear record saying so, but a deduction can be drawn from the following: (a) Roosevelt's serious intention to raise the issue in Yalta. (b) Churchill's objection to involving Stalin. (c) The fact that Palestine was in some way discussed in Malta (Leahy, ibid., and J.F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, p. 22) and (d) that Palestine was not discussed in Yalta. Footnote in FRUS 1944, p. 655. See also the unabridged account of Hoskins's lunch with Roosevelt after the conference, 867 N.O1/3-545, USNA.

⁴ Grew to Tuck (Cairo), 3 Feb. 1944, FRUS 1945, p. 1.

⁵ Ibid.

when he heard of Roosevelt's intended conference; according to an American witness he "suspected some plot to undermine the British Empire."¹ He, at all events, "changed his own schedule," and arranged himself to meet the same rulers soon after Roosevelt had finished.²

When the Yalta conference was over, Roosevelt's ship cast anchor in the Bitter Lake, and between the 13 and 14 February took part in a spectacular event on board. He received the three monarchs one by one, each ceremony getting more grandiose; Ibn Saud's was the last.

At this meeting, the United States Minister in Jidda ostentatiously remarked that "even the slightest incident of that historical event was worth notice."³ Indeed, the ship had been turned into a beduin camp, where sheep were slaughtered and grilled on open fires, where Arab coffee was served in the traditional beduin way, where expensive gifts were exchanged, and where alcohol, cigarettes, and women were not to be seen. Knowing that the account of the meeting was not going to be published,⁴ the President felt free "to be himself". He enjoyed the exotic experience and took pleasure in calling Ibn Saud a "twin brother of himself" in "age, responsibility and

¹ Leahy, op. cit. His version more closely corresponds than do others to the official description of the events in USS Quincy's Log-Book. Cf. "The Yalta Conference", MR, Box 24, FDRL. According to J.F. Byrnes, however, when still in Malta, Churchill was told about the President's plan, "wished him good luck but did not seem very hopeful." J.F. Byrnes, op. cit. Sir Reader Bullard, British Minister in Jidda, recollects that his American Colleague, Eddy, was instructed not to tell Bullard. The latter knew of the intended visit, because Ibn Saud, with his natural courtesy, told him of it (information from my supervisor, Oxford, 1973). Also Commons, Hansard, vol. 408, col. 1289.

² Leahy, op. cit., p. 381, and W.S. Churchill, The Second World War, vol. VI, pp. 348-350.

³ William Eddy to the Secretary of State, 3 March 1945, FRUS, pp. 7-9.

⁴ It was published only in 1970.

physical disability."¹

But in contrast to the grandeur of the ceremony, very little was defined and nothing fixed in regard to Palestine.

Indeed, no great hopes in that arena need have been entertained from the start. Hoskins's mission was now eighteen months old but not one encouraging omen had been discernible since, to suggest that the King had relaxed his anti-Jewish fanaticism. Quite the contrary; the briefing which American experts on Saudi Arabia gave Roosevelt included descriptions of fresh incidents in which the King had demonstrated his hatred of Jews.²

These briefings also included a strongly worded warning: United States interests in Saudi Arabia were in a delicate state; their retention depended almost solely on the King's changes of mood. If the President insisted upon getting him to reach some compromise with the Jews, the basic precondition must be complete abandonment of any talk of a Jewish State.³

Roosevelt did not even try to be so drastic. The farthest he went was to "ask the King's advice" what to do with the Jews who survived in Europe.⁴

Upon returning to Washington, Zionist leaders were told that the President had asked Ibn Saud to

¹ Eddy to the Secretary of State, op. cit.

² Eddy to the Secretary of State, 1 Feb. 1945, FRUS, P. 687.

³ The Director of American Economic Operations in the Near East (James Landis) to Roosevelt, 17 Jan. 1945, FRUS, pp. 680-682. Roosevelt had also been told that of late the King was deeply involved in the campaign for Arab unity, had subscribed to the Alexandria Protocol (drafted September-October 1944), and declared himself to be the "Champion of the Arabs of Palestine." Later, on joining the Arab League, founded on 22 March 1945, he called upon all the Arabs "to fight and die in the battle" for Palestine's sake.

⁴ "The Great Bitter Lake Conference", MR, Box 24, Annexe "C", FDRL.

admit more Jews into Palestine.¹ But there is no mention of such a request in the verbatim minute of the meeting, signed by Roosevelt himself.² Roosevelt, the minute shows, never questioned Ibn Saud's proposal that survivors of Nazi persecution should be settled in their countries of origin, or better still, on German soil confiscated for them by the Allies. Roosevelt's only remark about these suggestions was the "Poland might be considered a case in point", since "the Germans appear to have killed three million Jews," and therefore there "should now be space in Poland."³ With that their discussion of Palestine ended.

Churchill met Ibn Saud on Roosevelt's very heels. His talk was more straightforward; Britain, Churchill said, had supported and subsidized Saudi Arabia for twenty years and enabled the King to retain his control over his subjects. She was now entitled to turn to the King for help with solving the Jewish problem. Churchill wanted the King to help Arabs and Jews to reach a compromise, in which each side would obviously have to make concessions.⁴ In reply the King said that even if he was ready to do this for Britain's sake, he could not, because it would "destroy his soul and sully his honour" and would only bring about wide-spread disorder and bloodshed, which would not be of any advantage to the British.⁵

It was the last time any great power tried to engineer help by Ibn Saud with settlement of the Palestine problem. He soon became a marginal figure in that arena.

¹ Wise's report of his 16 March interview with Roosevelt, President's file, ZANY.

² "The Great Bitter Lake Conference", op. cit.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Eddy to the Secretary of State, 22 Feb. 1945, pp. 689-690.

⁵ Ibid.

Roosevelt could not, of course, tell the pro-Zionist Congress the full nature of his meeting with Ibn. Saud. He, nevertheless, dropped them a hint. When reporting, on 1 March, on his lengthy stay abroad, he noted that about the problem of Arab-Jewish relations he had "learned more by talking to Ibn Saud for five minutes than [he would have done] in the exchange of two dozen letters."¹

His remark immediately triggered off renewed pressure upon him. Tired as he was through the ordeal of his illness, on the brink of death, Roosevelt again felt that he could not refuse an interview with Wise and once again had to enable the Zionist leader to emerge from the White House equipped with a statement to the effect that, "The President was still in favour of unrestricted Jewish immigration and of a Jewish State in Palestine."² Once again, it was with utter consternation that the State Department learned that the President was again up to his old ambiguous Janus-like talk.³

Soon, Arab protest began to pour in again.⁴ Once again the President had to send personal replies to heads of Arab states, written in the traditional vein of the "Full Consultation" canon. Historically, the most important of these reassurances was yet another letter to King Ibn Saud, sent on 5 April.⁵ But it seemed there was no way out. Letters of Arab protest continued to pursue Roosevelt even into his convalescence house at Warm Spring, Georgia; when he died, on 12 April, he had not had time to answer all of them.⁶

¹ US Congressional Record, 79 Congress, 36-45, p. 1656.

² New York Times, 17 March 1945.

³ Henderson to Grew, 18 March 1945, 867.01/3-1845, USNA.

⁴ Cf. exchange of telegrams, late March and early April 1945, between Washington and the US envoys in Baghdad, Damascus, and the Yemen, FRUS, pp. 693-698.

⁵ Roosevelt to Ibn Saud, FRUS 1945, p. 698.

⁶ For the delicate situation that followed, in which Truman signed a few of these letters, and later regretted it, see Byrnes's talk to Halifax, 19 Oct. 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 777-779. See also Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, Memoirs, II, pp. 141-144.

But Roosevelt was not alone in growing dizzy on the Palestine see-saw; even Churchill, in his last days in office, began to show symptoms of the same malady. Confronted with mounting opposition to partition inside his Government, and realizing that international opinion about such a plan was getting less and less favourable, he began to fear that he had missed his chance. At sound of the voices coming from the United States White House and Congress (and with little precise knowledge of Roosevelt's corresponding dilemma), Churchill suddenly burst out with the idea that the Americans should take over the Mandate for Palestine. On 6 July 1945 he wrote to Stanley:

"I do not think we should take responsibility upon ourselves to manage this difficult place, while the Americans sit back and criticize. Have you ever addressed yourself to the idea that we should ask them to take over? I believe we would be stronger the more they are drawn into the Mediterranean. At any rate, the fact that we show no desire to keep the Mandate, will be a great help. I am not aware of the slightest advantage which has ever occurred to Great Britain from this painful and thankless task . . ."

And although the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office were quick to argue that Palestine was essential to British imperial strategy,² Churchill's outburst was characteristic of British uncertainty at that juncture. It was not yet clear to Britain that the advantages of holding Palestine were more than offset by the impossibility of ruling Jews and Arabs together.³

¹ Churchill to Stanley, FO 371/45378, E 4369.

² "Future Control of Palestine", Report by the Joint Planning Committee, endorsed by the C-of-S, with comments by Beeley, Baxter, and Campbell, 10 July 1945, FO 371/45378, E 5141.

³ Again, at the Potsdam Conference, Churchill said to Truman he would be "delighted to withdraw from Palestine" if the Americans were ready to take over. To that Truman replied: "No, thank you Mr. Churchill." "The Berlin Conference", FRUS, 1945, Vol. II, p. 318.

But America had no desire to take over. When she began to intervene in British Palestine affairs, as she soon did, she never contemplated taking Britain's place. There was never an Anglo-American dispute as to who should rule Palestine.

(c) The End of Zionist War-Time Messianism

The common ground upon which the followers of "Biltmore" stood was the belief that "the hour had struck" for the foundation of a Jewish State. This was modern Messianism, tailored to fit modern Jews, many of whom could no longer bring themselves to believe in the classic but naive version of the coming of the Messiah.

The modern belief was based on two premises. One was that the world "owed" the state to the Jews, as compensation for their suffering. That concept put the stress on "wakening the conscience of humanity" to do its "duty". The second premise was that the world was egoistic and hostile and that the only possible redemption of the Jews was by their own efforts. The first was manifest in the attempt to persuade the Allied leaders that there could be no true justice if, after the war, they did not award the Jews a State. The second was based on the reckoning that persuasion would not work; the war leaders must be forced to give the award, even if to get it, the Jews were considered brutal and "ugly". Naturally the first school of thought encouraged moderation, the second, militancy.

During the war, the two concepts had developed side by side. Some "Biltmore" followers put the stress on the first, some on the second, and some changed their advocacy

with the circumstances. But all that came to an end when all the real and assumed promises of Churchill and Roosevelt proved hollow. From that period on, "Biltmore" became a battle-cry for the more militant Zionists; it turned into what the British feared from the start that it would do.

With the change, Zionism lost much of its early Messianic nature. When the war ended the Zionists, both in Palestine and in the United States, had command of impressive new powers which could be manipulated for the attainment of their goals. They became a formidable factor in the domestic politics of the United States and in Palestine they became the stronger party from the military point of view. They also equipped themselves there with inspiring economic and technological schemes covering industry, irrigation, settlement, and physical absorption of hundreds of thousands of newcomers; their Palestine plans were drawn by top American experts.

But these developments happened after the war ended; for the time being, nearly everyone's thoughts dwelt on the pattern that had prevailed after World War I. Even the more sober Zionist leaders could not imagine the war ending without some redeeming statement in regard to the future of Palestine and the Jewish people.

An incident that occurred at this juncture was characteristic of their mood. When, on 16 March 1945, Wise went to see Roosevelt, he went not so much to get an explanation of the President's harsh comment before Congress, as to find out what announcement he had brought from Yalta. But what could Wise be told? Obviously not that Palestine was never discussed at all between the Big Three, or that the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine, contrary to what

had been published, was not discussed with Ibn Saud.

In an effort to evade lying to Wise, Roosevelt resorted to the argument that strict secrecy was still imposed on most of the Yalta decisions. In consequence, he could only give Wise "hints", which must also be taken as said "off the record".

"The President's position," Wise was told, "had not changed." He still "took it for granted that there must be unrestricted Jewish immigration" and although he had "utterly failed with regard to Ibn Saud," he had not given up hope, and was going to "find, together with Mr. Churchill, some court of higher appeal" before which to bring the Jewish case. The President also said the Zionists must pay great attention to the coming San Francisco conference, hinting that he might arrange "to bring the Palestine problem before it". It ought to be the united nations acting together, Roosevelt said, that should be "able to impose a solution"¹ rather than he and Mr. Churchill.

Meanwhile, all other branches of the Zionist movement were also striving to learn what had been decided at Yalta. Wise's vague rendering of Roosevelt's airy talk, combined with their tense expectation, served to distort even the small grain of truth that survived in Roosevelt's outline. When Wise's information reached the two Zionist centres, in Palestine and London, it had been buckled into an

¹ Report by Wise, 16 March 1945, President's file, ZANY. See also AZEC minute of the same date. It was later said in a whisper that Roosevelt also informed Wise of Stalin's attitude. Stalin, according to him, said that "although he did not believe the Jews were capable of becoming farmers and soldiers, he personally had nothing against their achieving a State." See minute of 20 Apr. 1945, FO 371/45398, E 2422. Such rumours were widespread at that time. Information from Sir Isaiah Berlin, Oxford, 1972.

unrecognizable shape. On 20 March the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem received a report to the effect that there was now "full agreement between the Big Three about Palestine" in the spirit of Roosevelt's earlier promises to the Zionists.¹ And as if this were not enough of a caricature, further products of the rumour-factory continued to distort the truth. Ben Gurion, who was staying in London at the time, lost all sense of judgement and, early in April, reported that "the chances are much brighter than ever we thought," and that "it is now clear that in Yalta Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed to accept the 'Biltmore' program . . ."² All these "truths" of course soon evaporated.

Next, many Zionists still hoped to achieve redemption at San Francisco; Roosevelt's hint to Wise only helped to strengthen their fallacy.³ During January and February, all branches of the Zionist movement, but particularly that in America, were feverishly preparing for the conference, though with little idea of what was going to be discussed there. Disquietingly, they had had no sign from the Big Three indicating that the Jews had been granted any status at the conference, whereas five Arab states had been legally recognized as eligible to have a seat there. AZEC thereupon decided urgently to summon Ben Gurion and Weizmann to New York, to

¹ Joseph Cohen to Weisgal, 20 March 1945, Z/5/922, CZA.

² Report to the Executive by Dr. Joseph, minute 6 Apr. 1945, CZA. When the story described a full circle and reached officials at the British Embassy in Washington (who were well informed about Yalta) they were baffled by the Zionist excitement. "Dr. Wise is no longer as young as he was," reported one of them; "his memory leaves gaps and he is apt to fill it with products of his own imagination." 20 Apr. 1945, FO 371/45398, E 2422.

³ The belief prevailed in spite of Churchill's announcement of 27 February in Parliament that the solution of the Palestine problem would be postponed until after the war. Hansard, Commons, vol. 408, cols. 1289-90.

advise on how to act.¹ At the same time the American Jewish Conference, which had most of the war remained semi-dormant, was resuscitated in order to secure State Department recognition as the sole representative of American Jewry.²

Towards the end of February, however, it became known that no leader from among the Big Three was going to attend at San Francisco. This should have been a clear sign to the Zionists that the conference was going to be limited in scope. But only a few as yet understood the nature of the new World organization that was about to be established; Jewish bodies therefore continued to press for representation at a "historic" gathering. In the end, some sixty self-appointed Jewish "delegates", representing more than twenty organizations, were trotting up and down the conference's corridors, having no status and very little idea of what to do.³

When it became clear that the sole task of the

¹ AZEC, minute 25 Feb. 1945, ZANY.

² In the end, the Department caused it to share the status of "Advisors" to it with the American Jewish Committee, for what that was worth. See E. Elath, Yoman San Francisco, p. 50. The first, then served as a channel through which the Jewish Agency and AZEC officially communicated with the United States Government, but there was no recognized procedure for communicating with the other delegations.

³ For the bitterness and frustration of the Agency's delegates see reports to the Executive by Zaslany and Agronsky, and a "clarification of the nature of the conference" by Rabbi James Heller, Z. Exec. minutes 28 May, 10 June, and 8 July, CZA. The Jewish Agency however, scored an important success in regard to the future status of the Mandate. The five Arab states tried to have the article on trusteeship so worded as to limit Jewish rights in Palestine to the existing Jewish population in the country. This scheme they did not manage to further because none of the Big Four members of the Security Council (US, UK, USSR and France) saw advantage in such an arrangement. Since according to the projected Charter all former Mandates were to be transformed into Trusteeships, the standing of the World Jewish Agency was saved. AZEC, minute 30 May 1945, ZANY. See also Elath, op. cit., pp. 39-44.

conference was to draft the United Nations' Charter, after this had already been outlined by the Big Three, the Zionists did not know whether to thank God that more important subjects were not discussed at a meeting at which they were so poorly represented, or whether to upbraid "the world" for forgetting its "duties" to them. In any event, the war had ended with no "compensation" for the six million dead the Jews had suffered and with no indication of what would happen to those who had somehow survived. Some Zionist leaders continued to look forward to the coming "Big Three" conference at Potsdam,¹ but the majority had soberer expectations.

This outcome could not fail to have an effect on the repute and influence of those leaders within the Zionist movement who had hung their hopes on Churchill or Roosevelt. In July, Silver reassumed the AZEC Chairmanship, after massive pressure from the rank and file of the American Zionists.² At virtually the same moment, Ben Gurion met Stanley in London and bluntly told him: "You have let us down. We shall have to tell our public. There will be troubles."³

¹ AZEC, minutes 12 July 1945, ZANY.

² Ibid.

³ Report by Agronsky, Z. Exec. minute 8 July 1945, CZA.

Chapter Five

THE BRITISH ATTEMPT TO HARNESS AMERICAN CO-OPERATION

The British needed no Zionist or Arab warning to realize that it was high time for them to make up their minds about Palestine's future. Yet, they were in a fix. Their Cabinet partition plan lay in ruins; if there had ever been a chance to carry it out, this had now been missed. All other alternatives looked just as unpalatable.¹

As far as they could see, Palestine was on the verge of outbreak of violence owing to the exhaustion of Jewish patience. Meantime, the first cleavage between East and West became plain for all to see, and a silent watch maintained by the Soviets made the British nervous of possible Russian intentions in Palestine. Once again, it looked as if any

¹ Towards the end of June 1945, the FO made a survey of the options open to them in Palestine. They asked British diplomats in all the Arab capitals, as well as in the United States, India, and Palestine, to report on the possible reaction in their provinces to each of the following five possible courses of action:

- (a) Executing the British Cabinet's partition plan.
- (b) Pursuing Grigg's trusteeship scheme.
- (c) Continuing British administration of Palestine, without the immediate introduction of any comprehensive policy, while Jewish immigration continued at the rate of 1,500 a month.
- (d) The same, but making Jewish immigration conditional upon consent by the Arab League.
- (e) Continued adherence to the White Paper of 1939.

In reply, none of the five courses was said to be an adequate policy, while all the persons questioned, in particular dismissed (a) and (e). Cf. summary of the "Reaction Anticipated . . . to the Five Courses of Action on Palestine Policy", July 1945, FO 371/45378, E 5151 and E 4853.

course that Britain might reasonably adopt, would be dictated mainly by global considerations, with little chance to satisfy any party in Palestine. It is no wonder then, that they deferred the taking of any decision whatsoever until after the British general election of July 1945.

As its result, the task fell to a Labour Government.

Surprisingly, Labour's initial approach was optimistic. Of course many changes had taken place in world affairs since December 1944, when its Party Conference had passed its outspoken pro-Zionist resolution.¹ Nevertheless, new ministers thought they had enough ground upon which to frame a sound and just design for the Middle East and which would embrace Palestine. Within a few days of coming to power, they resumed the work of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine and soon produced a new and, they thought, promising scheme for the future, in the form of Provincial Autonomy.

At first they regarded Palestine as Britain's exclusive affair; but when preparation of their new policy was on the point of completion, they received a shock. This was American intervention, in the form of pressure from President Truman, for the immediate admission into that territory of 100,000 Jewish displaced persons. This bombshell forced them to stop and reconsider their procedure.

Contrary to what might be expected, this piece of American intervention was not a direct result of Zionist

¹ "Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land . . . The Arabs have many wide territories of their own; they must not exclude the Jews from this small area of Palestine . . . Indeed, we should re-examine also the possibility of extending the present Palestine boundaries, by agreement with Egypt, Syria and Transjordan." Resolution accepted by the Labour Party annual conference, 1944. ManGuard, 14 December 1944.

pressure. Of course Truman had the Zionist lobby in mind when he made his initial démarche, but since his main aim was to solve a humanitarian problem, and he was not thinking of giving the Zionists a state, he tried to evade all contact with American Zionism. He tried to draw a clear dividing line between solving a burning problem in occupied Germany and furthering the spirit of "Biltmore", and this line he was most anxious not to cross. The British did not seem to grasp the distinction that he wished to draw.

America's new position in world affairs made it impossible for Britain to disregard his pressure. In fact the British Government began to see some advantages in bringing the Americans into their Palestine planning. "Sharing responsibility," the British believed, ought to make it easier for them to face any repercussions resulting from whatever policy they might eventually adopt. They also hoped that America's involvement in devising a solution would diminish anti-British agitation in the United States and perhaps damp down mounting Zionist militancy. All in all, Truman's move reinforced propensities already present in some quarters of the Foreign Office, to harness American co-operation on the Palestine issue, rather than to evade it.

The outcome of this new British thinking was the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. It was chiefly a British idea, though the American contribution towards its terms of reference brought about a significant change of stress in those terms. Its creation did not solve the outstanding disagreement between Truman and the British Government, though, initially, it raised hopes of eventual amalgamation of the two countries' policies.

(a) "The Americans Will Not Fight Us"

The election year of 1944 was the first occasion on which an American President publicly promised Zionist citizens of his country, readiness to intervene in British Palestine policy.¹ Less than a year later, such an intervention was actually made by Truman. It is doubtful however, I think, whether Roosevelt, had he lived and carried out his full fourth term of office, would have acted as Truman did. Actual intervention, which Truman was the first to practise, was to a great extent, and more than anything else, the result of his personality.

Throughout Roosevelt's reign, the British were not particularly worried that he would implement his promises to the Zionists. "We must get used to the idea," wrote a Foreign Office official at the beginning of the election campaign of 1944,

"that the President of the United States will favour Zionism this year, and may almost equally favour Arabs next . . . so let us go our way."²

Even Lord Halifax, who often warned his Government about the danger to Anglo-American relations implicit in the Palestine problem, did not highly rate the Zionist achievement at either of the two Parties' national conventions.³ In July 1944 he "strongly endorsed" an appreciation made by one of his ablest aides that,

". . . Palestine is not occupying the attention of the American public. . . . Despite their pressure, the Zionists seemed to have made little headway. [Therefore] . . . nothing that His Majesty's Government is likely to do or omit to do in Palestine, would provoke

¹ See above, p. 184.

² Minute by Hankey, March 1944, FO 371/40134, E 3610.

² See above, pp. 181-182.

an outburst of genuine sentiment on part of American public that really matters. His Majesty's Government can therefore proceed resolutely to implement whatever course of action seemed to it desirable, without excessive fear . . ."¹

In the light of such an appreciation, there was no change in the basic British conviction, established by the North American Department at the Foreign Office nearly a year earlier, to the effect that "the Americans will not fight us over Palestine even before the elections, and certainly not after them!"²

But by the time the war in Europe was over, this British confidence about American public opinion began to waver. In a lengthy appreciation of July 1945, written in the light of the Allies' encounter with post-war Europe, Halifax drew attention to a change. The State Department, he wrote, "was still more favourable to the Arabs than to the Jews," but the attitude of the Administration as a whole was now "inescapably under the influence of the public, which generally is pro-Zionist."³

He did not mean that the public shared Zionist zeal for founding a Jewish State, but that it had evolved a new and deep sympathy for the suffering of the European Jews and that it tended to see Palestine as the obvious haven for those among them who had survived their ordeal at Nazi hands. Speculating "whether the Jews would be able to carry non-Jewish opinion," Halifax wrote that he was no longer sure that they would prove incapable of doing so.⁴ His conclusion was that

¹ Halifax's remark, attached to an appreciation by Berlin, FO 371/40131, E 3610.

² Eden's approval, attached to a memo by the North American Dept., Oct. 1943, FO 371/35040, E 6270.

³ Halifax to FO, 1 July 1945, Cab 95/14 (page un-numbered).

⁴ Ibid.

American co-operation must be pursued, so that instead of "criticizing without taking responsibility, the Americans would shoulder part-responsibility for the future of Palestine." He ended his appreciation with a proposal which was already being aired in America:

"Instead of considering the continuation of Jewish immigration at the rate of 1500 a month, His Majesty's Government might propose . . . the admission to Palestine, as a special humanitarian action of, say, 100,000 Jews who wish to leave Europe . . ."¹

Here, some time before the issue of the celebrated Harrison report,² we have in a nutshell, and in a British document, all the components of Truman's subsequent policy.

Compassion for the victims of Nazism, coupled with ignorance of the complexity of the Palestine problem, characterized the thinking of the greater part of the American public at the end of the war. Truman, "the Everyday Man", who lacked his predecessor's subtlety, shared that mood and retained it even when he rose to the highest post in the Government of the United States.

(b) The First Phase of the Labour Government's Palestine Policy-Making: The Plan for Provincial Autonomy

Both Truman and the Labour Government came to power unexpectedly. But whereas Truman's initial approach to Zionism was gloomy, Labour's was well known and was uncompromising opposition to the White Paper. That standpoint, still recognizable in their utterances immediately prior to the election of 1945,³ caused AZEC, for instance, when Labour came to power,

¹ Ibid.

² See below, pp. 215-216 and 218-220.

³ "Restricting Jewish immigration is morally wrong and politically indefensible." Hugh Dalton, Labour's Shadow Foreign Minister at the Labour annual conference of 1945. JTA Bulletin, 24 May 1945.

to be sure that their advent was "the end of the last sore trial of the Jewish People."¹

The Zionists were not alone in expecting a change of British Palestine policy in their favour; even the down-to-earth State Department experts thought likewise. An appreciation made by the head of the NED immediately after the election in Britain said that although "in view of their Imperial responsibilities" it was unlikely that the Labour Party would attempt to implement their 1944 resolution to the full, the White Paper was in any event bound to be repealed, "particularly in regard to immigration."²

And if that was the experts' opinion, surely the President was entitled to express himself freely on the question of immigration to Palestine. Labour's secrecy, which they maintained in a traditionally British way about their Palestine deliberations once they assumed power, merely caused their earlier pro-Zionist expressions to boomerang against themselves. Truman, when he gave the British a first push to open the gates of Palestine, could not be expected to know that he was doing something contrary to Labour's own plans.

Labour's volte-face on Zionism was perhaps a surprise to its own members. It was certainly so to onlookers who thought that they knew Labour minds inside-out.³ Its cause was that Labour ministers, newly aware of fast-growing East-West discord, could not resist the strategic and political arguments put to them by the senior officials in their

¹ Statement by AZEC, Evening News, 27 July 1945.

² Minute by Loy Henderson, 30 July 1945, 867 N.01/7-3045, USNA.

³ For the amazement of a contemporary see John Kimche, "Labour turnabout on Zionist", Commentary, May 1946.

respective departments. When they came to weigh support for a Zionist millenium against what appeared to be a chance to secure the friendship of the Moslem world through alliance with the Arab League, the temptation to choose the second course was too strong.

But Ministers who made their choice did not consider themselves as neglecting the Zionists completely. Their Provincial Autonomy scheme, prepared during the changing of the guard in Whitehall by a Colonial Office official, Douglas Harris,¹ still appeared to them to be a fair offer to the Jews.

In his planning, Harris took for granted that Arab-Jewish rapprochement was for the time being impossible. But this, according to him, did not greatly matter. What he thought important was that the scheme should be "defensible in an international forum," that is, that it would be "accepted by the world in general, and by the Government of the United States in particular."² To achieve that aim, Harris included United Nations' Trusteeship in the groundwork of his plan but only in a purely formal manner. Trusteeship was to be the new name for the old League of Nations' Mandate, while Britain was to remain the dominant power and run the country's central Government.

His plan envisaged the creation in Palestine of four autonomous regions (or "Provinces" or "Cantons"): an Arab one, a Jewish one, the province of Jerusalem and that of the Negev.³

¹ A veteran of Palestine and India and an expert on Agriculture. From early 1945 on "Special Duty" at the Colonial Office.

² "A New Policy for Palestine", 1 Sept. 1945, Cab 95/14 P(M) (45)11. For Harris's earlier drafts of August, see FO 371/45379, E 6622.

³ The principle called "Cantonization" was introduced to the Peel Commission in 1937 and had then been turned down. See ESCO, op. cit., p. 846.

The boundaries were to be drawn according to the latest variant of the Morrison Committee plan¹ but were to be administrative only; the real power in matters of security, finance, police, and foreign affairs was to remain in the hands of the central Government, headed by the British High Commissioner. Immigration too was to remain in the hands of that Government but land sales in the Jewish and the Arab Provinces would be decided by the local Governments. Jerusalem was to have a bi-national Council, shared equally between Jews and Arabs, and supervised by the British. Finally, the Negev too would be under the direct control of the High Commissioner but its future was, for the time being, to remain undecided.

Harris's plan appeared to meet at least partially all the conflicting demands that the British faced in Palestine. Arab and Jewish national aspirations were thought to have been met by giving each people a degree of autonomy in its own province, while British strategic needs were met thanks to overall control by the central Government. The Charter of the United Nations seemed also to be fulfilled by the appointment of Britain as a Trustee "responsible" to the World Organization. Finally, it could be argued that this was the right way to "educate" the two rival peoples to co-operate, until at some far future date they would come to compromise in a bi-national State.

Late in August, the Colonial Secretary, George Hall, endorsed Harris's idea, which only needed Cabinet approval in order to become Britain's official policy.

But Bevin, the new Labour Foreign Secretary, saw defective reasoning in Hall's assumption that there was no

¹ See above, pp. 160-162.

need to get general Arab approval of the scheme. If such a plan were to be imposed on the Arabs, it might spoil Britain's relations with the Arab League. His own idea was a rather odder scheme, which he called "Federal Union". Strangely, Bevin was of opinion that the mere name "federal" might "be liked in America" where the Federal system was familiar.¹ According to him, the boundaries between Palestine and Trans-jordan, fixed by Churchill's White Paper of 1922,² must be abolished, while the faithful Emir Abdulla would, he hoped, be crowned Monarch of the new Union. Thus, the White Paper of 1939 could be abolished as well, while the future of a Jewish National Home, under the umbrella of a supposedly reasonable Arab ruler, would be secured by the grant of semi-autonomous status. Although Bevin was not sure all Arab leaders would like the arrangement, he hoped that it would be acceptable to the Palestine Arabs. He saw it as offering great economic promise, including the development of irrigation and power schemes all round the basin of the River Jordan. His reasoning suggests that British thinking was affected and impressed by plans drawn up at the close of the war by pro-Zionist American economists, following the pattern of the Tennessee Valley Authority,³ with intent to extend Palestine's

¹ Minute by George Hall, 7 Sept. 1945, FO 371/45379, E 6776. For arguments for and against Bevin's scheme see Cab 95/14, pp. 59-61. See also Minute of the Cabinet Meeting of 6 Sept. 1945, FO 371/45379, E 6953. (Cabinet Papers, apart from the Cabinet Committee file, i.e., 95/14, were not available at the time of writing.)

² Cmd 1700.

³ For the survey and plan made by Messrs. Gass, Nathan and Creamer, former officials of the Tennessee Valley Authority, during 1943 and early 1944 see the file Z5/867, CZA. The plan for developing the Jordan Valley project was first introduced by W.C. Lowdermilk in his book Palestine, Land of Promise, after a somewhat impressionistic survey that he made in 1939.

absorptive capacity.

But few thought as Bevin did. Somewhat to his chagrin, many of his subordinates at the Foreign Office, particularly "the men in the field", preferred Harris's scheme to his. At a special conference of Britain's Middle East diplomats, held in London early in September 1945, most experts opposed the Federal Union idea.¹ In consequence, on 10 September the Cabinet ruled out that scheme, and in principle accepted the plan for Provincial Autonomy.²

The mood of the British Government about Palestine was still one of confidence. The diplomats who conferred in London thought that in the short run the present policy was "going well";³ the only outstanding question seemed to them whether Jewish immigration, at the maximum rate of 1500 a month should continue or stop after the exhaustion of the final White Paper quota. In a word, the Government, while cognisant of the need to decide, as soon as possible, on a plan for the long run, sensed no immediate trouble. But that situation soon changed owing both to an increase of terrorism in Palestine and to Truman's intervention.

In mid-September, and as the process of policy-making was nearing final form, American pressure suddenly revealed itself as much more serious than the British had imagined.⁴ So dependent were they on American support in other fields, that they had therefore to reverse their thinking. The first phase of Labour's effort ended with no policy to show for it.

¹ Minutes of the 6 and 10 Sept. meetings are in FO 371/45379, E 6954 and E 6955. See also, The Killearn Diaries, pp. 48-49.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Minute by Rowan, 14 Sept. 1945, FO 371/45380, E 7251.

(c) Truman's Intervention

Palestine was one of the subjects on which Truman came to office ill-informed. During his four months as Vice-President he had had little chance, if any, to acquaint himself with his predecessor's views on the subject.¹ When assuming his great predecessor's shoes, Truman had subjects calling far more urgently for study.

The State Department, however, lost no time in putting him into the Palestine picture. No sooner had he entered the White House, than he was briefed about the ambivalent position that his predecessor had adopted from July 1944 until his death. The public promises given by Roosevelt to the Zionists, Truman was told, were only one side of the story; the other was the secret reassurances given by him to the Arab leaders. Should Zionist pressure on him be renewed, Truman must seek the Department's counsel on how to act.²

Truman, who soon proved capable of crossing swords with many of Roosevelt's former aides, first appeared to comply with the Department's advice. His initial conduct on the Palestine issue was a carbon-copy of Roosevelt's. On 17 May 1945, in reply to a letter from Emir Abdulla, he signed what the Department put before him; this was yet another reassurance that no decision would be reached in regard to Palestine

¹ Inauguration took place on 20 January and on the 23rd Roosevelt set sail for Yalta. He was back at the end of February, very ill. After only two weeks in Washington, he went to Warm Springs, where he died. On the scant communication the two men managed to have on any subject whatsoever, see Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, I: Year of Decision, p. 56.

² Stettinius to Truman, 18 April, and Grew to Truman, 1 May 1945, FRUS, pp. 704-706.

prior to full consultation with both Arabs and Jews.¹ Truman remained cautious in a talk of 20 April to Rabbi Wise, when he merely promised "to carry on with Roosevelt's line."²

During the rest of 1945, Truman was rarely available to Zionist visitors³ and remained so on purpose. To their bewilderment, he for a long time remained unknown to them; unlike Roosevelt, he had no Zionist friends,⁴ nor did he try to acquire them. When wanting to know more about him the Zionists had to search their archives for evidence of his early conduct, but could find few clues.⁵ Nor did his public utterances all through 1945 give them much comfort; as late as November 1945 he expressed himself as against a Jewish State, telling newspapermen that he "no longer favoured the Wagner-Taft resolution"⁶ (to which he had subscribed in 1944) because he "did not feel the Government of Palestine should be established on racial . . . lines."⁷

Truman's support for Zionism grew only indirectly and step by step. His initial conviction was merely that it was a moral American obligation of the highest order to help

¹ Truman to Abdulla, FRUS 1945, p. 707. He also replied in the same vein to the President of the Egyptian Council of Ministers. Ibid., p. 708.

² Truman, Memoirs, vol. I, pp. 71-72.

³ See Nahum Goldmann's complaint before the State Department in June 1945. Memo by Evan Wilson, FRUS, pp. 710-712. See also discussion with Laurie, AZEC's secretary, in which he said Truman had "let the Zionists down". Randall to FO, December 1945, FO 371/45403, E 10223.

⁴ His one Jewish friend, Edward Jacobson from Kansas City, a member of Bnay Brith, had at that time no contacts with the Zionists. The Jews on his staff were not Zionists, see below, p. 253, fn. 3.

⁵ AZEC, Minutes of 12 July and 28 August 1945, ZANY. Truman, the Zionists established, used to endorse occasional Zionist petitions, just as most other Congressmen did, but was never prominent in that regard.

⁶ See above, p. 175.

⁷ He said, however, that he "still favoured Palestine as a haven for Jews," which fitted his basic humanitarian concept. Truman's interview with David Stern, Philadelphia Record, quoted by Halifax on 5 and 6 Dec. 1945, FO 371/45403, E 9490.

the victims of the Nazis. He came to support immigration to Palestine because he grew convinced that this was the quickest way in which to enable the survivors to rehabilitate their lives, and that Palestine was the place to which they all wanted to go.¹

When the war ended, general information about the magnitude and end-product of Nazi cruelty was accessible to outsiders. But only personal encounter with Europe's post-war realities, made by members of the Allied armies, by newspapermen, and by UNRRA workers, brought its horrors well and truly home to foreign publics and Governments. Many of those who went to Europe had read stories of Nazi massacres, but not until they saw the concentration camps, the gas chambers, and the misery of the survivors, did they "realise that the Allies' anti-Nazi propaganda fell far short of the truth."²

The fate of the dead rendered the public and Government of the United States hyper-conscious of that of the living. Compassion flooded the Administration, particularly its members who were associated with the activities of the War Refugee Board.³ Prominent among these was Henry Morgenthau, the real father of the Board, whose idea was to turn it into a peace-time

¹ Truman, to be fair to him, did not set aside all thought of America's taking a share in absorbing the European DPs. While many of the most ardent Congressional supporters of immigration into Palestine were equally enthusiastic supporters of limiting immigration into the United States, Truman, from 1946 and on, was pressing Congress for legislation aimed at relaxing US immigration restrictions; but he clearly wanted first to see the bulk of Jewish DPs move to Palestine. A comprehensive description of his conduct in that respect is set out in Sister M.M. Lorimer's Ph.D. Thesis, "America's Response to Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1952".

² R. Crossman, Palestine Mission, p. 18. As an employee of the BBC's anti-Nazi programme, Crossman was among the first reporters to see the camps.

³ See above, p. 153.

agency,¹ and to change its job from the work of rescue to that of rehabilitation of Nazi victims.²

Truman's first steps in regard to the DP problem were taken under the influence of such people. In June, Morgenthau managed to persuade the State Department immediately to send an expert on refugees to Europe, to make a quick survey of the problem and report to the United States Government. His own choice would have been James MacDonald, who had in the thirties served as High Commissioner on Refugees for the League of Nations, and who continued to be deeply interested in the problem.³

The State Department, however, did not think MacDonald "unbiased", and put up the name of Earl Harrison, the young Dean of Pennsylvania University Law School, who was not only up-to-date on the refugee situation,⁴ but also an expert on immigration into the United States. When Harrison's name found favour, the Department further suggested, that in order to endow him with greater authority, he should be made Truman's personal envoy; this he became.⁵

Harrison's nomination, which thanks to Morgenthau became known to Jewish Agency officials weeks before his actual departure, caused the Zionists some anxiety; here again was a man unknown to them. But their worries were soon allayed,

¹ Morgenthau-Truman correspondence, 23 May and 6 June 1945. Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 7, pp. 1632-3, FDRL.

² For reasons not entirely clear, Truman did not accept this notion, and ordered the disbandment of the Board, ibid.

³ See Morgenthau's talk to Frankfurter and Agronsky over lunch in Washington, 8 June 1945. 25/991, CZA.

⁴ He served as US Representative on the Intergovernmental Committee on refugees which formally renewed its activities at the Bermuda conference, in April 1943. See above, pp. 81-82.

⁵ Grew-Truman correspondence, 21 and 22 June 1945, and Truman's letter to Harrison, 22 June. OF/137, HSTL.

since they found him ready to listen to them and to discuss Jewish matters. As a result of their contacts with him during June, he agreed to appoint Joseph Schwartz, European Director of the JDC ("Joint"), who was already active in Europe, as his chief assistant.¹

It is hard to exaggerate the historical significance of Harrison's mission. It was the departure point from which Truman set out on the course which eventually led him to support the establishment of the State of Israel. But at the time, Harrison's departure was scarcely noticed by the press or by other Governments. His terms of reference said that he should "inquire into the condition and needs of those among the displaced persons in the liberated countries of Western Europe, with particular reference to the Jewish refugees, who may possibly be non-repatriable."² That formula, although revealing awareness of the chance that settlement of the Jews in their countries of origin, or where they currently stayed, might not be possible, contained no hint of any conclusion to be drawn in consequence.

But hints of the President's reaction were soon available. In July, Truman decided to take up the matter directly with Churchill. On the occasion of the Potsdam conference he sent the latter a memorandum expressing dissatisfaction that restrictions, imposed by the 1939 White Paper, were still preventing Nazi survivors from finding a refuge in Palestine.³ By so doing he deviated, for the first time, from the State Department's advice to him that Palestine was essentially a

¹ Weisgal-Morgenthau-Frankfurter-Harrison correspondence and minutes between 14 and 28 June 1945, Z5/991, CZA.

² Report by Earl G. Harrison, Rosenman Papers, HSTL.

³ Truman to Churchill, 24 July 1945, FRUS, pp. 716-717.

British affair and that the United States should not exert any pressure on them to change their policy.¹

Churchill had no time to answer Truman's memorandum before, in the middle of the conference, he lost the British election and was replaced by Clement Attlee. The new Prime Minister, who had been shown the memorandum, consulted Foreign Office experts and was told that there was no hurry about an answer. "The President's démarche," Attlee was advised, "was merely for the record."² Consequently, Attlee merely sent Truman an acknowledgement.³

Truman thus remained ill-informed about the British position and on 16 August, when questioned by newspapermen, could only improvise replies. Questioned on whether Palestine had been discussed at Potsdam, his reply was that "it was discussed and is still being discussed." Asked about America's position, the President (who by then had already received Earl Harrison's first impressions) said it wanted to get

"as many of the Jews into Palestine as is possible, [but] the matter will have to be worked out diplomatically with the British and the Arabs."⁴

The United States, Truman added, perhaps with intent to allay Arab anxiety, "had no desire to send half a million American soldiers to make peace in Palestine."⁵

¹ Briefing for the President towards the Berlin conference, 22 June 1945, FRUS, pp. 972-974.

² Minute by Beeley, 27 July 1945, FO 371/45378, E 5474.

³ Attlee to Truman, 31 July 1945, FRUS, p. 719.

⁴ The Public Papers of President Truman, 1945, pp. 225-228.

⁵ Ibid. The number of soldiers mentioned was a slight exaggeration of an estimate made by the US Chiefs of Staff as to the requirements needed to control the situation in Palestine and other countries of the Middle East if America became involved in the implementation of a Zionist solution, and if as a result of that, wide disturbances occurred. See Reid to Lyon, 19 Sept. 1945, FRUS, pp. 742-743.

His statement puzzled many who heard it. It did little to abate Zionist suspicion of him and was regarded as "strange" by the British. "It is almost an invitation to the Arabs," remarked a Foreign Office official, "to exploit their nuisance value."¹

There was, however, more in that "strangeness" than the British could foresee. For Truman's "unwillingness" to send soldiers became an American principle even when America began to make explicit demands about Palestine policy. All throughout their later dealing with Palestine, and at a time when they were becoming increasingly involved in rendering military help to certain Middle Eastern countries, the Americans never for a moment thought of giving such support to the enforcement of a solution in Palestine.

Harrison completed his investigation as speedily as he could. He personally undertook the study in the American zone of Germany, leaving the British and the French zones, as well as Austria, to his aides. On 3 August he flew back to Washington to make an interim report to the President.² His full report came three weeks later.

Harrison was impressed by three main revelations: of Nazi cruelty, of the conditions of the people who survived, and of their explicit wish to immigrate into Palestine.³ When he became convinced of this last, he decided to adopt the Jewish Agency's demand, already communicated to him, that

¹ Minute by Beeley, 20 Aug. 1945, FO 371/45379, E 6068.

² Y. Bauer, Flight and Rescue, p. 76.

³ That wish was enhanced by emissaries from Palestine and by soldiers of the Jewish Brigade lately moved (mid-June) from Italy to Germany. These men, starting from the end of June, were voluntarily doing rehabilitation work in co-operation with the "Joint". Y. Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 1000-2.

100,000 Jewish DPs should be allowed to enter Palestine immediately.¹ He included the figure in his recommendations.

His diagnosis and prognosis seemed to him simple. Statistics showed that at that time there were barely 100,000 Jews in the whole of Germany;² he therefore had reason to believe that his proposal was in precise accordance with his terms of reference and would settle the problem once and for all. But as things quickly turned out, his activities, once known, gave strong impetus to a great movement of the Jewish Brichah (the word means "escape") into the American zone from every corner of liberated Europe--a movement that soon more than doubled the number of Jewish DPs to be handled there.³

When Harrison met Truman, he did not mince his words. After describing the distress of the Jewish DPs and their determination not to return to, or to stay in, the countries where they had seen their families butchered, Harrison acidly criticized the conduct of the American Army. The camps' inmates, he said, were in fact still being treated in ways that

¹ Harrison most certainly obtained the idea of 100,000 from representatives of the Jewish Agency, with whom he made contact before leaving for Europe. The notion was, however, much older. It originated with Weizmann's concept in 1941 of the Jewish State, where 100,000 was the ceiling number of immigrants he thought Palestine could absorb in one year. See above, p. 92. . Later, the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem mentioned the same figure in connection with the first batch of immigrants that they wanted to absorb directly as the war ended. See Shertok's talk to Wilkie, Z. Exec. Minute of 15 Sept. 1942. Before the war ended, Weizmann used the figure on various occasions, as a point in his demand to the British. See his talks to Churchill, 4 Nov. 1944, WA, and to Sir A. Kirkbride, Jan. 1945, FO 371/45391, E 897. Finally, the figure was included in a Zionist memorandum sent by Weizmann to Churchill on 22 May 1945, Prem 4/52/3, pp. 300-313. By then it had become the Agency's demand.

² "Report by the Office of the Military Government of the US Zone", Jan. 1945, 867 N.01/2-1146, USNA.

³ A full account of this big infiltration movement is given in Y. Bauer, Flight and Rescue.

the Nazis had used, "except that we do not exterminate them."¹

Truman was profoundly shocked and impressed; consequently he adopted Harrison's views, as well as his conclusions. He thereupon took two decisive steps: he sent a strong rebuke to General Eisenhower, Commander in Chief of the United States Army in Europe about his Army's behaviour; simultaneously he sent Harrison's report to the British Prime Minister, followed by a strongly worded memorandum to the effect that it was the wish of the American people that the gates of Palestine should forthwith be opened to 100,000 Jewish refugees.² His letters were dated 31 August.

Both steps had important results. The rigorous criticism of the Army resulted in permission for the Jewish DPs to concentrate in separate camps; over these the Agency soon gained control. More importantly--out of fear lest such scandals³ should become widely known, the Army became extremely cautious about Jewish DPs and never seriously hampered the great flow of Brichah.⁴ As for Truman's letter to Attlee--it at first raised the latter's temperature but later paved the way for a British decision to seek American co-operation over Palestine.

The British took several weeks to change their minds.

¹ Report by Earl G. Harrison, op. cit.

² Truman to Attlee, 31 Aug. 1945, FRUS, pp 737-739.

³ I learned much about the US Army's conduct and their reaction to Truman's letter through my interview with Herbert Fierst, who served as liaison officer for Jewish affairs at the headquarters of General Hilldring, head of the Civil Affairs Division of the Pentagon, and later, Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Territories.

⁴ Y. Bauer, op. cit., pp. 80-87. Truman's act of 31 August had strong support from members of his Administration who were like him infuriated by the American Army's conduct. See Secretary of the Treasury, F.M. Vinson to Truman, 29 Aug. 1945, OF (OL)137 HSTL.

Initial tension arose largely by mistake; Truman's 31 August letter did not reach Attlee straight away. The new Secretary of State, James Byrnes, who was bound for Europe to attend the Foreign Ministers' conference in Paris, took the letter with him in order to hand it over personally. But for some reason, Attlee did not see it until the second week of September, so that Truman got no immediate reply.¹

This inexplicable delay seems to have been taken by the White House as deliberate procrastination. Consequently, Truman decided to accelerate matters by sending up a trial balloon. On 9 September he encouraged a little known ex-Senator, Guy Gillette, "Political Adviser" of the Bergson group, to issue a statement to the effect that the President had told him about a demand that he had made for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine. When this whisper got to the press next day, the White House denied it outright.²

This was the first time the Zionists had sensed that Truman was doing something about the DP problem; it may also have been the first time that Attlee or even Bevin heard about the serious interest that Truman was taking in the subject.³

The press report caused general surprise. In Paris, Bevin angrily told Byrnes that "such action cannot fail to harm Anglo-American relations."⁴ No less surprised were the American Zionists,⁵ who tried to guess "who was behind it."⁶

¹ Minutes by Rowan and others, 14 Sept. 1945, FO 371/45380, E 7251, and a footnote in FRUS 1945, p. 737. See also Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 169.

² JTA Bulletin, 16 Sept. 1945.

³ For the earlier British underestimate, see above p. 217, fn. 2.

⁴ Minute by Rowan, op. cit.

⁵ "What our Government intends to do in Palestine is still a mystery to us." Silver to Senator Robert Wagner, 6 Sept. 1945, SA.

⁶ AZEC, Minute 18 Sept. 1945, ZANY.

On 24 September, an AZEC delegation called on Acheson, the Acting Secretary of State, to inquire about "rumours" that negotiations regarding the future of Palestine were in progress between Britain and the United States, on American initiative.¹

But the oddest aspect of the affair was that the State Department itself,² and most of all the NED, knew nothing of Truman's démarche.³ Therefore, when the Zionist delegation came to see Acheson, the latter was no less surprised than they were. He could only give them a laconic reply in the vein of the Full Consultation formula.⁴

At this point, however, that formula began to trouble Truman. He began to regret his hasty endorsement of Roosevelt's line in the previous May and started looking for some way of watering down the obligation to consult the parties before any move was made.⁵

Truman's new approach was now based on the full endorsement of the Harrison report's conclusions. He too regarded the DP problem as simple of solution. He had neither the knowledge nor the perception to appreciate Britain's dilemma, nor Britain's delicate relations with the Arab League, which to him seemed by and large to be just a piece of old

¹ Acheson to Winant, 24 Sept. 1945, FRUS, p. 743.

² Apart from Byrnes, who was away.

³ "It seems apparent . . . that the President . . . had decided to have a go on the Palestine issue without our knowledge." Internal exchange of notes at the NED, 26 Sept. 1945. Fn. in FRUS, p. 745 and text in pp. 745-748.

⁴ The Arabs too were aroused by Gillette's story. But to all inquiries and protests the State Department could answer no more than it did to the Zionists. Henderson to Acheson, 1 Oct. 1945, FRUS, pp. 751-753, and despatches from various Arab capitals, ibid., pp. 743-750.

⁵ Byrnes's retrospective talk to Halifax, 19 Oct. 1945, ibid., pp. 777-779.

fashioned "imperialism". His White House advisers counselled him to interpret America's obligation to the Arabs more loosely than his predecessor had done, so that the admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine need not entail "consultation with Arabs and Jews". That number, he was told by the men round him, would still leave Palestine with a substantial Arab majority and thus would "not change the basic situation" in that country.¹

It is fairly obvious that Truman realized that the attainment of 100,000 immigration certificates might involve some friction with Britain; friction, however, appeared to him a fair price to pay for what he believed to be the removal of the main part of a burning humanitarian problem.² This being his concept--decisive and speedy action were essential. If the operation were not quickly completed he might become involved, during the 1946 biennial elections, in the kind of electoral difficulties that Roosevelt had had with the Zionists. If, on the other hand, he managed quickly to fulfil a duty to the remnants of Nazi extermination, it ought to become much harder for the Zionists to drag him to their struggle for a Jewish State.

But the British failed to grasp his motives and were from the beginning convinced that he was acting under direct pressure of "the Jews of New York".

During the rest of September and early October, the British line in their negotiation with the Americans was

¹ Rosenman to Truman, 7 Sept. 1945, Rosenman Papers, HSTL.

² It is therefore my assumption that Truman's initial demand for the admission of the 100,000 was made at an exceptional moment. It is doubtful whether he would have made it later, when the number of Jewish DPs in West Germany and Austria had, due to the great infiltration, more than doubled. But by the time it reached that stage, the 1946 elections were near and Truman could no longer retreat.

gloomy. They were in a hurry to reach a decision about a Palestine policy because of the threat of mounting violence in that country, but at the same time they did not want the Americans to take advantage of their haste and obtain concessions from them. And so, for quite a while, the Americans did not sense that the British had changed their minds and were contemplating American co-operation on the issue.¹ To the Americans, the British position appeared to be one of stalling to gain time.

Attlee's belated reply to Truman's 31 August letter came only on 16 September. It was styled in a "none of your business" manner; Truman's demand was presented as "ignoring his predecessor's obligations," and instead of helping the British to devise a solution--a job that was difficult enough as things were--only made this task more complicated. Britain, Truman was told, was now working out a comprehensive policy for the Middle East and for other parts of the world nearby; when that was ready, he would in due course be informed.²

Attlee's vexation made Truman more wary. He decided to take no further action until Byrnes came back from Paris.³ Meanwhile, at home, he began to prepare the ground for a less rigid interpretation of the Full Consultation formula. On 26 September, when asked at a press conference about the existence of some alleged obligation to the Arabs, Truman replied that he had "looked carefully into the matter," and could find no evidence that Roosevelt had ever given his promise "not to make an issue of the Palestine question."⁴

¹ See below, pp. 227-229.

² Attlee to Truman, 16 Sept. 1945, FRUS, p. 740.

³ Truman to Attlee, 18 Sept. 1945, *ibid.*, p. 741.

⁴ The Public Papers of President Truman, 1945, p. 347.

Whatever that statement exactly meant, it immediately plunged him into hot water; it was too much for King Ibn Saud. This Arab ruler, who was in possession of a number of documents binding the United States to consult the Arabs, refused to countenance any such evasion. On 2 October he wrote to the President saying that he intended to publish Roosevelt's letter to him of 5 April,¹ together with secret protocols reached at the Bitter Lake conference² of 1945.

Some State Department officials, exercised about Truman's apparent readiness to act without them, saw advantage in allowing the correspondence to become public but the White House advisers, bent on preserving the image of the Democratic administration, opposed it³ though they had, of course, no control over what some Arab head of state might do. The President appeared to be driven into a corner. "I decided," he wrote several years later, "that it would be well for the American people to understand that we wished to maintain friendship with the Arabs as well as with the Jews."⁴ But in fact he had no choice but to do so. On 18 October, therefore, both Washington and Jidda simultaneously published Roosevelt's letter to Ibn Saud; at the same time both parties agreed to keep the Bitter Lake conference protocol secret.⁵

But even the material published was explosive. It caused Truman to realize that he must conduct a balanced policy. Ten days later, therefore, he decided to publish his

¹ See above, p. 193, fn. 5.

² Ibn Saud to Truman, 2 Oct. 1945, FRUS, pp. 755-756.

³ Memo by Rosenman, written in retrospect, 23 Oct. 1945. Rosenman Papers, HSTL.

⁴ Truman, Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 149.

⁵ Sands (Jidda) to the Secretary of State, 16 Oct. 1945, Press Release 18 Oct. 1945. Both in FRUS, pp. 770-771.

31 August correspondence with Attlee, and his rebuke to Eisenhower of the same date.¹

The whole series of publications could not, of course, pass without serious effect on Anglo-American relations as well as on the relations between the Truman Administration, the Arabs, and the Zionists. In the Arab camp, publication raised great alarm, proving that Truman's words to ex-Senator Gillette were not a slip of the tongue. Among the Zionists, and particularly the American ones, the publication "opened their eyes" in two respects. The Zionists now realized, without being able to explain why, that Truman "was working for their cause"; at the same time, the Roosevelt legend suffered a fatal blow. Those who, like Silver, had always suspected Roosevelt of "deceiving" the Zionists, were now "proved right", whereas those who, like Wise, had always followed Roosevelt's leadership in faith, lost ground. In a word, publication further reinforced the militant wing of AZEC. At the same time, however, these militants had still little idea as how "to handle" Truman.

In the absence of new ideas, AZEC turned to the "traditional" ones. Late in October, Silver easily persuaded the AZEC Executive to attempt a third reintroduction of the long shelved pro-Zionist resolutions into Congress.² Despite Truman's opposition to this course,³ the major obstacle constituted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was this time easily pushed aside. On 17 December 1945, both Houses

¹ The Public Papers of President Truman, 1945, pp. 335-337. Truman, however, insisted that on no account should his own letter to Abdulla be published, Acheson, op. cit., p. 171.

² AZEC, Minute 20 Oct. 1945, ZANY.

³ Interview with David Stern, Philadelphia Record, quoted by Halifax, 5 Dec. 1945. FO 371/45403, E 9490.

of Congress finally voted for the resolution.¹ Meanwhile, in November, Silver, in addition to his other positions, was elected President of ZOA² and became the unchallenged leader of American Zionism.

As for the effect of publication on Anglo-American relations--it further stimulated the trend, already at work among members of the British Cabinet, to come to terms with the Americans about future Palestine policy. This development started the second phase of Labour's Palestine policy-making.

(d) The Second Phase of the Labour Government's Palestine Policy-Making: The Establishment of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry

If the British Government ever needed to have a clear policy for Palestine in 1945, now was the moment. By the end of September, tension there was nearing boiling point. The leaders of the Yishuv, in an act of despair, had for the first time ordered their Haganah to take part in acts of sabotage.³ In the United States, Jewish agitation was louder than ever before,⁴ but so were Arab propaganda campaigns,⁵ and so was

¹ There was a slight amendment in the form of the resolution: the word "Jewish" had been omitted before the word "Commonwealth". For the discussion of the whole affair see AZEC, Minute of 24 Dec. 1945.

² Jewish Year Book, 1946.

³ The turning point was reached at the Zionist Executive meeting of 23 September. Leaders of the Yishuv came to the conclusion that Britain had no intention of changing the White Paper. Y. Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 840-842. The British intelligence managed to de-cypher the Agency's telegrams in that vein sent from Jerusalem to London. See Cmd 6873 of 1946.

⁴ On 1 October, an estimated crowd of 100,000 attended a Jewish mass meeting in New York, at which Rabbi Silver declared the White Paper "illegal". A telegram campaign aimed at Congress and the White House was the most vociferous for some time. Halifax to FO, 4 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45400, E 7433.

⁵ Conducted through their newly established Arab Offices in London and Washington.

the pressure of the Arab League on the British Government.¹ Public knowledge of American pressure in regard to the displaced persons added a new item to the British dilemma: any solution that they might suggest was bound to be suspected by the Arabs of being decided at American dictation.²

But in spite of the need for haste imposed by all these considerations, the British postponed decision yet again in order to take into account the mounting American pressure just described. Their deliberations about how to meet it took time, and, all the while, international events in Europe were developing in such a way that they were bound to keep American wishes in the forefront of their minds. At the end of September it became clear that the Foreign Ministers' conference in Paris was a failure and that indecision about a series of post-war arrangements, marked the beginning of East-West cleavage. American goodwill therefore looked indispensable to the British. On 12 October, Bevin wrote:

"We are determined to take steps that will prevent any future conflicts. To that end it is important to eliminate the very difficult Palestine question, which is harming the relations between the United States and ourselves."³

By "eliminating" Bevin meant reaching an understanding with the United States. He was convinced that, logically, there was only one thing to do; America must be brought to "share responsibility" in Palestine.⁴ He was optimistic

¹ Azzam Bey, Secretary General of the Arab League warned Bevin, at the end of September, that any move on the British part to change the White Paper, would immediately entail an Arab demand for independence in Palestine. Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 231.

² Minute by FO official (Rowan?), 7 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45380, E 7479.

³ Bevin to the British Minister in Jidda, FO 371/45382, E 8067.

⁴ Bevin to Halifax, 10 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45381, E 7757.

enough to think that had this happened sooner, the recent sword-crossing between the two countries might have been avoided.

He found the Cabinet open to the idea of admitting the Americans to the job. At its meeting of 4 October, it accepted the line--long advocated by Halifax--to invite the American Government to participate in a new investigation of the problem.¹ The Cabinet was of opinion that making America a partner to a long-term policy would not only disarm United States criticism; it ought also to make Britain's task of formulating short-term policy much easier.

Accordingly, the Government policy-making machinery was once again put to work. On 6 October, the first draft of the terms of reference for a joint Anglo-American Committee of inquiry was ready.²

Its planners in the Foreign Office tried to pick up Truman's main theme, yet at the same time to abate Arab suspicions. They therefore drafted the terms of reference of the proposed Committee in such a way as to emphasise the importance of solving the DP problem rather than the future of Palestine. Accordingly, the first draft regarded the proposed task for the Committee of inquiry as:

- (a) to examine the condition of the Jewish DP in Western Europe,
- (b) to estimate the number of such Jews who might not be able to settle in their countries of origin,
- (c) to examine the possibility of relieving the

¹ FO 371/45381, E 7956. Draft of Bevin's memoranda, prepared for the Cabinet meeting of 4 October, spoke of "turning the whole of our foreign policy in the Middle East on to a basis of partnership." See Co 733/461 75872, Pt. III.

² Howe to Bevin, 6 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45380, E 7479.

position of these Jews by immigration into other countries outside Europe,

- (d) to consider other available means of meeting the needs of the immediate situation.¹

This was of course an evasive definition. Palestine was not mentioned at all, and the whole case of the DPs was presented as a humanitarian issue, remote from any political struggle connected with that country. Nevertheless, to make it acceptable to the Americans, the latter had been given to understand that term (c) was open to flexible interpretations, and that within it, the question of immigration into Palestine would also be examined.²

Halifax, who on 19 October carried the proposal to the American Government, wrote to Bevin that "the approach struck him as being admirable,"³ but the American Government remained cool. Byrnes, who had by then acquainted himself with the President's views, accepted the British proposal in principle, but firmly rejected the terms of reference, as defined. The wish of the Jewish DPs to immigrate into Palestine, Byrnes told Halifax, had already been proved by Harrison's investigation. It was clear therefore that the main question should be immigration into that country. This must be clearly stated by the terms and must colour the definition of the Committee's task. It must therefore investigate conditions in Palestine and the country's ability

¹ Ibid. For a slightly different form of the British terms of reference see Halifax to Byrnes, 19 Oct. 1945, FRUS, pp. 771-774.

² Halifax to Byrnes, ibid. See also minutes from series of talks between Byrnes and Halifax regarding the terms of reference, 19-22 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45381, E 7932 and FRUS, pp. 777-783.

³ Halifax to Bevin, 14 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45381, E 7907.

to absorb Jewish DPs. In the course of the interview, Byrnes intimated to the British Ambassador that, at that very moment, the Democrats in the United States were slightly worried about the prospects of the election to the New York City Mayoralty, due at the beginning of November 1945. In this election, the Jewish vote was obviously decisive.¹

Nevertheless, Bevin remained in good spirits. Taking Byrnes's last point as an explanation of America's playing for time, he decided that a further delay, however damaging to the British position in Palestine, must be put up with in order to obtain more room for diplomatic manoeuvre. He decided not to press the Americans for an immediate reply until the election was over.² But at the same time, Bevin tried to find out what were American possible counter proposals.

On 24 October, after consulting Truman, Byrnes produced an alternative proposal of his own with an entirely different emphasis. His terms of reference for the Committee of Inquiry were:

- (1) to examine the political, economic and social conditions in Palestine, as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement therein, and the well being of the people now living there.
- (s) To examine the position of the Jews in the countries in Europe where they have been the victims of Nazi persecution, and to make estimates of those who wish, or will be impelled by their conditions, to migrate to Palestine

¹ Series of talks Byrnes-Halifax, op. cit.

² Bevin to Halifax, 20 Oct. 1945, FO 371/45381, E 7932.

and other countries outside Europe.

- (3) To hear the views of competent witnesses, including representative Arab and Jews, on the problem of Palestine as well as on a possible future permanent solution.
- (4) To make recommendations to the Governments of the United States and Great Britain, to meet the immediate needs arising from the conditions (mentioned above).¹

By the end of the first week of November it became clear to Bevin that even after a Democratic victory in the New York election, the United States Government continued to disregard the British terms. But by now the disorder in Palestine itself had become so pressing² that Bevin could wait no longer. He therefore accepted virtually in full the American terms of reference.³ On 11 November, Attlee, at the time in Washington, accepted wholesale withdrawal of the British draft and by that act placed Britain on a level with America.⁴ The final point agreed between them was to limit the Committee's investigation to not more than 120 days.⁵

At the end of his patience, Bevin made his 13 November statement about Palestine.⁶ An Anglo-American Committee,

¹ Byrnes to Halifax, 24 Oct. 1945, FRUS, pp. 785-786.

² On 31 October, the newly created Jewish Resistance Movement (consisting of the Haganah as well as the two terrorist organisations) carried out a widespread act of sabotage against rail and road communication in Palestine. A clandestine broadcast on behalf of that movement said later that this was intended to serve as a warning of what was to come if the gates of Palestine were not opened. Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 858-860.

³ Halifax to Byrnes, 9 Nov. 1945, FRUS, pp. 815-816.

⁴ Halifax to Bevin, FO 371/45384, E 8659. See also Acheson, op. cit., pp. 171-172.

⁵ Ibid. Bevin wanted no time-limit, while Byrnes suggested 60 days.

⁶ House of Commons, Hansard, 13 Nov. vol. 415, cols. 1931-4.

he told the Commons, would inquire into the problem of Palestine and the DPs. In the interim, Jewish immigration would continue at the "traditional" rate of 1500 a month.¹ In another part of his statement, Bevin described how difficult it was for Britain to satisfy the wishes of the two rival people in Palestine. He went on to expound a point that he had failed to insert into the Committee's terms of reference, namely, that he saw no necessary connection between the suffering of the Jews in Europe and their immigration into Palestine.

Simultaneously with Bevin's statement, an American one, issued in Washington, likewise announced the establishment of the Committee.²

The remaining problem outstanding was selection of the Committee's membership. Since the two countries were still not at one over Palestine, each at the outset tried to select candidates with knowledge of the problem. The first list that the British considered included, among others, Sir Edward Grigg,³ Lord Portal, Lord Cranborne, and even Antony Eden.⁴ The Americans for their part, considered names such as those of Sumner Welles, Mrs. Roosevelt, New York's ex-Mayor Fiorello La-Guardia, and Senators Taft and Wagner.⁵ But that

¹ Bevin regarded this as a concession to the Jews which the ungrateful Agency failed to appreciate. Indeed, some of his colleagues, George Hall for one, said immigration should completely stop in the interim. Bevin believed that he could make the Arab League accept that rate of immigration, even in the longer run. Cf. Bevin-Azzam talks of October, FO 371/45393, E 8255 and FO 371/45379, E 6954. See also minute of 31 Dec. 1945, FO 371/45407, E 10165.

² New York Times, 14 Nov. 1945.

³ Formerly Minister of State in Cairo and now retired as Lord Altrincham.

⁴ Various minutes, 9 to 22 Nov. of meetings chaired by Cadogan, FO 371/45384, E 8802.

⁵ Rosenman to Truman, 19 Nov. 1945. Rosenman Papers, Palestine, HSTL.

approach soon changed. Both countries realized that such pundits could hardly be expected to change the views that they held. Gradually both the Foreign Office and the State Department agreed that the findings might be more satisfactory if members of the Committee had not too much prior knowledge of Palestine and were more in a position to form new views. This concept fitted both sides' sincere conviction that some single logical and just conclusion was attainable. On both sides, the Committee was in the end selected much as a jury is chosen.

Most of its twelve members were scarcely known to the public. And yet, when the final list was announced, there was a cautious mood of satisfaction on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ The Manchester Guardian, always well informed on Palestine, called it a "well balanced team". It saw the selection of the American James MacDonald and the British Richard Crossman, both with experience on the refugees problem, as a "reflection of Bevin's belief that the answer to the problem would be found in Europe, rather than in Palestine . . ."²

British confidence was thus restored. Both the Zionists and the Arabs had been persuaded to co-operate with the Committee³ and the American Government seemed equally

¹ Byrnes to Winant, 6 Dec. 1945 and Halifax to Byrnes, 24 Nov. 1945, FRUS, pp. 830, 838. See also Halifax's appraisal of the situation, 6 Dec. 1945, FO 371/45387, E 9512.

² ManGuard, 11 Dec. 1945. Crossman, as we shall see in the next chapter, was an unknown quantity until the last stage of the Committee's work.

³ Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 257. AZEC was first against it. "What we need is not another inquiry," said Silver "but action!" (Telegram to the President after the announcement of the Committee, Wise's file, ZANY). But following a decision by the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to the contrary, AZEC changed its mind. Minute, 24 Dec. 1945, ZANY.

relieved at the suspension of an explosion in Palestine.¹ The British now reckoned that once the Americans came into direct contact with the reality in Palestine, they would relinquish their naive prejudices, just as they had done in the case of the King-Crane commission of 1919.² In fact American "goodwill" seemed to be on the upgrade already. The American Chairman-elect of the Committee, Hutchison, won British admiration when he boldly declared that "the American members will not be influenced by Zionist agitation in their country," and that "they fully realized what the real motive behind actions of American Senators was . . . and what it was worth."³

Suddenly, a feeling of mutual trust came about. When in January the Committee came to London, Bevin voluntarily and unexpectedly told its members that if they achieved a unanimous report, he would personally "do everything in his power to put it into effect."⁴

"The Government," wrote a hardened Colonial Office official, who had seen many a zigzag in British planning for Palestine, "having cast the Committee on the waters, is hoping that a policy will return to them after many days."⁵

¹ The Jewish Resistance Movement announced a moratorium on all military activities during the Committee's visit to Palestine.

² Howe to Martin, 28 Dec. 1945, FO 371/45389, E 9538. On the King-Crane enquiry see above, Introduction, pp. viii-x.

³ Halifax to Bevin, 19 Dec. 1945, FO 371/45389, E 9969.

⁴ Crossman, op. cit., pp. 65-66. The story was confirmed by both Harold Beeley and Evan M. Wilson, during my interviews with them.

⁵ John M. Martin to J.V. Shaw, 11 Nov. 1945, CO 733/463, 75872/138, No. 2.

Chapter Six

AFTERMATH: ATTEMPTED CO-OPERATION AND SOME REASONS FOR ITS FAILURE

This last part of the thesis, covering 1946 and early 1947, is called "Aftermath" because the sources on which it is based are not of the same quality as those of the previous chapters. The difference springs chiefly from the fact that most of the British, and also most of the Zionist documents for this period, are not available at the time of writing. This section is therefore based on American published and unpublished documents, as well as on some useful Zionist papers found in archives in America. These alone cannot give a full picture of either the development of Zionist pressure or of Anglo-American relations during the period. Nevertheless, these several sources, and living persons whom I was able to consult, helped me, I believe, to shed new light on some important turning-points.

New items are in particular (a) a description of the mental process and backstage manoeuvres that led to the attainment of a unanimous report by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. This account is based on consultation with Crossman, Beeley, and Noel-Baker, as well as on my reading of the Crossman papers (at St. Antony's College, Oxford). (b) A description of the circumstances in which

the Morrison-Grady plan was first "agreed upon", and then rejected by the United States. This account is based on study of unpublished correspondence between the State Department and its team of experts in London, as well as on Henry Grady's unpublished autobiography. (c) A description of the background to Truman's Yom Kippur statement in the light of correspondence within the White House, as well as of AZEC minutes and an account by Eliahu Epstein (found in the Truman Library).

The final phase of American intervention in Britain's Palestine policy took place between the issue of the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in April 1946 and the British decision, in February 1947, to hand the problem over to the United Nations. This period was marked by repeated attempts, both on the British and on the American sides, to amalgamate their Palestine policies --all of which failed. They failed in spite of a report that was labelled "unanimous", and in spite of the renewal of the two powers' wartime alliance in other fields--notably, over resisting Soviet attempts to dominate satellites to its south as well as its west. The basic stumbling block was a difference of interests in that part of the Middle East which lay outside the so-called "Northern Tier"(that shared a border with the Soviet Union).

Farther south, the British, though they were fast losing their status as an imperial world power, nevertheless clung to their conception that they needed bases, allies and security for their centuries-long communications with Asia. For them, the prime considerations in the area were now Arab

allies and a quiet Palestine, so that this last could become a site for a garrison living in safety. Sudden and heavy Jewish immigration would, by upsetting the Arabs, impair these interests. But the Palestine Yishuv, armed through its own exertions, impaired them by organizing subversion --indeed, virtually a rebellion. This last became so widespread as to defeat British attempts to curb or limit it.

The United States Department of State grasped the British anxieties, but the President and the American public did not do so. These last continued to press Britain, mainly for humanitarian reasons, to admit 100,000 Jewish DPs into Palestine. The Americans were ready to pay the financial cost of this operation, but wholly unwilling to provide the men or arms to maintain security inside Palestine, which large scale immigration was bound to upset.

In view of Anglo-American harmony on other issues, attempts were made throughout the middle of 1946 to reconcile the two powers' clash of interests in Palestine. These attempts failed, at least partly, because of misunderstanding on each side of the difficulties of the other. This misunderstanding greatly increased when prospective Democratic fortunes in the Congressional election of the fall of 1946 compounded heavy Jewish and party pressure on Truman with his humanitarian instincts about the Jewish DPs.

Nevertheless, Truman even after he had publicly expressed support for partition, continued to hesitate to press the British to undertake a security burden that was rendered heavier by mounting Jewish violence, and that he could not offer to share. For a while, in the summer of 1946, Jewish despair over his hesitation led to pessimism among the

American Zionists and in Palestine. After all-but dropping their "Biltmore" programme, they came to believe that even their hopes of getting a Jewish state in a "viable part" of Palestine were not acceptable. At this stage, they seemed to the British to be ready to compromise, and this encouraged the former to go on trying to evolve fresh proposals.

But in fact there was nothing new to propose and Britain's Arab allies were too intransigent to help her propose it. Baffled, denied American help and unable to solve her problem, Britain's only possible way out seemed to be the exercise of force against the Yishuv. This the post-war British public would not countenance; moreover, the use of force was bound severely to damage Anglo-American relations. Britain accordingly took the line of least resistance and shuffled off her problem.

Her attempt to get American support was defeated by American inability to implement recommendations that would have entailed American involvement.

(a) The Anglo-American Committee's Report

When the Committee of Inquiry was formed in December 1945, it served an urgent need felt by both the British and the Americans. Each was in a hurry--the British to ease their burden of curbing Jewish resistance in Palestine, the Americans to empty the Jewish DP camps in Europe. Both needed to buy some respite from growing Jewish pressure (enhanced by the fate of European Jewry during the war). Both Governments hoped that the gift of time so won would afford them enough breathing space to work out a long-term compromise, the conception of which would dwarf existing disagreements over the

admission of 100,000 new immigrants, or the handling of terrorism in Palestine.

Their relief was obviously shared neither by the Jews nor the Arabs. Both these peoples viewed the formation of the Committee with acute suspicion. The Jews maintained that they had "seen enough committees", and that no good had come of any of them. The Arabs, who hoped at minimum for maintenance of the White Paper, knew that once the Americans had become involved, no conceivable change was likely to be in their favour.¹

Nevertheless, realists on both sides managed to stem their peoples' inclination to boycott the Committee.² Both Jews and Arabs were ready to testify before it, while making clear that their co-operation in no way signified recognition of the Committee's right to plan the future of Palestine.

The heads of the Jewish Agency were convinced that the British members of the Committee were all hopelessly anti-Zionist; consequently the Agency thought that a unanimous report must be prevented. It therefore concentrated on lobbying the American members, of whom two were already known to favour Zionism.³ (Only at a late stage was the intimate Weizmann-Crossman tie made, and no one could predict that eventually it would be a Britisher that would tip the scales.)⁴

¹ Reports: from Jerusalem by US Consul Hoffer, 14 Nov. and from Cairo by the Chargé d'affaires Lyon, 27 Nov. 1945, FRUS, pp. 821-822 and 834.

² Rabbi Silver in a minority, continued to regard the Committee as "a well prepared trap". AZEC, Minute, 14 Jan. 1946, ZANY.

³ "The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry; an analysis", by A.Lourie, Jan. 1946, AZEC correspondence, ZANY. See also account of a telephone conversation Shertok-Silver, 11 Apr. 1946, Notes.

⁴ The Zionists' early contacts with Crossman, whom they considered strange and "dangerous", were made because he was "the single Labour MP on the Committee." Lourie, op. cit.

The Committee's task was immense; it had to take evidence not only in Palestine, as other committees had done, but in four continents. It had to pass judgement not only on the future of Palestine, but also on the difficult issue of emptying the DP camps. Its timetable was rigidly limited to 120 days, and the possible range of its conclusions was limited by the stands already taken by Truman and Attlee.

As has been explained, virtually all its members were beginners on the subject of Palestine. They had to pick up from their advisers the "traditional" difficulties, so well known to those involved, arising out of the conflicting national aspirations and the contradictory pledges given to both peoples. But beside asking the old questions, and getting the old answers, the Committee members had to cope with new problems that puzzled and disturbed the most experienced FO and CO men at their disposal. They had to master topics and dilemmas which cropped up at the very time of their inquiry. On such questions, they could obtain very little expertise from anybody.

Nevertheless, within the limited time at their disposal, most members managed to grasp the difficulties of a new situation. When at the last they divided, their division was over the real and immediate dilemmas that beset any possible Palestine policy.

The new factors that confronted them were basically four: The Russian threat, the new mood of the Jews, the trend towards Arab unity, and the future role of the United States in handling Palestine.

The long shadow of Soviet intervention in the region's affairs, was already plain for all to see in Iran

and Turkey.¹ But however firmly Britain and America stood together over the threat to these countries, if Soviet Russia captured the sympathy of the Arab nationalists, it was bound to outflank their northern neighbours and consequently to reduce Iran and Turkey to Soviet satellites.

Jewish militancy, which before the war had been the mood only of the small dissident Revisionist movement, had by the end of the war become dominant in Zionism. The chief reasons for this seem to have been three: despair over the fate of their brethren in Europe,² the belief that the 1936-9 Arab riots had benefited these last, and the maintenance in force of the White Paper. The combination of these three elements, coupled with a growing confidence in the Yishuv's newly acquired military strength, shifted the significance of the terms "moderates" and "extremists"; the "extremist" position of a year earlier became "moderate" a year later, and a new crop of "extremists" sprang up. The troubles caused to the British by the comparatively small terrorist organizations, and the threatening potential of the Haganah,³ all pointed up the British dilemma which was: should the

¹ Early in 1946 the Russians refused to carry out an agreement made in 1943, to evacuate their armies from Iran. Instead they created in their zone of control a satellite "Republic" of Azerbaijan. At the same time they conducted a massive war of nerves against Turkey, raising demands in regard to control of the Black Sea straits and to some segments of Turkey. Britain, backed by the US, acted as the chief opponent to Soviet ambitions in that part of the world. McNeill, America, Britain and Russia, pp. 713-714. The correspondence in FRUS 1945 is in pp. 289-565 and 801-899.

² See above, pp. 80-83.

³ This the British still tended to exaggerate. Their estimate of the number of Haganah members was "Sixty to eighty thousand". (The British Embassy to the State Department, 6 Nov. 1945, FRUS, pp. 812-813.) The real figures, even on the eve of British withdrawal in 1947 did not surpass 45,000. That number included women and youths under 17. (Y. Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 1275-9.) Numbers, of course were not significant when the resistance movement had, as it did, the support of the whole local Jewish population.

illegal "armies" be suppressed indiscriminately before any solution was attempted, or should the perpetrators of violence, or some of them, be harnessed to help carry out such solution as could be devised.

As for Arab trends towards unity, these were, in 1945 manifested chiefly in the creation of the Arab League, which was at one over opposition to Zionism and to Jewish immigration. In all other fields, inter-Arab dynastic feuds and political quarrels continued to prevail. The puzzle for the British responsible for Palestine was how to evaluate these conflicting trends. Would the new League, so eagerly supported by some sections of the Foreign Office, be able to perform as a real power? Would it be able to dictate common policies to its members? Would it be able to raise armies to serve its purpose? Would these be under a unified command?

The last of Britain's new conundrums was: what was the role America could play in Palestine, and what course ought a joint Anglo-American policy to advocate. The United States raised the issue of the 100,000 certificates, and had taken part in the creation of the Committee. Consequent questions were: to what extent must the American demands be taken seriously, and what price ought America to pay for fulfilment of those demands, in terms of political and military responsibility for executing them?

The conclusions reached by members of the Committee, after little more than three months, were inevitably impressionistic. Nevertheless, none of the twelve members dissented from three important concepts reached. The first was the belief that the White Paper of 1939 was obsolete, and must be changed. The second was conviction of the gravity of the risk

of rebellion in Palestine, to which the current disturbances looked to be a mere prelude. All members shared the sense of sitting on a volcano and hoped that their report might prevent its eruption. Last but not least, all shared the conviction that the initial remedy for the condition of the Jewish DPs in Europe was the immediate immigration of 100,000 of them into Palestine. This belief stemmed from the shock suffered by all twelve, after personally witnessing parts of the scene in post-war Europe. Most of them were further stimulated by Bevin's solemn promise that Britain would accept any solution unanimously arrived at. This sentiment explains much of what happened when they came to complete their report.

On 28 March, the Committee finished its fact-collecting, and flew to its final meeting place, Lausanne. The next three weeks were spent in jury-like deliberation, which ended in a wide measure of agreement, but with one seemingly unbridgeable difference. Less than a week before its work was due to end, it seemed that, despite its strong wish to reach unanimity, there would be two, perhaps three partisan reports, instead of one.¹

At that stage, the division of opinion was as follows: (a) four Americans, headed by Hutchison, maintained that Palestine should be neither a Jewish nor an Arab State. They wanted 100,000 Jews to be admitted immediately and unconditionally. The British mandate, they thought, should be carried on until, eventually, a bi-national State was formed. (b) Five Britishers, headed by their Chairman, Singleton, agreed basically with the Americans, but on condition that all illegal armies should be disbanded before letting the

¹ Crossman to Hector McNeil, 22 Apr. 1946, Crossman Papers.

100,000 in. (c) Two Americans and the British Crossman became convinced that the only solution was partition, but for the sake of unanimity were ready to compromise on the "no Jewish no Arab" formula, if group "b" dropped their condition. But group "b" refused to do so, and that refusal created a deadlock.¹

One major obstacle to unanimity was disagreement about the future of the Haganah. This should come as no surprise. Most of the Committee's recommendations amounted to mere reflection of the ideas long held by members of the Foreign Office or the State Department; these the Committee members absorbed through various documents they read and through the guidance given to them by officials such as Harold Beeley, who acted as Secretary to the Committee's British section. But on two issues--those of immigration and suppression of the military organisations--the British and the American Governments differed and the Committee had to grope on its own. What was more, whereas on all other issues the recommendations were purposely formulated in a general manner, so as to be merely "guiding principles",² the recommendations on the two disputed issues (if Bevin's promise remained valid) must be immediate instructions for action. On these two points, the British Chairman and some other British members were obviously anxious not to place on the British authorities responsibilities that would impair what they regarded as Britain's vital interests.³

One unexpected development was that the division of opinion did not correspond with national affiliations.

¹ Ibid.

² Hutchison to Crossman, 16 Aug. 1946, Crossman Papers.

³ See "Public Security", memo for the Committee by Singleton, 9 Apr. 1946. Crossman Papers.

Richard Crossman, the young Labour MP and ex-Oxford don, was the most forceful member of the group that wanted an alternative to the conventional views held by the Foreign Office and the State Department; not only did he argue vigorously for his ideas, he was also the moving spirit in the backstage manoeuvres which in the end broke the deadlock and brought about a unanimous report.¹

Crossman had been held by the American Zionists to be "basically anti-Zionist".² Their view was based, not without foundation, on the disturbing questions and ideas he had uttered before members and officials of the Jewish Agency while the Committee was in America. His theoretical line of thought did not fit in with conventional Zionist thinking; nor did expressions such as that he perfectly understood the desire of the Arabs "to shoot any Jew who came to Nablus"³ help to render him trusted within the Yishuv. But in the end, Crossman shifted towards a Zionist point of view because he began to reckon that disbandment of the Haganah was no longer practicable and that it was in Britain's interest to make the Haganah a partner to the solution that the Committee advised.

According to his own evidence, Crossman gave much thought to the Jewish national question, which he measured on the sociological model of a "nation". Contrary to the view that he reckoned Attlee and Bevin to hold, he thought the Palestine Jews (not world Jewry) were already a "nation".⁴ As

¹ This was the opinion of Harold Beeley, as discussed with him in 1973.

² Report by Lourie, 20 Jan. 1946, Z5/1174, CZA.

³ Palestine Mission, p. 114.

⁴ His ideas bore a similarity to, and were perhaps unconsciously influenced by, those expressed by Peter Bergson's Hebrews, which Crossman came across in Washington. For Bergson's programme see his letter to Weizmann, 1 May 1945, now in 867.01/5-145, USNA. See above, pp. 88-89.

such, he thought, they already possessed not only a well organized State machine, but ran a quasi-Government; also they were ready to take great risks in order to achieve national self-determination.

The question, according to Crossman, was not whether the Jewish People should return to Zion, but whether political recognition should be granted to them in Palestine. After seeing their organization, he became convinced that what was developing there was perhaps "the finest piece of Socialism" available.¹ He expressed great admiration for the Jewish Kibutzim and the Labour co-operative movement, and thought that an important piece of Socialist fabric might be lost if the British should try to disarm the Yishuv. Crossman was sure that such an attempt could only result in an all-out war between the Yishuv and Britain, which "would mean a cold blooded liquidation of a community which had come to Palestine under British protection."²

The British military admitted that disarming the Haganah would be virtually an impossible job;³ why not act in a way that would cause the Jewish Agency and its subordinate Haganah to co-operate with them in putting down the terror? Crossman came to the conclusion that this was possible, if the demand for renewal of immigration from Europe was accepted. This acceptance, he realised, would be a step towards an eventual Jewish State.

As regards the Arabs, Crossman's socialist conscience was unmoved. As he later wrote, he "believed in social

¹ Palestine Mission, pp. 141, 148, 210.

² Ibid., p. 180.

³ B. Crum, Behind the Silken Curtain, p. 220.

progress," and was sure that as a "revolutionary force", the Jews were bringing about a change which "in the long run" would benefit the Arabs.¹ Through this mental process, Crossman's sentiments turned from irritation with the self-righteous Zionist agitation in the United States, to support of Zionism in Palestine.

But his argument alone was not enough to break the deadlock; he had to resort to other means. At the time that the Committee was sitting in Lausanne, a British Minister of State (that at the Foreign Office), Philip Noel-Baker was in Geneva on other business. Crossman secretly contacted him,² and not only managed to persuade Noel-Baker that giving birth to a unanimous report was preferable to keeping a solid front with Singleton, but also persuaded Noel-Baker to try and convert Singleton to this idea. When an astonished Singleton learned from such an authority that unanimity was desired by the Foreign Office, he caused his British colleagues to drop their condition that disbandment of the Haganah must precede the admission of the 100,000.³ From that point, no serious disagreement remained.

On 20 April 1946, the unanimous report was ready. Both Chairmen flew home to present it to their respective heads of state. Truman and Attlee received it simultaneously, and immediately contacted one another in an attempt to find out the other's reaction to the document.⁴

¹ Palestine Mission, p. 176.

² My interview with Crossman, 1973.

³ Noel-Baker acted no doubt without Bevin's counsel. To Crossman (somewhat worried about what his pleading had done), the Minister promised "to support him on his action when he got home." My account of the Lausanne affair is based on (a) interviews with Crossman and Beeley, (b) Crossman Papers, (c) my correspondence with Noel-Baker.

⁴ See below, p. 250.

As has been said already, the recommendations¹ were of two kinds: concrete propositions requiring immediate implementation and proposals which were to serve merely as "principles".² The first category included Number 2, calling for the immediate admission of 100,000 DPs, and recommendation Number 7, calling for the abolition of the Land Transfer Regulations.³ But the distinction drawn between what and where the Committee's real task lay, and where it had merely to give general guidance, did not make its practical recommendations any more practicable to its critics.

(b) The Impasse Created and its International Background

Before the British and the Americans started to argue about the contents of the report, disagreement arose between them over the time and form of its publication.

Truman had long been warned by some of his advisers,

¹ The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Report to the United States Government and His Majesty's Government, Lausanne, 20 April 1946.

² See above, p. 245.

³ The other eight recommendations were: Number 1; this set out to refute the Zionist claim that Palestine alone could solve the whole problem of the Jewish DPs. Number 3 stipulated that Palestine should become neither a Jewish nor an Arab State. Number 4 recommended that after passing legally to the status of Trustee for Palestine, Britain should continue to rule the country until a bi-national solution was practicable. Numbers 5 and 9 dealt with various aspects of economic and social development. They pointed to the need to equalize the standards of living of both peoples, in order to ease tension. They also called for substitution for the separate nationalistic (and "doctrinaire") educational systems by a Governmental and unified one. Recommendation Number 6 emphasised that all immigration beyond the 100,000 recommended, should be determined by the Trustee, in accordance with the country's absorptive capacity. Finally, recommendation Number 10 served as a diluted substitute for the demand to disband all the illegal armies. It merely stated that any attempt to oppose the implementation of the above, by threat of violence, and any illegal immigration, should be resolutely suppressed.

that the British might employ stalling tactics¹ if they did not see their way to implementing certain of the recommendations. He was therefore on the alert. It was now late April, eight months since he had made his plea to the British to admit the 100,000--a plea which in his eyes was now strengthened by a verdict in which Britons had concurred. The Jewish inmates had spent another sorrowful winter in the dreary camps on German soil; Truman seems to have been ready to go a long way with the British, in discussing any terms regarding the future of Palestine, but he was not willing to put up with any further delay in the transfer of the 100,000 Jewish DPs. He wanted the step to take place as quickly as possible.²

Accordingly, he merely let the British know that he was going to make a statement on 1 May, in regard to the Committee's report. It was to be a short expression of satisfaction that the request for the abrogation of the White Paper and for the immediate admission of 100,000 immigrants were unanimously accepted, and a call for the immediate implementation of these two recommendations.³

But by British standards, this selective process was throwing a package deal to the winds. Attlee and Bevin did not care for Noel-Baker's advice about dropping the recommendation for disarmament.⁴ Burdened as they both were with other problems and duties, they felt the report needed further "clarification", which they hoped to achieve through

¹ See footnote in FRUS 1946, p. 585.

² See footnote in FRUS 1946, p. 588.

³ Acheson to Byrnes (in Paris), 30 Apr. 1946, and a footnote ibid., pp. 587-588.

⁴ A short time after the Lausanne affair, Noel-Baker was transferred from the Foreign Office to another Ministerial post. It is possible, though I found no evidence, that his action without Bevin's consent was the cause of this move.

confidential consultation with the Americans.¹ When they learned of Truman's intention to publish a statement immediately, and when they realised the selective nature of that statement, Attlee decided not to mince his words, and to make a statement of his own² in the House of Commons. In this statement, he expressed strong objection to the immigration of the 100,000 without first disarming the illegal armies.³ "Unanimity" had merely papered over a crack too deep for cure by mere drafting.

Consequently, on 1 May, before the world learned exactly what the Committee had said, it learned of the disagreement between the two powers. It also learned that Truman had once again demanded that 100,000 DPs must go immediately to Palestine, whereas the British said the report "must be considered as a whole," and that "it would be impossible to admit so large body of immigrants, unless and until these formations [the Haganah and the dissident terrorist organizations] have been disbanded, and their arms surrendered."⁴

This profound disagreement between the two powers exacerbated a dispute that existed within the United States Government. The State Department was divided, its experts on Central Europe differing with its experts on the Middle East. On 3 May, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Occupied Territories, General Hilldring (who had just moved to that Department from the Pentagon) wrote a memorandum in

¹ Report on a meeting between Bevin and Matthews, Director of the Central Europe Division of the State Department, in Paris, 27 Apr. 1946, FRUS, p. 587.

² Acheson to Byrnes, 30 Apr. op. cit. Bevin, who was in Paris when the news came to him, was, according to a witness, "thrown into one of his blackest rages", when he read Truman's intended statement. Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 215.

³ Harriman to the State Department, 1 May 1946, FRUS, pp. 589-590

⁴ Hansard, Commons, vol. 422, cols. 195-197 of 1 May 1946.

which he said that British stalling tactics which were "predictable", must not be countenanced. "America's military and political interest in Germany and Austria," he wrote, required immediate transfer of the Jewish DPs. He therefore advocated

"... an aggressive public policy of needling the British to implement the Committee's recommendations for the entrée of 100,000 immediately, and without reference to the future action of any other recommendation of the Report."¹

Hilldring further demanded that the United States should state that she was ready "to assume primary responsibility for the movement of the 100,000," including finance, shipping and, if necessary, also military assistance.²

Members of the NED hit back. Its experts on the Middle East claimed that the removal of 100,000 DPs would no longer solve the problem, since Jewish newcomers would always refill the camps in the American zone in the hope of reaching Palestine by this route. In addition, they wrote, Palestine was Britain's business, not America's. If the President proved too eager to assume responsibility for the settlement of the problem, quite apart from the damage to United States interests in the area, Britain might decide to shake off her responsibility for Palestine.³

But the strongest opposition to the admission of the 100,000 came from two advisers prominent in this field in the past--Colonel Hoskins and Myron Taylor. Taylor, one time United States Representative on the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, served as the mouthpiece for Hoskins's

¹ Hilldring to Acheson, 3 May 1946, FRUS, pp. 591-592.

² Ibid.

³ Merriam to Acheson, 8 May 1946, ibid., pp. 597-599.

old alarm about a jehad, which three years earlier had so much impressed Roosevelt.¹ The two men set out to warn Truman that the admission of 100,000 Jewish DPs into Palestine might involve Britain and the United States in an all-out war against the Arabs, who might be supported by Soviet Russia, thus bringing about a new world war.²

Truman preferred a middle course as between those who wanted full involvement and those who wanted him to hold back. He continued to demand the admission of the 100,000 but dismissed all idea of military involvement in carrying out any of the recommendations. This he did on the advice given to him by his Jewish Liaison Officer for minorities, David Niles,³ who was also part-author of his 1 May statement.⁴

Among the Jews, the recommendations, coupled with Truman's statement, were received with relief, tempered by anxious feelings. The Zionists were obviously glad that

¹ See above, p. 132, fn. 3.

² Taylor-Truman-Niles correspondence, 15-28 May 1945, OF 204, Misc. HSTL.

³ Niles, originally a New Deal official, later proved a good election campaign organizer for Roosevelt, and was involved in the latter's decision to appoint Truman Vice-President in 1944 (J. Daniels, The Man of Independence, pp. 242-243). He, together with Sam Rosenman, were among the few of Roosevelt's advisers who, after resigning, were requested by Truman to return (Truman to Niles, 20 July 1945, General File, HSTL and Truman to Rosenman, 1 June 1945, Nash Papers, Box 2 HSTL). Both were Jews but not Zionists; they were, however, alive to Jewish matters. Niles's job, in his capacity as Administrative Assistant to the President, was to serve as a "buffer" between certain sections of the population and the White House. Thus, his was the eye which read, selected, and answered the permanent stream of letters and telegrams which the Zionist lobby was sending the White House. The degree of influence Niles had over Truman's Palestine steps is controversial. Evidence about his activities is to be found in an "Oral History Transcript" by K.M. Birkhead, Director of Public Relations of the Democratic Party in Truman's time, HSTL.

⁴ Niles co-operated with AZEC in framing that statement. Silver wrote that Niles hardly changed a word in the draft he himself prepared together with Bartley Crum (an ex-member of the Anglo-American Committee), Notes, 29 Apr. 1946.

Truman's statement had put the stress on recommendation Number 2; they were surprised that this had been unanimously accepted in the first place. They were, on the other hand depressed by the total rejection of any thought of a Jewish State. The Agency's line was to wait and see how the immigration matter developed.¹

The Arabs, by contrast, were very bitter. Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of their League, observed that "the Zionists achieved all they could desire," because "only three things mattered, and the Zionists got two;" they got immigration and the right of land purchase, and "that could only lead to a Jewish State."²

In a nutshell, the situation was by now as follows: while the United States pressed Britain for the immediate implementation only of recommendation Number 2, and while the Arabs rejected the whole report, Britain was ready only to accept the report "as a whole"--that is, after she had put herself in a position to implement recommendation Number 10, by getting rid of the shadow Jewish illegal armies. But putting that condition to America amounted to sending it to the wrong address; for Truman had no control over the Haganah and had no intention of assuming any responsibility for curbing it. The leaders of the Yishuv, who were for the time being ready to keep silence about a Jewish State, provided immigration were enacted, would never, it was clear, freely surrender their arms. Britain was therefore in a cleft stick, once she realised that America, upon whom she was becoming

¹ AZEC, Minute of 9 May 1946, ZANY.

² Conversation with the US Minister in Cairo, 3 May 1946, FRUS, p. 592. For Arab bitterness see also Jamal Husseini to the British Prime Minister, 2 May 1946, CO 733/463 (part I) 75872/138.

increasingly dependent in other fields, would never countenance any full scale operation designed to reduce the Yishuv to submission by force. The vicious circle in which she was caught brought about an Anglo-American impasse. During June and July various diplomatic manoeuvres were made in an attempt to break out of it. None succeeded.

Britain had many reasons for growing dependence on America; the most important was that Russia was constantly increasing its pressure on the northern flank of the British Middle Eastern defence system that ran from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf; another was her plight in the ever deepening throes of an economic crisis. In the interlocked fields of economy and defence, the United States was the only power that could help her to sustain her position. This help had a price in Palestine.

Britain's difficulties in Palestine also happened to coincide with a need for a new site for her Middle East military headquarters and logistic installations. These, according to a decision taken by the British Cabinet in May 1946, could no longer remain in Egypt proper.¹ As Britain already possessed a substantial military build-up in Palestine, and as Palestine was geographically a handy alternative, Britain's military planners turned to it as their future main base in the Middle East. But were it to become so, they naturally needed a high degree of security there, and this did not

¹ Bevin's talk to Byrnes, 7 May 1946, FRUS, pp. 71-72. The British used the need to withdraw from Egypt as an argument to persuade the Americans not to press them on Palestine. Interestingly, America was also asked to try and persuade King Farouk of Egypt not to press Britain for immediate withdrawal because of urgent needs connected with "the defence of the Middle East". Report regarding negotiation about revision of the Anglo-Egyptian 1936 Treaty, FRUS 1946, pp. 72-74. See also footnote in p. 603.

exist so long as Jewish illegal armies held sway.¹

Britain's only hope of managing her affairs in Palestine was, therefore, to bring America to appreciate her difficulties; somehow, she reckoned, a demonstration of American understanding might weaken Jewish demands and render the Yishuv more open to compromise. It is against this background that the "experts" talks' of June and July 1946 need to be viewed.

(c) The "Experts" Fail to Break the Impasse

The Anglo-American conflict over single items in the Committee's report, still left room for joint action on the rest--a majority--of its recommendations. Therefore, despite the fading of earlier hopes for an immediate amalgamation of policy, neither side wanted to close the door to further negotiation. This inclination was all the greater because the estimates and desires of the Foreign Office and the State Department were closer to one another than those of their heads of Government.

Two procedural questions faced the two foreign services. One was how to translate such general recommendations as the Committee had made into an agreed policy. The other was how to conduct the long-promised "consultation with Arabs and Jews", before that policy was enacted. Since, by Truman's standards, 100,000 new immigrants did not "alter the basic situation in Palestine"² (the point on which he was least at one with the British) it was agreed, for the time being that all the recommendations, apart from the crucial

¹ See Elizabeth Monroe, "Mr Bevin's 'Arab Policy'", p. 16.

² See above, p. 223.

Number 2, were fit subjects for "consultation".

These questions were discussed while the delegates were still at Lausanne. Harold Beeley there produced a seven-stage procedure, to which he managed to persuade his American counterpart, Evan Wilson, to agree. This they jointly put before their respective Governments.¹

Once the two countries had published separate statements, it was too late to carry out the first two steps of the Beeley-Wilson procedure, which envisaged a joint study of the report and a consequent joint Anglo-American appraisal. They still hoped, nevertheless, that the rest of their procedure could be followed. The third stage was to lay the report before the Arabs and the Jews, who were to be asked to comment on it within a limited time. As the fourth stage, Britain and the United States were, in the light of the Arabs' and Jews' comments, to make up their minds about the proposed Anglo-American solution. The fifth stage was to be the publication of their intended policy.

Both Beeley and Wilson were of the opinion that "the commitment to consult, did not imply . . . obtainment of consent"²--a proviso that would render a policy much easier of execution, if only that policy could be agreed upon. Nevertheless, the sixth stage envisaged the possibility (not the necessity) of summoning an Arab-Jewish conference, under Anglo-American auspices, in which the two parties would be persuaded to accept the Anglo-American proposals. (Should such a conference take place, the joint statement was only

¹ "Handling the Palestine Report", Memo by Beeley and Wilson, Lausanne, 15 Apr. 1946. State Department Files, 54 D/403 Box 1815.

² Ibid.

to be made after it.) The last stage included the actual implementation of the solution, whether the Jews or the Arabs liked it or not. It also included obtainment of the approval of the United Nations, before Britain became UN Trustee for Palestine.

At the time, this procedure looked possible of achievement. The Americans, though not enthusiastic about the "sixth stage" conference, did not reject all idea of it.¹ And they fully agreed with the British that they must carry out stage three--the "consultation"--and invite Arabs' and Jews' written comments on the report. Until the subject of admitting the 100,000 came to a head, therefore, the two sides agreed to start the procedure proposed.

But throughout these proceedings, Truman continued to argue, Cato-like, that the admission of the 100,000 must be carried out a priori, and without waiting for any other step.² Partially yielding to his steady pressure, the British eventually agreed to insert into the Beeley procedure a preliminary consultation of experts on the practical aspects of recommendation Number 2 only, and to do this before any other subject was discussed. Indeed, discussion had begun while consultation with Jews and Arabs was still in progress.³ But

¹ Exchange of notes Truman-Acheson, 6 May 1946, and Truman's telegram to Attlee of the 8th, FRUS 1946, pp. 595-597.

² There is hardly a letter exchanged with Attlee in which he did not bring up the subject. Nevertheless, he tried to make clear what he meant. In reply to an acquaintance, who urged him to press both for immigration of the 100,000 and for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, Truman wrote that the two were separate issues, not a single issue. While he strongly supported the first, he did not think that now was the time to act on the second (exchange of letters with the Governor of Schopol, Kansas, 4 and 14 June 1946, OF 204, Misc., HSTL).

³ The replies in writing were due on 20 June, while the preliminary talks began on the 12th. Bodies consulted included among others: the Jewish Agency, the Arab Higher Committee, AZEC, Secretary of the Arab League, and the Governments of five Arab states.

the British "concession" proved illusory, for they maintained their condition that the final decision should be "on the report as a whole."¹

Nevertheless, for the time being there was a clear line of action. On 12 June, a hurriedly gathered team was sent from Washington to London to discuss "the physical and financial aspects of recommendation number 2."² It was instructed by Truman on no account to deviate from the subject of the 100,000; the team found no difficulty in getting the British to agree on this. The first stage of the "experts" talks was therefore cordial enough.

The Americans, however, sensed British pressure in various forms. On the very day of their arrival in London, Bevin, who was attending the annual conference of the Labour Party at Bournemouth, stated that the proposal immediately to admit 100,000 immigrants would necessitate sending an extra division of British troops to Palestine, and the expenditure of twenty-two million pounds. He added that the Government thought this expenditure out of the question.³

The American team could offer the British no help over the military question. The United States Chiefs of Staffs were adamant that "no armed forces be involved in carrying out the Committee recommendations," and that "no action should

¹ Truman-Attlee correspondence, 13 May-10 June, FRUS 1946, pp. 606, 617, 623-624, and a footnote on p. 603.

² Truman to Attlee, 5 June 1946, FRUS, p. 617. Also account of the preliminary talks, 3 July 1946, 867 N.01/7-346, USNA.

³ Kirk, The Middle East 1946-1950, p. 218. On the same occasion, Bevin made his celebrated remark, that the Americans pressed for Jewish immigration into Palestine "because they did not want too many of them in New York"; this remark raised a storm of anti-British sentiment in Congress, and in no way made Truman more open to compromise.

be taken which is . . . beyond the capability of British troops to control."¹ On the financial side, the Americans were differently placed, and could proudly say: "this is why we are here." They were ready to shoulder the main expenses of both the transportation and the absorption of the 100,000 people.²

The British team was much more experienced on the subject of Palestine than were the Americans.³ They saw clearly that this set of talks was not going to touch the heart of the problem, and did not mind letting the Americans think that by surveying all the technicalities involved in the execution of recommendation Number 2, they were paving the way to getting what Truman wanted. On 27 June, the Americans flew back to Washington spreading a spirit of optimism. It proved premature.

Meanwhile, the American Government completed preparations for the main "experts" talks on the full report. Early in June, Truman appointed a Cabinet Committee "to deal with Palestine and related problems," of which Secretary of State Byrnes was Chairman, and Secretaries for the Treasury Snyder and for War--Patterson--were members.⁴ All further negotiations

¹ Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Co-ordination Committee of State-War-Navy, 21 June 1946, FRUS, pp 631-633.

² The total cost was estimated at \$460 million. Of this, 100 million was to come from the US Import-Export Bank, 200 million from the World Bank (where American funds were dominant), 50 million as an American grant-in-aid, and the rest from British and Jewish sources. Report by Wilson, 54 D/403 Box 1815, St Dept., undated.

³ It included Secretary of the Cabinet Norman Brook as Chairman, from the Colonial Office--J.M. Martin and Douglas Harris, and from the Foreign Office--Harold Beeley, Richard Howe, and William Baxter. The American feeling of inferiority was expressed by Evan Wilson, who wrote home: "The British presented a galaxy of Palestine talent. We shall have to go a long way to equal them." Report by Wilson, 15 June 1946, ibid.

⁴ Department of State Bulletin, 23 June 1946, p. 1089.

with the British were to be held under this exalted supervision.

By making appointments at this level, Truman no doubt sought, in a typically Rooseveltian manner, to broaden the support for his Palestine theme.¹ But he was balked by the Cabinet Committee, the members of which delegated their work to a lower level Board of alternates, headed by Henry F. Grady of the State Department.²

Grady, who had till then held diplomatic jobs of only secondary importance, was Byrnes's choice and proved a diligent worker. On selection, he had immediately been promoted to the rank of Ambassador by special Presidential order. But neither the title nor ten days of intensive briefing could cure his ignorance of the Palestine problem.³ His lack of knowledge was noteworthy as soon as he was confronted by a first-class British team. His unfamiliarity with the subject played into the hands of the British, who on their part, overdid their advantage to such an extent that Truman was unable to accept the terms to which they caused Grady to agree.⁴

One cannot escape the impression that Grady blundered when he failed to grasp Truman's cardinal reason for

¹ Snyder was known for his sympathy for Zionism. The other two were pragmatists who would not venture to stray far from the President's wishes.

² Other members of Grady's team were Goldthaite Dorr of the War Dept. and Henry Gaston of the Treasury.

³ For retrospective admittance of Grady's ignorance, by the Chief of the NED, Loy Henderson, see Akzin to Silver, 3 Dec. 1946, Akzin file, ZANY.

⁴ The story of the Grady affair is illuminated from two sources. One is his autobiographical manuscript "Adventures in Diplomacy", which was never published (Grady Papers, HSTL). The other is a mass of material which did not reach the volume of the FRUS of 1946, but which is kept in the Historical Office of the State Department, 54 D/403, Box 1815.

sending him to London.¹ He appears to have missed the point that Truman still, and above all, insisted on the immediate and unconditional implementation of recommendation Number 2.

Grady seems to have been swayed by British accounts of some recent developments in Palestine. They described to him the growing involvement of the Haganah, during June, in acts of sabotage, and their consequent arrest and detention, on 29 June, of thousands of its members, together with such leaders of the Yishuv as did not go into hiding. Next, on 22 July, at a moment when the "experts" were nearing their decision, came the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, by the terrorist Irgun, an explosion which cost the lives of nearly one hundred British and local civil servants. This act greatly shocked British public opinion, and Grady with it. To the British it seemed to provide an opportunity to enact a new policy, both because only minor opposition need now be expected in Parliament and from the public, and because the Jewish Agency's morale seemed shattered.²

In these circumstances, the British tried to slip Douglas Harris's plan³ onto the conference table by a back door. Astonishingly, when Grady saw this plan, it did not seem to occur to him that it had already been rejected by

¹ The instructions which he received from the White House included very little positive advice. He was in the main told to what the US must not commit itself (see list of topics discussed between Grady and Truman on 9 July, FRUS 1946, pp. 644-645. See also Wilson to Leslie Rood, 22 June 1946, 54 D/403 Box 1815). Grady was given the impression that the June team had virtually disposed of recommendation Number 2.

² For a description of the mood of confusion within the Jewish Agency, and the search for alternative courses, see a report from the Paris gathering of the Jewish Agency by Rabbi Goldstein. AZEC, Minutes 26 Aug. 1946, ZANY. For the Paris gathering itself and its outcome see below pp. 274-275. See also Y. Glutsky, op. cit., pp. 941-954 and Bauer, op. cit., pp. 257-260.

³ See above, pp. 208-209.

the Anglo-American Committee, the recommendations of which he was now charged with implementing. He reported home that he was "considering a Plan for Provincial Autonomy"¹ and later that it struck him and his colleagues as "the only realistic solution" for Palestine.² In Washington, Byrnes, who had, since his dealings with Halifax over the Anglo-American Committee's terms of reference, detested dealing with Palestine, minded little what scheme was adopted, so long as it was acceptable to both Governments. Himself ignorant of what Harris's plan envisaged,³ he was interested only to know whether the President's point had been retained. Grady replied that this was so.⁴ But from a telephone talk with Grady, Byrnes in fact grasped that the former had given his approval to a plan by the terms of which the 100,000 could go only if the United States accepted the plan as a whole. Byrnes, baffled, immediately ordered Grady to hold his horses until he met him in Europe in two days time.⁵

Meanwhile, on 25 July, the secrecy in which the London talks had been held was broken; someone leaked the story to the press.⁶ As a result, both Britain and the United States were the next day forced to spell out their intentions.

¹ Grady to Byrnes, 19 July, FRUS 1946, pp. 646-647.

² Same to the same, 24 July, FRUS 1946, pp. 651-652.

³ The plan was not available at the State Department (sic). Grady had to telegraph its contents point by point, but did so only after he had given his approval to it. Byrnes to Grady, 22 July, and Grady to Byrnes 24 July 1946, FRUS, pp. 648-649 and 652-667.

⁴ Telephone conversation Grady-Byrnes, 26 July, ibid., pp. 670-671.

⁵ Byrnes was bound for Europe to attend a meeting of Foreign Ministers.

⁶ Grady, "Adventures in Diplomacy", pp. 162-163. The NYT front page read next day "Delaying entrée of the 100,000". NYT, 26 July 1946.

Attlee telegraphed to Truman proposing a joint Anglo-American statement of acceptance of the Provincial Autonomy scheme,¹ and the immediate summoning of an Arab-Jewish conference.

Truman, who, it appears, only then learned what Grady had done, instructed Byrnes to tell the British that "the Government of the US had not yet had sufficient time to consider the plan."² But at exactly the same time Bevin, trying to strike while the iron was hot, told the United States Ambassador in London, Averell Harriman, that the British Cabinet had already accepted the recommendations of the Brook-Grady joint team, and that they were going to announce this without delay.³

Consequently, once again separate statements emerged. While the President vaguely said he "hoped" that "further discussions will alleviate the situation of the persecuted Jews in Europe . . .,"⁴ and while Byrnes said even more vaguely that this plan "was not suggested by the US and " was "of British origin,"⁵ the British Cabinet decided to go the whole hog and introduce the plan as a joint Anglo-American product. Such was the manner whereby, on 31 July, the Plan for Provincial Autonomy was laid before the British Parliament,⁶ and

¹ Attlee to Truman, 25 July 1946, FRUS, p. 669.

² Byrnes to Truman. Minute of 26 July, 867 N.01/7-2646 USNA.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Public Papers of President Truman, 1946, p. 367, footnote, related to 31 July 1946.

⁵ NYT, 27 July 1946. Byrnes's attitude was altogether vague. Grady accused him of first giving him full support but later of betraying him. Grady, loc. cit., also p. 164. In any event, after this disagreement, Byrnes said that he "washed his hands of the Palestine issue" and left it to Acheson. Byrnes to Nathan, 17 Aug. 1946, 867 N.01/8-1746, USNA.

⁶ Cmd 7044 of 1946 (published 1947): Hansard, Commons, vol. 426, cols. 961-977.

was baptised the Morrison-Grady Plan.¹

(d) Deadlock and War of Attrition

After introducing the plan into Parliament, the British set out to persuade the Jews and the Arabs jointly to attend the London conference. They of course made it clear that they were going to put the Provincial Autonomy plan to it as their proposed scheme for Palestine.

They failed in their attempt to persuade the Palestinian Arabs to attend, but the five Arab states who were members of the Arab League agreed to do so. According to their "tradition", however, they refused to sit at the same table as the Jews. This refusal did not worry the British at this stage, since they had much to settle with the Zionists before these last would agree to attend any such conference. A purely Anglo-Arab conference therefore, opened on 9 September 1946.²

Negotiation with the Jews was more complicated. Only the more moderate were ready to talk at all; the militants (who were from Palestine) were either interned, or wanted by the police, or else refused to attend. None of the leaders of the Yishuv were willing to do so. Obviously the remainder, though in a stronger position than formerly, did not feel empowered to speak for the Yishuv, and demanded the release of the interned leaders as a first act. At the same time, moderates such as Weizmann and Goldmann took advantage of the

¹ It was, as has already been said, Douglas Harris's scheme, but the FO and CO officials used sometimes to call it the Brook-Grady plan. Morrison's name had been inserted almost by accident; due to Bevin's illness he, as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine, introduced the plan in Parliament.

² Gallman to the Secretary of State, 17 Sept. 1946, and a footnote, FRUS, p. 696.

absence of certain of their fellows to display a more flexible approach.¹

The events of June and July in Palestine had taught the Jewish Agency some lessons; for years it had known about British plans to disarm the Haganah and to arrest its leaders,² but it had never believed that the British would dare to carry out such measures. Now the Agency was no longer sure that the British would shrink from stern and aggressive tactics, and reckoned that they might pursue these until satisfied that the Haganah no longer constituted a danger to British security. After the blowing up of the King David Hotel by the Irgun terrorists, the Agency doubted whether it could count on any sector of the British public to oppose further and more drastic actions against the Yishuv.³ It also saw as a bad sign Truman's failure to say a clear "No" to the Morrison-Grady plan. Zionist leaders everywhere felt that a sword of Damocles was hanging over them, and that in order to save what had already been achieved, some concessions, however painful, must be made. Some were therefore inclined to abandon the all-out "Biltmore" programme, and to accept a more modest solution, such as partition.⁴

And while Bevin, who considered himself an excellent

¹ Goldmann's telephone conversation with Acheson (report by Merriam) 29 Aug. 1946, FRUS, pp. 687-688. Harriman to Acheson, 21 Aug. ibid., pp. 688-690. Report of Epstein's visit to the NED, 5 Sept. ibid., p. 692.

² Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 889, 1262.

³ "Bevin will not imitate Hitler's furnaces, but short of this will do everything . . . it seems that the only recommendation being carried out is the one that was not even made --that the Haganah will be exterminated." Ben Gurion address to ZOA Executive, 25 July 1946, General Correspondence file, ZANY.

⁴ Report by Dr. Goldstein, 26 Aug. 1946, AZEC, Minute, ZANY.

negotiator,¹ had no intention of accepting partition, he nevertheless welcomed the new development and became increasingly willing to listen to the Agency.

From September 1946, therefore, two simultaneous conferences were taking place in London; the same British Ministers and officials, intermittently attended both, first officially with the Arabs and then, "unofficially" with the Jews. Rabbi Silver, who did not favour this arrangement, pointed out the resemblance between the new situation and that of the 1939 St. James's talks,² and predicted that the current series would end in a similar result.

The Arab states attending the conference were in better trim, but by British standards no more constructive. They introduced a plan which envisaged the termination of the mandate not later than 1949, after which an independent state, with an Arab majority, was to be established. Immigration must stop, while the "basic religious and cultural rights of the Jews" would be preserved. Their plan was fairly consistent with the 1939 White Paper, but far removed from Bevin's current Provincial Autonomy scheme. After much small-talk, the Anglo-Arab conference decided to adjourn until after the United Nations General Assembly, ending in uncertainty whether or not the talks would then be resumed; if so, the date would be late in December.³ The impression gained in America

¹ He had proved himself to be such in his long career in British Trade Union circles. See for instance, appreciation of this gift in Alan Bullock's The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol. I, pp. 62, 189, 319, 365, 434, and so on.

² Silver, Autobiography, Part I. For the St. James's talks see above, p.12 .

³ Reports of the meetings with the Arabs, held on 9, 10, 12, 16, 29, 25 Sept. and 2 Oct. 1946, sent to Sir A. Cunningham, the Palestine High Commissioner, by the CO. They are in a file of 1946 which has by chance slipped among the 1945 papers. See CO 733/464 75872/147/11.

was that the talks had failed.¹

The unofficial talks with the Zionists did better. Although not much progress was made, Bevin appeared keen to show the United States Government that he could handle the Zionists.² He seems to have believed that, confronted with America's indecision, the Zionists were getting more and more "reasonable".³

But Bevin's assertion, that at the beginning of October he was nearing success with the Jews,⁴ that is, causing them to accept his Provincial Autonomy scheme, should, I think, be taken with a grain of salt. Even if he was about to persuade Weizmann's people to accept some variant of this plan, which is in itself doubtful, he would undoubtedly have failed with the Jews of Palestine. In any event, an unforeseeable development in the United States early in October suddenly ruined his hopes.⁵

From July onwards, and seen from the White House, Truman's chances of causing Attlee immediately to accept admission of 100,000 immigrants⁶ looked meagre. Failure was a blow to his prestige, but he seemed ready to put up with this, for he no longer reiterated his demand. He could not, on the other hand, accept the Morrison-Grady plan, because he was under tremendous pressure from his Party "bosses", the first

¹ See Minute, 3 Oct. 1946, 867 01/10-246, USNA. See also, Truman to Attlee, same date, FRUS, pp. 701-702.

² See report by Gallman, 20 Sept. 1946, FRUS, p. 697. See particularly Attlee's emphasis that "We are in consultation with members of the Jewish Agency." Attlee to Truman, 2 and 3 Oct. 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 700-701, 704.

³ See his remarks, Commons Debates, Hansard, vol. 433, cols. 1907-1913.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See below, pp. 277-279.

⁶ Truman, by negotiating directly with Attlee, usurped the role that should have fallen to Bevin and Hall. None of the three British Ministers, to judge by their blunt replies, liked the practice.

strong pro-Zionist pressure he had encountered, not openly to give way to Attlee.¹

He needed some good reason for turning down the British plan. After summoning Grady back, he once again took the advice of David Niles and invited the six American ex-members of the Anglo-American Committee to meet with Grady's team, under the auspices of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine, which was chaired by Acheson. The question put to the six was loaded: "Is the Provincial Autonomy plan identical with your ten recommendations or not?"² After securing the obviously negative reply, Truman felt entitled to utter a judgement on the plan; but he was careful. He told the press that "it should not have been published." At the same time he made it clear that he still favoured the Anglo-Arab-Jewish negotiations in London.³ So long as these were going on, he could successfully resist home pressure to publicly reject the plan and to break with Britain on the issue.

In the light of Truman's temporising, even the most militant American Zionists were bound to share the feeling that the Jews were in a cul de sac. On 26 August, Silver remarked that "the movement's political stocks had never been

¹ The Democratic Party was hectically trying to restore its declining popularity before the coming biennial elections. Immediately after the Morrison-Grady plan was announced, Hannegan, Chairman of the Party's National Committee and Lehman, candidate for a Senatorship in New York, urged Truman not to yield to the British. Lehman to Truman, 30 July 1946, OF 204, Misc., HSTL. Also NYT, 1 Aug. particularly James Reston's review. See also below, p. 279, including fn. 2.

² Connally to Truman, 30 July 1946, OF 204, Misc., HSTL. Since the six remembered that they had already rejected Harris's scheme while in Lausanne, it was obvious what their answer was going to be.

³ The Public Papers of President Truman, 1946, pp. 407-410. See also Truman to Attlee, 12 August 1946, FRUS, pp. 682-683.

as low as at that moment."¹ He nevertheless remained convinced that both the British and the President would yield to pressure; if that at present being exercised was not enough, then the screw must be tightened. In contrast to the Agency, Silver stuck to "Biltmore", and considered the London negotiations "dangerous". He cast about for a new and more daring approach and found one in the topic of the American loan sorely needed by Britain.²

When in June 1946, Bevin made his remarks about "the Jews in New York", the loan was before Congress. Silver set out to exploit Bevin's phrase and suggested that the loan should be withheld.³ He now tried to manipulate AZEC's machinery so as to achieve that result. The stand he took served to illustrate both to the British and to the President how deeply their alliance was affected by the Palestine crisis.⁴

Meanwhile, the deadlock over the despatch of the 100,000 DPs to Palestine caused Truman trouble at home. From early 1946 he had tried to make a reluctant Congress agree to admit several hundreds of thousands of European DPs, not necessarily Jews, to the United States.⁵ But his lack of progress

¹ AZEC, Minute of 26 Aug. 1946, ZANY.

² This loan of \$3.75 milliard was crucial to Britain's immediate financial recovery. But its issue involved a long process of discussion, which took place in the summer of 1946. It was eventually approved by Congress in December.

³ See his criticism on the "chances missed", AZEC, Minute 21 Oct 1946, ZANY. "How could it be said that we have no right to ask our Government to delay--not to defeat--action on the loan until just and righteous political objectives are achieved?" Rabbi Wise openly condemned action against the loan, NYT, 13 July 1946.

⁴ See for instance report on Harriman's talk to Hector McNeil, July 1946, 567.01/7-646, USNA. For the procedure and history of the loan in question see The United States in World Affairs, 1945-1947, pp. 358-367.

⁵ "The Palestine Problem" in The World Today, July 1947, pp. 453-462, RIIA.

in persuading Britain about the 100,000 Jews afforded opponents to his proposal an excuse to arrest passage of his proposal through the relevant Congress Committees.¹

All in all, the President grew weary of the topic. He knew "Silver and the terrorists in Palestine" were the main source of his troubles with the British and thought that the extremists had defeated the entrée of the 100,000.² He was "very irritated by Jewish pressure,"³ and felt maligned for his good intentions.⁴ "I have come to the conclusion," he wrote after the Grady affair, "that there is no solution to the Palestine problem."⁵ In a word, he came close to the conclusion reached in 1943 by Roosevelt, only he was less free to manoeuvre than his predecessor had been, since he had committed himself to the condition of immediately admitting the 100,000.

By now, the conundrum had become a total deadlock. The Jews and the Arabs were farther than ever from seeing eye to eye. Some concessions which moderates on both sides

¹ Ibid. The measure in question was the "Stratton Bill".

² Gelber to Epstein, 15 Oct. 1946, 25/1009, CZA.

³ Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman, p. 299.

⁴ "Well you can't satisfy these people. They will never understand that you have to get the British to agree." Truman to Senators Mead and Wagner, during an interview. Report by James McDonald, who was also present. President's file, ZANY. A year later, Truman's irritation grew. His friend Eddy Jacobson, who tried to make Truman see Weizmann, gives the following description of Truman's reaction when the subject of Palestine arose: ". . . he immediately became tense and very bitter. In all the years of friendship he never talked to me in this manner . . . he said how disrespectful and how mean certain Jewish leaders had been to him. I suddenly found myself thinking that . . . the President of the US was as close to being anti-Semite as a man could possibly be." Jacobson to Joseph Cohen, Weizmann Papers, HSTL (account written on request by Cohen, who was Weizmann's secretary in America, some years after the founding of the State of Israel).

⁵ Truman to James McDonald, 31 July 1946, OF 204 Misc., HSTL.

were ready to make were regarded by the majorities as "betrayal", yet were still hopelessly far from an adequate basis for agreement. The British tried to modify the parties' claims, not because they thought they might bring the contestants to agree, but because if enforcement were to become their lot, they wanted a policy that embodied at least some elements acceptable to sections of both communities. But if they were to enforce a solution on Jews in open rebellion, the British acutely needed American support. Truman, tired of acting on behalf of the "thankless Jews", seemed for a brief moment to slacken his pressure on Britain and to be ready to let her act as she thought fit.¹ But he proved unable to do so because of the lynx eyes of his Party "bosses" and of many influential Democratic Congressmen.

Thus, six months after the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry made its report, no one any longer gave its recommendations a thought. But because no one was ready to concede enough ground to afford room for compromise, all those involved continued to wage a war of attrition in a mounting mood of futility and hopelessness.

(e) Truman Moves to Support Partition

Most Zionists, whether "moderates" or "extremists", could not accept the Anglo-American Committee's verdict, that Palestine be "neither Jewish nor Arab." Some leaders read

¹ Truman expressed concern over the British assault on the Yishuv on 29 June but in July he condemned the terror in Palestine. Cf. his statements of 2 July 1946 in which he said he "regretted these developments" and insisted that he was not consulted, and his "Statement . . . condemning Acts of Terrorism in Palestine" of 23 July 1946. In this last he hinted that such acts might harm the chances of the 100,000 to get to Palestine. The Public Papers of President Truman, 1946, pp. 335, 354.

into this recommendation a message that if a Jewish State was desired, partition was the only way to move towards it. Weizmann and Goldmann were among these.

In May 1946, when the report was published, "Biltmore" was still a gospel for most Zionists. But from July, and in the light of the wholesale arrests in Palestine and the feeling that the Yishuv leaders were losing ground to the advocates of unlimited violence, circumstances greatly changed. Both in America and in Palestine, Zionism was cast into the deepest gloom and no one in the Jewish Agency was any longer confident that a militant approach was the right way to bring about a Jewish State in the whole of Western Palestine. On the contrary, to fight for this cause might lead to new dangers. The Zionist Executive feared that it might lose control over the angry Yishuv and that the extremists in Palestine might stir people into an all-out war with Britain. They feared that even the traditionally well controlled officers of the Haganah might become uncontrollable.¹ If that happened, the Executive feared, America would not be of much help to a Yishuv in danger. A break with Britain, some feared, might bring about the "Third destruction" through a "Second Massadah".² The chief gainer from any such development would surely be the Arabs.³ Memories of the

¹ See Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 941-959. The argument among them, grown more acute than before, was how best to combat the White Paper. Some of the Yishuv wanted to stick only to operations of immigration and settlement; others said that to draw a distinction between this moderate course and full opposition to British rule was virtually impossible.

² Some, nevertheless, sustained sound arguments to the contrary, namely, that the events of June and July had taught Britain a lesson and that she herself could go no further in the matter of taking measures against the Yishuv, without badly damaging her relations with the US. Slutsky, loc. cit.

³ Just as the Jews had been, in a way, the gainer from the military point of view, by the suppression of the Arab rebellion in 1938-9.

European holocaust were vivid, even traumatic, and many trembled at the thought that Palestine might become the scene of a suicidal war, and, eventually, a second death trap for the Jews.¹ Jewish arrogance in the United States, these thinkers further feared, might in combination with the events in Palestine, re-awaken anti-Semitism in America and other parts of the world. Finally, the shadow of the Morrison-Grady plan and the possibility that Truman might eventually give way and accept it, caused the Agency the deepest concern.²

This is the background against which Dr. Nahum Goldmann's new plan for partition must be viewed. He first introduced his plan to an impromptu gathering of a rump of the Jewish Agency Executive,³ held in Paris early in August 1946. On 5 August, this group voted for his plan with Ben Gurion and Moshe Sneh⁴ abstaining; the vote revealed the confusion and loss of confidence suffered by the Zionists at that stage.⁵

Goldmann's plan amounted to Zionist readiness to be content with a "viable Jewish State" in an adequate area of Palestine.⁶ Naturally, the plan implied unlimited immigration into the Jewish area and full Jewish sovereignty within its boundaries; but the planners were ready to specify "a

¹ For the grave concern of a contemporary, see Hannah Arendt, "'The Jewish State', Fifty Years After", in Commentary, May 1946.

² Report by Goldstein from the Paris gathering, AZEC, Minute, 26 Aug., ZANY.

³ The rest were detained in Latrun camp, Palestine.

⁴ Commander in Chief of the Haganah; together with Ben Gurion he was on the British list of wanted persons.

⁵ Report on Goldmann's 7 Aug. talk with Acheson. Acheson to Harriman, 12 Aug. 1946, FRUS, pp.679-682.

⁶ Goldmann, "Memo on Palestine", 8 Aug. 1946, Papers of John Snyder, HSTL. See also his Memoirs, p. 232.

guarantee for British interests" within that state--that is, allow them to keep British military bases. The proposed boundaries of Goldmann's state, although never clearly drawn, were generally said to be in line with those proposed by the 1937 Peel Commission, plus the virtually uninhabited Negev.¹

Immediately after the Paris meeting, Goldmann inaugurated wide-ranging diplomatic manoeuvres, aimed at bringing his plan to the notice of as many people as possible in the British and the United States Governments. A man who had never until then belonged to the first rank of Zionist leaders, thus suddenly found himself a key figure in Zionist diplomacy.² He made several round-trips between Paris,³ London and Washington, and set in motion every cog of the Agency machinery to which he had access, in all three capitals.⁴ In London he became Bevin's chief partner in a series of "unofficial" negotiations,⁵ which lasted until the Zionist Congress held in December 1946;⁶ in Washington he established good relations with Acting Secretary Acheson, and with his aide, W.L. Clayton.

¹ Acheson to Harriman, 20 Aug. 1946, FRUS, pp. 687-638. AZEC was represented in Paris, but Silver stayed at home. He made no secret of his opposition to Goldmann's proposal, not so much as a matter of principle as on tactical grounds. Even if the Zionists were now ready for partition, Silver argued, this was their last ditch and therefore they must leave it to others to propose it. This view was later accepted by the Zionist General Council. See Silver, Autobiography, Part II.

² He continuously reported all his moves to Weizmann. Some of his reports are in General Correspondence, ZANY.

³ While the Yishuv leaders were in detention or banned from London and Jerusalem, Paris became a temporary headquarters for the Agency (as well as for the Yishuv's controlled Brichah and the illegal immigration organization, the "Mossad").

⁴ My account of Goldmann's trips is made from his own reports to Weizmann and from telegrams in FRUS 1946, pp. 679-700. See also his Memoirs, pp. 233-235. In arranging his air travel, he was assisted by the State Department, ibid.

⁵ See above p. 267.

⁶ Where Goldmann was ousted from his position in America by Silver.

Goldmann also maintained contacts with David Niles, through whom he hoped to convey his ideas to the President.¹

He was convinced that he was doing well. But he interpreted far too optimistically the comparatively warm reception he had both in Washington and in London. It was true that his initiative cheered both the British and the United States Governments, but it did so mainly because they believed that his plan spelt the beginning of a change in the Zionist attitude. Bevin, for once, appears to have believed that if he now made some minor concessions to the Agency (say, spread the 100,000 immigrants over a period of 2-3 years),² the latter would, in return, accept the plan for Provincial Autonomy. The State Department for its part, believed that Bevin's readiness to discuss Palestine with Goldmann, indicated that he might be ready to compromise on a partition, not in the form that Goldmann contemplated, but perhaps on something between Goldmann's plan and some Jewish autonomous area of much smaller dimensions.³ Since the State Department and, indeed, now the President himself, appear scarcely to have cared what kind of compromise the British reached with the Zionists, so long as compromise came about, there was enough in Goldmann's

¹ Niles, at that time, began to shift towards support for partition; The Agency was happy to note this. They began to nickname him "Our Friend". See Epstein to Goldmann, 9 Oct. 1946, Weizmann Papers, HSTL. Goldmann also met, on 8 August, with Snyder and Patterson, members of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine. See his Memoirs, p. 234.

² As is evident from his "Unitary State" plan (the Bevin Plan), which he eventually put before the Jews and the Arabs. See below, pp. 289, 292.

³ See bulk of minutes, 12-14 Sept. by Clayton and others, 867 N.01/9-1246, USNA. An impression that the British might be considering partition is outstanding in a report of 17 Sept. by the US Chargé d'Affaires in London, Gallman. Describing the background of the Anglo-Arab parleys, Gallman wrote: "Any solution must take into account absence of common ground between Arabs and Jews. Answer seems to lie in separation of the two communities." FRUS 1946, p. 696.

plan to give the illusion that here was a way to restore Anglo-American relations over Palestine.

On 19 August, Goldmann learned that the State Department was giving consideration to his plan.¹ Simultaneously, the United States Government finally decided not to participate in the official London conference, since it was as a start to be held with the Arabs alone.² Early in September, while Goldmann was busy in London,³ his men in Washington, upon his advice, tried to extract from the State Department a public statement of support for partition. But when the matter was taken up with Truman, his reply was in the negative.⁴

The State Department now saw two alternative courses open to the United States. One was to dismiss Goldmann's proposal outright, with the excuse that it contradicted the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry; the other was to support it in the hope that to do so would (a) strengthen the hands of the moderates among the American Zionists "against the anti-Administration elements" and (b) give the British a new little push towards reaching a compromise with the Zionists in London.⁵

When the two courses were put to Truman, he appeared to favour the first. On 27 September he continued to assure members of the NED that "in any solution . . . there could be no Jewish State."⁶ But a few days later, two new developments

¹ Report of a telephone conversation Goldmann-Acheson. Acheson to Harriman, 20 Aug. 1946, FRUS, pp. 687-688.

² Ibid.

³ He met Bevin and Hall several times between 14 and 20 Aug. (Reports by Gallman, FRUS 1946, pp. 685, 687) and again on 14 and 19 Sept. 1946 (ibid., p. 697).

⁴ Report of Epstein's visit to the Department, 5 Sept. and Clayton-Truman, 12 Sept. 1946, ibid., pp. 692-695.

⁵ Clayton to Truman, ibid.

⁶ Truman's talk to George Wadsworth, US Minister in Syria and Lebanon, FRUS 1946, p. 699.

made him change his mind. One of these developments was on the domestic front; the other happened in London.

Towards the end of September, the Democratic Party intelligence smelt out a Republican plan to exploit Truman's indecision over Palestine in the course of its election campaign.¹ (Elections were due five weeks later.) Truman's aides in election matters, Hannegan and Niles, suggested that the Democrats forestall this plan.² At the same time, word came from London that the parleys with the Arabs had petered out inconclusively,³ while the unofficial talks with the Jews were going well.

The fact that nothing had been achieved with the Arabs, whereas talks with the Zionists seemed to be going well, created the impression in Washington that the British were about to reach a compromise with the Zionists on partition. Goldman's inborn optimism and good spirits, combined with some cheerful hints from Attlee helped to confirm that impression.⁴

The White House thereupon decided to switch to the Department's second alternative. It had no intention of supporting Goldman's plan as he conceived it, but since Goldman, no doubt out of fear of some of his Agency colleagues, declined to draw definite maps, the notion of a "viable Jewish State" had no shape to it. Washington, therefore, believed that the plan provided negotiable ground upon which the moderate

¹ Epstein to Goldman, 9 Oct. 1946, Weizmann Papers, HSTL.

² Ibid. See also, Silver, Notes, 20 Oct. 1946. It is possible that Silver "helped" to leak the news of the Republican intentions, as he had done in the past. See above, pp. 183-184.

³ Attlee to Truman, 2 Oct. 1946, and Gallman to the Secretary of State, same date, FRUS 1946, p. 700.

⁴ Attlee to Truman, 2 Oct., ibid.

Zionists and the British might meet.¹

It is hard to tell whether the domestic or the foreign development played the more decisive role in bringing about Truman's statement of 4 October 1946. His desire to end dispute with Britain was strong, but the difficulties that he reckoned to confront the Democratic Party must not be underestimated. Its chances of winning the mid-term elections had been on the downgrade since July, and once again, the danger to the Democrats' fortunes was at its greatest in the key States of New York, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.² Particularly was it so in regard to the seats in the House of Representatives. In the last few weeks before the poll, it was the candidates from these States who exercised the greatest pressure on their leader.³

Truman, therefore, decided to come out with a pro-Zionist statement before the Republican leader, Dewey, did so. But he sent his draft, two days before publication, to Attlee, informing the British Prime Minister that he intended to publish it at the end of the Jewish Yom Kippur, "when Jewish feelings of depression were . . . intensified."⁴ It seems that Truman, who believed the British were likewise

¹ See the draft for an unpublished statement, prepared and elucidated by the State Department, 12 Sept. 1946, FRUS, p. 695.

² On 18 Sept. the President addressed a specially gathered group of 30 Congressmen from the above-mentioned States, and told them that "Congress must remain Democrat." A cartoon in the NYT of 29 Sept. showed the President turning his back on a big map of US international affairs and approaching Hannegan, saying: "and now, let's turn to domestic policy." For the permanent concern of the Democrats and the general opinion that the Republicans would capture Congress in November, see NYT 20, 21 July; 11, 19 Aug; and 29 Sept. 1946.

³ Silver, Notes, 20 Oct. 1946. Lehman and Hannegan arranged for the President to see Rabbi Wise on 2 October, but it seems that by then the draft statement was ready.

⁴ Two telegrams from Truman to Attlee, 3 and 10 Oct. 1946, FRUS, pp. 701-703, 706-708.

considering partition, did not fully realise what a bombshell he was sending.

Attlee immediately consulted Bevin; they decided on an urgent appeal to withhold publication,¹ but gave, on the other hand, little information that might cause Truman to change his thinking about British inclination to reconsider partition. Truman, who by then had promised many people to make the statement on Yom Kippur, did not see enough justification for withholding it. Whatever the motive that swayed him most, the statement was published as planned, at the end of the Jewish Day of Atonement on 4 October 1946.²

Truman had no intention of perpetrating a historical event but in fact his statement became one. He had meant it as pre-election fodder, aimed at reviewing his efforts on behalf of the Jewish survivors in Europe. But it contained two passages signifying a change of policy. One rejected the Morrison-Grady plan; the other cautiously supported partition.

About Provincial Autonomy, Truman said that it met with "opposition among members of the major political Parties . . . both in Congress and throughout the country" and he therefore could not support a plan that advocated this. As for partition, the relevant passage read:

"The Jewish Agency proposed a solution of the Palestine problem by means of the creation of a viable Jewish State . . . A solution along these lines would command the support of public opinion in the United States."³

¹ Attlee to Truman, 3 Oct. 1946, FRUS, p. 704.

² This statement was significantly called "Statement by the President Following the Adjournment of the Palestine Conference in London". The Public Papers of President Truman, 1946, pp. 442-444.

³ Ibid.

Deep in his misconception of the British attitude, Truman wrote to Attlee, and still believed when he published the Yom Kippur statement, that he "could not believe" the gap between his views and those of the British "was too great to be bridged by men of reason and goodwill."¹ The British for their part, equally misconceived Truman's intentions; they regarded him as shamelessly sold-out to "the Jews of New York". Deeply immersed in their own problem of keeping order in Palestine, the British totally failed to read Truman's main signal, which was that while trying to help his own electoral ends, he sincerely meant to allay Britain's problem, not to aggravate it.

On the British, the effect of Truman's statement was devastating. Bevin was beside himself with rage. To him, Truman appeared a devil incarnate, out to sabotage every British attempt to settle the issue of Palestine. He saw a long sequence of events--the Earl Harrison report, Truman's letter of 31 August 1945, Truman's treatment of the Anglo-American Committee's report, his unwillingness to accept the "experts'" conclusions--as no less than a well worked out conspiracy intended to undo all his work² and, at that, a conspiracy guided by the hidden hand of the devilish Jews. He saw this sequence as reaching its climax at a moment when the Zionists of Palestine and of London were, in his eyes, near to submission, and when a settlement lay within his grasp. Now Truman had delivered another blow which, Bevin later told Parliament, "wrecked everything."³

¹ Truman to Attlee, 3 Oct. 1946, FRUS, pp 701-703.

² Commons Debates, Hansard, 25 February 1947, vol. 433, cols. 1912-3.

³ Ibid.

Between the British, the Jews, and the Arabs, manoeuvres and negotiations continued for several months; yet it seems that Truman's 4 October statement fatally shook the confidence of the first about their ability to cope with their problem. Zionist confidence, by contrast, revived, though not immediately.¹ Goldmann was soon relegated to a marginal role and more militant negotiators took over the lead.² As for Truman, however "good" his intentions towards Britain had been, he was unable to retreat from his Yom Kippur stand. Rather the other way; he was offended by the British reaction to it, while he was "made think well of himself" by the American Zionists.³ From that date, he never publicly wavered from support of a Jewish State, though he more than once contemplated this course.

(f) To the United Nations "Without Recommendations"

The only immediate change wrought by Truman's statement of 4 October was that the Zionists became more adamant in the stand they took in London and that the British began to use a new threat: to throw Palestine into the lap of the United Nations "without recommendations".⁴ This was a diplomatic way of saying that Britain might not accept the role of Trustee for the United Nations and that she would not

¹ Some Zionists were extremely slow to grasp that the statement was important. AZEC's Information Bulletin called it "rather moderate" (ZANY). An advertisement in the Jewish Advocate of 24 Oct. virtually condemned it, saying "the Truman Administration gave us words, words and more words." At the Agency headquarters in Washington, a heated argument arose as to whether the Zionists in any way benefited from it. Gelber to Epstein, 15 Oct. 1946, Z5/1009, CZA.

² Particularly after the Zionist Congress. See below, pp. 288-289.

³ Epstein to Goldmann, 9 Oct. 1946, Weizmann Papers, HSTL.

⁴ This threat was first uttered by the new British Ambassador to the US, Lord Inverchapel, on 22 November 1946, during talk with Acheson, FRUS 1946, pp. 723-726.

co-operate with whoever tried to take over.¹

At first, few believed that the British threat was serious. Any such move would be wholly contrary to British defence commitments in the Middle East, particularly at a time when the British base in Egypt had become confined to the Canal Zone only. The Americans were well enough informed to be the first to understand that the threat was not entirely an empty one² but even they took it as a remote possibility. The Jews and the Arabs, however, found it hard to believe that the British would ever voluntarily leave Palestine. Neither had the information, or the ability, to tot up the sum of Britain's desperate economic plight and the mounting irritation of the British public with the Palestine issue; both therefore failed to sense that evacuation was a serious possibility. The British seemed to them to be playing "brinkmanship" with a threat that was scarcely credible.

Yet there was a snag to referring Palestine to the United Nations that equally affected both American and British policy; to do so implied inviting the Russians into Middle Eastern politics (after the western powers had jointly and successfully checked them in Iran and Turkey). No one had any doubt what the Russian position would be--it was thought likely to be strongly anti-Zionist.³ In such case, the British

¹ Palestine, according to Chapter XII of the UN Charter, was in any event bound to be considered by the UN and appointed a Trusteeship. British policy to date had been to accept that role.

² See Minute by Acheson on his conversation with Lord Inverchapel, 22 Nov. 1946, FRUS, pp. 723-726.

³ All research, American as well as British at this stage led to the conclusion that it would be impossible to expect Soviet support for any Zionist aim. On the American side, see Despatch from the US Chargé d'affaires in Moscow, 2 Nov. 1946, FRUS, pp. 720-721. On the British side, see report by the British Chargé d'affaires in Moscow, 2 Aug. 1946, CO 733/463 (part I), 75872/140.

and Americans were almost bound to lag behind the Soviets in adopting a pro-Arab attitude. After all, both Britain and the United States had in some way committed themselves to a middle way between Jewish and Arab demands; the Soviets had no such commitment.

Neither the Jews nor the Arabs were particularly eager to see Britain leave, unless their basic demands were first fulfilled. Only the extremists and dreamers among them wanted, or said they wanted, the British to go with no provision at all for the future. The majority of the leaders on both sides wanted Britain first to set up a regime of the kind that each demanded, to crush the other community's opposition, and only to leave thereafter.

The Arab League, for instance, at its December 1946 Council meeting decided that the best course to adopt would be diplomatic action, designed to "relieve American pressure on the British,"¹ hoping that once Britain was free of it, the Arab states would be able to get from her a settlement acceptable to them.

The Zionists too, preferred continuation of British rule, if only the White Paper could be abolished. Dr. Weizmann, who feared actual hostilities, both between the Yishuv and Britain and within the Yishuv, thought "a break with Britain would be a disaster" and might "turn Palestine into a jungle."² Even militants such as Silver and Ben Gurion did not like the idea of turning over Palestine to chaos; such a result would not at all fit their intention that America should force

¹ Information from the Iraqi Foreign Minister; a footnote in FRUS 1946, p. 731.

² Weizmann to Crossman, as late as 12 March 1947. Crossman Papers.

Britain's hands to take a pro-Zionist course. Silver, meeting Bevin in New York at the end of November 1946, said that he thought a sudden British withdrawal "would be disastrous" to Zionism.¹ Ben Gurion, who made as if he did not mind the British leaving the country, so long as he thought the threat an empty one, as soon as he realised that it was not so--told them that he would prefer the status quo to passing the country to the United Nations (that is, provided that the White Paper was mitigated).²

But the main opposition to British withdrawal from responsibility for Palestine came from those who themselves refused to get involved in its peace and security--the United States Government. Contrary to a belief of Goldmann's,³ even after Truman's 4 October speech, that Government did not actually advocate partition. What it now sought was a compromise with Britain. It was still ready to accept whatever solution the British could devise without stirring up trouble.⁴ This American line of thought continued until the British definitely stated in February 1947, that they would refer the question to the United Nations.⁵ America meanwhile devoutly

¹ Acheson's talk with Inverchapel, 22 Nov. 1946, FRUS, pp. 723-726. Bevin met Silver twice, during the former's visit to the UN General Assembly. These meetings were part of an attempt made by the new British Ambassador to bring about a détente with the American Zionists while the talks in London were in progress. For these meetings see also Silver, Autobiography, part II, and Notes, Nov. 1946. On Inverchapel's pro-Zionist inclinations, see Goldmann, Memoirs, p. 236.

² Ben Gurion's talk with the British Lord Chancellor after the collapse of the Agency's talks with Bevin and Creech-Jones --see below, pp. 294-295.

³ Goldmann, Memoirs, pp. 235, 237.

⁴ Henderson to Acheson, 21 Oct. 1946, FRUS, pp. 710-713.

⁵ "It was more important to find a solution with the maximum possibility of being put into effect, than to pick out any particular solution." Acheson to the British Ambassador, 21 Jan. 1947, FRUS, pp 1008-1011.

prayed for the success of the London talks, due for resumption at the end of January 1947.

The President's 4 October statement did not prevent his Party from losing the majority in both Houses of Congress; thereafter, he kept silence. The more the British uttered their threat to leave Palestine "without recommendations", the more worried the Americans became that this might happen. Their initial amazement turned into an explicit warning to the British not to surrender responsibility.¹ But they were never ready to shoulder this, or any part of it, for any solution devised;² at the same time they were unable to abandon their interest in the fate of the DPs or of the Yishuv.

At the end of 1946, the British still had faint hopes of being able to cope with the situation. Their thoughts at this stage appear to have run along the following lines: they must work out a new scheme, which, although it could not satisfy either side, might nevertheless be acquiesced in, however grudgingly, by the "responsible" leaders on both. If these efforts failed, their only alternative was to send the problem to the United Nations. This they must do "without recommendations" (that is, without suggesting any plan) because a negative approach might expose them to less criticism than would the making of definite proposals. Maybe they hoped that the very threat of abandoning Palestine might lead to an international injunction to stay. And if that were to happen, they would acquire better support for their mandate to rule the country and gain more freedom of action than before. A

¹ Acheson's warning to Inverchapel, see "Written Oral Statement" (sic), 27 Jan. 1947, FRUS, pp. 1014-5.

² Ibid.

threat to quit was, it appears, their only hope of bringing America to abandon almost total submission to domestic pressure on the subject of Palestine.

In any event, after the end of the United Nations General Assembly in December, Bevin and the new Colonial Secretary, Creech-Jones, set out to renew talks with both the Jews and the Arabs. They knew that neither really wanted the question to go to the United Nations and hoped that both realised how far apart their positions were; either they must reach a compromise under British auspices or else be left to the hazards of losing much in the course of such unforeseeable development as might ensue. The British Ministers, it appears, failed to conceive that people who struggle for self-determination (something the British never experienced) seldom adopt this degree of "realism". Instead, they push forward blindly, each believing in the "inevitability" of his ultimate redemption.¹ The two sets of talks in London were resumed in January 1947.

Meanwhile, the attitudes of both sides hardened. On the Arab side, this new degree of obduracy was the result of the arrival of the Palestinian Arabs, headed by the militant Jamal Husseini, at the conference. Husseini was deaf to any proposal which envisaged less than the grant of complete independence to Palestine as an Arab State. His ruthless attitude caused some prominent moderate Arabs, such as Azzam Pasha, to decline to attend the talks from the start.²

¹ Attlee called Crossman "Machiavellian" when the latter observed that "a solution in Palestine was possible only after a test of strength." Crossman Papers, no date.

² The US Chargé d'affaires in London to the State Department; information received from Beeley. 31 Jan. and 5 Feb. 1947, FRUS, pp. 1021-0. This was the channel through which current information about the London parleys came to the American Government.

On the Jewish side, the new rigidity was the result of resolutions adopted by the 22nd World Zionist Congress, held in Basle during the second half of December 1946.

This, the first Zionist Congress since 1939, was held in an atmosphere of tension, bitterness and frustration. The prolonged deadlock left its mark on the delegates; no one could see how a Jewish State was attainable in the foreseeable future. "Extremists" and "moderates" were divided on the basis of their assessment of the likely loss if a militant line was maintained in Palestine. The former, consisting of Silver, Neumann, the Revisionists, and Sneh's Haganah activists, thought that the British were already "doing the work of Titus", and that there was therefore little to lose by running armed resistance to them. The latter, with Weizmann, Wise and Goldmann, thought there was much to lose, and perhaps something to gain by adopting a more flexible line. This "flexibility" meant departing from "Biltmore".¹

The main issues at Basle were three: (a) should the Zionists take part in a new set of talks with the British? (b) If so, should they adopt the idea of a "Viable Jewish State"? (c) How should the struggle against the White Paper be conducted?

On 25 December 1946, the "extremists" won the day by a thin majority. The resolution rejected partition and stipulated that "in the present circumstances" it was impossible to join the London parleys. Nevertheless, under the

¹ "Political Report of the 22nd Zionist Congress, 1946". See also Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 832-833. Ben Gurion's attitude was a more complex and pragmatic conglomerate of both views. This was evident from his position when the talks with the British were resumed. Although "Activist", Ben Gurion saw no way out other than further negotiation with the British.

influence of Ben Gurion, this stark decision was watered down. He brought about an addition to the effect that "if a change occurred," the Zionist General Council would be empowered to alter the decision and sanction talks. But partition was in no circumstances to be proposed. The pragmatist Zionist leaders, headed by Ben Gurion, bypassed the Congress's resolution by telling their British counterparts that although they were not allowed to propose partition, they would be ready to discuss it if and when others proposed it to them.¹

This step they took on the assumption that the British would be ready to accept partition in principle, but they were wrong. The British Cabinet, meeting on 20 January, once again reviewed the options open to them, and found that theoretically there were three: partition, cantonization (of some kind, not necessarily the Morrison-Grady scheme), and submission to the United Nations "without recommendation".² Attlee was all for the last,³ but as the General Assembly session was over and out of the way, the Cabinet accepted Bevin's proposal to try yet one more round of talks. It authorised Bevin to propose to the parties a new variant of the Provincial Autonomy plan, later known as the "Bevin Plan" or the Plan for a "Unitary State".⁴

Bevin wanted first to hear yet again what the Jews and the Arabs wanted, in order to see on what points he had a chance of meeting their demands. On 27 January he opened the official conference with the Arabs, and on the 30th he

¹ Minute by Goldmann of a meeting with Bevin and Creech-Jones, 30 Jan., General Correspondence, ZANY.

² Inverchapel's talk to Acheson, 21 Jan. 1947, FRUS, pp. 1008-1010.

³ My interview with Harold Beeley, 1973.

⁴ The plan was introduced on 7 Feb. 1947. See FRUS, pp. 1033-5.

held the first "unofficial" session with the Jewish Agency. Both parties, Bevin soon found, were gloomy, bitter and uncompromising; their conflicting demands had very little in common with his plan.

Speaking for the Arabs, Husseini forthwith closed the door to all compromise. He said that the Arab case was simple and self-evident; it was, he said, "that of people who desired to remain in undisturbed possession of their country, and to safeguard their national existence and freedom."¹ He rejected any possibility of Jewish immigration, and warned his hearers that if any kind of Jewish State were to be attempted, it "would undoubtedly become a permanent source of trouble in the Middle East." He also said the Arabs were confident that "their strength, shown in 1936-9, was unimpaired."²

In answer, Bevin warned Husseini of Jewish military strength, and pointed out that if the British did not manage to reach a solution, the Palestine Arabs might be left to face that force alone. But Husseini remain unimpressed. He could not accept a bi-national solution either; and if the Jews were so well armed, he said, let the British disarm them.³ His intransigence left little worth discussing with the Arabs and the "Bevin Plan" was simply handed to them for comments.⁴

With the Jewish side, more talk took place but no better results were obtained. Meetings were held twice a week

¹ R. John and S. Hadawi, The Palestine Diary, p. 117.

² Gallman's report, 28 Jan 1947, FRUS, p. 1016.

³ Same to the same, ibid., p. 1029. To which Creech-Jones chimed in that "this was nearly impossible."

⁴ Sessions with the Arabs were held on 27, 30 Jan., 4 and 12 Feb. 1947.

between the 30 January and 14 February. Prior to them, the British made some gestures of goodwill; they freed the interned leaders and allowed men wanted by the police to take part in the talks.¹ They also announced that the illegal immigrants whom they had interned in Cyprus, would gradually be allowed to enter Palestine. The British Government in Palestine added that it would pay compensation for Jewish property confiscated or damaged as the result of recent military action there.² The replacement of George Hall by Arthur Creech-Jones, and the despatch of Inverchapel to Washington in place of Halifax, should also be interpreted as measures designed to improve the bad relations between Britain and the Jewish Agency. Still more important in Jewish eyes, Bevin made no further mention of his wish to disband the Haganah before the 100,000 were admitted to Palestine. Instead, he now proposed the admission of 4,000 Jews per month over a period of twenty-four months, which amounted to virtually the same figure.³

But on the main issue Bevin remained adamant: he would not agree to any kind of partition. His word on this, the Zionists believed, was not final; for this reason they carried on attending the talks. They certainly did not see that failing partition, the only alternative the British had

¹ In return the Agency gave a vague promise to oppose terrorism but declined to give any assurance about illegal immigration. But even that concession caused Yishuv public opinion to suspect a wholesale submission to the British. Slutsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 831-832.

² Slutsky, *loc. cit.*

³ It is tempting to speculate what would have happened if the "Bevin Plan" had been issued in response to Truman's demand of 31 August 1945, to admit 100,000. It is reasonable to assume that, provided immigration had started immediately, Truman would have been satisfied.

to cantonization was withdrawal.¹

On 7 February, the "Bevin Plan" was circulated to the Jews, the Arabs, and the United States Government. It was a variant of the Morrison-Grady plan, for in it the principle of two separate national provinces was retained, but now the power of the Central Government was increased. Any immigration after the proposed 100,000 (96,000, to be exact) was to be left in the hand of an "Arbitration [sic] Tribunal", appointed by the United Nations. Land sales were to be controlled by the Central Government. After four years an attempt was to be made to run a general election for an Assembly. And after five years it was to be the task of the United Nations Trusteeship Council to decide whether the country was ripe for independence.²

The only new element in Bevin's final plan was, that it suggested that the special international status of the Jewish Agency should gradually be abolished and that representation of the Yishuv should pass to its representatives on an Advisory Council that was to assist the High Commissioner to govern.

If Bevin still cherished some hope that he could

¹ The final British decision to withdraw from Palestine, while taking no responsibility for the ensuing situation, was taken only in Sept. 1947, after the UN Inquiry Commission (UNSCOP) had recommended partition (without saying who was to enforce it). (My interview with Beeley.) The world learned of the British decision on 26 Sept., when the Colonial Secretary told the UN ad hoc Committee that his Government ". . . would not be able to give effect to a policy unacceptable to the Arabs and Jews," and that therefore, "it would be necessary to provide an alternative implementing authority." (FRUS 1947, p. 1161, footnote.) Historically then, British withdrawal was made known in two stages. One was the passing of the problem to the United Nations, in February, "without recommendations", which will be described below; the second was the decision of September, which is outside the period covered by this chapter.

² See "Text Received from Mr. Bevin", 7 Feb. 1947, FRUS, pp. 1033-5.

make cantonization acceptable to the Jews, then this last item was an indubitable mistake. At a moment when Palestine was more than ever before an international issue, and when the Agency was strengthened by that international link, his attempt to reduce its range to that of a purely local body spelt death to the pattern that he was trying to devise.

When the State Department discussed Bevin's Plan, its members felt a measure of relief. They were convinced that here was a policy that the British were finally determined to carry out. It took the line that while accepting the British plan as sound, the United States Government must not give any official approval to it "until the storm which its announcement will raise has subsided."¹ This and other deliberations in the same vein, reveal that the United States Government failed to see how close Britain was to withdrawal.²

The 13 February was the date that the British set themselves as a deadline. But by that date, meeting with the Jews and the Arabs showed no progress. Jamal Husseini kept reiterating his confident belief that the Arabs could handle the situation, if not alone, then with the help of the neighbouring Arab states.³ Ben Gurion for the Zionists, said that the new plan, from the Agency point of view, was even less acceptable than the Morrison-Grady one, which the Agency had already rejected.⁴ The Agency, nevertheless, seemed unwilling

¹ Memo by Loy Henderson, 10 Feb. 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 1038-9.

² See, for instance, a detailed inquiry by Secretary of State Marshall into the nature of the proposed plan (Henderson to Gallman), *ibid.*, pp. 1033-9.

³ Report by Gallman (quoting Beeley and Douglas Harris), 13 Feb. 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 1044-5.

⁴ Minute of the last meeting with the British. General Correspondence, ZANY.

to close the door to all further talk. It seemed disturbed at the prospect that after the failure of the talks it might be left face to face with the British Army.¹

Ben Gurion, who until 14 February seemed unimpressed by the British threat to turn the Palestine question over to the United Nations, entirely changed his view when, after everything was over with Bevin and Creech-Jones, he learned that the British were determined to carry out their threat. Then, and all of a sudden, he expressed himself as ready to go surprisingly far to meet their demands. In an interview that he had with a senior Labour man, William Jowitt, then Lord Chancellor, he said that the Jews would be ready to accept the status quo ante in Palestine for another five years, instead of committing themselves to any final solution. He was ready, for the duration of that period, to give up not only the "Biltmore" claims, but that of any kind of Jewish State, within any form of partition. He insisted only on two conditions: one was the abolition of the Land Transfer Regulations (in regard to the whole of Palestine); the other, the admission of the 100,000 "within a year or two."² In return he was ready to take action to stop terrorist activities

¹ Towards the end of January there was a sharp increase in terrorist activities in Palestine (in which the Haganah did not take part). The British military authorities, expecting that worse was still to come, decided to evacuate British women, children, and non-essential males from Palestine, and to move the rest into fortified enclaves in the main cities. This move was suspected by the Agency as forecasting a renewed attempt to break the illegal armies if the London talks failed. As a result of AZEC pressure, Secretary of State Marshall made representation about what he believed to be a British plan of action, to the British Government. See Marshall's inquiry with Inverchapel and report by Pinkerton, early February, FRUS 1947, pp. 1023, 1030.

² Ben Gurion's talk with the Lord Chancellor, 14 Feb. 1947. Minute in General Correspondence, ZANY. For the Agency's readiness for a last moment compromise, see also Slutsky, op. cit., p. 834.

in Palestine, though not illegal immigration.¹

At the end of the talk, Lord Jowitt appeared satisfied and said to Ben Gurion, "I can tell you that we have met just in time." But as things turned out, they met too late. At the Cabinet meeting on that very date, Attlee insisted that there was no fourth course, and that if the Bevin plan had failed, the question must go to the United Nations.²

On 18 February Bevin made a short statement in Parliament. He told the House of the Cabinet's decision and that a debate would be held on the 25th.³ During its course, Bevin won the sympathy of both political parties, and was cheered when he attacked the United States Government and its President, laying on them the chief blame for his failure to solve the Palestine problem. "I do not desire to create any ill feeling in the United States," Bevin said,

"... in fact I have done all I can to promote the best possible relations with them ... but I should have been happier if they had regard to the fact that we were the mandatory power, and that we were carrying the responsibility."⁴

He charged them with "setting the whole thing back" time and again, and deplored Truman's unwillingness to listen to any of his reasoning.

American intervention played a major part in projecting the Palestine problem into a new phase, both because it rendered British regime impossible and because it consequently set loose all the pressures the British had till 1947

¹ Illegal immigration and the Brichah movement in Europe had at that time neared their peak. Slutsky, op. cit., pp. 1091-1152.

² Interview with Beeley, 1973.

³ Hansard, Commons, vol. 433, cols. 989-993.

⁴ Ibid., cols. 1907-1915.

kept under control. This outcome was not what those who set American policy of intervention into motion really desired. Rabbi Silver, in particular, was said by Acheson to be "subdued and frightened" when told that the future lay in the hands of the United Nations.¹ This was not the child that Silver prayed for; his dream was of a change in British policy brought about under American pressure. The transfer to the United Nations hands opened a number of new vistas, but at the moment of their opening, no one --British, American, Jew, or Arab, peering into the fog ahead, could be sure which was the route to choose in order to attain the end-product that he desired.

¹ Acheson's talk with Silver, 15 Feb. 1947, quoted in a telephone conversation with the British Embassy, recorded at the FRUS, p. 1050.

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