

CHAPTER XI THE YISHUV REPUDIATES THE MANDATE

THE WAR ENDS: JEWISH AND BRITISH APPRAISALS

Within months after hostilities in Europe ended, a tentative balance sheet could be drawn up. The statistics of the “Final Solution” numbered 2,800,000 Polish Jews, 800,000 Soviet Jews, 450,000 Hungarian Jews, 350,000 Rumanian Jews, 180,000 German Jews, 60,000 Austrian Jews, 243,000 Czechoslovakian Jews, 110,000 Dutch Jews, 25,000 Belgian Jews, 50,000 Yugoslav Jews, 80,000 Greek Jews, 65,000 French Jews, 10,000 Italian Jews—all liquidated by shooting, gassing, hanging, burning, or starvation and disease. The data of survival took longer to accumulate, for it was based upon the number of Jewish “displaced persons” who gathered in the Allied occupation sectors of Germany.

General Eisenhower’s initial policy was to return these “DPs” to their countries of origin. Yet the majority were natives of eastern Europe, where they had escaped Nazi massacre in the wake of the retreating Soviet army. Eisenhower’s order would have compelled them to return to the graveyards of their families, and to the less than tender mercies of the Polish, Ukrainian, and Rumanian populations. It was not until late summer of 1945 that visiting Jewish welfare teams alerted the American commanders to the anti-Semitism rampant in eastern Europe. It happened that Earl G. Harrison, dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, had already been appointed by Washington to make a survey of European refugee conditions. The White House therefore instructed him to pay special attention to the circumstances of the Jews. Harrison fulfilled his mission, and his later report was an indictment of military insensitivity to the plight of the Jewish DPs in the American zone. Immediately afterward, on direct orders from President Truman, the treatment of these survivors was improved, their housing augmented, their rations increased. Under no circumstances, the directive stated, were east European Jews to be turned back from refugee camps in Germany.

Spontaneously, then, refugee traffic from the East to German relocation centers gained momentum. It was still largely unorganized throughout 1945 and was carried out with the help of private German or Polish smugglers, who moved the Jews westward in return for money or goods. By the opening days of 1946, 2,000 to 3,000 Jews a day were crossing from Poland into Czechoslovakia and on to central Europe. By the summer of that year, nearly 100,000 Jewish DPs had reached Germany. Jewish living conditions in the renovated former concentration camps were not intolerable. Food,

clothing, and medical attention were provided by the American army and supplemented from Jewish philanthropic resources. For the survivors, however, each additional day in the European charnel house was a psychologically intolerable ordeal. The vision of escape became their obsession.

With equal expectation, the Zionist world in turn placed its trust in Britain's new Labor government. The Agency leadership by then had written off the Conservatives as verbalizers. Until the end, as late as June 1945, Churchill had maintained the White Paper restrictions intact, cautioning the Zionists that the Palestine issue could not be "effectively considered until the victorious Allies are definitely seated at the Peace Table." By contrast, the Labor party record on Palestine was known to be sympathetic. Indeed, Labor's numerous resolutions of support for the Jewish National Home had been evoked by no American-style pressure group, but rather by a "profound conviction," in the recollection of a Laborite MP, Richard Crossman, "that the establishment of the national home was an important part of the Socialist creed..." This lent a unique significance to the pro-Zionist plank adopted at the Labor party's convention in 1944. The statement went so far in its endorsement of a Jewish Palestine, actually suggesting a mass transplantation of the Arab population to neighboring lands, that it left even the Zionists gasping.

Hopes in the Yishuv revived dramatically, therefore, following Labor's stunning upset victory of July 1945. "The British workers will understand our aims," Ben-Gurion declared exultantly, upon hearing the news. There was additional reason for encouragement. The community that now demanded recognition was no longer a precarious minority settlement. By 1944, as has been seen, the Jewish population of Palestine had reached 560,000. Its economy had been profoundly stimulated by the war. Almost half its food needs could now be supplied by its own farms. Industrial production had risen dramatically. Weizmann, returning to Palestine after a five-year absence, was astonished at the magnitude of growth. He wrote later:

The war years had knit the community into a powerful, self-conscious organism—and the great war effort, out of all proportion to the numerical strength of the Yishuv, had given the Jews of Palestine a heightened self-reliance, a justified sense of merit and achievement, a renewed claim on the democratic world, and a high degree of technical development. ... The National Home was in fact here—unrecognized, and by that lack of recognition frustrated in the fulfillment of its task.

In this mood of suppressed exasperation at years of blocked immigration, therefore, combined with renewed confidence in the Yishuv's strength and in the pro-Zionism of British Labor, Ben-Gurion led a deputation to London within ten days of the Attlee government's accession to power. He presented his demands to the new colonial secretary, George Hall. The list was the autonomist Biltmore Program in all its essentials except the demand for final sovereignty, coupled with a request for the immediate admittance into Palestine of 100,000 Jewish displaced persons. The very scope of the demands, not less than the aggressiveness with which Ben-Gurion presented them and the colonial secretary rejected them, turned the interview into a disaster. The outraged

Hall sputtered afterward that Ben-Gurion's attitude was "different from anything which I had ever before experienced." Several weeks later, on August 25, the Colonial Office replied with a palliative offer of 2,000 immigrant certificates remaining unused from the original White Paper allotment, with a supplemental monthly quota of 1,400—provided the Arabs agreed. This response in turn dumfounded and appalled the Zionist leadership.

By then, a guideline for the entire Middle East already had been prepared by the Labor foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin. Drafted even earlier by previous British governments, it accepted as unchallengeable the importance of maintaining the friendship of the Arab world. One reason was economic. Britain in 1945 was virtually bankrupt. Its armies had engaged the Axis on five continents and had borne the weight of hostilities longer than any other Allied nation. When the bill was calculated afterward, a quarter of Britain's national wealth was found to have been expended. The domestic cupboard was bare. The nation's remaining supply of hard currency was adequate for barely 40 percent of current purchases, and this at a moment when the new Labor government was intent on carrying out an extensive, even revolutionary, program of social welfare.

One of Bevin's priority concerns during the grim postwar era, therefore, was to assure the single most important of Britain's remaining overseas resources. This was oil, the power source of the country's very industrial existence and a foreign-currency earner of near-sacred importance. Britain's vast holdings were concentrated in the Middle East, partly in Iran, but largely, too, in the vast Kirkuk field of Iraq, in Kuwait, and in Qatar. Both the production and the potential of this liquid El Dorado were calculated as immense. If there was anxiety for continued supply, it was related less to the bottomless wells of the Persian Gulf than to the pipelines crossing the frontiers of other, politically unstable, Arab lands. The growing network, traversing hundreds of miles of desert, was uniquely vulnerable to disruption and sabotage, and its security would be assured only as long as Britain could depend upon Arab political friendship and quiescence.

If a need for oil and pipeline easements was one factor in determining Bevin's Middle Eastern policy, geopolitical strategy was another. Between 1943 and 1947, the British fulfilled their long-cherished ambition of maneuvering the French out of Syria and Lebanon, and thus ended a perennial source of imperial competition in the eastern Mediterranean. During those same years, however, the Soviet Union was emerging as a potentially far more serious threat to Britain's military and economic hegemony in the Middle East. This became evident in the immediate postwar period as Soviet funds, weapons, and advisers fueled a Communist insurrection in Greece; as Moscow issued harsh and ominous territorial demands upon Turkey; and as Red Army divisions continued solidly emplaced and apparently immovable in northern Iran. Notwithstanding his comradely Socialist background, Foreign Secretary Bevin entertained no illusions whatever about the magnitude of the Soviet danger. After Potsdam, he stated his misgivings on Russian policy in Parliament, his certainty of Soviet intentions "to come right across ... the throat of the British Commonwealth." In response to that threat, Bevin appreciated with acute urgency that Britain's sphere of

influence in the Persian Gulf area, with its immense oil reserves, and in the lower Middle East, fronting the “warm waters of the Mediterranean,” had to be protected at any cost.

By the same token, the foreign secretary understood how vital, and now how fragile, was his nation’s complex skein of imperial relationships in the Arab world. Reduced as it was to near-insolvency, Britain scarcely was capable of assuring its relationship with the Arabs through the conventional methods of armed force or intimidation. Rather, a more promising technique had been initiated and encouraged by the Churchill government after 1942. It was to foster an Arab confederation as an instrument of regional stability under British influence. After several preliminary meetings, the Arab leaders did in fact join together in such an organization in March 1945—although the League of Arab States hardly became the extension of British policy that London had anticipated. Another method was to cultivate Arab goodwill by offering to evacuate Britain’s garrisons in Egypt, the Sudan, and Iraq. It was London’s expectation that, as a *quid pro quo*, the Egyptians and Arabs would accept treaty arrangements guaranteeing Britain the option of return to its former bases upon the event of war or the threat of war. In the end, of course, the entire concept of a new Middle Eastern relationship depended on Britain’s trustworthiness in Arab eyes.

Bevin appreciated this fact. He did so, moreover, not as a babe in the woods, awkwardly dependent upon the more experienced professional staff in the Foreign Office. He was his own man. Indeed, the stamp of Bevin’s own background and personality influenced every phase of the explosive Palestine negotiations for the next three years. He had been molded in a hard school. Orphaned at ten, he had spent his youth laboring at slave wages as a farmer’s helper, a dishwasher, a truck driver. At times he stole for his food. Remarkably, he escaped brutalization. As a young man he diligently studied economics in night courses offered by the Social Democratic Federation. At the age of twenty-nine he became an official of the dockers’ union, and eventually a member of the general council of Britain’s Trades Union Congress. The lineaments of Bevin’s personality were already visible by then: blunt, hard-driving, impatient of criticism, scornful of inefficiency. His prestige in the labor movement was unshakable. When the Socialists won in 1945, Clement Attlee, a mild and diffident man, recognized the need for a strong person beside him. Bevin was unquestionably the strongest in the party, and he was chosen for the key post of foreign secretary. To the surprise of many, he brought with him solid ideas on international affairs. His position in the trade union movement and as wartime minister of labor had taken him to all parts of the world, and he had acquainted himself with the problems of other countries. Most important, Bevin was afraid of no man. Bull-like in appearance and manner, he was unwilling to tolerate intellectual intimidation from any source.

Nor was he unfamiliar with the Palestine question. At the time of the second Labor government under Ramsay MacDonald, when the Zionists were denouncing the Passfield White Paper, representatives of the Histadrut had called on Bevin as a fellow trade unionist for help. He had given it willingly. “Don’t worry,” he said, “I’ll tell the old man.” His intercession with MacDonald had played a decisive role in safeguarding the

Zionist cause. Now, however, fifteen years later, Bevin was unwilling as foreign secretary to thrust himself into the Palestine question without detailed additional study. To that end he organized a new committee of cabinet ministers and Foreign Office experts. The most knowledgeable of the latter was Harold Beeley, a pronounced Arabophile and Whitehall's authority on all Palestine matters.

The committee launched into its work in August 1945 and reported back to the cabinet in the middle of September. In its deliberations, the group had been influenced by a special report completed in February 1944 by the Royal Institute of International Affairs, which emphasized again the vital strategic importance of preserving Arab friendship. The more the Laborites on the committee studied the Palestine question now, the more they were embarrassed by the visible gulf between their party commitment to Zionism before the election and the advice tendered by men like Beeley. Attlee wrote afterward: "We'd started something in the Jewish National Home after World War One without perceiving the consequences; it was done in a very thoughtless way with people of a different outlook on civilisation suddenly imported into Palestine—a wild experiment that was bound to cause trouble." For the time being, then, the committee suggested carrying on with a small monthly quota of Jewish immigration visas. Partition was deemed unacceptable, for apparently it could not be put into effect except by force against the Arabs. Whitehall's long campaign against the Churchill cabinet committee report now seemed to be paying off under the Socialist administration.

At no time, on the other hand, did Bevin give serious consideration to the use of force against the Jews. Better methods of accommodation were surely available. Certain that conciliation was the answer, and that his years of experience as a union negotiator would decide the issue, the foreign secretary went so far as to give his "personal assurance" to Barnet Janner in the House of Commons that he would "stake [his] political future" on solving the Palestine issue. Bevin's plan was to convince Washington that it must share responsibility in dealing with the refugees. The government of the United States would influence the Zionists to be reasonable. In their unlimited resources, the American people would help find sanctuary for the DPs elsewhere.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE REFUGEE QUESTION

The Roosevelt administration had earlier displayed its concern for the Jewish plight. Yet its solicitude had taken the form not of a relaxation of American immigration quotas ([Chapter X](#)), but of occasional efforts to intercede with the British to modify the White Paper. Secretary of State Cordell Hull recalled that throughout the war he had "repeatedly spoken on this matter to Ambassador Lord Halifax." In March 1944, Roosevelt assured Zionist leaders that the United States government had at no time given its approval to the White Paper, and he hoped that "full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home." Weizmann met with Roosevelt in 1942 and 1943. The Philby scheme came up for discussion in the second of the two meetings. At the suggestion of Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, who was present, Roosevelt agreed to dispatch a representative to Arabia in an effort to win Ibn Saud to a more

friendly position on the Zionist issue. The emissary he chose was Colonel Halford Hoskins, a veteran Middle East hand with important oil connections among the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. Hoskins arrived in Riyadh in August of 1943 and conferred with Ibn Saud. In the course of discussions, the Arab ruler sensed that the United States had no intention of pressing him to accept the Philby scheme. He therefore curtly rejected the proposal, and nothing more came of it. Roosevelt meanwhile continued to express a genial interest in the Zionist cause, repeating to Jewish visitors his personal sympathy with the Jewish National Home. But the president's assurances of friendship were cautiously deprecated by American ambassadors in Arab nations, even as Roosevelt himself privately minimized their importance to congressional leaders.

By early 1945 the State Department had moved firmly to a position of anti-Zionism, from Secretary Edward Stettinius down. During the course of the year, in fact, Undersecretary Joseph Grew warned the administration that "Zionist activities in this country will remain the gravest threat to friendly relations between the United States and the countries of the Near East until solution to the problem is reached." For the previous two years a series of research studies on Palestine had been conducted by a State Department interdivisional committee, led by Gordon P. Merriam, director of the Near East desk—a division, then, of Loy Henderson's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs. In their summary of January 1945, the committee members urged that Palestine be stipulated an international territory under United Nations trusteeship. Such an arrangement of course would permit only limited Jewish immigration and landownership. Roosevelt was not uninfluenced by this consensus. In discussing the Palestine question with Hoskins on March 5, 1945, therefore, he accepted the State Department's view that an autonomous Jewish commonwealth would provoke a mass Arab uprising, and that an international trusteeship was far to be preferred.

The president's own ambiguity on the Palestine issue had been evident during his return trip from Yalta the previous month, when he met briefly with Ibn Saud off the Arabian coast. The meeting had been arranged by Stettinius in the hope that American oil and air landing rights on Saudi territory might be reconfirmed. But Roosevelt was optimistic at the same time that his charm and personal magnetism could win the desert ruler over to a flexible position on Zionist demands. If all else failed, the president had an additional inducement in the Lend-Lease aid Washington had been providing Saudi Arabia since 1943. Nevertheless, the king remained unimpressed with Roosevelt's plan to use Palestine as a sanctuary for Jewish refugees. He explained Arab opposition forcefully, if courteously. In the end his argument reached the mark. Roosevelt assured Ibn Saud, both on the occasion of their meeting and afterward in a letter of April 5, 1945, that he would not adopt a stance hostile to the Arabs and that Washington would not alter its basic approach toward Palestine "without full and prior consultation with both Jews and Arabs." The president told Congress afterward that of "the problems of Arabia I learned more about the whole problem, the Moslem problem, the Jewish problem, by talking with Ibn Saud for five minutes than I could have learned in an exchange of two or three dozen letters." To Judge Joseph Proskauer, president of the American Jewish Committee, Roosevelt subsequently remarked that "on account of the

Arab situation, nothing could be done in Palestine.” Later, he issued another perfunctory statement of reassurance to the Zionists. But the president’s assistant, David K. Niles, was probably correct when he once remarked: “There are serious doubts in my mind that Israel would have come into being if Roosevelt had lived.”

Harry Truman’s approach was rather less equivocal. Upon assuming office, the new president was of course exposed immediately to the full force of the State Department’s objections to Zionism. On the other hand, he had come to the presidency at a moment when the trauma of the displaced persons first became acute, as it had not in Roosevelt’s lifetime. Without the backlog of prestige Roosevelt had enjoyed, moreover, Truman was obliged to remain sensitive to ethnic political pressures. American Zionism was not the least among these ([Chapter XII](#)). Soon it became virtually a reflexive accusation for Attlee and Bevin, in the heat of their anger toward Truman, to charge that his support of Jewish immigration into Palestine was motivated essentially by domestic politics. At best, this was an oversimplification. Truman’s long history of sympathy for the underdog, in politics, economics, and religion, was a matter of record. In his account of this period, Dean Acheson recalled that “Mr. Truman held deep-seated convictions on many subjects, among them, for instance, a dislike of Franco and Catholic obscurantism in Spain.” Not least of all, he had been a pro-Zionist since his early manhood. Truman wrote in his autobiography:

I had familiarized myself with the history of the question of a Jewish homeland and the position of the British and the Arabs. I was skeptical ... about some of the views and attitudes assumed by the “striped-pants boys” in the State Department. It seemed to me that they didn’t care enough about what happened to the thousands of displaced persons who were involved. It was my feeling that it would be possible for us to watch out for the long-range interests of our country while at the same time helping these unfortunate victims of persecution to find a home.

The president’s instinct was to assign the broader Palestine issue to the United Nations. “For the immediate future, however,” he explained, “some aid was needed for the Jews of Europe.”

With this aim in mind, Truman sent Churchill a brief note on July 24, 1945, during the Potsdam Conference, expressing hope that the British government would “take steps to lift the restrictions of the White Paper into Palestine,” and that the prime minister would let him have his “ideas on the settlement of the Palestine question so that we can at a later ... date discuss the problem in concrete terms.” Before a reply could be sent, Churchill was defeated in the general election. Soon afterward, it is recalled, Truman dispatched Earl G. Harrison to study the conditions of the Jewish DPs. Harrison’s report not only indicted American military insensitivity but also laid out a number of uncompromising proposals for solving the refugee question. With thinly veiled indignation, Harrison described the appalling circumstances of the death camp survivors, their despair, their frantic anxiety to leave the European morgue. At least 100,000 of them, the report suggested, ought to be evacuated immediately, and “Palestine is definitely and preeminently the first choice.”

Truman endorsed this proposal without qualification, despite the cautionary advice of

Loy Henderson and Secretary of State James Byrnes (who had succeeded Stettinius). In a letter to Attlee of August 31, 1945, the president urged that 100,000 Jews be allowed into Palestine forthwith. "The main solution appears to lie in the quick evacuation of as many as possible of the nonrepatriable Jews, who wish it, to Palestine. If it is to be effective, such action should not be delayed." The appeal took Attlee by surprise, so much so that it required two and a half weeks until Bevin and the Foreign Office could prepare a response. Dispatched over Attlee's signature on September 16, the reply offered a clue to London's emerging approach to the Palestine question. It rejected the notion that Jewish displaced persons had suffered more than non-Jewish victims of Nazism, and then proposed that the survivors be shipped to Philippeville and Felada in North Africa, where camps existed with facilities for up to 35,000 persons. The letter continued:

In the case of Palestine, we have the Arabs to consider as well as the Jews, and there have been solemn undertakings ... given by your predecessor, yourself and by Mr. Churchill, that before we come to a final decision and operate it, there would be consultation with the Arabs. It would be very unwise to break these solemn pledges and so set aflame the whole Middle East.... In addition to this problem we are engaged upon another related one and this is India. The fact that there are ninety million Moslems who are easily inflamed in that country compels us to consider the problem from this aspect also.

There is little doubt that the British government made a serious error in its refusal to accept the 100,000. London might have avoided an ugly confrontation with the United States. More important, a good deal of the stridency might have been taken out of Zionist demands. It would also have been useful if Bevin had exercised verbal restraint, rather than warn, on November 2, "that if the Jews, with all their suffering, want to get too much at the head of the queue, you have the danger of another anti-Semitic reaction through it all." This remark elicited a day of mourning in the Yishuv.

As late as the autumn of 1945, it was not the Jewish Agency's intention that Britain should abandon its ties to Palestine altogether. Yet the Zionist leadership had concluded that if Whitehall's attitude was based on the assumption of Arab strength, then Britain must be equally impressed by Jewish strength. For the first time, the Agency countenanced specific measures of physical resistance. Thus, in November 1945, the commanders of the Haganah and of the two dissident Jewish underground forces reached agreement that all future Etzel (Irgun Z'vai Le'umi) and Lech'i operations would be coordinated under Haganah direction. For the next eight months the three groups undertook systematic attacks on British installations. Arms were acquired from various sources. British soldiers occasionally were willing to sell equipment. Jewish units in the British army filched weapons from depots, scavenged for German guns on the battlefields of the Western Desert and Italy, and smuggled them back in large quantities. A number of secret Haganah munitions factories began turning out grenades, mines, and light automatic rifles. Finally, during late 1945 and early 1946, the Etzel and Lech'i embarked on a number of daring and successful raids against British armories.

With these accumulated weapons, an underground attack in October 1945 "liberated"

several hundred illegal Jewish immigrants from a British detention camp. That same month a joint Haganah-Etzel operation dynamited the British rail network at two hundred different points throughout the country, effectively paralyzing British troop movements; while the Haganah destroyed three British naval launches that had been used for intercepting refugee vessels. Other acts of sabotage were carried out against British airfields, radar stations, and coastal lighthouses. Although shaken, the mandatory authorities were intent upon dealing firmly with this Jewish resistance. Military reinforcements were promptly sent in, among them the Sixth Airborne Division, veterans of the Normandy invasion. By the beginning of December 1945, four destroyers, two cruisers, and large numbers of patrol planes had similarly been added to the blockade of Palestine coastal waters. Under a new high commissioner, Lieutenant General Sir Alan Cunningham, the government's retaliatory measures became increasingly severe. Early in 1946, for example, after the Etzel successfully raided a number of arms depots in the Judea area, the British rounded up more than 14,000 civilians for a particularly harsh interrogation. Yet underground agents were rarely caught. General Barker, the commanding officer in Palestine, had to admit later that "the Jews knew all government secrets and military plans within a day of our making a decision. Their Intelligence system is uncanny." The attacks continued, hitting police, army, and naval garrisons. The British were confounded. Until the postwar period, they had been accustomed to thinking of violence in Palestine as exclusively an Arab prerogative. The force and savagery of Jewish resistance came as a shock to them. Nevertheless, Bevin's determination to solve the refugee issue and the future of Palestine in his own way was not easily to be undermined.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Ten weeks passed before London formulated a new compromise approach to Truman's request. On October 26, 1945, before the House of Commons, and on the following November 13, in a letter to the American president, Attlee proposed a joint Anglo-American committee to investigate the tragedy of the refugees and devise a solution to it. Unspoken in the offer was the assumption that the United States would also cooperate in putting a solution into effect. Truman accepted the challenge with alacrity, but with the qualification that Palestine alone, rather than any alternative refuge, become the focus of the inquiry. Attlee and Bevin grudgingly accepted this condition as evidently the only means of winning American participation. The foreign secretary warned, however, that His Majesty's Government could not "accept the view that the Jews should be driven out of Europe," nor that Palestine alone could solve the problem of rehabilitating European Jews.

Among the six British members of the joint investigating body the most influential were the chairman, Sir John Singleton, a judge of the high court; Herbert Morrison, one of the top Labor political tacticians; and a young Labor member of Parliament, Richard Crossman, who became the intellectual gadfly of his colleagues. Accompanying the British delegation was Harold Beeley, the Foreign Office expert on Palestine. The

committee members first visited the United States to meet with their American counterparts. The latter's chairman was also a judge, Joseph Hutcheson, a seventy-year-old ultraconservative from Texas. Other leading members included Dr. Frank Aydelotte, director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton; Dr. James MacDonald, a professor of government at Columbia and former League of Nations high commissioner for German refugees; and Bartley Crum, a San Francisco lawyer and would-be politico whose Zionist leanings were as undisguised as the pro-Arab bias of Beeley.

The members underwent their first briefing in Washington, then heard their first Jewish and Arab witnesses in New York. Both sides were equally uncompromising. The Arabs insisted that Jewish political intercession alone was forcing the American government's hand. The Zionists launched a scathing attack on British policy, as if England were mainly responsible for the tragedy of European Jewry. Proceeding then to London in January 1946, the committee was received by Bevin at a formal luncheon. Crossman recalled that the foreign secretary "stated slowly but emphatically that, if we achieved a unanimous report, he would personally do everything in his power to put it into effect." Bevin then devoted the rest of his remarks to an attack on "racialism" and indicated that he foresaw no solution in the establishment of "racial states in Palestine." The London hearings continued until February 1. Although a number of pro-Zionist witnesses testified, including Lord Herbert Samuel and Leopold Amery, it was in London that the committee members at last encountered the full force of bureaucratic anti-Zionism. Experts from the Colonial and Foreign Offices direly predicted a bloodbath in Palestine if thousands of additional Jews were introduced into that country.

The warning was to be echoed even more decisively by the various British officials whom the committee later interviewed in the Middle East. "They detest the [Jewish] Agency like sin," Crossman wrote, and ignored the Jewish side as "outrageously" as the Zionists in America had disregarded the Arab position. The line of continuity between Arab and British spokesmen was all but seamless. Ironically, Azzam Pasha, secretary general of the Arab League, had once counseled his fellow Arabs "to explain our case in reconciliatory terms and as people who understand the present situation." But when Azzam himself, tense and suspicious, appeared before the Anglo-American Committee in Cairo, his objections to Jewish immigration were bitterly uncompromising. The single high point of his address was an authentically moving peroration:

The Zionist, the new Jew ... pretends that he has got a particular civilizing mission with which he returns to a backward, degenerate race in order to put the elements of progress into an area which has no progress. Well ... the Arabs simply stand and say "No." ... We are a living, vitally strong nation, we are in our renaissance, we are producing as many children as any nation in the world.... We have a heritage of civilization and of spiritual life. We are not going to allow ourselves to be controlled either by great nations or small nations or dispersed nations.

Even more impressive was the testimony of Albert Hourani, the distinguished Lebanese scholar and Oxford don. Coldly logical, brilliant in exposition, Hourani made a formidable case for the historic Arab connection with Palestine.

But it was in the Holy Land itself that the visceral quality of Arab nationalism was at

last fully gauged. The Palestine Arabs in fact were under the severest disadvantage of those testifying before the investigating group. Their community still had not recovered from the economic losses of the 1936–39 civil war. Their political leadership, outlawed by the British, had fled the country and were living in neighboring lands. Until 1945 the Arab Higher Committee had ceased to function in Palestine. From time to time efforts were made to resuscitate this body, but they were invariably blocked by the Mufti's followers, who refused to allow any challenge to his leadership. Instead, their repeated demand was that Haj Amin himself, with his aides, should be allowed first to return to Palestine. The British vetoed the request.

Eventually a compromise was reached, virtually on the eve of the Anglo-American Committee's arrival in Jerusalem. Through the intercession of the Syrian foreign minister, Jamil Mirdam Bey, the Husseini family agreed to reactivate the Higher Committee. The British in turn agreed to release the Mufti's nephew, Jamil al-Husseini, from his internment in Rhodesia as an enemy agent. Shortly afterward the Committee was reestablished. British and Arab moderates alike, however, were appalled at its composition. The chairmanship was left vacant for the Mufti. The vice-chairman now was Jamil al-Husseini, whose record of pro-Axis activity almost matched his uncle's. Other leading members equally shared pro-Axis backgrounds. Thus, Wasif Kamal had played an important role in the Iraqi rebellion of 1941, and in 1943 had flown to Italy and Germany to serve as a close associate of the Mufti. Dr. Hussein al-Khalidi similarly had participated in the Rashid Ali uprising, and afterward, in 1943, had become an announcer for the German Arabic-language radio station in Athens. Emile Ghorri, the earliest of the Mufti's followers to return to Palestine (in 1941), was an organizer of the assassination squads that had disposed of the Mufti's Arab enemies in the civil disturbances of the late 1930s. It was not the most impressive body that could have been chosen to present the Arab case hardly a year after the war against the Axis.

With full self-assurance, nevertheless, the Arab Higher Committee resumed its inflexible prewar stance during its testimony in March 1946. Jamil al-Husseini cited the Arab majority in Palestine (1,300,000 to 560,000 Jews), the nation's blood relationship with the rest of the Arab world, the inability of Palestine to unite with other Arab countries that had attained or nearly attained self-government. "All these evils," the argument went, "are due entirely to the presence of the Zionists and the support given to them by certain of the Powers...." Among the "positive evils" described by the Higher Committee was the economic and political imbalance already caused by Jewish immigration, which had reduced the Arab proportion of the country from 93 percent in 1918 to 65 percent in 1946, and appeared likely to transform the Arabs into a minority in Palestine. The usual warnings of Jewish land mastery were advanced. Nor did the Higher Committee hesitate to venture a noteworthy reference to Arab wartime activities, citing the "large number" of Arabs who had volunteered to serve in the Allied forces, and the loyalty of the Palestine Arab community "even when the Germans reached the borders of Alexandria...." The Jews, by contrast, "in their present attitude in Palestine are nothing but the embodiment of Nazism." In any event, the *cri de coeur* with which the Higher Committee expressed its deepest fears of Zionism was palpably

genuine and evoked the sympathy of the British and American visitors. “The Zionists claim further,” the brief declared,

that they are acting as mediators of Western civilization in the Middle East. Even if their claims were true, the services they were rendering would be incidental only; the Arab world has been in direct touch with the West for a hundred years, and has its own reawakened cultural movement, and thus it has no need of a mediator.... In a deeper sense the presence of the Zionists is even an obstacle to the understanding of Western civilization, insofar as it ... is tending to induce in the Arabs an unsympathetic attitude towards the West and all its works.

The Arabs summarized their claims, then, by demanding an end to Jewish immigration, abolition of the mandate, repudiation of the Balfour Declaration, and recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state consonant with other Arab independent nations.

The basis of the Jewish case was laid even before the Anglo-American Committee reached Jerusalem. Shortly after leaving London and Vienna, in February 1946, the committee members visited the displaced persons' camps. “The abstract arguments about Zionism and the Jewish State seemed curiously remote after this experience of human degradation,” Crossman wrote afterward. “We had been cut off from what had previously been reality.” By then the Jewish survivors already were responding to the challenge offered them by Ben-Gurion, who had addressed a huge crowd of DPs in Landsberg, Germany, in the autumn of 1945: “Do not be afraid if you hear of new laws promulgated against us tomorrow or the day after. A Jewish power has arisen which will fight together with you for a proud, independent Palestine. I promise you that not only your children but also we, the white-haired ones, will live to see the Jewish homeland.”

Early in 1946 the refugees gave their answer by holding a Congress of Jewish Displaced Persons in Munich and accepting the challenge of mobilizing large-scale immigration to Palestine. To that end, a wide-ranging program of Zionist activities was organized, including Hebrew classes, courses in Jewish history, calisthenics, even agricultural training schools. The committee members witnessed this phenomenon as they toured the displaced persons' centers. What they had heard about the Jewish survivors in Washington and London apparently was confirmed here. The visitors understood Jewish feelings better, moreover, after encountering the poisonous anti-Semitism that still lingered in central Europe even at the highest level. “They found themselves increasingly regarding Palestine as the Jews of Europe regarded it,” wrote Crossman, “as a solution rather than a problem.”

In Palestine itself Weizmann was the first Zionist spokesman to appear. Although over seventy and half blind, the Zionist elder statesman waxed surprisingly vigorous before the committee. He described the ineradicable nature of European Judeophobia, even after the collapse of the Nazi Reich. Resorting to classical Zionist arguments, he insisted once more on the unlikelihood of a cure for anti-Semitism as long as the Jews remained a stateless people. As in many previous appearances before earlier investigating bodies, Weizmann again found it necessary to review the diplomatic context of the Balfour Declaration, to describe the circumstances of Jewish life throughout the world and—in

this instance—the contributions of Palestine Jewry to the war effort. During the intensive questioning that followed his remarks, Weizmann admitted that he had gone much further toward the statehood position than before the war, but insisted that the White Paper and the Holocaust of European Jewry now rendered Jewish sovereignty indispensable. He confessed, too, that the Palestine issue was not one between right and wrong, but between the greater and the lesser injustice.

Ben-Gurion's testimony was much tougher, although not without a certain harsh effectiveness. In fuller detail than Weizmann, the Jewish Agency chairman recounted Zionist accomplishments in Palestine, the welfare community that had been established on the basis of democratic socialism. Jewish statehood was even more central to the Zionist goal than the admission of 100,000 refugees, he insisted. "We are not going to renounce our independence, even if we have to pay the supreme price, and there are hundreds of thousands of Jews ... both in this country and abroad who will give up their lives, if necessary, for Jewish independence—for Zion." Unlike Weizmann, Ben-Gurion was evasive about repudiating the current wave of Jewish violence in Palestine (the committee members were under constant armed protection), and less emphatic about the ideal of Anglo-Zionist cooperation.

The Jews made their strongest case in documenting Zionist achievements and plans for the future. Their graphs and statistics rebutted Arab claims of Jewish economic exploitation and suggested that the opposite was the case, that the Arab standard of living was rising uninterrupted. A survey conducted by a team of American (Jewish) economists was cited in evidence of Palestine's capacity to absorb "between 685,000 and 1,250,000 immigrants in the next decade." A blueprint prepared by the eminent American hydrologist Dr. Walter Lowdermilk anticipated that the water to support this enlarged population could feasibly be drawn from the harnessed flow of the Jordan River. The visitors were impressed. "I had to admit," wrote Crossman, "that no Western colonists in any other country had done so little harm, or disturbed so little the life of the indigenous people [as the Jews].... If Zionism in 1918 was a synthetic importation, in 1946 it had become the fighting patriotism of an existing commonwealth."

The mass of transcribed and documentary evidence was taken by the committee to Lausanne at the end of March. There, in the next month, it was boiled down to a unanimous report of less than one hundred pages, and issued on May 1, 1946. It described the unbearable physical and psychological conditions of the European Jewish survivors and the improbability of any serious revival of Jewish life on the Continent. "We know of no country to which the great majority can go in the immediate future other than Palestine," the report continued. It then recommended the immediate authorization of 100,000 immigration certificates. The suggestions for Palestine itself were more equivocal. Most of the group favored a unitary solution for the country. Accordingly, the report turned down either an Arab or a Jewish state, for "in neither case would minority guarantees afford adequate protection for the subordinate group." Without offering a detailed solution, the conclusion simply proposed a regime in which further Jewish immigration would neither be subject to an Arab veto nor be allowed to grow to such numbers as to produce a Jewish majority. During the interim, the mandate

should continue to function.

Whatever the document's limitations, hardly any of the group anticipated that it would be categorically rejected, for it appeared to fulfill Bevin's principal desiderata. It was unanimous, for one thing. Moreover, it recommended (however vaguely) a unitary state. Finally, it enjoyed American moral and financial backing. London's response was frigid, nevertheless. Inundated by difficulties in Europe, Egypt, and India, the British government was unprepared to face the consequences of opening Palestine to an additional 100,000 Jews. Should such a step be taken, the mandatory government anticipated that an extra British division would be required to maintain the peace. The chancellor of the exchequer calculated the expense of these reinforcements as £40 million. He did not have the money. In any case, Whitehall was hardly eager to risk further antagonizing the Arab world—possibly the larger Moslem world—at a critical juncture of British diplomacy in Egypt and Iraq, in Iran, Turkey, and India, as well as in Palestine itself.

But if the committee members had not expected an outright rejection of the fruits of their labors, presumably London had not envisaged official endorsement from the United States government, without prior consultation, and while the ink of the report was barely dry. The State Department was known to be sympathetic to Britain's difficulties, after all, and cautious about accepting any simplistic approach to the Palestine question. On April 27, Bevin pleaded with the American government to delay release of the report until after joint discussions. The request was turned down. The text of the document was published in Washington on May 1, 1946, and that same day Truman publicly announced his approval of the recommendations for admitting 100,000 DPs into Palestine. Indeed, the president concentrated on this issue to the exclusion of the longest section of the report. E. F. Francis-Williams, Bevin's friend and biographer, wrote later that Truman's statement "threw Bevin into one of the blackest rages I ever saw him in." The foreign secretary sent an immediate protest to Washington, making clear his government's collective anger at this intervention of "unparalleled irresponsibility in a period of acute tension when British soldiers are being killed by Jewish terrorists." Attlee went further. He was determined that if the Americans wished to press Zionist claims and lecture Britain on its responsibilities, then they must help foot the bill. The prime minister thereupon cabled Truman on May 26, setting out the expenses both governments had to consider in putting the report into effect, including the costs of transporting, housing, and maintaining the immigrants, suppressing terrorism, and shouldering the additional commitments that might follow.

Somewhat reluctantly, the president accepted this challenge, confirming that American and British experts should meet. But Attlee continued to procrastinate, requesting further discussions even before working out a final plan of action. The approach was short-sighted. Even at this late juncture, had London granted the humanitarian request of admitting 100,000 Jews, the Palestine question undoubtedly would have lost much of its unendurable tension. Certainly Jewish emphasis upon territorial sovereignty would have been moderated. If rejection of Truman's appeal was a serious tactical blunder, moreover, Bevin insisted upon compounding it by the harsh

insensitivity of his remarks. Thus, his irritated reaction to the president's suggestion was to declare publicly that the Americans favored the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine because "they did not want too many of them in New York." The outrage provoked by this statement was not limited to Jews. Sailing to the United States shortly afterward, Bevin discovered that the stevedores in the port of New York refused to handle his baggage.

JEWISH EXTREMISM INTENSIFIED

London's rejection of the committee report began one of the darkest periods of the Jewish postwar experience. The movement of DPs from eastern Europe to the American zone of Germany was picking up momentum. In the summer of 1946 it was given new urgency by the spontaneous outbreak of native pogroms against the remnant Jewish community in Poland. As a result, the survivors once again began to depart the country by the thousands. During July, August, and September, 90,000 of them arrived in the Western zone of Germany, where they all but overwhelmed American military and Jewish philanthropic resources. During the same period, another 25,000 Jews arrived from the Balkans. Ultimately, by the end of 1946, more than a quarter of a million Jews were packed into the displaced persons' camps of Western Germany.

The summer and autumn thus represented a new threshold of emergency for the Zionist leadership. Far from being impressed by the Anglo-American Committee Report, Ben-Gurion rejected it in its totality. He had always insisted on self-rule as the one sure method for acquiring control of immigration. Even the admittance of a limited installment of refugees was not inducement for him to abandon this goal. In any case, Bevin had rejected the Anglo-American proposals. The foreign secretary's obstinacy, together with the explosion of refugees from eastern Europe, made it clear that additional pressure would have to be exerted on the British. This new spirit of grim militancy was expressed in a secret Haganah broadcast of May 12, 1946:

Present British policy ... is based on an erroneous assumption: Britain, in evacuating Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt [sic], intends to concentrate her military bases in Palestine and is therefore concerned to strengthen her hold over the mandate, and is using her responsibility to the Jewish people as a means to that end. But this double game will not work.... We would therefore warn publicly His Majesty's Government that if it does not fulfill its responsibilities under the mandate—above all with regard to the question of immigration—the Jewish Resistance Movement will make every effort to hinder the transfer of British bases to Palestine and to prevent their establishment in this country.

Even before this warning, the Jewish underground groups had been engaged in a vigorous campaign against British installations. Now, however, on the night of June 17, Haganah units launched their most daring attack thus far. They blew up ten of the eleven bridges connecting Palestine with surrounding nations, thereby isolating the country from land communications with its neighbors. Until that moment, the British had refrained from striking back at Jewish sabotage with quite the harshness they had demonstrated in their repression of Kenyan or Malaysian rebels; they were by no means

impervious to the tragedy of European Jewry. But the destruction of the bridges ended the last of the mandatory's restraints. On Saturday, June 29—"Black Sabbath," as the Jews henceforth described it—the British embarked upon the most far-reaching cordon and search in Palestine history. It lasted for two weeks and was nationwide. Tel Aviv was combed block by block, its houses and buildings inspected from basement to attic. Schools and hospitals were not immune from search. Even casts were broken off patients. Many Jewish Agency officials were arrested and placed in detention camps (Ben-Gurion himself was in Paris at the time). Nevertheless, the British were unsuccessful in finding the ranking underground commanders. Nor were arms caches of any importance discovered.

Yet the Jewish Agency in turn sensed that continued assaults on military bases risked even more paralyzing British countermeasures. It therefore instructed the Haganah to concentrate on illegal immigration. On the other hand, the extreme dissident groups were unwilling to accept restraints of any kind. Although badly decimated by earlier attacks on British forces and installations, the Lech'i now carried out over one hundred acts of sabotage and murder between September 1946 and May 1948. It was at this point, too, that the Etzel—the Irgun Z'vai Le'umi (National Military Organization)—which thus far had been erratic in its use of violence against British personnel, reverted to Lech'i methods of killing. And this it did with a vengeance, indeed, with more terrible effect than ever before in the history of the Yishuv. The Etzel had originated in 1931 as Haganah Bet (B), a non-Socialist faction that broke away from the "official" but Labor-dominated underground. Its rank and file consisted overwhelmingly of Betar members and of other young Revisionists, together with small groups of extreme nationalists from the capitalist farm colonies and from the Maccabi, the Jewish middle-class sports movement. The policy of the new organization was based squarely on Jabotinsky's teachings: every Jew had a right to enter Palestine; only active retaliation would deter the Arabs; only Jewish armed force would ensure the Jewish state. The Etzel's symbol was a hand grasping a rifle over the map of Palestine—including Transjordan—with the motto "Rak Kach" (Only Thus).

From the outset, the Jewish Agency sternly denounced the Etzel, and the British countered by mass arrests of its suspected members. Shlomo Ben-Yosef, an Etzel partisan, was the first Jew to be hanged in Palestine (June 8, 1938), for an attack on an Arab bus. Until the publication of the White Paper in May 1939, however, the activities of this group generally were limited to retaliation against Arab marauders. It was only afterward that officials of the mandatory government became the Etzel's principal target. The campaign of violence might have gained serious momentum but for the outbreak of World War II. The Etzel then announced a cessation of its anti-British activities and offered its cooperation in the military effort. In May 1941 its commander, David Raziel, volunteered for a particularly hazardous mission on behalf of the British in Iraq. He was caught in Baghdad and killed by the Rashid Ali government. The loss, coupled with the death of Jabotinsky the previous year, temporarily immobilized the Etzel, and for two years it appeared unlikely that the organization would recover even its limited prewar strength of several hundred members.

Two factors accounted for its revival. One was the ebbing of the conflict in the Middle East and the possibility, therefore, of undertaking rescue and assault measures without endangering the war effort. The other was an infusion of new recruits, many of them Jewish deserters from General Wladislaw Anders's Polish Army, which was stationed temporarily in Palestine. The newcomers were consumed by recent memories of their kinsmen's fate in Nazi Europe. Trained militarily, they were intent now upon following an activist policy of resistance. Even with their enlarged membership, the Etzel's numbers rarely exceeded 2,000 during the entire period of militance from 1944 to 1948. Yet the quality of the group's leadership was altogether fanatical. Thus, Menachem Begin, a gaunt, bespectacled intellectual in his mid-thirties, who commanded the Etzel during its most violent phase, had been toughened in the school of resistance long before arriving in Palestine. A Polish Jew, he had been arrested in Soviet Lithuania for Zionist activities in 1941, and sentenced to imprisonment. Afterward, in a Siberian labor camp, he displayed exceptional physical and moral courage among his anti-Semitic fellow prisoners. A year later he was allowed to enlist in the Anders army. Upon reaching Palestine with this force, he promptly deserted, joined the Etzel, and rose to its command in December 1943.

Under Begin's leadership, the Etzel intensified its assaults on British military installations. The discipline of its members was apparently unshakable. So was their ruthlessness. They extorted funds from Jewish businessmen and occasionally "executed" Jewish informers. Their world was entirely conspiratorial. With a price on their heads, under threat of hanging or long prison terms, they adopted false names and moved from one hiding place to another. After the "Black Sabbath" of June 29, 1946, the Etzel command refused any longer to accept the authority of the joint resistance committee. Instead, Begin determined to carry out a spectacular operation that would dramatize Jewish resistance beyond the frontiers of Palestine or even Britain. He succeeded. On July 22 a group of armed Etzel members entered the kitchen of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. An entire wing of this building was occupied by government offices, together with the headquarters of the CID, the Criminal Investigation Division. The saboteurs deposited heavy milk cans packed with gelignite in the hotel's lower quarters. Time fuses were set and the men departed. According to Begin's later account, a warning of the impending explosion was telephoned to the CID. The British subsequently denied that the warning was ever received. When the explosion went off in the hotel twenty-five minutes later, ninety-one Britishers, Arabs, and Jews were killed, forty-five injured.

This time British punitive measures were directed against the entire Jewish community. Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were placed under curfew for four days and isolated from the rest of the country. A division of British troops received orders to shoot curfew breakers on the spot. Angrily branding all Jews guilty of complicity in terrorist crimes, General Barker put the nation's Jewish homes and shops out of bounds for his troops. In fact, the Agency was no less horrified than the British government by the King David bombing. Ben-Gurion, who had never brought himself totally to disavow earlier underground raids on British installations, now furiously anathematized the Etzel and urged Palestine Jewry to turn its members in wherever they were discovered. On a later

occasion, the Haganah managed to foil an Etzel scheme to blow up British police headquarters in Tel Aviv. Begin and his men were not to be that easily deterred. Rather, they intensified their attacks on military transport, destroying vehicles, paralyzing railroad traffic, occasionally killing British personnel.

Well before this new spate of violence, however, the Haganah had perfected a less sanguinary, and ultimately a far more compelling and effective, method for undermining British policy in the Holy Land.

THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Quietly, unacknowledged, and certainly unappreciated by the Zionists, the British by 1946 were disregarding the limits set by the White Paper and allowing a Jewish immigration of 18,000 a year. It was a not inconsiderable figure by prewar standards. Yet the Jews measured it against the tens of thousands of Jewish refugees still confined in the DP camps. Even before the war, we recall, the Zionist leadership (and the Revisionists) had sponsored an illegal immigration of Jews from Europe and the Middle East. Known as *Aliyah Bet*—Immigration B (nonofficial immigration)—the Agency-directed rescue effort was increasingly linked with the Haganah. From the inception of this program in 1938, its director was Shaul Avigur, a tough, resourceful underground veteran, still in his early thirties. When the war ended, Avigur returned to Europe to open a new office, this time in Paris, a block from Allied military headquarters. His instructions from the Jewish Agency were clear and unequivocal. They were to organize the immediate departure of Jewish DPs for Palestine. Nor was this to be a clandestine smuggling effort of a few hundred or even a few thousand refugees. What was intended, rather, was a traffic organized on a scale of far-reaching proportions, involving tens of thousands of Jews. The homelessness of these victims of Nazism was to be exploited fully, even ruthlessly, to dramatize the fate of the Jewish people and the callousness of British immigration policy in Palestine. In short, the exodus was intended as the realization of Ben-Gurion's promise to the displaced persons at Landsberg: "You are not only needy persons, you are also a political force."

During the next few months Palestine Jews, many of them veterans of the Jewish Brigade, began to appear in the DP camps and elsewhere throughout Europe, working as emissaries of the Agency. With funds supplied by Jewish philanthropy from abroad, frontier crossings were arranged, transit stations established, housing, food, and clothing secured, ships purchased and repaired in French Riviera ports. None of these activities would have been feasible, in turn, without at least the tacit approval of the French government. Often cooperation was made possible by influential French Jews, ex-members of the *Maquis*, the French wartime underground. A few were themselves strategically placed members of the government. Thus, André Blumel was the *chef de cabinet* in the brief postwar government of Léon Blum (who had no personal dealings with the Zionists until much later). Jules Moch served as defense minister in the cabinets of both Blum and Georges Bidault. Daniel Mayer held a succession of ministries between 1945 and 1947. These men and others were committed to the rescue of the DPs, and

they secured government help from ministerial offices in Paris down to the final port authorities on the coast. Simple compassion for the Jewish victims of Nazism was unquestionably a factor in the French attitude. So was the extensive representation of Maquis veterans in the bureaucracy, men and women who shared a sense of partisan camaraderie with the Haganah. They shared another emotion, as well. This was unremitting hatred (the word was Avigur's) of the British, for having maneuvered France out of the Levant between 1943 and 1945, and perhaps even for having sunk the French fleet at Mers al-Kabir in 1940. The sense of helpless rage was compounded by the presence of British CID agents in French cities and ports liberated by Montgomery's army. It was for all these various reasons, then, of mutual sympathy and common interest that the French interior ministry, under Edouard Deprux, worked closely with Avigur in securing transit facilities for the DPs in French border and port areas, in offering political asylum to fugitive Etzel members from Palestine. Later, in 1947–48, the French army was prepared to extend itself even further to help the Zionist cause ([Chapter XIII](#)).

By autumn of 1945 the first groups of several hundred refugees were taken out of their camps in the American zone of Germany. In trucks supplied by the Jewish Brigade, they were carried to the French (and later, Austrian) borders. Here they made their way over mountain passes by foot, to be transported afterward to the French or Italian coasts. By the opening of 1946 the number of "illegals" was more than a thousand a month. A score of Palestinian agents directed the migration from one transit point to another, often helped by couriers from the DP ranks themselves. Throughout 1946 the route of travel shifted increasingly toward Italy, where long coastlines and deep-water inlets proved ideal for secret embarkations. It was in Italy that the organizational abilities of Yehuda Arazi, Avigur's principal lieutenant, were decisive.

A former officer in the Palestine police, Arazi was also a veteran Haganah gunrunner who only recently had evaded the British dragnet by fleeing to Europe. There he was immediately assigned the task of coordinating DP escape traffic from Germany to the Mediterranean. His success in exploiting the chaos of postwar Italy for this underground operation was phenomenal. Dressed as a British sergeant, Arazi found an ideal cover working through the Palestinian units of the British Army of Occupation. In this manner, he "requisitioned" vehicles for DP transportation, sequestered Italian estates for refugee camps, and obtained large quantities of food and equipment from British military stores. Well after the British ordered the Palestinian units home in late 1945, Arazi maintained the intensive pace of emigration. He forged papers, confiscated supplies, transported fuel, hired ships and sailors. At the same time, the Italian government, whose compassion for the DPs was matched by an undisguised resentment of British occupation, generally abstained from interfering with the escape effort.

The largest number of Haganah vessels were Italian coastal ships of prewar vintage. Hardly one of these obsolescent tubs was fit for a Mediterranean crossing; it appeared unthinkable to load them with hundreds of passengers. Nevertheless, hastily repaired at various Italian shipyards, they were sent to their embarkation rendezvous, usually secluded inlets near larger Tyrrhenian and Adriatic ports. Even at this last stage before

departure, a battle of wits was continually being fought between the Palestinian agents and British intelligence. CID agents were everywhere on watch. Hoping to ferret out departure schedules from the refugees, a number sought to pass themselves off as Jews. Usually the Haganah detected their identity. On several occasions the CID managed to confiscate Jewish supplies in Italy and to sabotage their ships before departure time. Yet, with few exceptions, the Palestinians succeeded in obtaining new vessels and supplies and in hiring new crews.

The immigration had its counterpart in Palestine itself. Although the British naval blockade off Palestine waters was seemingly leakproof, and fully 80,000 British troops were patrolling the country by 1946–47, Haganah intelligence often secured copies of British interception plans and monitored radio messages between police and CID headquarters, and between coast guard stations and patrol launches. Ruses were used to decoy the British while the illegals landed. The initial sailings caught the British by surprise. Half a dozen ships slipped by the British coastal watch in Palestine during the late autumn and early winter of 1945–46, unloading 4,000 refugees.

Early in 1946, however, the British intensified their blockade. Their flying boats and destroyers cruised vigilantly along the Palestine shore, and this blockade was reinforced by a tight naval scrutiny of Europe's Mediterranean coast. With nearly 8,000 displaced persons sailing from Italian ports by then, interception was almost certain, usually just within Palestine territorial waters. The refugees were forcibly transferred to British vessels and carried off to Cyprus. To discourage immigration, the internment camps at Cyprus were made as forbidding as possible. The heat in the summer was infernal, water was always short, and food barely adequate. Even so, the flow of illegals continued with growing momentum; to the Jewish survivors, Cyprus was merely another stepping stone to Palestine. Not infrequently the DPs resisted British boarding parties, and deaths occurred on each side. On several occasions, Haganah underwater demolition teams sabotaged British transports assigned to deport refugees from Palestine to Cyprus. When the immigrant ship *Beauharnais* was towed into Haifa harbor, its passengers unfurled a long banner over the deck: "We survived Hitler," it proclaimed. "Death is no stranger to us. Nothing can keep us from our Jewish homeland. The blood be on your head if you fire on this unarmed ship." Photographs of this and other demonstrations appeared in many of the leading newspapers of Europe and the United States, and profoundly stirred Western sympathies. All but five of the sixty-three refugee ships were intercepted between 1945 and 1948, with the internment of 26,000 DPs on Cyprus. Yet it was precisely this message of the refugee tragedy that the Zionists were determined to convey. Its impact on world opinion and the British taxpayer turned out to be the Jews' most effective weapon.

BRITAIN'S FINAL EFFORT: THE MORRISON-GRADY PLAN AND THE LONDON DISCUSSIONS

Early in the summer of 1946 the confluence of Jewish underground violence and Aliyah Bet refugee sailings began to have its impact on British policy. The colonial

undersecretary, Arthur Creech-Jones, long identified as mildly pro-Zionist, succeeded finally in persuading Bevin that the DP crisis was incapable of resolution except in relation to Palestine, that neither the Jews nor the United States government would countenance an alternative approach. The mandate itself would have to be restructured. And once this new flexibility was communicated to Washington, Truman indicated a willingness to share the task of altering Palestine's status. Three weeks after London's rejection of the Anglo-American Committee Report, the president announced the establishment of a special cabinet committee to help formulate his policy. The day-to-day work of this group was referred to a board of deputies under the chairmanship of Dr. Henry F. Grady, an assistant secretary of state. It was Grady and his associates who now entered negotiations with a parallel British committee to define a joint Anglo-American program and to allocate economic and military responsibilities between the two governments. In late June of 1946, Truman had the Grady mission flown to London in his own plane. There, during the next five weeks, the two sets of experts met under the chairmanship of Herbert Morrison. The discussions were intensive, for unrest was mounting in Palestine and reached a new peak with the Etzel bomb attack on the King David Hotel. On July 31 the fruits of the joint committee's labors were revealed to Parliament. It was evident then that Grady and his American colleagues had been won over to the British position.

Following Bevin's line, the report began by proposing "that our two Governments should seek to create conditions favourable to the resettlement of a substantial number of displaced persons in Europe itself, since it is recognized that the overwhelming majority will continue to live in Europe." Other nations were urged to participate in the relocation of those survivors who chose not to remain on the Continent. Thereupon an intricate scheme was worked out for transforming the mandate into a trusteeship and dividing the country into separate Jewish and Arab provinces, with the Negev and Jerusalem remaining under British administration. By this formula the Jewish province, the smallest, would be limited to 17 percent of the country, the most drastically attenuated offer ever made the Zionists. Although the two communities would be allowed self-rule in purely domestic affairs, the British high commissioner would reserve for himself authority over defense, foreign relations, customs, police, courts, and communications, and would similarly exercise veto power over all legislation for a transitional period of five years. The one important concession offered the Jews was the proposed admittance of 100,000 refugees during the first year after the plan went into effect. But thereafter the high commissioner would control immigration on the basis of the province's "economic absorptive capacity." Full implementation of the scheme, moreover, would depend upon its acceptance by both Arabs and Jews. The report concluded hopefully: "We believe that this plan provides as fair and reasonable a compromise between the claims of Arab and Jews as it is possible to devise, and that it offers the best prospect of reconciling the conflicting interests of the two communities."

It unquestionably reconciled British interests. In fact, its basic outlines had been formulated in advance by the Colonial Office. As one British official later summed up the plan: "It is a beautiful scheme. It treats the Arabs and the Jews on a footing of

complete equality in that it gives nothing to either party, while it leaves us a free run over the whole of Palestine.” With Egyptian pressure mounting in the summer of 1946 for the British to evacuate Suez, London recognized the heightened danger of abandoning its foothold in the Middle East altogether. Except for Transjordan, which was inaccessible from the Mediterranean, Palestine was the last remaining base from which Britain still exercised a reasonable freedom of action. Haifa might compensate for Alexandria. Control of the Negev would preserve British military installations on the northern flank of Suez. Newer, larger, permanent camps even then were being constructed in the Gaza area, and the decision recently had been taken in London to lay a new oil pipeline from the Kirkuk field to Haifa.

The official British reaction, then, to the Morrison-Grady Report was distinctly favorable. Whitehall emphasized that it was on the basis of these recommendations that it was inviting Jewish and Arab representatives to London on September 10, 1946, to negotiate a solution to the Palestine impasse. It was a basis that the Jews found unacceptable. The Zionist Executive, meeting in Paris at the end of July, voted for partition alone as an appropriate format for negotiations, and rejected the invitation. The Palestine Arabs meanwhile flatly refused to attend as long as the Mufti, who remained *persona non grata* to the British, was not allowed to lead their delegation. As a result, when the conference opened on September 10, participation was limited to the British and to representatives of the Arab states outside Palestine. The Arab stand in London was uncompromising. It called for the establishment of an interim Palestine government under the transitional supervision of a British high commissioner. Once in operation, the provisional government would be independent, ruling over a unitary state with its own elected legislature. Freedom of religion and guarantees for the holy places would be provided, even three Jewish ministers out of a government of ten; and Hebrew would become a second official language in districts where Jews formed an “absolute majority.” But otherwise naturalization would be extended only to citizens who had lived in Palestine for a continuous period of ten years. In this fashion the DPs would be excluded.

Two days after the Arabs delivered their plan, the British suspended the conference, asking time to study the proposal. It is unlikely that they were given pause by the maximalism of the Arab stance. The Arabs at least had agreed to participate in the discussions, and this was already a clue that their governments were impressed by the Morrison-Grady proposals. Indeed, Azzam Pasha declared on the Arabs’ behalf that they felt “much nearer agreement [with Britain] than we ever thought we would be.” It was rather the absence of both the Palestine Arabs and the Jews, as well as the lack of American support, that appeared to undermine the usefulness of any further parleys. The Mufti himself continued to direct Palestine Arab political affairs from Cairo, where urgent meetings of the Arab Higher Committee were being held. Thus, in the midst of rising Jewish violence, special Arab measures already were being taken to boycott Jewish industrial products, to block the sale of Arab land to Jews, and to subsidize various Arab paramilitary organizations. The latter, functioning under the euphemism of youth movements, included the Najjada, founded in 1945 by a Jaffa lawyer,

Muhammad Nimr al-Hawari, and the Futuwwa, the activist arm of the Husseini faction. Both groups received military equipment smuggled across from neighboring Arab lands. By 1946 their combined numbers exceeded 30,000. Needled continually by the Palestine Arab leadership to stay “honest,” therefore, the Arab League Council held to its unyielding position.

On October 1, 1946, Bevin met unofficially in London with Weizmann and other Jewish Agency members and presented his own blueprint for an interim trusteeship that would lead ultimately to self-government. In a gesture of goodwill to the Zionists, the government on October 4 promoted Creech-Jones to colonial secretary. The atmosphere for a compromise appeared faintly hopeful. Referring to these gestures and discussions later in a speech before the House of Commons on February 25, 1947, Bevin recalled: “I did reach a stage ... in meeting with the Jews separately, in which I advanced the idea of an interim arrangement, leading ultimately to self-government.... I said to them: ‘If you will work together for three, five or ten years, it might well be that you will not want to separate. Let us try to make up the difference!’ At that stage things looked more hopeful. There was a feeling ... when they left me ... that I had the right approach at last.” Bevin underestimated the gulf that remained to be bridged. The Morrison-Grady proposal for admitting 100,000 Jews was out of date even before the London meetings. The Zionists had awakened by then to their earlier mistake of pressing for this limited number as the *summum bonum* of their demands. Bevin himself, in fact, unwittingly admitted this in the same address of February 25, 1947, even as his remarks betrayed the exceptional opportunity he had cast aside in rejecting the early Anglo-American Committee Report:

I say this in all seriousness. If it were only a question of relieving Europe of 100,000 Jews, I believe a settlement could be found.... Unfortunately ... from the Zionist point of view the 100,000 is only a beginning, and the Jewish Agency talks in terms of millions.... The claim made by the Arabs is a very difficult one to answer.... Why should an external agency, largely financed from America, determine how many people should come into Palestine, and interfere with the economy of the Arabs, who have been there for 2,000 years? That is what I have to face.

There was no meeting of minds between the British and the Zionists.

In truth, the White House was hardly more impressed by the Morrison-Grady Report than were the Zionists. Accepting the evaluation of Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, Truman considered the scheme a ghetto, a betrayal of the Jews. “I studied the plan with care,” he wrote later, “but I was unable to see that anything would come out of it except more unrest.” Truman then conveyed his view to Attlee on August 7, 1946. Fending off the prime minister’s entreaties, he cabled again on August 12: “The opposition in this country to the plan has become so intense that it is now clear that it would be impossible to rally in favor of it sufficient public opinion to enable this Government to give it effective support.” Soon afterward, on October 4, the eve of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, Truman issued the customary presidential statement of greeting to American Jewry. Acheson helped him prepare it. An advance copy was sent to Attlee on October 3. The prime minister was horrified by what he saw.

He pleaded that the statement be postponed at least until he could discuss it with Bevin. Truman refused. The greeting then was issued. Officially endorsing the partition approach, it urged further that “substantial” immigration into Palestine, which “cannot wait a solution to the ... problem,” should commence immediately. Bevin, of course, was livid and attacked the statement as a blatant play for the Jewish vote at a time when congressional elections were only a month off. “I was told,” he said, “that if it was not issued by Mr. Truman, a competitive statement would be issued by Mr. Dewey [the Republican leader]. In international affairs I cannot settle things if my problem is made the subject of local elections....” Acheson subsequently denied the political motivation:

When President Truman engaged in a political maneuver, he never disguised his undiluted pleasure in it... About the Yom Kippur statement the president was very serious. The Day of Atonement seemed to come on a particularly dark day in Jewish history. The President chose it as a fitting occasion to announce that he would continue his efforts for the immigration of the one hundred thousand into Palestine.

Despite the setback that the British professed to see in the Truman statement, the new colonial secretary, Creech-Jones, was determined to reduce tension in Palestine itself. This, it was hoped, would induce the Zionists to join the second stage of the London Conference. At Creech-Jones’s request, therefore, the mandatory government abstained from further searches of Jewish villages. General Barker, who had issued an angry anti-Semitic remark in the aftermath of the King David bombing, was replaced on October 22. Two weeks later the British released from internment the Jewish Agency leaders and more than a hundred others who had been arrested on the “Black Sabbath” of the previous June. For a while, these and other gestures removed some of the venom from the dispute. Even so, the next stage of the London Conference was delayed until early 1947, to enable the Jewish Agency leaders to refer the question of participation to the Twenty-second Zionist Congress, which was scheduled in Basle for December 1946.

The gathering was a melancholy affair. The two major groups remaining now were the Palestinians and the Americans. Between them sat only isolated representatives of European Jewry. The reservoir upon which Weizmann had depended for the two decades of his moderate leadership had vanished. The Americans, led by a fiery Cleveland rabbi, Abba Hillel Silver, were hardly less militant than Ben-Gurion and the Palestinians, and were convinced of the need to attack British authority head-on in Palestine. Weizmann issued an appeal for a final effort to seek a compromise solution, perhaps on the basis of a transitional regime that would lead to partition. He met with a cold response. It was the consensus that the Zionist movement ought not to be represented at London except on the basis of Jewish statehood. The Congress then pointedly refrained from reelecting Weizmann to his traditional presidency of the Zionist Organization.

During the four-month interval between the first and second installments of the London Conference, the views of Arabs and Jews alike had hardened. If the Agency now sent back word that it would accept nothing less than a Jewish state in Palestine, the Arab League representatives declared in advance that they insisted upon an Arab state

with an even more drastically reduced Jewish membership in the government. The Palestine Arab Higher Committee this time was formally represented, and its militancy equaled the Arab League's. The Jews continued to boycott the discussions. Unofficially, however, Ben-Gurion and Shertok had gone to London for talks with Creech-Jones, who was characteristically sympathetic. He informed the Zionist spokesmen that he personally favored partition. The trouble was Bevin, said Creech-Jones, who listened to no one except Harold Beeley, the "unavoidable."

When the foreign secretary turned up for a later private session, the Zionist leaders experienced a shock. Their archenemy, Bevin, tottered into Creech-Jones's office like an exhausted man. He blinked suspiciously at Ben-Gurion, Shertok, and other Agency representatives. These were the spartan days of Britain's fuel cuts, and the large room was eerily lighted by candles. Bevin ventured a heavy joke that there was really no need for candles since they had the *Israelites* present. The Jews smiled thinly. The foreign secretary then listened in obvious restlessness as Creech-Jones proposed a compromise: if the Jews agreed to shelve their political demands for five years, Britain in turn would not enforce the White Paper and land-purchase veto. Bevin interrupted to reject the idea. He would not prolong the original mandate under any circumstances, he emphasized, for it was unworkable, a mistake from the very beginning. Whatever happened, he was against racialism, and if the Jews would only leave him in peace he could compose their differences with the Arabs. Then, impatiently, the foreign secretary pressed the Jews to reveal their territorial demands.

At this moment Ben-Gurion suddenly asked the foreign secretary if he might see him alone. Bevin agreed, although he took Beeley with him into the other room. "Why don't you believe we are honest about our policy?" Bevin complained. "We have no selfish intentions. It's peace and stability in the Middle East we are looking for, no more." Ben-Gurion replied with equal bluntness: "Tell me frankly what you want. Perhaps we Jews would be willing to help. Perhaps our interests coincide." The interests of the two men did in fact coincide, at least partly. Ben-Gurion mentioned the possibility of British bases in the Negev, and access to Haifa harbor, of oil drilling prospects in the southern desert. Bevin reacted favorably. He intimated that he still had hopes of devising a formula that the Zionists could accept. It is possible, in the light of this exchange, that London may not have entirely discounted partition. Acheson recalled that early in 1947 he was sounded out on the idea by the British ambassador, Lord Inver-chapel. Would the United States support a partition resolution in the United Nations? the Englishman asked. Acheson gave his personal opinion that his government would, and that partition appeared the most feasible of all solutions. The ambassador promised to convey this response to London. If Bevin gave serious consideration to the idea he soon abandoned it. He described his reasoning later:

The best partition scheme, and the most favourable one that I have seen up to now, has the effect that it would leave ... 450,000 Jews and 380,000 Arabs in that Jewish State. I put that to the Arabs quite frankly, and what was their answer? The Arabs say: "If it is wrong for the Jews to be a minority of 33½ or 40 percent in the whole country, what justification is there for putting 380,000 Arabs under the Jews. What is your answer to that?" I have no answer.

But if the foreign secretary was unwilling to swallow the partition plan, it was hardly expected that his eventual formula would be less palatable to the Zionists or Americans even than the Morrison-Grady scheme. In mid-February of 1947, however, such a proposal was submitted. Its modification of the earlier blueprint was to suggest a time limit of five years for the period of trusteeship. During the transition, the country would be progressively readied for independence as a unitary state, while the high commissioner would retain supreme legislative authority. Instead of provincial autonomy, moreover, the inhabitants of Palestine would be granted cantonal self-government in areas where Arabs or Jews constituted a majority. The Jewish Agency would be dissolved, and the Jews, like the Arabs, would be represented by delegates on an advisory council. A constituent assembly for the projected unitary state would be admitted over a period of two years, instead of one, and in the last three years of trusteeship the Arabs would be assured a voice in determining immigration policy. Elaborate and complex as it was, the scheme was wasted effort. The Arabs immediately denounced it; a postponement of majority rule was unthinkable to them. The Jews for their part were appalled by the cantonal plan and rejected it outright. Ben-Gurion insisted that it moved away from the Morrison-Grady plan in the direction of the 1939 White Paper. The Yishuv had already developed a viable quasi-government, after all, while the Arabs possessed no institutions of self-government whatever. The latest proposal offered the Arabs more than they already enjoyed and the Jews much less.

The deadlock was complete, and on February 14 Bevin announced that he was referring the entire problem to the United Nations. The decision was taken not alone for reasons of the Labor Cabinet's utter weariness and frustration on the Palestine issue. The government's economic resources by then were strained to the limit. Only six days later, Attlee appeared before Parliament to announce that the government also intended to transfer the government of India to the Indians not later than June 1948. One day after that, on February 21, Whitehall revealed that it was ending its military and financial commitments to Turkey and Greece by March 30. In the course of a single week, therefore, a series of official announcements foreshadowed the divestment of a historic sphere of influence. "If I could get back to the contribution on purely humanitarian grounds of 100,000 into Palestine," the foreign secretary remarked bitterly in his February 25 speech, "and if this political fight for a Jewish State could be put on one side, and we could develop self-government by the people resident in Palestine, without any other political issue, I would be willing to try again." But Bevin had had his chance earlier to defuse the issue by allowing the immigration of 100,000 refugees, and he had forfeited it.

It was not yet certain that London had entirely abandoned the notion of trying again. "We are not going to the United Nations to surrender the Mandate," Creech-Jones warned on February 25. "We are ... setting out the problem and asking for their advice as to how the Mandate can be administered." This was the impression received by the new Palestine high commissioner, General Sir Alan Cunningham, upon visiting London in March 1947. Bevin and his advisers were evidently uncertain that the decision to withdraw was final, and suspected—perhaps hoped—that the United Nations would ask

Britain to stay on as policeman in the Holy Land. On April 2 Bevin called for a special meeting of the UN General Assembly to discuss the Palestine mandate. Yet more than six weeks later, on May 29, the foreign secretary informed the Labor party convention that he personally would not be bound by any United Nations decision on the future of Palestine unless it were unanimous—hardly a likely development.

Events in Palestine itself gradually doomed this secret expectation of remaining on. The Etzel now intensified its coercive efforts. On March 1 it blew up the officers' club in Jerusalem, while the same day attacks elsewhere killed 18 and injured 25 Englishmen, a number of them civilians. By the end of 1947, the Lech'i boasted that it had killed 373 people, of whom 300 were civilians. Meanwhile, the scale of Jewish violence obscured the fact that the two Arab paramilitary groups were simultaneously terrorizing their own community. Most of the Arab victims allegedly had violated the land-sale boycott against the Jews; but between November 1945 and February 1947 six political opponents of the Husseinis also were murdered.

Indeed, the most significant development in Palestine throughout the eighteen months of Labor's incumbency was the virtual collapse of security. In 1947 the mandatory had stationed in the tiny country no less than 80,000 troops, in addition to units of the Transjordanian Arab Legion and 16,000 British and local police. This was a combined military-police establishment four times larger than the one of eight years earlier, at the height of the Arab revolt. Huge army and police structures had been erected throughout the country at a cost of £2 million. To pay for military transport and upkeep, British taxpayers had spent an estimated £50 million during Labor's year and a half in office, and the Palestine government another £5 million. Nothing better illustrated the bankruptcy of Labor policy in the mandate than the captivity into which British officials themselves had fallen. Despite far-reaching and elaborate security measures, conditions in the Holy Land were so tense in February 1947 that families of British civilian personnel, about 2,000 people, were evacuated and returned to England. The remaining nonmilitary employees were placed behind wire-enclosed security zones in the larger towns, and at the end of the month only eleven British civilians resided outside these enclosures. All of them lived under a dusk-to-dawn curfew and ventured forth only under armed escort.

It is not possible to draw sweeping generalizations about Jewish nationalism and its impact on the mandate. The formulation of the Biltmore Program and its endorsement by the Zionist Congress in 1946 hardly signified that the Yishuv had at last matured as a national-political organism. Only a minority of Palestine Jews had been born in the Holy Land, after all; their aspirations and claims were by no means dictated by nationalism alone. Immigration was the key. Even to a maximalist like Ben-Gurion, assurance of free immigration was more important than statehood. If, as late as 1946, Bevin had managed to devise a scheme for keeping Palestine within the Commonwealth and simultaneously assuring the unhampered flow of Jewish refugees from Europe, Ben-Gurion and the Agency Executive would have acquiesced. More than any other factor, it was London's preoccupation with Arab goodwill and, correspondingly, Bevin's agonized intransigence on the immigration issue that provoked the maximalist Zionist demands

for Jewish statehood, that ignited the terrorism, launched the illegal refugee traffic to Palestine, undermined Britain's economy, eroded its international reputation, and finally doomed the Palestine mandate itself.

CHAPTER XII THE BIRTH OF ISRAEL

THE PALESTINE ISSUE REACHES THE UNITED NATIONS

From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, it is difficult to recapture the near-mystic hopes that were enshrined in the United Nations of the immediate postwar era. In its first decisive test of strength, the crisis provoked by the Soviet occupation of northern Iran, in 1946, the world body had shown itself an effective forum for the peaceful settlement of national rivalries. A year later, therefore, the United Nations was again chosen as the instrument to cope with a second international dilemma. The issue of Palestine admittedly was far more complex than that of Iran. This time a formula would have to be devised that would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of two bitterly hostile communities, and very probably establish a new sovereign entity to replace the British mandate. But if the task was more difficult, it was also specifically the kind of challenge the United Nations had been founded to deal with. Confrontations between the Great Powers were assumed to be outside its scope; the Security Council veto was an admission of this limitation. On the other hand, the dampening of hostility between contentious smaller peoples was ostensibly the United Nations' very *raison d'être*. In acknowledging this fact, Harry Truman was not simply being naïve in distinguishing between the humanitarian question of the refugees and the more intricate challenge of Palestine's juridical status. "My basic approach," he emphasized in his memoirs, "was that the long-range fate of Palestine was the kind of problem we had the UN for." And now, on April 2, 1947, by choosing to turn the fate of Palestine over to the world body, Britain itself seemed openly to be endorsing this approach.

But the appearance was partly illusory. In selecting the General Assembly as the organ of competence, rather than the smaller and more efficient Security Council, the Attlee cabinet betrayed its lingering hope that the United Nations, failing to provide a solution, would turn the matter back to London. In this fashion Britain presumably would enjoy a wider latitude in dealing with Zionist obstructionism. Harold Beeley said as much to David Horowitz, a Jewish Agency representative whose memoirs offer a fascinating insight into this period:

Look at the U.N. Charter and at the list of countries belonging to it. In order to obtain a favourable decision, you will need two-thirds of the votes of those countries, and you will be able to obtain it only if the Eastern bloc and the U.S. unite and support both the decision itself and the same formulation. Nothing like that ever happened, it cannot possibly happen, and will never happen.

Moreover, in bypassing the Security Council, Bevin revealed his anxiety lest the Soviet Union, as a permanent member of the smaller body, exert undue influence in dealing with Palestine and the Middle East. The concern was fully justified. When the Assembly convened on April 28, 1947, and debate opened on the membership of a proposed committee of inquiry, the Russians suggested limiting participation to the Big Five. Reacting instinctively, the American and British delegates expressed their preference for a “neutral” body with no “special interests.” The Anglo-American view was upheld.

Accordingly, an eleven-nation investigative board was set up on May 13. Entitled the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine—UNSCOP—the special body consisted of the representatives of Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. If less than neutral, it was probably as balanced a group as could have been found. India, Iran, and Yugoslavia, for example, with their own considerable Moslem populations, were likely to sympathize with the Arabs. On the other hand, Czechoslovakia had actively helped the Jewish refugee traffic from eastern Europe to Germany, while the Guatemalan and Uruguayan members had long been outspoken Zionist partisans. The Canadian, Australian, Peruvian, and Swedish delegates were genuinely uncommitted. When, therefore, the Arabs sought repeatedly to divorce the problem of the DPs from Palestine, a majority of the UNSCOP members rejected the attempt.

Under the best of circumstances, the chances of success did not appear promising. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Britain’s representative in the Security Council, insisted that his government would neither abandon the mandate nor enforce a decision unless the solution were “just” and acceptable to both Arabs and Jews. It was an improbable condition. Upon learning that UNSCOP’s terms of reference included—by implication—the plight of the displaced persons, the Arab states warned that they, too, would not necessarily be bound by the United Nations’ recommendation. Meanwhile, the Arab Higher Committee decided that it would boycott the UNSCOP hearings altogether. It will be recalled that the Committee had originally been resuscitated in June 1946. Since then, eradicating rival Palestine Arab organizations, it had come to exert a decisive influence on the Arab League in all matters dealing with Palestine. The Committee’s authority reflected in some degree the enormous personal impact of the Mufti. The mere presence of this *éminence grise* in Cairo overpowered the occasionally more moderate counsels of Azzam Pasha, secretary-general of the Arab League.

In the spring of 1945, ironically, as the Allied armies were driving into Germany, Haj Amin had come within a hair’s breadth of being seized as a war prisoner. He was able at the last moment to escape by plane to Switzerland, accompanied by Marshal Pétain’s physician. The Swiss promptly shipped the Arab leader back to Germany, where French troops took him into custody, and Paris became the Mufti’s home. His detention was brief. In December 1945, a clean-shaven “Syrian” gentleman slipped into a French military transport plane bound for the Levant. Four days later the “Syrian” entered Abdin Palace, Farouk’s home in Cairo, and claimed the right of a fellow Moslem for shelter. Farouk willingly granted it. Immediately afterward, Haj Amin began issuing directives from his Egyptian exile, and did so with the same sure-handed authority as in

the prewar years. His orders were followed in Palestine to the last detail. By early 1947, as a result, the Husseini party had merely to invoke the spell of the Mufti's name to restore its political machinery in every Palestine Arab town and village. By then, too, organized opposition to the Husseinis had been liquidated so completely that the British were prepared to extend full recognition to the Arab Higher Committee as the legitimate voice of Arab Palestine. It was in February, we recall, that Whitehall agreed to accept the Committee's delegates at the second phase of the London Conference. Three months later, the UN General Assembly similarly accredited the Higher Committee as the official representative of the Palestine Arabs.

With this recognition, and the threat of the revived paramilitary armies behind it, the Husseini faction adopted an increasingly uncompromising stance. From mid-June of 1947 on, when the UNSCOP group arrived in the Holy Land, the Mufti's followers staged anti-Zionist demonstrations in the larger Palestine cities. Jamil al-Husseini warned also that this unrest was merely the overture to a large-scale Arab revolt, unless the United Nations gave "full justice." It was in the interval, then, that the Higher Committee decided to boycott the UNSCOP hearings. The decision was probably a tactical blunder. Although the United Nations group managed to interview Arabs unofficially during its five-week stay in Palestine, and sample their views, this informal poll hardly compared to the elaborate and documented testimony offered by the Zionists. It was only when UNSCOP left Palestine for Beirut, on July 20, that the visitors had the opportunity of meeting with representatives, not of the Higher Committee, but of the Arab League. By then little new could be added to the evidence previously supplied the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. If anything, the League spokesman offended the UNSCOP group by emulating the strident, aggressive tone of the Mufti's partisans and issuing warnings of bloodshed if Palestine were divided. Even the normally urbane Azzam Pasha hinted that a decision in favor of partition risked danger not simply to the Jews of Palestine but to other Jewish communities in the Middle East, particularly to the 120,000 Jews of Iraq. "I do not think anyone could protect the Jews of the various Arab states," Azzam Pasha confided to a journalist later. These remarks achieved the opposite of their purpose. They convinced the UNSCOP members that it would be fatal to leave the Jews as a minority in Arab hands.

The Zionists for their part went through the entire series of reports and hearings during UNSCOP's five weeks in the country. The material they presented was essentially the data that had been submitted a year earlier to the Anglo-American Committee. But there was nothing routine in Zionist testimony. The Jewish Agency spokesmen recognized that if the UNSCOP report were negative, world sympathy for the Zionist cause would be dissipated, perhaps irretrievably. The tension gripping the Yishuv was well evident to the UNSCOP members. In harsh counterpoint to the sessions, Etzel and Lech'i violence reached its apogee in the midsummer of 1947. On May 4, several weeks after four of their men were hanged at Acre prison, the Etzel launched a spectacular assault against the prison building, dynamiting its walls and freeing 251 inmates. Several of the condemned prisoners were recaptured and hanged in late July. Two days after the executions, the Etzel kidnapped and hanged two British sergeants in

retaliation. “We repaid our enemy in kind,” boasted Menachem Begin. The horror this deed aroused in England was movingly expressed by the *Daily Mail*, which on August 1 appealed to the feelings of “American women whose dollars helped buy the rope.”

Repelled as they were by the killings, and the evidence they saw everywhere around them of elaborate military precautions—barbed wire, armored car patrols, searchlight beams at night—the UNSCOP members sensed that they were witnessing in the mandate a doomed political entity. If they needed additional proof of Jewish desperation, moreover, they found it in a widely publicized episode that occurred while they were in Palestine, in mid-July. During the preceding half-year the illegal refugee traffic had been fairly well throttled. Then, early in the month, a battered little American Chesapeake Bay ferry, packed with 4,500 DPs, set out from the French port of Sète. Six British destroyers and one cruiser were waiting offshore. They immediately “escorted” the refugee ship, appropriately renamed *Exodus-1974*, across the Mediterranean. Twelve miles outside Palestine territorial waters, the British armada closed on the *Exodus* for boarding. A furious hand-to-hand struggle ensued. The DPs fought off the boarding party for several hours. Eventually the British put machine guns and gas bombs into action, killing three Jews and wounding a hundred. All the while a detailed account of the battle was radioed to Haganah headquarters in Tel Aviv, and later rebroadcast throughout the world. The crew of the *Exodus* surrendered only when the British began ramming the vessel, threatening to sink it.

Listing badly, the ferry was then towed into Haifa harbor. Under ordinary circumstances the British would have transhipped the boat’s passengers to Cyprus. But in the previous twelve months some 26,000 Jews had been packed onto that island, hopelessly overcrowding its two internment camps. In this case, therefore, Bevin personally decided to “make an example” of the refugees by sending them back to their port of origin. Shortly afterward, on British transports that were essentially prison ships, the DPs were carried off to Marseilles in the full blaze of the Mediterranean summer. And there, except for a small number of the old, ill, or pregnant among them, the Jews refused to disembark. The French government offered the refugees hospitality and medical care. The offer was rejected. Notwithstanding the suffocating heat and illness, and a contagion of rashes and boils, the passengers insisted that their destination was the Land of Israel. A correspondent, Ruth Gruber, described their plight:

Squeezed between a green toilet shed and some steel plates were hundreds and hundreds of half-naked people who looked as though they had been thrown together into a dog pound.... Trapped and lost, they were shouting at us in all languages, shattering each other’s words.... The hot sun filtered through the grillwork, throwing sharp lines of light and darkness across the refugees’ faces and their hot, sweaty half-naked bodies. Women were nursing their babies. Old women and men sat weeping unashamed, realizing what lay ahead.

What lay ahead was Germany. After three weeks, the French government, concerned by the possibility of epidemics, ordered the vessels to depart. At this point the British cabinet held an emergency meeting and decided that its only alternative was to ship the Jews back to Germany. Most of the refugees were thereupon returned to Hamburg.

Some 1,500 of them refused to disembark at the North Sea port. As the local German inhabitants watched in incredulity, the Jews were carried off by British troops wielding clubs and hoses. Eventually the DPs were transported by rail to German internment camps at Pöppendorf and AmStau. For a month the British attempted to register them, but they elicited only one response for all questions: "Eretz Israel." The *Exodus* tragedy, prolonged over three months, was extensively reported in newspapers throughout the world. The UNSCOP members were not unaffected by the episode, as it developed. "It is the best possible evidence we can have," said the Yugoslav representative, before the group departed for Beirut on July 20. A week after that, arriving in Geneva, the members voted to dispatch a subcommittee to the refugee centers in Germany and Austria. And the visitors witnessed in the camps precisely the spectacle that Harrison and the Anglo-American Committee had encountered earlier: a community of refugee Jews, some 250,000 by this time, who measured their very existence against the hour of departure for Palestine.

THE UNSCOP REPORTS

The committee spent most of August evaluating alternatives. Moshe Shertok and David Horowitz, the Jewish Agency representatives, met endlessly with the various delegates, pleading the Zionist case. So did Richard Crossman, who had become a Zionist convert while on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. The report was finished on August 31. In it, UNSCOP laid down eleven guiding principles. The most important of these stated that: the mandate should be ended and independence granted at the earliest practicable date; the political structure of the new state or states should be "basically democratic"; the economic unity of Palestine must be maintained; the security of the holy places and access to them should be assured; the General Assembly should carry out immediately an arrangement for solving the urgent problem of a quarter-million Jewish DPs in Europe. Applying these principles, then, UNSCOP divided, seven to three, into a majority (Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay) recommending partition, and a minority (India, Iran, and Yugoslavia) proposing federation. The delegate of Australia abstained.

In favoring partition, the majority scheme envisaged an Arab area comprising western Galilee, the hill country of central Palestine except for the Jerusalem enclave, and the coastal plain from a line south of Isdud (Ashdod) to the Egyptian border. The Jewish territory would include the rest, except for the Jerusalem-Bethlehem promontory, which would be internationalized. During a two-year interim period beginning September 1947, Britain would administer Palestine under United Nations supervision, although it was the implication of the majority report that the United States would assume a share of the responsibility. At the same time, Jewish immigration would continue at the rate of 6,250 monthly in the first two years—for a total of 150,000—and thereafter at the rate of 5,000 monthly, or 60,000 a year, if it were necessary to extend the transitional period. The economic unity of Palestine would be maintained by a ten-year customs and currency treaty between the Arab and the Jewish states. A separate

board, composed of three Arabs, three Jews, and three members appointed by the United Nations, would administer the economic union, and the Jewish state would provide a limited financial subsidy to the Arab state.

The UNSCOP minority report considered all this unworkable and anti-Arab. It proposed instead the transformation of the mandate into an independent federal government of Jewish and Arab cantons, with Jerusalem as capital. Cantonal authority would apply to internal matters. Immigration, foreign relations, and national defense would belong to a central government, consisting of a bicameral legislature in which one house would function by equal representation and the other by proportional representation. A majority in both houses would be required for the enactment of all laws. The most crucial difference related to Jewish immigration. By the minority scheme, refugees were to be allowed into the Jewish cantons for three years only “in such numbers as are not to exceed ... absorptive capacity ... having due regard for the rights of the population then present within that state and for their anticipated natural rate of increase.” The “absorptive capacity” of the Jewish areas was a matter to be decided by an international commission. Finally, under the minority plan, Jaffa and most of the Negev were allocated to the Arab state rather than, as envisaged in the majority report, to the Jews.

There was little even in the majority report, for that matter, to set the Zionists dancing in the streets. Territorially, it envisaged for both peoples asymmetrical segments that were “entwined in an inimical embrace like two fighting serpents,” as Herbert Samuel had once described the Peel Plan. The assumption was unrealistic that the Jews, after their own state was established, would agree indefinitely to subsidize the economically weaker Arab regime. Even so, the Zionists generally regarded the proposal as an improvement over the minority report, with its throwback to the Morrison-Grady cantonal scheme. It offered them at least two indispensable prerequisites: sovereignty and an uninterrupted flow of immigration for the reasonable future. The Jewish Agency therefore expressed cautious satisfaction with the majority report.

The Arabs, conversely, rejected it with passion. Indeed, both the majority and the minority plans horrified them. As soon as the contents of the reports became known, Prime Minister Salih Jabr of Iraq summoned an emergency conference of the Arab League’s Political Committee. Meeting at Sofar, Lebanon, on September 16, the committee voted to impose economic reprisals ([this page](#)) and to supply men and weapons for the Palestine Arabs. On the following day the Arab League formally threatened war if the United Nations approved either of the two UNSCOP reports.

The Zionists were no less eager than the UNSCOP committee to break this impasse with the Arab League. They sensed that their best hope in the long run was to be found in a private understanding with their neighbors. To that end, in an effort to reach a compromise settlement, the Jewish Agency liaison officials David Horowitz and Aubrey (Abba) Eban met with Azzam Pasha in London on October 14, 1947. Horowitz later recalled that the Zionist emissaries declared their willingness to offer cast-iron guarantees against Jewish expansionism in any form, as well as arrangements for regional economic development. Azzam smiled resignedly. The issue was beyond

settlement through reason or compromise, he explained. If he, or any other Arab leader, returned to Cairo or Damascus the next day bearing a peace agreement with the Zionists, he would be a dead man within hours. The secretary-general observed that he and his personal colleagues no longer represented the new Arab world. His son, and the students who burned streetcars and stoned Western embassies—these were the Arabs who now decided policy. The Middle East would have to find its own solution, Azzam commented regretfully, just as Europe had done earlier, by force.

There was apparently no room for negotiation between Arabs and Jews. The future status of Palestine rested with the members of the United Nations, and notably with the Great Powers. The General Assembly thereupon turned the Palestine question over to an *ad hoc* political committee of all member nations. In this manner fourteen meetings and an additional twenty-four days were spent in open hearings. From the outset of the sessions it became evident that any lingering hope of British cooperation was doomed. This was the period when London was negotiating a new treaty with Egypt and seeking Arab goodwill as a means of protecting British oil interests. The notion of participating in any scheme that was objectionable to the Arabs, even a plan enjoying international sanction, was unthinkable. Rather, Sir Alexander Cadogan declared that Britain accepted UNSCOP's recommendations for ending the mandate. But thereafter, Britain would limit its support to a plan on which agreement had been reached between Arabs and Jews. The statement was of course a euphemism for rejecting the UNSCOP majority report. In truth, Britain's "neutrality" served as a rationale for declining even to fix an evacuation date until the partition subcommittee had nearly finished its work. The British also rejected the suggestion of a gradual transfer of authority to a United Nations commission, or any scheme delegating authority to the projected Arab and Jewish governments.

In the alignment of blocs within the General Assembly, however, the influence of the Soviet Union proved far more decisive than Britain's. It was of interest that fully two years after the war the Kremlin still refused to give an inkling of which way it would land on the Palestine issue. The Jews had never been particularly optimistic—antipathy to Zionism had been an axiom of Soviet policy since the early 1920s ([Chapter VII](#)). To be sure, the Histadrut's wartime fund-raising efforts on behalf of the USSR had favorably impressed the Soviet leadership, and Russian visitors to Palestine during the early 1940s had expressed their goodwill. Nevertheless, Moscow's consistent support of Arab nationalism in the Levant and Egypt appeared to bode ill for the Zionist cause. It was thus all the more unexpected, near the end of the special United Nations session in mid-May 1947, when Soviet delegate Andrei Gromyko suddenly assailed the bankruptcy of the Palestine mandate and endorsed the "aspirations of the Jews to establish their own State." In his speech, Gromyko made the barbed observation that no western European country "has been able to ensure the defense of the elementary rights of the Jewish people." He added that the Soviet Union's first choice of a solution would be "the establishment of an independent, dual, democratic homogeneous Arab-Jewish State." But if such an arrangement were demonstrated to be unfeasible, his government would then be willing to support partition.

However opportunistic, the shift in the Soviet approach was not illogical. Its ultimate purposes were well summarized by Walter Bedell Smith, the United States ambassador to Moscow, in a long memorandum afterward to Washington. Bedell Smith shrewdly noted that if Russia were to fulfill its historic ambition of gaining a foothold in the Middle East, it would have to explore all avenues. Northern Iran was one. The Turkish straits and Greece were another. In both cases, Western opposition to Soviet pressure was mounting. Conceivably Palestine was a third gateway, if a vacuum could be opened in that country by an accelerated British departure. From Moscow's vantage point, then, the establishment of a modern Jewish state, imbued with a fiery nationalist spirit, was more likely to eliminate British influence than was a backward Arab regime, heavily dependent upon Britain for funds, advisers, and weapons. Moreover, even if a Jewish state did not come into existence immediately, it was likely that hard fighting would take place between Arabs and Jews once the British withdrew. The ensuing chaos would still be to Moscow's advantage, as long as British evacuation were not attended by a corresponding increase in American influence.

In the light of this incisive analysis, all subsequent Russian behavior followed a consistent pattern. On October 13, 1947, the Soviet representative to the UN Palestine Committee, Semyon Tsarapkin, officially endorsed the UNSCOP partition plan. Indeed, he did so with a vengeance, at first insisting that the Security Council itself should be responsible for administering Palestine in the transitional period. The Americans and British rejected the proposal. Still, Tsarapkin did not give up easily; he pressed Britain to dissolve the mandate forthwith and to abstain from playing any active role in a Palestine settlement thereafter. Soviet intentions in the Middle East by then were transparent. But to the Zionists, the votes were all that mattered. And by 1947 this shift in the Soviet position assured the votes of the Soviet Union itself and the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Republics, as well as those of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Rumania—possibly even of Yugoslavia. For the advocates of partition, an important hurdle evidently had been overcome.

THE UNITED STATES MAKES A COMMITMENT

Ultimately, to Arabs and Jews alike, everything hinged on the attitude of the United States, by common recognition the most powerful force in the world body. That attitude in turn was mightily influenced by several contending viewpoints within the United States government itself. American economic and strategic interests in the Middle East had grown dramatically since World War II. The area's importance as a communications center was so highly regarded that in September 1946 a representative of President Truman, George A. Brownell, was sent to the Arab capitals to negotiate air transport agreements on behalf of American airline companies. A bilateral treaty was successfully reached between the United States and Egypt, and eventually similar agreements were concluded with Lebanon and Syria. Then, in 1947, the Palestine issue suddenly obtruded, blocking a treaty with Iraq. Brownell wrote later that "public statements on the Palestine question by officials of the American government ... so angered certain

Iraqi officials that our representatives were advised that no agreement of any kind would be possible. It is difficult to exaggerate the feeling that exists on this subject throughout the Moslem nations.”

Yet the concern for air rights was dwarfed by a far greater preoccupation with American oil holdings. By 1947 American petroleum corporations owned approximately 42 percent of Middle Eastern supplies, largely in Saudi Arabia, but also in Kuwait, in Bahrein, even in Iraq. During the war U.S. output and refinery capacity in the Persian Gulf had doubled. Still, the oil corporations were intent upon enlarging their holdings. James Terry Duce, executive vice-president of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), was determined to assure the friendship of the Saudi government, and by the same token to increase his company's share of the Persian Gulf reserves. From the viewpoint of Duce and other oil company officials, the eruption of the Palestine issue clouded the outlook both for additional concessions and for assured pipeline rights across Arab territory. The fear that Washington's support for Zionism might endanger corporate earnings was phrased euphemistically, as a rule. In the *Petroleum Times* of June 1948, for example, Max W. Thornburg, a vice-president of the Cal-Tex Oil Company, one of the partners of the Aramco complex, expressed his dismay that Washington should have “prevailed upon [the United Nations] Assembly to declare racial and religious criteria the basis of political statehood.... In that one step ... the moral prestige of America was extinguished and Arab faith in her ideals destroyed.” After the United Nations vote was taken, Kermit Roosevelt, another former oil company executive, echoed this indignation: “The process by which Zionist Jews have been able to promote American support for the partition of Palestine,” he wrote, “demonstrates the vital need of a foreign policy based on national rather than partisan interests.”

In fact, Defense and State Department officials entirely shared the concern for American oil holdings in the Middle East. The military Joint Chiefs of Staff reminded Truman that access to Arab petroleum was a matter of critical national importance, one that would have to be evaluated in any governmental decision on the Palestine issue. “[Secretary of Defense] Forrestal spoke to me repeatedly about the danger that hostile Arabs might deny us access to the petroleum treasures of their country,” the president recalled. Indeed, the issue was much on Forrestal's mind. He warned a small-businessmen's luncheon on October 9, 1947, that as a consequence of the evident depletion of American oil reserves, “we ... have to develop reserves outside the country. The greatest field of untapped oil in the world is in the Middle East.... We should not be shipping a barrel of oil out of the United States to Europe.... [P]ipe for the Arabian pipeline should have precedence over pipe for similar projects in this country.” The defense secretary's concern for adequate oil reserves was soon transformed into an obsession with Zionist pressures on the government. Repeatedly he emphasized the need for lifting the Palestine question “out of politics.” His posthumous papers reveal that on several occasions he admonished J. Howard McGrath, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, that “no group in this country [i.e., the Zionists] should be permitted to influence our policy to the point where it could endanger our national security.”

Forrestal's alarm at American Zionist influence was shared by James Byrnes and Loy Henderson in the State Department, and by their colleagues at the Near East Desk, Gordon Merriam, Fraser Wilkins, and Evan Wilson. In a typical memo of January 14, 1947, Wilkins cautioned Byrnes that a pro-Zionist stance would be

... prejudicial to America. Arab relations in the fields of education, trade, petroleum and aviation [would be threatened]. Continued agitation and uncertainty regarding the Palestine question, by weakening the Anglo-American position in the Near East, permits a more rapid expansion of Soviet Russian objectives, and is distressing to Christians everywhere because the Christian interest in Palestine tends to become submerged in an Arab-Jewish controversy.

Truman wrote later that the State Department personnel were "almost without exception unfriendly to the idea of a Jewish state.... Like most of the British diplomats, some of our diplomats also thought that the Arabs, on account of their numbers and because of the fact that they controlled such immense oil resources, should be appeased. I am sorry to say that there were some among them who were inclined to be anti-Semitic." Some in any case reflected a pro-Arab background and training, particularly those who had studied at the American University of Beirut and others who had accumulated years of consular or ministerial service in various Arab cities and capitals. Their acquaintance was limited for the most part to the Arab world and its mentality.

But there were other factors that, in their turn, exerted a markedly pro-Zionist influence on the White House and Congress. Chief among these was the importance American political leaders placed on the Jewish vote in New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and other states with urban Jewish populations. This influence in turn would hardly have been effective if the American Jewish community itself had not been won over to Zionism through years of cultivation. By the end of World War II, American Jewry numbered some 5 million. The revelations of the death camps and the emergent plight of the refugees effectively transformed Zionism into the dominant mood of this strategically placed minority bloc. As a result, fund-raising drives on behalf of European survivors and the Palestine sanctuary raised \$100 million a year by 1947, far surpassing the philanthropic efforts of any other American charity or of any American ethnic group.

Not least of all, under the guidance of such Zionist leaders as Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen Wise, American Jewry mobilized to deluge the White House and Congress with letters and telegrams from all parts of the country. As early as 1943, an American Zionist Emergency Council had been established to orchestrate this lobbying effort. The AZEC, in fact, soon developed into one of the most formidable pressure groups of its time. With a large budget and fourteen professionally staffed departments, it was capable of obtaining mass signatures for petitions, or a flood of letters to Washington, in a matter of days. The AZEC worked through synagogues and other Jewish institutions, activated labor leaders, the press, and clergymen (through a front group, the American Christian Palestine Committee), and arranged speeches for such public service organizations as the Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and others. It issued an endless stream of memoranda, reprints, books, and directives, and planned rallies, conferences,

and campaigns. It was extraordinarily effective in Congress, and hardly less so with the executive branch of government.

When Harry Truman assumed the presidency in April 1945, therefore, he was subjected instantly to the full impact of this Zionist appeal. He was annoyed by it ([this page](#)), but he was impressed by it as well. In addition to his own deeply felt compassion for the Jewish refugees, the president was unquestionably responsive to the counsel of several pro-Zionist liberals whose integrity he trusted. These included Eleanor Roosevelt, Governor Herbert Lehman of New York, and Colonel Jacob Arvey, chairman of Cook County's (Chicago's) Democratic Committee. Truman and his advisers were not insensitive to the American Jewish political support these figures marshaled. On September 4, 1947, for example, Robert Hannegan, newly appointed chairman of the Democratic National Committee, urged the president to issue a pro-Zionist statement on Palestine, "for such a statement would have a very great influence and great effect on the raising of funds for the Democratic National Committee." Forrestal quoted Hannegan as reporting that "very large sums were obtained a year ago from Democratic contributors and that they would be influenced in either giving or withholding by what the President did on Palestine."

One of those who functioned most effectively behind the scenes was David K. Niles, Truman's special assistant for minority affairs. Through the office of this inconspicuous, rather dour man, the sense and fervor of American Zionism were transmitted to the president. It was Niles who persuaded Truman in July 1947 to drop the State Department officials George Wadsworth and Loy Henderson as advisers to the American delegation at the UN General Assembly, and to replace them with Major General John H. Hilldring, whose sympathetic treatment of the DPs during his tenure with the American military government in Germany had favorably impressed the Zionists. This was evidently as far as the president was willing to go, however, and as late as October 6, he turned down Hannegan's request for an official statement of intent on partition.

The State Department meanwhile remained determinedly noncommittal in its public comments. Throughout the UNSCOP hearings in the late summer of 1947, Secretary George Marshall declined to take an official stance on the Palestine issue. On the other hand, he privately endorsed a group memorandum submitted in June by Henderson, by Warren Austin, the American representative in the Security Council, and by Dean Rusk, director of the State Department's Office of Special Political Affairs. The document strongly favored the concept of a unitary state under a United Nations trusteeship, with immigration not to exceed Palestine's "economic absorptive capacity." As late as July 7, moreover, the secretary of state quietly assured Bevin of American cooperation in helping suppress illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine. Marshall was also impressed enough by Henderson's urgent appeal of September 22 to refrain from supporting the UNSCOP majority report. Nevertheless, the initiative on Palestine was soon taken out of Marshall's hands.

On October 9, 1947, Truman learned that the Arab League Council had instructed its member nations to dispatch troops to the Palestine borders. Even earlier, public statements from the Arab capitals were becoming increasingly belligerent. Evidently the

president's back was up. He instructed the State Department to support the partition plan, and Marshall dutifully abandoned his personal objections. Later Truman wrote that his essential purpose was "to help bring about the redemption of the pledge of the Balfour Declaration and the rescue of at least some of the victims of Nazism. I was not committed to any particular formula of statehood in Palestine or to any particular time schedule for its accomplishment... The simple fact is that our policy was an American policy rather than an Arab or Jewish policy." On October 11, Herschel V. Johnson, the representative on the General Assembly's Palestine Committee, announced the president's decision to endorse the "basic principles" of partition, subject to "certain amendments and modifications." It was a moment of bitter disappointment for the Arabs, of intense rejoicing for the Jews.

On October 21, 1947, the Palestine Committee assigned the task of refining UNSCOP's majority report to a subcommittee of nine partition supporters, including, by then, the United States and the Soviet Union. It was an imposing combination. Working together smoothly in this group, the American and Soviet delegations produced a compromise timetable for British evacuation. The Americans had briefly contemplated withdrawing most of the Negev Desert from the projected Jewish state; but Weizmann was able to meet with Truman personally, to captivate the president with a historical disquisition on Jewish links with this ancient wilderness, and to win Truman's support for the original partition boundaries.

On November 24, 1947, the minority subcommittee, composed largely of Moslem delegates, presented blueprints for a federal state to the full Palestine Committee. The latter in fact represented all the members of the General Assembly; its impending vote accordingly was crucial as a prefiguration of the General Assembly's ultimate decision. The Zionists counted on the full weight of American influence being thrown now against this—essentially pro-Arab—plan. They were disappointed. In a final, anguished memorandum, Henderson succeeded once again in staying Marshall's hand. The secretary of state instructed Herschel Johnson not to press the official American position on other delegations. This time, too, the Jews found a closed door at the White House. The president was irritated by Zionist tactics. "I do not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I did in this instance," he wrote. "The persistence of a few of the extreme Zionist leaders ... disturbed and annoyed me." Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett reported later at a cabinet lunch of December 1, 1947, that he personally "had never in his life been subject to as much pressure as he had been during the last few days of the Palestine issue at the United Nations." The Arabs meanwhile warned even more intemperately of retaliation against Western oil interests, of a Middle Eastern bloodbath, should the vote go against them.

If the Zionists hoped to win over the remaining delegations, they understood now that they would have to do so on their own, without U.S. help. Meeting repeatedly with these statesmen, therefore, the Zionist emissaries—Shertok, Horowitz, Eban, Silver, Eliahu Epstein, and others—urgently reminded their listeners of the Arabs' pro-Axis record during the war, and emphasized the plight of the displaced persons. In their desperation, they were not less single-minded in exploiting American Jewish

connections than the Arabs in threatening war and economic reprisals. Thus, unofficial but highly effective economic leverage was applied to the Chinese and to a group of smaller countries that had tended initially to favor the minority plan, including Haiti, Liberia, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and Greece. These six governments were deluged with wires, phone calls, letters, and visitations, many from important business customers. In the end, all of them except Greece voted against the Arab proposal. As a result, the minority scheme for a federal Palestine state was defeated by a vote of twenty-nine to twelve. On the following day, November 25, the Palestine Committee approved an amended partition plan, twenty-five to thirteen.

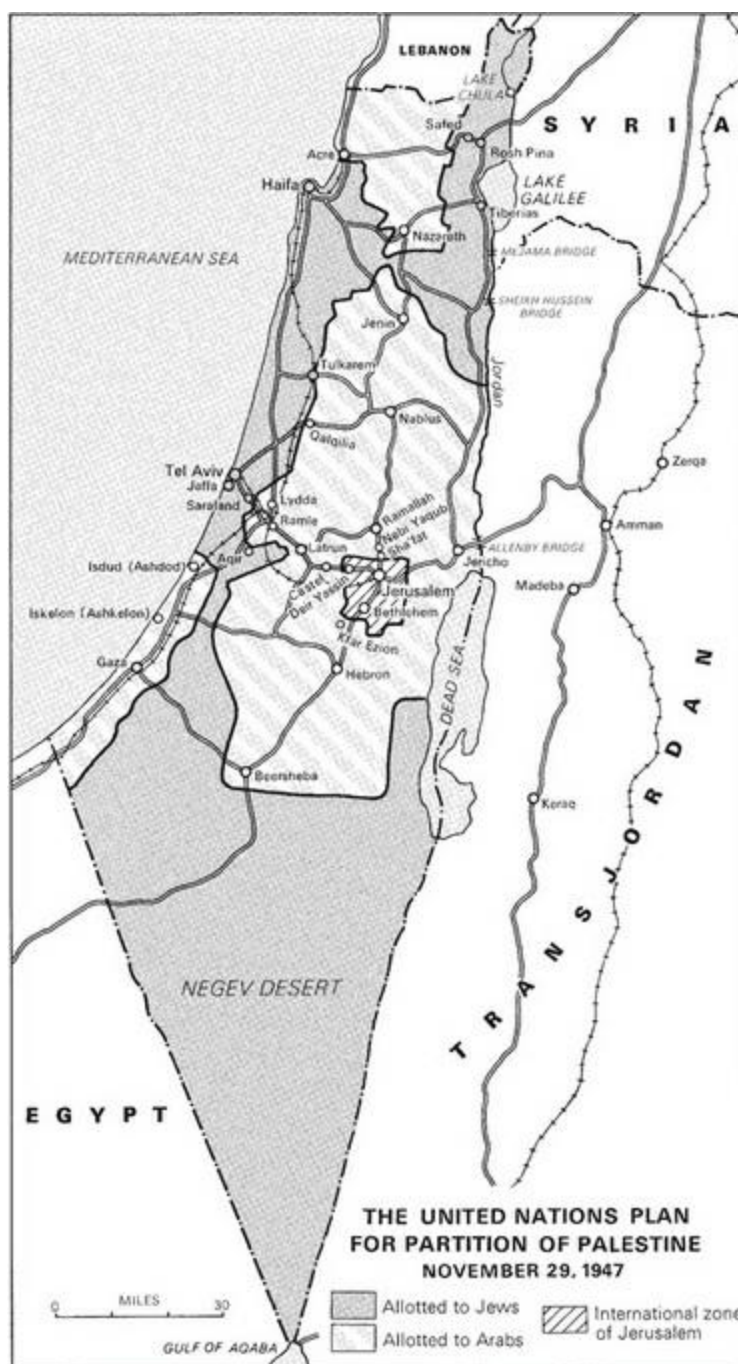
THE VOTE FOR PARTITION

The blueprint that was now to be submitted to the full plenary session of the General Assembly included several modifications. These had been suggested by the United States and approved by the Palestine Committee. The first was for the largely Arab-inhabited port of Jaffa to be assigned to the Arab state rather than to the Jews. The second was for two portions of the Negev, including the town of Beersheba and its hinterland, and a narrow strip of territory running from the Mediterranean along the Egyptian border halfway to the Gulf of Aqaba, to be allocated to the Arab rather than the Jewish state. Under the final plan, therefore, the Arab state would embrace 4,500 square miles, 804,000 Arabs, and 10,000 Jews. The Jewish state would encompass 5,500 square miles, 538,000 Jews, and 397,000 Arabs. Except for these changes, the UNSCOP majority report was accepted in basically unaltered form. The two states were to be linked in an economic union and to share a joint currency, joint railroads and interstate highways, as well as postal, telephone, and telegraphic services. Between 5 and 10 percent of the surplus revenue from customs and other common services was to be allocated to the City of Jerusalem; the remainder would be divided equally between the two governments. Each year the Jewish state would pay the Arab state a £4 million subsidy, reflecting the former's better citrus areas and anticipated higher technological efficiency.

The method of putting the resolution into effect was its weakest feature. After sharp debate, the Palestine Committee unenthusiastically adopted a Canadian formula. By its terms the General Assembly would name an international commission to supervise partition under the jurisdiction of the Security Council. Law and order were to be maintained by armed militias within the respective states, but the Security Council would be asked to assume responsibility "in the event of a threat to the peace." It was a meager palliative, yet no attempt was made to remedy it by providing an outside military force. One reason was the widely held expectation that Britain finally would agree to police the country on an interim basis. In any case, the United States feared that a mixed Security Council force would give the Russians a share in the administration of "peace and security" in Palestine.

On November 29 the partition resolution was submitted to the full session of the General Assembly for the desired vote. The political maneuvering of Jews and Arabs continued to the last moment. By then, however, pressure tactics were largely

gratuitous. The Americans and the Soviet bloc were committed to partition. So were Norway, Canada, and Guatemala. So, too, at last, were the five small nations whom the Zionists had succeeded in winning over. As expected, the Moslem bloc, together with India, Yugoslavia, and Greece (the latter with an important diaspora in the Arab world), continued unshakable against partition. One of the remaining question marks was France. The French had demonstrated an uncharacteristic sympathy for the Jews during the early postwar period, and an equivalent distaste for British policy and the Arabs. A Jewish state in the Middle East unquestionably would strengthen the position of the pro-French Maronites in Lebanon. Even so, the French delegation was ambivalent. Its chairman, Alexandre Parodi, was fearful of antagonizing the North African communities and of undermining a wide network of French Catholic institutions in the Moslem world. In the end, however, a transatlantic telephone call from Weizmann to Léon Blum in Paris resolved the issue. The former prime minister's influence was still considerable. Less than two hours before the final vote, the French delegation received instructions to support partition.



The General Assembly resolution was approved by a vote of thirty-three to thirteen, giving it the necessary two-thirds majority. With the exception of Cuba and Greece, all the states voting against the measure were either Moslem or Asian. The pivotal bloc of votes in favor of the resolution—not less than 40 percent of the United Nations membership—ultimately was cast by the Latin American delegations. Zionist pressure here was minimal. Nor was the intercession of the United States anywhere apparent in the Latin American stance. On the contrary, later, in April of 1948, when Washington proposed temporarily shelving partition in favor of a trusteeship ([this page](#)), the Latin American delegates unanimously rejected the notion. The evidence is compelling that these Latin governments, with few interests either way in the Middle East, accepted the majority report at face value. Simple compassion for the displaced persons unquestionably influenced their decision, the identical sympathy they would display the following year on behalf of Arab refugees from Palestine.

As matters developed, therefore, Jewish—or Arab—pressure tactics influenced the

General Assembly vote much less than critics of partition were willing to admit. Far more important was the unexpected but impressive phenomenon of Soviet-American agreement on an international issue. Moreover, the General Assembly was offered little valid alternative to the partition plan. Both Arabs and Jews had insisted that they would not accept a federalized Palestine, while partition claimed the support of at least one of the parties in the dispute. Significantly, on the morning of the final vote the Arab delegates panicked, announcing that they would support a federal solution in principle. Yet it was clear that Jewish immigration was still unacceptable to them, and that the tragedy of the DPs would not be alleviated by the minority plan. By then, too, the supporters of partition had the necessary votes and were uninterested in further delay.

The Arab scholar Albert Hourani shrewdly evaluated the factors responsible for the partition decision. The Jews belonged mainly to the West, he observed; they were far better known than the wholly alien Arabs. Their plight, registering directly and intimately on the Western conscience, was magnified by the Western sense of guilt by inaction. It was surely not a coincidence that the nations whose doors remained closed to Jewish immigrants were precisely the ones voting in favor of the Jewish state. Hourani noted also that the order, efficiency, and social philosophy of the Zionists appealed to Western minds. “[Westerners] were attracted by the gallant little people with a great and tormented past, by the pioneers taming the wilderness, the planners using science to increase production, the collective farmers turning away from the guilt and complexity of personal life, the terrorist making his gesture in the face of authority—all images of a new world ... hopeful, violent, and earnest.” The Zionists had a simpler explanation. It was the one Weizmann had offered the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry a year earlier, when he suggested that the decision to establish Jewish and Arab states and thus provide asylum for a nation of refugees was a choice not between right and wrong, but between the greater and the lesser injustice.

THE RESPONSE TO PARTITION

The partition formula anticipated a reasonable degree of economic cooperation between Arabs and Jews in common association. The members of the General Assembly hoped also to minimize difficulties by seeking British help on a number of crucial issues. These included the evacuation of Palestine not later than February 1, 1948, the use of a port adequate for substantial Jewish immigration, and a willingness to share the administration of the country with the appointed Palestine commission during the transitional period of British departure. To achieve these goals, a Palestine commission was appointed less than a month after the resolution was passed, consisting of delegates from Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama, and the Philippines. Like the General Assembly itself, the commissioners expected active support from Britain.

These hopes were disappointed. Sir Alexander Cadogan had warned repeatedly that his government would play neither a lone nor a leading role in effecting a plan that was not “accepted by both Arabs and Jews.” Eventually Britain declined to assume any tutelary responsibility whatever, refusing so much as to fix a schedule for the evacuation