BRITISH PARTY POLICY - PALESTINE 1937 - 1950.

A CASE STUDY

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Keele for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, by Heather Mary DEEGAN. October 1984

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ABSTRACT

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There are two themes contained in this thesis: firstly, the examination of British Government policy towards Palestine during the period 1937 to 1950 and secondly, the analysis of attitudes within the British Labour and Conservative Parties towards this issue. British Government policy is, therefore, juxtaposed with party policy and the thesis illustrates, on the one hand, that policy formulated in Opposition is often unviable in Government and, on the other, that this is invariably occasioned by domestic and international constraints imposed on successive administrations.

Exigencies in the context of this study are defined as the nature of the Palestine problem itself; the violent conflict between Arabs and Jews; the Second World War and its attendant ramifications for Palestine; the role of the United States; Britain's post-war decline as a World Power; domestic public opinion; the influence of Parliament and the impact of intra-party division.

The study suggests that policy towards Palestine was conditioned by these constraints which profoundly influenced Britain's perception of her own 'national interests'. The Conservative Party through its pragmatic acknowledgement of the realities of office escaped the ignominy of the affair, while the Labour Party, by establishing a strongly pro-Zionist line in Opposition successfully managed to inflict the greatest possible damage on itself when it was seen to renege on its promises when Office was attained.

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INTRODUCTION

Britain's period of Mandatory responsibility for Palestine has been the subject of much contemporary study and investigation by both historians and political scientists. Of course, Palestine was, indeed is still today, a contentious issue and can lend itself to partisan interpretations and opinions as to its historical development. Those academics sympathetic to either Zionist or Arab viewpoints have been profoundly criticial of the direction of British policy.

Gabriel Sheffer(1) investigating the period 1929 to 1939 arrives at the conclusion that British policy towards Palestine was dictated by a pro-Arab clique within the Colonial and Foreign Offices. He concentrates on the officials who were, on their own admission, sympathetic to the Arabs and focuses attention on what he terms the 'official class' dismissing politicians as mere victims of their Whitehall advisers. In essence, Sheffer, in adopting such a model of the policy-making process places British responses solely within the context of imperialistic ambition, that is, the maintenance of Palestine within the sphere of British interests, at any cost to the local communities.

Michael Cohen, in his study of the Mandatory period 1936 to 1945, takes imperialism one step further and argues that "British policy was determined by one single hard-headed criterion, not liberal ideals, but economic and strategic interests."(2) He considers the attitudes of Whitehall to be of profound importance but is equally critical of certain Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State. Winston Churchill, who by any reasonable yardstick of assessment could never be described as anti-Zionist, for it was he who gave flesh and blood to the concept of a Jewish National Home in 1922, is condemned by Cohen as "something of an enigma" who adopted "an ambiguous attitude which accounts for the many vacillations of British policy."(3) His admittedly well-written and thorough account falls into the rather fashionable category of attacking the British Government for pursuing any policy regardless of the often limited environment in which it operated. Despite his plethora of research material, he fails to critically assess the Zionists' changing demands throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and the impact of Jewish terrorism on the ultimate direction of British policy.

Norman Rose in his study of Gentile Zionism and Anglo Zionist Diplomacy considers the period 1929 to 1939 from a rather different perspective. He looks at Zionists and their sympathisers in the context of pressure group activity on the Governments of that decade. His analysis is uncritical of what can only be interpreted as 'behind the scenes' manouevring of a narrow interest group, the Jewish Agency, particularly in light of the fact that the Arabs did not have the same facility of access to those in 'high places'. He argues that Britain's commitment to establish a Jewish National Home stemmed from Britain's own interests, yet fails to explain why, in 1922, this commitment , which was not overwhelmingly popular even amongst Britain's most jingoistic ministers, was incorporated into the Palestine Mandate at the League of Nations. His conclusions by 1939 and the advent of the White Paper, which limited Jewish immigration into Palestine rest on the assumption that Britain had no further use for the Jews and could only "serve their imperial interests" by "placing the Zionists into cold storage."(4)

The theme running through all these studies is that Britain acted purely from self-interest, disregarding the Jews and pursuing anti-Zionist policies which had either been formulated by partial Whitehall Mandarins or pro-Arab Ministers in Government. The tendency is invariably to fudge the role the Zionists played in the dispute and to portray them as innocents used and abused by a series of ill-intentioned British Administrations.

However, if Zionist historians comfort themselves with the belief that Britain adopted pro-Arab policies, there is one group who manifestly disagree with this interpretation: the Arabs. Originating from the Balfour Declaration, it is the Arab contention that Britain embarked on a pro-Zionist course. As A.W. Kayyali maintains: "The Palestinians were convinced that Britain was the real sponsor and defender of Zionism in Palestine."(5) In his analysis of the major causes as to why the Palestinian Arab nationalists failed to prevent the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine he focuses on the inequity of the balance of power between themselves and what he calls, the "British-backed Zionists". He argues that the "Palestinian Arabs formed an under-developed rural society with meagre resources and minimal effective organisation, while the Zionists constituted a highly organised, well-financed movement led by a highly intelligent and determined leadership."(6) Of course,

Palestinian Arab backwardness was often advanced by successive British Governments as exactly the reason why the Jews should be encouraged to establish a Homeland in Palestine. It was believed that the Jews would bring economic advancement and general prosperity to all Palestinian domiciles.

Dr. Shahabuddin disagrees with this view, asserting that the undisputed Zionist prosperity within Palestine benefited the Jews only, and actually served to retard Arab development. Proceeding along this line of argument he condemns the British Government for deliberately debilitating Arab progress.(7) F. Khouri touches on the failure of the Palestinian Arabs to propagandise their resistance to Zionism and points his finger accusingly at Britain who, he asserts, must bear the responsibility for failing to "resolve the Palestine question peacefully."(8)

Of the less partisan accounts, Elizabeth Monroe both in her book(9) and article(10) favours the view that Britain somehow 'muddled through' in its policy towards Palestine. She looks to Britain's role within the wider Middle Eastern theatre and assesses Palestine as one factor in a larger arena. Her research is comprehensive, although constrained by the absence of certain documentary evidence made available after her writings were published, yet it is possible to feel a certain sense of unease at her unquestionably fulsome defence of Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary in the post-war Labour Administration. As regards popular works on the Mandatory period, Nicholas Bethell's must rate reasonably highly. He offers a readable and informative description of events although his essentially journalistic appraisal confines itself to pure narrative and rejects any attempt at analysis.

Clearly then, in spite of a wealth of literature on the subject, questions remain unanswered. Can British policy towards Palestine only be seen in terms of biased Civil Servants? Does the pursuit of a foreign policy based on self interest, in itself, provide sufficient grounds for condemnation? Is it true that Britain actually dictated policy or was it the case that British responses were conditioned by the increasing animosity between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine, the ultimate recourse to violence, and often the contraints of office as perceived by successive governments? Why did Britain's many Commissions of Enquiry fail so dismally in arriving at any resolution

of the Palestine problem? It is the intention of this thesis to confront and attempt to clarify these questions. In pursuance of this objective research has been conducted at the Public Record Office and other institutions holding important documents and private papers on this period. Unfortunately, due to financial limitations, archival material held in foreign institutes, i.e. the Central Zionist Archives and Weizmann Archives in Israel and the Harry S. Truman Library and Zionist Archives in the United States were inaccessible.

The thesis is not only concerned with the direction of British policy towards Palestine but also with policy-making in the context of British Party politics. Its central interest is situated in the analysis of attitudes, responses and policies of both the British Labour Party and the Conservative Party towards the Palestine issue, and how these intentions were translated when Office was attained. A crucial aspect of the thesis is an assessment of the power and influence of the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office in order to discern whether accusations of the existence of an all-powerful, partial, decision-making coterie within Whitehall can be substantiated.

It is the contention of the thesis that British policy towards Palestine should not be seen in isolation from party political considerations and in this respect it will seek to explain why Governments of either the Labour Party or the Conservative Party chose to follow certain policies, many of which were at variance with declarations made whilst in Opposition. The thesis intends to explore the belief that parties in Government suffer severe limitation in the direction of policies pursued and that the adoption of a particular policy depends less on party opinions or the wishes of personnel within the Civil Service and rather more on the constraints of Office. In the context of this study, contraints of office will be defined as: the nature of the Palestine problem itself; the violent conflict between Arabs and Jews; the Second World War and its attendant ramifications for Palestine; the role of the United States; Britain's post-war decline as a World Power and domestic public opinion. The power of Parliament and the impact of intra-party division on the direction of Government policy will also be examined. In essence, the thesis is concerned with what has hitherto been an unresearched area, that is, an analysis of party policy juxtaposed with Government policy towards Palestine and an understanding of the factors involved which influence policy makers to decide on their

ultimate choice of policy direction.

A comprehensive doctoral study(12) has been made of the attitude of the Labour Party towards Palestine, yet within this excellent account of the procedural aspects of the Party's shifting policy on Palestine there is little attempt to relate these developments to the evident realities and often unpalatable truths a party faces in Government. Another study has been advanced in which a section is devoted to the apparent 'betrayal' of the post-war Labour Administration to the Zionist cause.(13) The view proffered by J. Alderman is that of a Labour Party consciously espousing pro-Zionist policies in Opposition for purposes of electoral advantage. It is his belief that once the Labour Party gained voting support from the Jewish community in Britain in the General Election of 1945, it deliberately reneged on its promises when it subsequently gained office. This thesis intends to offer a less simplistic analysis of the indisputable dilemma of reconciling policy intentions outlined in Opposition with those adopted in Government.

Much has been written of the nature of Opposition in Britain and in the opinion of one leading political scientist, Opposition Parties fail to propose realistic policy options because of institutional structures and the lack of access to detailed Administrative information.(14) However, it is neither the purpose of this thesis to examine the Government-Opposition cycle nor to prove or disprove the arguments of contemporary political scientists in what is essentially a study of a single issue in an historical setting.

Wider questions on the nature of British imperialism are not within the remit of this thesis and scholars of International Relations may well be disappointed as the study, whilst not ignoring Britain's post-war decline as a World Power, which rendered her vulnerable to external pressure and ultimately limited the policy options open to her, does not place British policy towards Palestine wholly in the context of International Power rivalry.

There has, until now, been no study of both the Labour and Conservative Parties' response to the problem of Palestine, maybe because of the inherent difficulties of such research. It will be apparent that an imbalance exists within the thesis as regards the treatment of the Conservative Party vis-a-vis the Labour Party.

The inequity is unfortunately unavoidable, given the relative paucity of archival material available at Central Office and the Bodleian Library Conservative Party Archive. The nature and structure of the Conservative Party organisation coupled with the devastation by fire of many records after 1946 profoundly hinder the researcher and, as such, the thesis has been obliged to rely on secondary sources. Of necessity, the use of private papers, biographies and press reports in order to gauge Conservative opinion inclines the thesis to arrive at conclusions which are more speculative than those with regard to the Labour Party.

The thesis is concerned with the development of Party and Government policy within the period 1937 to 1950, although the first and second chapters are essentially introductory and consider the historical development of Palestine up to 1936 and the attitudes of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Foreign and Colonial Offices throughout the years prior to 1937. The choice of such a period is not an arbitrary one for it marks a time in which the changes occurring within the political spectrum of Government corresponded with the profound impact external exigencies had on the entire question of Palestine itself and the nature of Britain's Mandatory responsibility. As such, the Palestine issue assumed a significance and urgency hitherto unknown and ultimately became a major pre-occupation of the post-war Labour Administration. The decision to commence at 1937 is especially important for it was the year in which the authoritative Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel published its findings. The Peel Commission, appointed to investigate the serious disturbances within Palestine, recommended that the Mandate should be abrogated and that Palestine should be partitioned into two separate states; one Arab, the other Jewish.

The notion of partition was to prove a divisive issue both in terms of party politics and the responses of Arabs and Jews. There has been a tendency amongst some Jewish academics to underplay the fact that Zionists, who strove violently to achieve this aim in the post-war years, initially rejected the proposal and have argued that the Peel partition plan:"was not a genuine attempt at solving the problem for good...the plan was primarily aimed at safeguarding British national interests and only secondarily at solving the inter-communal conflict."(15) The thesis seeks to reject this narrow

indictment of British Governmental policy intention and considers the question of partition throughout the whole period under review. The thesis, therefore, follows a chronological pattern as it attempts to expose and analyse the vacillating positions of all parties to the dispute. The fact that partition was, indeed, the final solution arrived at by a decision of the United Nations, and not by the British Labour Government requires examination, as do the responses of the Conservative and Labour Parties to this resolution of the issue.

The thesis intends neither to apportion blame nor to concentrate on the iniquities of any party involved in the Palestine problem. It does, however, hope to illustrate that Governments have extremely restricted policy options which are often pursued at the cost of intra-party strife and personal opprobrium, and to explain something of the mechanisms at play in Government and Party decision making.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PALESTINE 1917-1937

(i) The Origins of the Intractable Problem

"Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs ....."

(Letter from Sir Henry McMahon to the Sharif Hussein, 24 October 1915)

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object....."

(Balfour Declaration, 1917)

Britain's conflicting promises to two different communities essentially characterised British Governmental policy towards Palestine for more than 30 years. Although this study is concerned primarily with the formation of British policy after 1937, due consideration must be given to the whole period of Mandatory rule, as the polarisation which developed during the interwar years violently manifested itself after 1945 and was to have a profound effect on the direction of British party policy.

Palestine came into being as a distinct political unit in 1922 when Transjordan was removed from the original Palestine Mandate of 1920. When the Palestine Mandate Agreement between Britain and the League of Nations was signed with the Balfour Declaration incorporated into it, the Jewish community acquired their first internationally binding pledge of support, which greatly strengthened their political claims.(1)

Following the official announcement of the Mandate a wave of Palestinian Arab protests against the policies incorporated within it, engulfed the country.(2) The Arabs were embittered and considered its provisions unjust and contrary to all previous promises made to them. Britain, of course, had seized upon the growing Arab nationalism and disillusion with Turkish dominance during the First World War. Once the Ottoman Empire joined the Central powers in the war, Britain saw the advantages of an Arab revolt. Not only would it weaken Turkey militarily by depriving her of Arab manpower, but Arab forces could be used to augment the Allied armies in the Near East.

However, some Arabs, particularly in Syria and Mesopotania, were wary of joining the Allies until Britain made satisfactory promises to them. It was this scepticism which occasioned the British High Commissioner of Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, to write a series of letters to Sharif Hussein, the Arab representative.(3) The Sharif requested British recognition of Arab independence in the area bounded on the north by a line from Mersin-Adana to the Persian frontier, on the east by Persia and the Persian Gulf, on the south by the Indian Ocean and on the west by the Red and Mediterranean seas. In his letters of 24 October and 13 December 1915, Sir Henry agreed "to recognise and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif," (4) with certain exceptions, none of which appeared, at least to the Arabs, to include the Palestine area. The British excluded the "districts of Mersin and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo," all of which lie well to the north of Palestine.(5)

Nevertheless, the question as to whether Palestine was included within these frontiers or not was to become a controversial issue after the War. The Arabs were under the impression that Palestine was included in the proposed independent Arab state which Britain promised to recognise, and certain documentary evidence suggests a substantiation of this view.(6)

Confusion arose over Palestine because simultaneously with the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, the British were secretly negotiating with their French allies the apportionment of the territorial area in the Ottoman Empire. These negotiations

culminated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916, according to which Palestine was to have: "an international administration, the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies and the representatives of the Sharif of Mecca."(7)

Barely 18 months later, Britain undertook another major commitment regarding the future of Palestine in the form of a letter, dated 2 November 1917, from Lord Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, to Lord Rothschild, a leading Jewish personality in Britain: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object."(8) At this stage, however, strong objections were urged by a section of the British Jewish community, relatively small in number, but eminent in their social and political standing, who viewed with alarm a movement which might seem to cast doubts on their own status as British citizens. Their view was voiced in the ranks of the Government itself, with passionate conviction by Edwin Montagu, who had recently succeeded Austen Cahmberlain as Secretary of State for India. Any doubts that the War Cabinet may have harboured regarding such a novel policy as the official endorsement of Zionism appeared to be reinforced. As such, decisions were postponed and for some months the issue seemed uncertain until Leo Amery was asked to draft a statement which would appease this element without impairing the substance of the proposed declaration. Amery included the words; "(...object), it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country,"(9) which effectively conveyed no suggestion that Jews essentially belonged to Palestine and left the future scope and authority of the National Home in Palestine to be decided by developments.

The conflicting nature of these varied commitments was not unknown to the British Government who endeavoured to suppress the discussion of the issue for the duration of the War. Hussein did not learn of the Sykes-Picot Agreement until a year and a half later when Russia's new government published secret war agreements in December 1917.

Britain was also aware of Arab feeling regarding the future of Palestine, and as early as March 1916, Sir Marks Sykes of the Foreign Office, reported that: "When in Cairo, Dr. Ferris Nimr and Major Faruki, poles asunder on the political question, both told me that Arabs, Christians and Moslems alike would fight in the matter to the last man against Jewish Dominion in Palestine."(10)

Sir Mark Sykes became an enthusiastic Zionist and his enthusiasm found an entirely new scope when he became a secretary to the War Cabinet, which included such Zionists sympathisers as, LLoyd George, Milner, Smuts and, of course, Balfour. According to Amery's memoirs, Sykes in his new capacity "practically took charge of all the negotiations which led up to the Balfour Declaration. The Zionist Movement owed much at a critical moment in its history to his infectious enthusiasm and to his indefatigable energy."(11)

The attitude of Sykes is interesting and strikes a contrast when compared with the opinion, admittedly in retrospect, of Sir Harold Beeley, also a member of the Foreign Office. In assessing the Balfour Declaration, Beeley considered it wrong on two counts; firstly, "It cut across complicated areas and almost destroyed the policy which we (the Foreign Office) were trying to pursue in the Middle East of establishing close relations with the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire as they became independent. Secondly, it was a policy which was totally out of date because it involved the colonisation of a territory in Asia of European settlers. And the whole trend of international political thinking was winging very fast against that kind of development."(12)

Early in 1918, Sir Reginald Wingate, the newly appointed High Commissioner, made an attempt to assuage the Arabs, when he sent Hussein two telegrams which reaffirmed Britain's former pledges to the Arabs; held that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was not a formal treaty, and concluded that in any case Russia's exit from the War "had long ago created an altogether different situation."(13) These messages reassured Hussein and prevented the erosion of Arab goodwill, at least for a short time, and the British troops were welcomed as liberators when General Allenby and his Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) entered Jerusalem on 11 December 1917, less than six weeks after the Balfour Declaration.

However, only days after Allenby's entry Colonel Deeds of the EEF reported the intial reactions in Jerusalem to the Declaration: "The news of Mr. Balfour's Declaration regarding Palestine is new to Jerusalem and has caused no little apprehension."(14) He also reported the exacerbation of relations between Arab and Jew.

General Clayton, Chief Political Officer of the EEF and head of the Arab Bureau lost no time in drawing the attention of London to the ramifications and likely effects of the Declaration on future Anglo-Arab relations in Palestine: "The policy.... will meet with strong opposition from both Christian and Moslem Arabs who have already shown distrust of the lengths to which His Majesty's Government will go as a consequence of Mr. Balfour's announcement to the Zionists."(15)

The British response was to aim to achieve a level of Arab-Zionist understanding which was considered essential if Britain was to preserve its war position in the area. In pursuit of this objective, the Arab Committee in Cairo undertook to send emissaries to Palestine to persuade the Palestinian Arabs to take a more conciliatory attitude towards Zionism. The British Government was anxious that a Zionist Commission should visit Palestine, headed by Dr. Chaim Weizmann with Captain W. Ormsby-Gore, a later Colonial Secretary, as its liaison officer. The Foreign Office stated that the object of the Commission: "is to carry out, subject to General Allenby's authority any steps required to give effect to the Government declaration in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for Jewish people.... and at the same time to allay Arab suspicions regarding the true aims of Zionism."(16) The British officials in the area endeavoured to create a conciliatory atmosphere on the eve of the Zionist Commission's visit, yet when Weizmann and the Commission reached Palestine in April 1918, they discovered that "Arab agitators were proclaiming that the British had sent for the Jews to take over the country."(17)

The Commission's visit did little to promote an Arab-Zionist entente. In a long report to Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, Ormsby-Gore gave a detailed account of the reception accorded to it by the various communities. The report, though restrained, did not fail to reflect Palestinian opposition to the Balfour Declaration: "It would be idle to deny the existence of a good deal of mutual suspicion on the

part of both Jews and Arabs... The Arabs are generally apprehensive of expropriation by the Jews and the loss of social and political prestige; on the other side the Jews are frightened of Arab attempts at domination."(18)

There clearly existed, even at this early stage, a distinct incompatibility between the Palestinian Arab quest for self-determination and Zionist aims in Palestine. Although, according to Amery many government officials were both pro-Arab and pro-Zionist and apparently saw no inconsistency between the two ideals.(19)

As the War drew nearer to its conclusion the British were increasingly taking account of the importance of retaining control over Palestine in view of its strategic benefits to the defence of the Suez Canal. A memorandum on 'The Future of Palestine' by Leo Amery of the War Office, stressed that : "Strategically Palestine and Egypt go together. Not only is Palestine a necessary buffer to the Suez Canal, but conversely, any defence of Palestine would have its main base at Kantara.....Palestine is geographically practically in the centre of the British Empire."(20) The conclusions of this line of thinking were drawn in a memorandum by the General Staff at the War Office: "The creation of a buffer Jewish State in Palestine, though this state will be weak in itself, is strategically desirable for Great Britain so long as it can be created without disturbing Mohammadan sentiment and is not controlled by a power which is potentially hostile to this country."(21) It is interesting to note in this statement the first mention of a Jewish State which, of course, could be conceived as something rather different than a Jewish National Home.

As Arab opposition to Zionism mounted, relations between the Palestinian Arabs and the British Administration became strained. The Foreign Secretary outlined in a letter to the Prime Minister a reason why Britain was disinclined to grant Palestine self-determination: "The weak point of our position of course is that in the case of Palestine we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination. If the present inhabitants were consulted they would unquestionably give an anti-Jewish verdict. Our justification for our policy is that we regard Palestine as being absolutely exceptional, that we consider the question of the Jews

outside Palestine as one of world importance."(22)

The Paris Peace Conference in April 1919 decided to send an Inter-Allied Commission to Syria, Palestine and Mesopotania to ascertain the sentiments of the people with regard to the future administration of their affairs. The Commission found, not surprisingly, that "only the Zionist Jews, about one-tenth of the total population, favoured the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine."(23)

Arab opposition failed to influence British policy in the manner intended. On the contrary, the Palestine Mandate was announced with the Balfour Declaration included in its articles. Also Britain appointed a well-known Zionist sympathiser, Herbert Samuel, as the first post-Mandate High Commissioner in Palestine. In his published memoirs, Samuel states that he had been appointed "with full knowledge on the part of His Majesty's Government of my Zionist sympathies, and no doubt largely because of them".(24) Subsequently, Arab determination to resist Zionism and the Balfour Declaration was intensified.

From 1921, Palestine, which had hitherto been under the aegis of the Foreign Office, became the responsibility of the Colonial Office. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, visited Palestine in March 1921, and found the Palestinians eager to convey to him their strong feelings against Zionism. On March 1921 a deputation met Churchill at Government House, Jerusalem and presented the Colonial Secretary with a memorandum outlining Palestinian Arab grievances and demands. The Memorandum called for the abolition of the Jewish National Home; stoppage of immigration and land sales, and the establishment of a national Palestinian government responsible to a Parliament.(25) In his reply Churchill informed the Palestinian leaders that it was not in his power to repudiate the Balfour Declaration and to veto Jewish immigration to Palestine, which the Jewish National Home policy inevitably involved. The Balfour Declaration was a fait accompli brought about by the War which the Arabs in Palestine could do nothing but accept.(26) He assured his visitors that the Government fully intended to stand by the second part of the Balfour Declaration which imposed a dual obligation on the Government: "if one promise stands so does the other."(27)

Churchill's comments disappointed the Arabs and Captain Brunton of the General Staff Intelligence in Palestine reported that Churchill's visit had added to the anxiety of the Palestinians because the Colonial Secretary "upheld the Zionist cause and treated the Arab demands like those of a negligible opposition to be put off by a few political phrases and treated like bad children."(28)

Demonstrations and clashes between Arabs and Jews ensued which prompted the High Commissioner to send a report to Churchill. Herbert Samuel attributed the outbreaks of violence to political and economic considerations aggravated by the increase of Jewish immigration. "The Arabs", he added, "demanded representative institutions and regarded the Administration as unduly autocratic."(29)

Samuel proposed the temporary suspension of Jewish immigration; a stricter regulation of immigration and a consideration of the "very early establishment of representative institutions."(30) Moreover, Samuel, presumably acting autonomously, made a speech at an Assembly in Jerusalem in which he re-interpreted the meaning of the Balfour Declaration in a manner designed to allay the fears of the Palestinian Arabs and to promote tranquility in Palestine. Samuel promised the Palestinians that Britain "would never impose upon them a policy which the people had reason to think was contrary to their religious, political or economic interests."(31)

Churchill, however, was unwilling to conciliate the Palestinians by means of political concessions, but nevertheless raised the Palestine Question before Cabinet: "The situation in Palestine causes me perplexity and anxiety. The whole country is in a ferment. The Zionist policy is profoundly unpopular with all except Zionists. Both Arabs and Jews are...ready to spring at each other's throats.... In the interests of the Zionist policy, all elective institutions have so far been refused to the Arabs."(32) He concluded by requesting that the whole situation be reviewed by the Cabinet, which was accepted by the Members. After discussion the Cabinet agreed not to yield to Arab demands and a decision was made to allow the Mandate, inclusive of the Balfour Declaration, to stand.

By the time the Palestine Mandate was brought into full operation by the League of Nations Council Resolution of 29 September 1923, the

attitude of the three parties to the Palestine dispute had already crystallised. The British Government stood firmly by the Balfour Declaration and the Jewish National Home policy, guided by the theory of 'dual obligation' and the principle of 'economic absorptive capacity' on immigration policy. The Zionists were satisfied that the articles of the Mandate were conducive to the achievement of their immediate basic aim, the establishment of a National homeland. They were opposed to representative institutions and the application of self-determination on the grounds that the Arab majority would use such institutions to fight Zionism and revoke the Mandate. The Palestinian Arabs believed that Britain and the Mandate were the protectors of Zionism, and that the Jewish National Home policy represented the convergence of British imperial interests with Zionist colonialism in Palestine which was bound to lead to a Jewish majority and supremacy and the eventual eviction of the Arabs from Palestine.

(ii) The Period 1924 - 1936

Between 1924 and 1928 the Palestinian political scene witnessed a period of stagnation and paralysis, although hostilities still existed beneath the surface calm. These hostilities manifested themselves when in 1925 Lord Balfour visited Palestine with the object of opening the Hebrew University. The day Balfour arrived in the country a general strike was observed by Muslims and Christians throughout Palestine. An Arab representative passed a motion to the High Commissioner inviting Lord Balfour to leave the country which, it was stated, he had entered against the wishes of the inhabitants.(33)

When, shortly afterwards, the new Colonial Secretary, L.S. Amery visited Palestine he received a Palestinian Arab deputation, headed by Sheikh al-Farouki, who outlined the view that eventually Britain would reach the conclusions that the Zionist policy was inapplicable.(34) Of course, Amery was a Zionist sympathiser who had originally been won over to the cause by Sir Mark Sykes. Amery revealed his views some years later: "I confess that my interest (in Palestine) was, at first, largely strategical. I was keen on an advance into Palestine and Syria on military grounds and the idea of consolidating that advance by establishing in Palestine a prosperous community bound to Britain by ties of gratitude and interest naturally appealed to me..... But it was not long before I realised what Jewish energy in every field of thought and action might mean for the regeneration of the whole of the Middle Eastern region."(35)

Amery was quite aware of the dissension between Arab and Jew although, nevertheless, felt that Lord Plumer, the successor to Herbert Samuel as High Commissioner would take over the country in good shape materially "even if Jew and Arab still remained diametrically opposed over the Mandate."(36) Lord Plumer assumed office at a time when the Palestinian Arabs were adopting a more conciliatory approach to the Government. The factors involved in this change of policy were, firstly, the sharp decline in Jewish immigration. In 1927 immigration was represented by a negative figure and in 1928 immigration and emigration balanced one another; secondly, the degree of factionalism which existed between the Palestinian Arab leaders. To an extent the opposition to Zionism was

overshadowed by power seeking within the Muslim community.(37)

It was not until 1929 that the Arab-Jewish animosity intensified; and it was a religious issue, that of the 'Buraq' or 'Wailing Wall' which triggered off the disturbances. The rising began as an anti-Jewish outburst but soon there were reprisal attacks from the Jewish community, until ultimately over 1000 persons were charged by the Palestine Administration. In January 1929, Sir John Chancellor, the new High Commissioner, reported to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield, that as a consequence of the recent outbreaks "a wave of Pan Arab nationalist sentiment has swept over Palestine and the neighbouring Arab countries, and it is certain that the political situation will never again be as it was."(38) Chancellor was clearly aware of the radical change in the Palestinian Arabs' political outlook.

A sense of identity had undoubtedly been kindled in the 1920s, particularly after the establishment of the British Mandate. Political consciousness had developed as a response to Jewish nationalism. Throughout the 1920s, Palestinian Arab nationalism, led by a coalition of Muslim landed gentry and upper middle-class Christian Arab families, resembled political movements then emerging elsewhere in the Arab world. Some 80% of its constituency was a politically unsophisticated rural peasantry. There was little if any ideology, with the major emphasis placed on the elimination of British controls and European Jewish influences.(39) In a sense, the quest for self-determination was the precursor of Arab nationalism; a development which may not have occurred had Britain adopted a different policy towards Palestine.(40)

In 1930 a Commission was set up by the Government to investigate the disturbances in Palestine (41) and reported that Zionist land acquisition and Jewish colonisation were the foremost Arab grievances. The Arabs, the Commission stated, were convinced that Zionist land settlement and immigration schemes would inevitably result in the complete subordination of the Arabs as a race, the expropriation of their people from the soil, and the unemployment of a large number and their displacement by Jews.(42)

Responding to the findings of the Commission, the Prime Minister of the new Labour Administration, Ramsay MacDonald, together with Lord Passfield the Colonial Secretary, agreed to receive an Arab delegation in London on 30 March 1930. In the discussions which took place the Palestinian leaders demanded the prohibition of land sales from Arabs to non-Arabs; the stoppage of Jewish immigration and the institution of a national parliamentary government in accordance with Article 22 of the League's covenant. The British Government maintained that they were under obligation to carry out the administration of Palestine in accordance with the Articles of the Mandate, and MacDonald and Passfield agreed to act on land sales and Jewish immigration after their envoy, Sir John Hope Simpson, had investigated the situation and submitted his recommendations. Simpson's findings were to become the basis of a Government Statement of Policy which was later known as Passfield's White Paper.

Simpson's Report drew two conclusions: firstly, that if all the cultivable land in Palestine were divided up among the Arab agricultural population there would be insufficient to provide every family with a decent livelihood; secondly, that at the time of investigation, there was no room for additional settlers if the living standards of the Arab population were to be maintained. Furthermore, Simpson expressed his conviction that Arab unemployment was serious and widespread and that it was unwise to admit Jewish immigrants to fill vacancies in Palestine when unemployed Arabs were capable of filling the vacancy.(43)

While upholding the theory of 'dual obligation' under the Mandate and the principle of 'economic absorptive capacity' as a regulative guide to the number of Jewish immigrants allowed into the country, Passfield's White Paper essentially promised to implement Simpson's recommendations. Predictably, the White Paper pleased the Arabs and incensed the Jews.

The White Paper marked a shift in British Government policy in that it displayed a certain sympathy towards the Arab community in Palestine; a shift which was at odds with Labour Party commitments. In fact, at the Labour Party Conference in 1931, the National Executive Committee decided to appoint a sub-committee to study the White Paper and its possible ramifications. Discussions were to be held with the Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation (Poale Zion)

which was affiliated to the Labour Party. Protests and criticism of the White Paper had been received from various Jewish Socialist organisations both in Europe and the United States. Arising from the NEC debate a statement was issued to the Press outlining Labour's views: "We are profoundly disturbed that our Jewish friends in Palestine and their colleagues abroad should doubt our sympathy with their ideals or suspect the British Labour Government of putting obstacles in the way of their practical realisation within the Mandate." However, conceivably in the interests of Party unity, the statement went on to support the Government: "It is precisely the purpose of the British Labour Government's policy to provide the conditions for the orderly and consistent development of Palestine so as to avoid unintentional injustices to the non-Jewish sections of the community, and at the same time secure a broader and more certain basis for the growth of the Jewish National Home."(44)

As a result of the outcry against the White Paper, Passfield informed Chancellor of the necessity of finding a means of co-operation with the Jewish Organisation and to this end Passfield concluded that there seemed no alternative but to allow a letter from Ramsay MacDonald to Dr. Weizmann to be published. The letter, the Colonial Secretary stated, defined "our policy in Palestine in terms more precise and more acceptable to the Jews than those of the White Paper."(45) Passfield recognised that the publication of such correspondence would increase Chancellor's difficulties with the Arab community but maintained that this outcome was unavoidable "for political and international reasons", arising from Zionist pressure.(46)

In his letter to Weizmann, MacDonald asserted that His Majesty's Government intended to stand by the Mandate, which they viewed as an obligation to World Jewry and not only to the Jews of Palestine; to uphold the Jewish National Home policy by further land settlement and immigration by Jews and to condone the Zionist policy of insisting on Jewish labour for work on Jewish enterprises.(47) Weizmann considered the letter to be a decisive factor, "which enabled us to make the magnificent gains of the ensuing years"(48)

Whether or not Weizmann's assessment was correct is open to conjecture for in a matter of a few years international events were to have a profound effect on the internal strife in that troubled area.

The rise of Fascism in Germany and the concomitant increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine exacerbated the existing hostilities between the two communities.

The flow of Jewish immigration in 1933 assumed such proportions that it prompted the current High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope, in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary, to admit that "during the past twelve months the control of immigration into Palestine has broken down, and the principle of allowing settlers to enter in accordance with the absorptive capacity of the country has not been observed."(49) In addition, the resolutions of the Zionist Congress in Prague which favoured unrestricted immigration to Palestine in view of the Nazi persecution, aggravated an already existent volatile situation.(50) The Arab response took the form of demonstrations, strikes and a threat to Wauchope that they would take the situation into their own hands in order to prevent the flood of Jewish immigrants. Ultimately, riots ensued, the severity of which compelled the High Commissioner to appoint a Commission of Enquiry. The Enquiry found that the Arabs' disposition to the use of violence in order to deflect the Mandatory power from its commitments, clearly revealed the depth of their feelings against the Jewish National Home and in favour of a pursuit of national independence.(51)

The British Government, too, viewed the deteriorating situation with concern. British interests in Palestine were no longer confined to the defence of the Suez Canal. The Mosul-Haifa pipeline, the Haifa harbour and the Imperial Airways route to India via Gaza, rendered Palestine an essential link in British strategy and the Empire's system of communication.

However, explosive as the situation was, Wauchope, who was certainly politically attuned,(53) was not as alarmed as he might have been for three main reasons: firstly, because the character of the riots were purely political; secondly, because the fellaheen did not join in the riots; and thirdly, because of the factionalism and lack of organisation among the Arab leaders.(54) Subsequently, this reading of the situation was to change.

An event occurred in 1935 which further damaged relations between the Arabs and the Palestine Administration. A young revolutionary

Arab, Qassam, who captured the spirit of Arab nationalism, tried to initiate an armed revolt against the British and the Zionists. It failed and Qassam, refusing to surrender, was killed in the abortive attempt. Qassam's seemingly heroic death to the Arab community, soon became the symbol of self-sacrifice and martydom and his funeral occasioned a great demonstration in which the police were attacked. Following from this event the Arab community became more militant and issued a statement to the High Commissioner asserting that unless they received satisfactory replies to their requests: "extreme and irresponsible counsels will prevail and the political situation will rapidly deteriorate."(55)

Alive to the dangerous state of Arab opinion in Palestine, the High Commissioner was authorised by J.H. Thomas, the Colonial Secretary, following a Cabinet decision, to make an announcement regarding the setting up of a legislative council. This statement went some way towards appeasing the Arab community, but aroused the opposition of the Jewish leaders. When the proposed Legislative Council, which would include a proportion of Arab and Jewish representatives relative to the respective size of their populations,came to be debated in the House Commons on 25 March 1936(56) the existence of serious doubt was revealed in all parts of the House as to the desirability of proceeding with the proposals. The members considered the Jews to have made a significant contribution to the economic development of Palestine(57) and maintained that the introduction of a Legislative Council policy would contravene the aims of the Mandate.

When the Arabs gleaned the news that doubts were arising within the British Government regarding the institution of a Legislative Council they reasserted their demand that all Jewish immigration should cease. The Government, however, announced a new Jewish Labour Schedule of 4,500 immigrants to be admitted for the following six months. It was this development which precipitated the Arab revolt against the British authorities and resulted in military reinforcements being sent into Palestine from Egypt and Malta. It was the scale of this violence, in part conditioned by British policy vacillations, which led the Government to appoint a Royal Commission of Enquiry to investigate the causes of the unrest.

The Commission, headed by Lord Peel, and discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, heralded a critical development in the relationship between the British Government and the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine. Thus, by 1936 the Palestine question was already set to become a contentious issue within the British political arena.

FOOTNOTES

1. Aims of Mandatory Agreement:

(a) the incorporation of the whole of the Balfour Declaration

(b) the recognition of the 'historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine'

(c) the establishment of a Jewish agency to be 'recognised as a public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish population in Palestine.'

(d) the facilitation of Jewish immigration and the 'close settlement by Jews on the land', provided that the Mandatory ensures 'that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced.'

(e) the right of each community to maintain their own schools.

(f) the use of Hebrew as well as Arabic and English as official languages.

Fred. J. Khouri. The Arab Israeli Dilemma New York 1977 p.16

2. FO 371/5120; FO 371/5114

3. These letters were published in Cmd.5957.1939

4. Ibid

5. cf. George E. Kirk. A Short History of the Middle East New York 1960 p.146 and F.J. Khouri Op Cit p.8

6. For an early confidential discussion of the subject asserting the inclusion of Palestine in the proposed Arab state see

'Memorandum on British Commitments to King Hussein,' Political Intelligence Department. 5 November 1918. FO 371/3384

See also McMahon to FO 26 October 1915.FO 371/2486

7. The text of the Agreement appears in E.L. Woodward and R. Butler (Eds) Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939 1st Series Volume IV p.241-251

8. Leonard Stein. The Balfour Declaration London 1961 p.16

9. L.S. Amery. My Political Life Volume 2. London 1953 p.115

10. FO 371/2767

11. L.S. Amery. Op Cit p.115

12. Sir Harold Beeley, Thames Papers Box 1, File 5. Middle East Centre. St.Antony's, Oxford.

13. Quoted in George Antonius The Arab Awakening London 1946 p.257

14. FO 141/803

15. Ibid

16. Cited in A.W. Kayyali. Palestine - A Modern History London 1978 p.48

17. Chaim Weizmann. Trial and Error London 1950 p.272

18. FO 371/3395

19. L.S. Amery. Op Cit p.116

20. L.S. Amery. The Future of Palestine 18 October 1918. FO 371/3384

21. The Strategic Importance of Syria to the British Empire General Staff, War Office. 9 December 1918. FO 371/4178

22. FO 371/4179

23. A.W. Kayyali. Op Cit p.67

24. Herbert Samuel. Memoirs London 1945 p.168

25. CAB 24/126 13 March 1921

26. Ibid

27. Ibid

28. CO 733/13

29. FO 371/6375

30. Ibid

31. FO 371/6375

32. CAB 70 (21) 18 August 1921

33. CO 733/92

34. CO 733/93

35. L. Amery. Op Cit p.116

36. Ibid p. 319

37. Political factionalism found its greatest scope in the fight for the control of the Supreme Muslim Council between the Husseinis and the Nashashibis. For a detailed account see A.A. Kayyali Op Cit p.136

38. CO 733/182

39. Don Peretz. Arab Palestine: Phoenix or Phantom? Foreign Affairs 1976. p.323

40. Interview with Dr. Fihir Shahabuddin. University of Utrecht. 27 April 1981.

41. Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929. Cmd. 3530. London 1929

42. Ibid

43. Cmd. 3686 1930

44. Labour Party Annual Conference Report. 1931. Report of the National Executive Committee 1930-1931

45. CO 733/197

46. Ibid

47. A detailed analysis of Labour Party policy will be included in a later chapter.

48. Chaim Weizmann. Op Cit p.415

49. CO 733/236

50. A.W. Kayyali. Op Cit p.171

51. CO 733/239

52. Royal Institute of International Affairs. Political and Strategic Interests of the UK. London 1939. pp142-144

53. For a character assessment of Sir Arthur Wauchope see. Gabriel Sheffer Policy Making and British Policies Towards Palestine 1929-1939 D.Phil.Oxford 1971. p. 432

54. A.W. Kayyali. Op Cit p.175

55. CO 733/294

56. HC Deb. Vol. 310 c1090 25 March 1936

57. Evidence supports this view:

Exports

1922 - L1,000,000

1935 - L4,500,000

1935 Budget surplus - L6,200,000

For greater detail see: Ibid

CHAPTER 2

PARTY AND DEPARTMENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PALESTINE 1917/1936

Introduction

In order to understand the dynamics of party behaviour in the post 1937 period, an overview of party policy towards Palestine in the 192Os and early 193Os is essential. This Chapter, therefore, will concern itself with the development of such policy in both the Labour and Conservative Parties; the extent to which policy made in Opposition was carried out in Office; and the influence of the Foreign and Colonial Offices on the government of the day.

1. The Labour Party

1 (i) The Early Years

The first reference to Palestine in early Labour Party literature appears in the proposals, drafted by Sidney Webb, for the document 'Memorandum on War Aims' in August 1917; some three months before the text of the Balfour Declaration was released. The Memorandum contained a section entitled: 'The Jews and Palestine' which read: "The British Labour Movement demands for Jews of all countries the same elementary rights of tolerance, freedom of residence and trade, and equal citizenship that ought to be extended to all inhabitants of every nation. It further expresses the hope that it might be practicable by agreement among all the nations to set free Palestine from the harsh oppressive government of the Turk, in order that such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and may work out their own salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion."(1)

The final draft of the Memorandum, with the paragraph on Palestine intact, was approved by a Special Conference of the Labour Party and the TUC in the December of that year, and later accepted as

the basis for a joint declaration at the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference in February 1918. However, when the Balfour Declaration was announced the response of Labour politicians was cautious, with MacDonald congratulating the Zionists on their success but hoping that "no untoward event will prevent the fulfilment of your desires."(2)

The Balfour Declaration, with its reference to the rights of 'existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine' was certainly ambiguous;(3) yet Webb's statement seemingly linked the future of Palestine solely with the needs of European Jewry and simply avoided any mention of the existing population. According to this statement Jewish settlement could take place 'free from interference by those of alien race or religion', and as such, a precedent had been set for future Labour Party doctrine on the question of Palestine; a doctrine which essentially managed to combine a sympathy for Zionism with a complete disregard for any potential dangers and injustices which might arise from it.

It has been argued that the attitude of the Labour Party to Palestine can only be understood if viewed in the context of certain ideological traditions.(4) However, confusion arises if this line of argument is followed because of the contradictory ideas on colonisation prevalent in the Movement at that time. A dichotomy clearly existed between Fabian economic and social engineering within the Empire(5) and the Hobsonian critique of imperialism.(6) Of course, it must be remembered that in 1917 the Party was still in its infancy and often statements issued reflected this stage of development, being at best vague, if well intentioned.

As will be seen from the Party's later pronouncements on Palestine, there exists much evidence to support Richard Rose's view that "feelings within the Party were shaped as much accidental and personal as ideological."(7) Certainly, initial links between Zionists and Labour were furthered not by developments in Palestine, but as a consequence of the wave of progroms in Poland and elsewhere which afflicted East European Jews at the close of World War I. These developments came as a confirmation of the need for Jews to acquire a National Home in Palestine, which, the Zionists stressed, would become a socialist state. The Labour Party, clearly sympathetic to the plight of European Jewry, and undoubtedly

attracted by the idea of a socialist state which would "save Palestine from Capitalism,"(8) accepted the affiliation of Poale Zion, the Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation.

The Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) Movement had originated in Russia at the end of the 19th Century and was introduced in Britain by Russian-Jewish immigrants in 1905. At its inception the leading figure within the British Poale Zion was Kalman Marmor, a friend of Chaim Weizmann, although the latter was unconnected with the Movement. The Organisation held its first Conference in Liverpool in December 1906 where it committed itself to class struggle, the socialisation of the means of production and the "territorial solution of the Jewish question through the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine."(9)

In 1917, Poale Zion recruited new members and by its annual Conference in April 1918, one source spoke of a tenfold increase in membership from its pre-war level of 100.(10) The following year witnessed an organisational change in Poale Zion whereby an Executive was set up and special committees were established to propagandise its views. Poale Zion now attempted to define its aims more clearly in that its programme for the prospective development of Jewish life in Palestine included: "The nationalisation of land, railways, trams, telephones and water; a minimum wage and the creation of a co-operative bank."(11) Poale Zion's attraction to the British Labour Party stemmed directly from the Party's declaration on Palestine contained in its document, a 'Memorandum on War Aims', and its potential value as a channel through which Poale Zion could articulate its sentiments.

It is certainly clear that as a consequence of its affiliation there existed from 1920 onwards a compact and influential Zionist pressure group within the Labour Party. Although small in membership, it did not exceed more than 1700 members, it was to play a vital role in providing a point of access into Labour Party politics and in inspiring and co-ordinating manifestations of support for Zionism within the Movement.

The Palestinian Arab representatives made sporadic attempts to mobilise support within the Party but as foreign supplicants lacking any base in British political life, their position was in striking contrast to that of the Zionists' spokesmen, who could rely upon, not

only a large body of sympathetic public opinion, but also, an influential domestic Zionist organisation. Socialist Zionists were able to develop intimate institutional and personal links with the Labour Party which their Palestinian rivals could not hope to match.

Nevertheless, despite the existence of these strong ties between the Zionists and the Labour Party it would be erroneous to suggest that Poale Zion gained all it desired from the Movement. In fact, during the early months of its affiliation Poale Zion applied for direct representation on the International Advisory Committee; an attmept which was rejected by the Party. Sargent, in his doctoral thesis, interestingly points out that the meeting, at which the decision was taken, was unusually highly attended and included Ernest Bevin, Cole, Bennett, Stokes and Woolf.(12) It is difficult to assess how members voted but not unreasonable to deduce that Bennett and Stokes, both later known as 'pro-Arab', opposed Zionist membership. Bevin's opinion on this matter remains unclear.

Throughout the Mandatory period, non-representation on the Committee was to be a recurring irritation and conceivably one reason why the Advisory Committee was consistently to display less sympathy for Zionist aspirations than its parent body, the National Executive Committee.

In 1920, Poale Zion participated for the first time in a Labour Party conference, and a resolution urging the Government to remove restrictions on Jewish immigration and to allow "immediate entry to the large number of suffering Jews in Eastern Europe anxiously waiting to settle in Palestine, " was proposed by Mr. Pomerantz of Poale Zion and seconded by Oscar Tobin of Stepney Central Labour Party. On the recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee, the resolution was passed unanimously, without discussion.(13) Despite the emphasis of the resolution on the question of immigration, the 1920s proved to be years of slow and unspectacular Jewish colonisation. However, Poale Zion had secured a niche within the Labour party and the many friendships and contacts between Zionists and Party members which developed throughout the decade tended to consolidate its position inside the British Labour Movement. Ramsay MacDonald, among numerous others, visited Palestine and returned enthusing about the country and the Jewish community.(14)

In July 1922 the Labour Party was called upon for the first time to demonstrate its Zionist sympathies in Parliament. The debate in the Commons focused on the Mandate and Labour's spokesman, Morgan Jones seized the opportunity to outline the Party's views. He asserted that "on sentimental grounds, as well as on the grounds of good statesmanship, good policy and good politics" the Mandate in Palestine should be upheld. In the course of his speech Jones attacked the Conservatives for being rather slow to discover the "principle of self-determination."(15) This was a potentially dangerous offensive for a number of critics had begun to question the compatibility of the commitment to Zionism with an overall policy of support for self-determination. Some official policy statments had blandly ignored the possible contradictions. Arthur Henderson had stated in an early document on the post-war aims of the Labour Party: "There will have to be certain restorations and reconstitutions. Such necessary changes will be covered by the application of the principle of the right of self-determination. The question of ..... Palestine (is) capable of being settled on this basis."(16) J.M. Clynes had strongly supported Campbell-Bannerman's views that "Good government is no substitute for self-government."(17)

Ernest Bennett, a former Liberal MP, considered support for the Mandate to be ill-advised and T. Williams characterised the Mandate policy as "one designed to control Palestine in the interests of the Jews, as long as they are in a minority; when they reach a majority control is to be relaxed and Palestine will be run as an independent state." Consequently, he argued, the Labour Party was acting in contradiction to its own fundamental principles by supporting a policy of running Palestine in the interests of a privileged minority. Williams protested strongly against the Party's argument that Britain was aiding the Arabs by raising their standard of living: "we think we know better for them than they do themselves."(18)

However, this line of argument ran against the tide of official party policy, which failed to accept the notion that Zionism could in any way pose a threat to the Arab inhabitants of Palestine or that, indeed, any hostility existed between the two peoples. Public statements stressed that the conflict in Palestine lay solely between Socialism and Capitalism and this view was reflected in the resolution adopted by the 1921 Conference which stated that Palestine should be

developed "not upon the foundations of capitalist exploitation, but in the interests of Labour." According to the Conference decision the object of the Mandate was the establishment of a "Jewish Autonomous Commonwealth."(19)

1 (ii) Labour Enters Government

During Labour's brief period in office in 1924 the question of Palestine was not raised and the Party's policy remained untested. However, by the time the Labour Party assumed power for the second time, Palestine had become an urgent problem requiring the immediate attention of the new government. Although Labour's term of Office has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter this section will confine itself to an analysis of the internal conflict within the Party as it faced, for the first time, the dichotomy between policy made in Opposition and that which is pursued in Government. This contradiction was to have an even greater impact upon the Party when it subsequently gained ofice in 1945.

Amid the disturbances which occurred in Palestine in 1929,(20) the Government announced that a Royal Commission would be sent to Palestine, chaired by Sir Walter Shaw. In an attempt to avoid party controversy his three colleagues were drawn from each of the major parties; the Labour representative being Harry Snell, the MP for Woolwich East, whose only knowledge of Palestine stemmed from his readings of the Bible.(21)

The Zionists were wary of the Commission and whilst investigations were still being undertaken, Poale Zion sent an emergency resolution to the NEC for the forthcoming Annual Conference. The resolution, which was critical of the government and destined to be contentious, was not submitted to Conference. The Committee's behaviour would appear to give prima facie support to Lewis Minkin's view that the National Executive Committee, throughout Labour's period in office acted as a mobilising and supportive agency of the Government.(22) The point at which this argument fails to apply can be seen at Conference the following year when the NEC supported a pro-Zionist resolution in defiance of the Government.(23)

Interestingly, at the time the Commission was instigated the New Statesman and Nation starkly re-oriented its previous position on Palestine: "We shall have to abandon both the appearance and the reality of that pro-Jewish bias which inspired our original acceptance of the Mandate." It also commented that the Balfour Declaration had been "itself a dangerous leap in the dark. Moreover, it cut across other pledges which we have previously given to the Arabs. It was a blunder perhaps the worst blunder that Lord Balfour ever made in his political life... in short, the historical case of Jewish rights in Palestine, with all its religious, political, financial and sentimental backing, is in truth no case at all."(24)

Following this publication Labour MPs hastened to reassure Zionist opinion and at the Brighton Conference in 1929, Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, briefly referred to Palestine in order to reaffirm the Government's adherence to the Mandate.(25)

When the Shaw Report was published in March, 1930, the Zionists were dismayed by its findings. It stated that certain factors contributed greatly to Arab unrest: firstly, the Arabs feared that continued Jewish immigration and land purchases would ultimately make them a minority in what they considered to be their own country; secondly, the Arabs were concerned about being economically as well as politically subjugated by the Jews. They complained that although Zionists were claiming to bring great material benefits to the Arabs, the Zionists not only excluded Arabs from their farm lands but also Zionist industries frowned on the hiring of Arab workers. Thirdly, the Arabs observed that the British Government appeared to pursue policies favourable to the Zionists and consequently, lacking confidence in the arbitration of the British Government and lacking what they considered to be adequate peaceful means for attaining their goals, many Palestinian Arabs were beginning to believe that the use of force was the only practical means left open to them. The Commission, therefore, recommended that Zionist land settlement and immigration levels should be reviewed by the British government.(26)

The Report itself, however, was not unanimous. Snell had disagreed with the outcome and had written to Passfield a long note of reservation, expressing his misgivings. The Palestinian Arabs had criticised his views and considered them to be based on party

considerations, which he, of course, strenuously denied.(27)

In an attempt to appease the Zionists MacDonald invited Dr. Weizmann to a meeting in order to discuss the Report. Weizmann was incensed with its conclusions and attacked MacDonald, the Government and the Palestine Administration for dismissing Zionist aims.(28) As a result of this conversation the Parliamentary Palestine Committee was reformed to be a watchdog for Zionist interests. This Committee had initially been instigated in 1926 by the Conservative MP, S. Finburgh, but Labour members, including MacDonald and Snowden, had joined the Committee at that time. In 1930 it was Josiah Wedgwood, an ardent pro-Zionist, who took a leading part in forming the new Committee which included not only a number of Labour MPs but also, Amery, Samuel and James de Rothschild.

Conservative participation with Labour was not solely confined to the interests of the Zionist cause. A small number of Labour MPs led by Seymour Cocks and J. McShane, were able with the help of certain Conservative MPs to further the Arab case. This Group pursued the argument that the Government, by refusing to publish the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, was not being totally open about the Palestine affair,(29) and in a series of Parliamentary Questions, Cocks, and Howard Bury, a Conservative, urged publication.

The Government steadily refused to do so and on 7 May 1930, Cocks raised the matter on the Adjournment. Cocks, Bury and McShane, joined by some Zionist sympathisers, including Fenner Brockway, asserted that promises made to the Arabs should be acknowledged and taken into consideration. For the Government, Drummond Shiels, the Colonial Under-Secretary, claimed that publication was not in the public interest but did promise a departmental review of the situation.(30)

However, after a series of debates throughout the summer, a Private Notice Question in Cocks' name brought the final decision against publication.(31) This apparent blurring of party positions on the question of Palestine coupled with the agreement between the Conservative leader, Baldwin and the Liberal leader, Lloyd George, that the Shaw Report was unsatisfactory, placed the Government in an embarrassing position. Consequently, at a Cabinet meeting it was decided that a more authoritative examination of land settlement,

immigration and development was required, with only Passfield dissenting. It was further agreed that a Cabinet Committee be set up comprising: Passfield, Henderson T.Shaw, Secretary of State for War and Lord Thompson, Secretary of State for Air, to overview policy towards Palestine.(32) However, these ad hoc Palestine Committees tended to act as bodies for deliberation rather than as groups for formulating policy.(33)

It is difficult at this stage to assess MacDonald's attitude to the issue as conflicting statements emerge. On the one hand Weizmann spoke of the Prime Minister's "100% Zionism"(34) and on the other, MacDonald is reported to have found the Zionists greatly trying his patience.(35) However, neither of these reports are verbatim and it would be unwise to overlook their possible subjectivity.

The outcome of the Hope-Simpson investigations and the subsequent White Paper,(36) curtailing Jewish immigration initiated what Passfield had predicted as the "Jewish Hurricane"(37) and further exacerbated the growing divide between Party and Government. The 1930 Conference, in contrast to the previous year, passed without dissent and with the approval of Hugh Dalton, representing the NEC, a long resolution from Poale Zion which included a demand for "the development of the economic possibilities of the whole of the Mandated territory and the encouragement of Jewish immigration."(38) In case anyone missed the evident contradictions between the resolution and the White Paper, Commander Kenworthy,(later Lord Strabolgi), elucidated them in a letter to The Times.(39)

The Conference resolution, although satisfying the sectional interests of the Zionists and their supporters in the Party, had taken little, if any, account of the rapidly deteriorating economic climate in which the Government was operating. Massive investment in Palestine was totally dismissed at Cabinet level, by Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he stated that "there could be no question of large scale expenditure."(40)

Factions within the Conservative Party rejected the White Paper proposals and Amery, Baldwin and Sir Austen Chamberlain co-signed a letter to The Times asserting that "policy was so definitely negative, that it appears to conflict with the intention of the

Mandate and the whole spirit of the Balfour Declaration."(41) The two legal experts, Lord Hailsham and Sir. J. Simon questioned the validity of the White Paper, in further correspondence to The Times and suggested obtaining "from the Hague Court an advisory opinion on the questions involved.... the British Government should not enforce those paragraphs which are challenged unless and until the Court had pronounced in their favour."(42)

The situation had developed into a political storm, with threats being made to MacDonald and Passfield, by Labour MPs, that many Labour members saw little alternative but to go into the opposition lobby when the House divided on the White Paper policy. MacDonald was becoming anxious, not only by the inter-party strife, but also, because a by-election was imminent in the predominantly Jewish constituency of Whitechapel St. George, in the heart of the East End. He confided to his diary: "even if the present clouds were to roll by... the position of the Government is steadily becoming worse. With blunders like Palestine... I can do nothing."(43) The by-election was crucial to the Government which the Conservative Party fully realised. It would be naive to believe that the Opposition's militancy over the question of Palestine stemmed purely from altruistic motives. It was more likely to be generated by a desire to belabour a minority goverment and make capital out of the Government's handling of the crisis.

The Zionists were, unquestionably, establishing a stronger position; the White paper had been roundly condemned; the Opposition and a section of the Labour Party were up in arms; and American Jewish pressure was powerful.

Throughout the Whitechapel electoral campaign Poale Zion openly criticised both the Government and the White Paper, thus making the by-election a prospective failure for the Labour Party. At this point Ernest Bevin appeared on the scene, and played a significant role in the Government's subsequent change of heart over the White Paper. Bevin had been invited to stand as the Labour candidate but refused in favour of a TGWU organiser, James Hall. Yet he was fully aware of the importance of the by-election to the Government and immediately embarked upon appeasing the Jewish community. In a conference with Poale Zion, Bevin stated that he would "instruct my boys to vote against the Government if the White Paper was not

amended."(44) Some days later, in a conversation with Henderson, Bevin again threatened to withdraw union support if assurances were not forthcoming. These threats came as one more devastating blow to an already battered Government, with the consequence that a public statement was swiftly released. It told of the representations made by the TGWU to the government and of the latters's assurances that Jewish protests had been founded on a complete misconception. Following from this statement came a definite pledge: the Government neither enacted nor intended any stoppage or prohibition of Jewish immigration and would expressly provide for the continuation of colonisation operations without a break.(45)

Many years later it was clear that Bevin took great pride in his achievement and probably considered it expedient to do so at the time, when he reminisced to a Labour Party Conference how he had: "got MacDonald to make Arthur Henderson the Chairman of a Committee. This Committee amended the White Paper and the Jews were very pleased."(46)

As a result of the statement, Poale Zion altered its position by supporting the Labour candidate and the Party ultimately gained the Whitechapel seat. The unwelcome by-election in a particularly sensitive area had seriously worried the Government and the Party, and Zionist pressure had acquired a potency it might otherwise not have achieved. Jewish influence had been channelled and amplified by the Labour Party and the Trade Union Movement and had clearly helped modify, if in a rather obvious manner, the Government's policy. It was the overt character of Zionist pressure which occasioned much criticism, especially from the Colonial Office. Although, Departmental policies and attitudes during this period will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section, for purely illustrative purposes it is interesting at this stage to relate Sir John Campbell's statement. The Economic Adviser stated: "The Government has treated the whole thing in a most deplorably rotten way .... and in my private opinion the Prime Minister was prepared to abandon the White Paper if it should seem necessary to gain Whitechapel."(47)

Further criticism stemmed from Labour Party members sympathetic to the Arab viewpoint. G.T. Garratt, wrote of the Government appearing "to be like a reed blown hither and thither by every wind which may blow from New York, from Delhi, or even from

Whitechapel."(48)

The Labour Party in Opposition had formulated its policies far from the realities of Office and had, in the absence of advice from the Civil Service or other interested parties,(49) come to rely upon the assistance of pressure groups. In the case of Palestine the most vocal pressure group was Poale Zion and its attendant supporters. As such, Labour, prior to 1929, had developed a one-dimensional view of the Palestine problem which, when Office was attained, appeared at once impractical and excessively partisan; particularly, as the violent disturbances occurring in Palestine coincided with the Party entering Government. The new Government clearly had to appear to be in command of the situation and it not unwisely appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the problem. Where the Government seemingly failed, and this was possibly created by the lack of a well-formulated policy in Opposition, was in its response to the findings of the Commission. It was not unnatural that the Government should fall foul of the Party when the White Paper so dramatically contradicted previous Labour commitments to Palestine. The Labour Party's previous lack of foresight coupled with the Opposition's stridency and by-election difficulties, placed the Government in the untenable position of appearing, quite accurately of course, to be unable to sustain a policy and being obliged to change direction under duress.

1 (iii) Labour and Palestine 1931-1936

For some time after the 1931 debacle Palestine was little discussed within the Labour Movement, partly because the issue was spent, for the moment anyway, but mainly because the Party, scarred by the splits in its ranks, was preoccupied with other matters.

The process of formulating a party policy for Palestine throughout the 1930s took place within the Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs. The Committee, although less concerned with immediate political considerations, had the responsibility of advising the NEC on developments and problems in the field of colonial affairs. Membership of the Committee included Lord Snell and Leonard Woolf,

both of whom were avowed pro-Zionists.(50)

Renewed consideration of the Palestine problem occurred in 1933 when the National Government announced in the Commons its intention to institute a Legislative Council.(51) The matter was brought to the attention of the Advisory Committee for its consideration by William Gillies, and resulted in a resolution drafted by Leonard Woolf, being accepted by the NEC. The resolution was in stark contrast to Palestinian Arab demands and rejected the establishment of a Legislative Council "whether composed of nominated or elected members." Once again the Party contradicted its commitment to representative self-government. Yet on this occasion it appeared to realise the inconsistency of its position and the resolution went on to stress that opposition to the Council "should be based solely on the contention that the moment is inopportune."(52)

Amid the deteriorating situation in Palestine, the question of a Legislative Council was raised continually between 1933 and 1936. In fact, Creech-Jones had written to Arthur Lourie of the Jewish Agency, stating; "I think the question of a Legislative Council for Palestine is very much in the newspapers. Do you want any questions put in the House?.... if I can be of any help in this direction will you let me know?"(53) In reply, Creech-Jones was asked to table a question concerning the Immigration Amendment Act.(54)

Creech-Jones, of course, on entering the House had offered his services to the Jewish Agency, so sympathetic was he towards the Zionist cause.(55) He was not alone within the Party in his support for Zionism and throughout 1936 on a number of Parliamentary debates, Labour Members led by Wedgwood, Silverman and Hopkin, rigorously defended the rights of Jews to develop Palestine and to maintain high immigration figures.(56) The Parliamentary Labour Party's attack on Government policy was supported by Churchill and Melchett who urged the Colonial Secretary to reconsider the matter. Some weeks later, Thomas indicated in the House that the question of a Legislative Council was to be quietly dropped.(57)

Once again Arab sympathisers interpreted the Government's decision to be the result of the incorrigible influence of Zionism within the House of Commons.(58) To Zionist supporters the outcome was a

triumph for Parliamentary democracy.

In a sense, the situation reflected that which happened in 1931; an Opposition Party had flexed its muscles on a sensitive issue and through the support of dissident members of the National government had managed to coerce the Colonial Secretary to reject a contentious policy. The Palestine problem was clearly cutting across party political boundaries; a development which Tom Williams articulated in Parliament: "I think I represent the feelings of Members of all parts of the House when I say that we are neither pro-one nor anti-the other (Arab and Jew), but we are pro-Palestine and we desire to promote the interests of all the peoples resident in that country.... this is not a party question, and we have no desire to turn it into any form of party question; it is purely a Palestine question, and we want it to remain on that level."(59)

However, in the light of Attlee's activities on behalf of the Zionists some two months later, Williams' statement appears to be somewhat simplistic. The Government had decided to institute yet another Royal Commission and personal messages were sent to Labour leaders by Poale Zion who were anxious lest immigration be suspended during the investigations. As a result Attlee and Greenwood visited the Colonial Secretary, and pressed upon him the question of immigration and suggested the immediate recall of Parliament if the issue was not resolved.(60) The following month Ormsby-Gore recommended the continuation of Jewish immigration into Palestine.

Of course, it would be unwise to suggest that this meeting was a crucial factor in the Colonial Secretary's change of policy, but it does indicate that the Labour Party acted in a less than objective manner in that it argued the case of one party to the dispute at the obvious expense of the other.

The Labour Party in the 193Os had either not learnt the lessons of Government in relation to its Palestine policy or had simply excused its previous period in Office as being unrepresentative of a future Labour Government. Certainly, the Party's policies remained confused and muddled as can be clearly seen from the resolution passed at the 1936 Conference: the British Labour Movement "recognising that the interests of Jewish and Arab workers alike can be served only by their cordial co-operation, deeply deplores the

outbreak of racial and religious strife which threatens..... to deprive the Jewish people of the opportunity of developing their own political, social and cultural institutions."(61)

Failing to retreat from empty platitudes and to critically assess the increasing polarisation between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine, the Labour Party succeeded in "placing a millstone around its neck"(62) which was to become, in later years, a considerable burden.

2. The Conservative Party

2 (i) Arthur Balfour and Zionism

There is little documentary evidence and few literary accounts of the influence of Zionism on the Conservative Party, yet links between the two were established as early as 1914. It was Dr.Chaim Weizmann, an academic and subsequent leader of the Jewish Agency, who initially forged a contact with the Party, principally through his negotiations with Arthur Balfour.(63) Weizmann, a Jewish-Russian emigre, possessed accomplished diplomatic skills and was highly adept and influential as a Zionist propagandist. Consequently, any study of Conservatism and Zionism must take account of the role Weizmann played in formulating and changing party opinion.

Of course, the historic Conservative Party was not notably policy oriented and, as such, policy arose without any conscious involvement of the the Party as a whole.(64) The Conservative annual conferences did not assume the significance of those of the Labour Party and so, in the absence of a decision-making body greater importance was attached to the views of individual leaders and party members. It was within the context of personal contact that Weizmann's charm, charisma and commitment are alleged to have had such a potent effect. Lord Boothby, in his Memoirs, considers that Weizmann when dealing with the harsh realities of politics was both a pragmatist and a gradualist. Weizmann, he claims, persuaded the British Government to make the Balfour Declaration and that had he not done so:"the Zionist Movement would almost certainly have been crushed."(65) Richard Crossman shared Boothby's opinions of Weizmann, arguing that "without the personality of Weizmann there

would have been no Balfour Declaration."(66)

After Weizmann's first meeting with Balfour in Manchester in 1914, Weizmann contrived to arrange further meetings and later reported that Balfour was clearly sympathetic to the aspirations of the Zionist movement.(67) Indeed, it is argued, albeit unconvincingly, that this seemingly detached and cynical person cared for little else but Zionism.(68) Weizmann interpreted Balfour's interest in Zionist aims and the subsequent Declaration as stemming from his desire: "to manifest a certain amount of restitution to the Jewish people for the contribution which the Jews had made ..... to the civilisation of mankind."(69)

However, this appraisal overlooks the decidedly pragmatic approach adopted by Balfour in his role as Foreign Secretary. At a Cabinet meeting in 1917, Balfour stated that from "a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it is desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspiration of the Jewish nationalists should be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America now appear to be favourable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America."(70)

Although there is little doubt that the active canvassing by Chaim Weizmann of the Zionist concept in political circles before and during the war had engaged the sympathy of the Foreign Secretary, the predominant reason for issuing the Declaration lay in the hope of using it to influence American and Russian Jewry at a time when allied war prospects were bleak. In other words, the origins of the Balfour Declaration can be found in what was essentially wartime calculation. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to dismiss Balfour's sympathy with Zionism and he clearly outlined his preferences in a Memorandum issued some two years after the Declaration: "Zionism.... is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."(71)

The impact of the Balfour Declaration on the Conservative Party is difficult to discern. No mention of it is made in Conference reports and although there seemed to be an awareness among members that

the Party needed to modernise its policy machinery,(72) (a development which did not, in fact, take place until after the Second World War), there is no indication that these innovative ideas related in any way to a dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Palestine question had been handled. One aspect which does emerge, however, is that both Leo Amery and Winston Churchill were committed Zionist supporters by the beginning of the 1920s. Amery's pro-Zionism stemmed from the Balfour Declaration which he had co-drafted(73) and he remained sympathetic to Zionism throughout the period under review. Churchill's contribution to Zionism in his role as Colonial Secretary was unquestionably far-reaching.

2.(ii) Churchill's White Paper

Churchill was Secretary of State for War when at a meeting of the Cabinet Finance Committee he first initiated a discussion on the setting up of a special Department for Middle Eastern Affairs, which would in effect co-ordinate Government policy in Palestine, Mesopotania and Arabia.(74) Churchill's enthusiasm for the idea stemmed less from his concern for the area than from his commitment to effect substantial cuts in military expenditure throughout the Middle East. He estimated that Britain was spending in excess of L37,000,000 and in the discussion which followed it was suggested that it would be cost effective if the Mandated territories were administered as a whole.(75)

When the full Cabinet met on 31 December 1920, it was finally decided at Churchill's suggestion, that a special Middle East Department be set up within the general aegis of the Colonial Office. This plan would enable the existing divided spheres of the War Office, the India Office, the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office "to be concentrated in a single Department,"(76) under a single Minister. The Colonial Secretary of the day, Lord Milner, was less than pleased with the prospect of such onerous responsibilities and tendered his resignation. There was no more suitable candidate to fill the vacancy than Winston Churchill and after initial hesitation he accepted the post. It was agreed that Churchill's responsibilities as Colonial Secretary should include both the civil and military administration of Palestine and Mesopotamia, and that the Middle East Department would be under his control.

Shortly after Churchill's appointment, he engaged in discussion with the new French President, Alexandre Millerand. During the course of conversation Millerand criticised the Balfour Declaration arguing that Zionism in Palestine disturbed the Arab world, and emphasised his fear that "the Jews would be very high-handed when they got together there."(77) Churchill defended British policy towards the Jews: "I expatiated on the virtues and experience of Sir Herbert Samuel (High Commissioner in Palestine) and pointed out how evenly he was holding the balance between Arabs and Jews and how effectively he was restraining his own people, as perhaps only a Jewish administrator could do."(78)

Churchill's statement reveals a superficial understanding of the situation in Palestine, yet the Colonial Secretary, seemingly unaware of the potential conflict between Arab and Jew continued to state that the area had to be considered as a whole: The more I study the Middle East problem, the more convinced I am that it is impossible to deal with it unless the conduct of British affairs in the whole of the Arabian peninsular is vested in the Middle East Department. The Arab problem is all one....."(79) At this stage, Churchill did not envisage the animosity which was developing in Palestine between the two communities. In March 1921, Churchill arranged for a Conference to be held in Cairo, the object of which was to review the British position and lay plans for future policy in the Middle East in the light of the French occupation of Syria and the unsettled conditions of Trans-Jordan and Mesopotamia.

Before the Conference the Political Committee of the Zionist Organisation met in London to discuss Churchill's forthcoming visit to the Middle East. Weizmann expressed concern about Churchill's intentions regarding the Mandate and maintained: "There are indications that Mr. Churchill might possibly desire certain changes in the Mandate. He is of a highly impressionable temperament and it is to be expected that the Arabs will organise an agitation to greet him on his arrival in the East." But Weizmann added: "Mr. Churchill has a low opinion of the Arab generally."(80)

In an attempt to influence Churchill Weizmann sent him an appeal, requesting that Transjordan be included in the Palestine Mandate. He also pressed Churchill to take the southern boundary of Palestine down into the Gulf of Akaba. Churchill, however, was not

influenced by Weizmann's arguments. He had already decided to separate Transjordan from Palestine, but had also decided to allow the Negev to form part of the Mandate and, therefore, to be open to eventual Jewish settlement. Weizmann also wrote to Herbert Samuel urging him to show Churchill the constructive side of the work of the Jewish pioneers.(81)

As Weizmann predicted the Arab community in Palestine outlined their grievances to Churchill immediately he arrived in Jerusalem.(82) The Palestinian Arab Congress clearly stated in a Memorandum to Winston Churchill their fears of Zionism and their disappointment with Britain for "creating, putting life into and carrying into execution" the notion of the Jewish National Home.(83)

Churchill dismissed the Arab Memorandum cursorily with the exhortation that "instead of sharing miseries through quarrelling, the Palestinians should share blessings through co-operation, a bright future lies before your country, the earth, a generous mother, will produce in plentiful abundance for her children if they cultivate in justice and peace."(84) The Palestinian leaders, however, failed to appreciate Churchill's interpretation of the situation in Palestine and remained embittered by what they perceived to be his "off-hand treatment".(85) An Arab rebellion followed Churchill's visit and the Colonial Secretary returned home to face a Parliamentary debate.

On this occasion Churchill received a good deal of support from his fellow Party members in the House. He undoubtedly presented a more cogent analysis of the dilemma facing the British Government in regard to Palestine that he had done so hitherto: "The difficulty about the promise of a national home for the Jews in Palestine is that it conflicts with our regular policy of consulting the wishes of the people in the Mandated territories and in giving them representative institutions as soon as they are fit for them, which institution, in this case they would use to veto any further Jewish immigration."(86) Churchill had clearly taken account of Arab fears although seemingly dismissing them at the time: "The Arabs believe that in the next few years they are going to be swamped by scores of thousands of immigrants who will push them off the land."(87) Churchill considered the fears to be illusory and maintained that if representative institutions were to be conceded to the Arabs, some

definite arrangements would have to be made which safeguarded within reasonable limits the immigration of the Jews into the country. "Our task .... will be persuade one side to concede and the other to forbear, by keeping a margin of force available in order to ensure the acceptance of the position of both parties."(88) The question as to which side should concede and which side should forbear was left open to interpretation.

In the course of the discussion which followed Churchill received a good degree of praise for handling a complex situation with skill. The comments tended to be generalised with most speakers recalling their wartime experiences of the Arabs in either positive or negative terms. No-one particularly demonstrated a clear understanding of the nature of the conflict in Palestine. In fact, one member, Earl Winterton suggested that "In the House it is not desirable that attention be drawn to the differences between Jews and Arabs."(89) On balance, therefore, it is more than likely that the Colonial Secretary's victorious emergence from the Debate was due not necessarily to the accuracy of his own arguments, powerful though they may be, but mainly because of the relative ignorance of his fellow members of Parliament.

One year later, amid growing opposition to Zionism in Palestine Churchill sought to placate matters by publishing an authoritative statement of British policy. In his 1922 White Paper Churchill asserted that the Balfour Declaration, which the Government intended to uphold, did not aim at the subordination of the Arab population or culture. The Jews, however, were in Palestine, "as of right and not on sufferance",(90) and would be able to increase their number by immigration subject to the "economic absorptive capacity" of the country. The White Paper declared that it was the intention of His Majesty's Government to foster the gradual establishment of a full measure of self government. A legislative council with a majority of elected members would be set up immediately and a committee of elected members of the legislative council would confer with the Administration upon matters relating to the regulation of immigration.

The White Paper came as a disappointment to many Zionists who thought the Statement "redeemed the Balfour promise in depreciated currency."(91) Ultimately, however, it was accepted by the Zionists

and rejected by the Arabs.(92)

While the White Paper failed to reconcile the Arabs to Jewish immigration and to a slower development of the National Home, it was necessary for the purpose of defeating the opposition which had developed in Parliament to accepting the Mandate with the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration. In fact, Churchill faced a vote of No-confidence in the House, and much criticism was levelled against him by Parliamentary members of the Conservative Party. The ensuing debate was acrimonious and hinged on the financial commitments the British Government had assumed in its dealings with Palestine. Sir J. Butcher, rejected the Mandate as a whole purely on the grounds that Britain "could not afford it". Others supported the Mandate out of, what appears to be, a spirit of 'Jingoism', in that Palestine represented a further extension of the British Empire, yet condemned the Jewish National Home policy as being unfair to Arabs.(93)

Sir W. Joynson-Hicks, in a long speech, outlined his sympathies for the Arabs, and attacked the British Administrations in Palestine for their bias against the Arab community. "The Zionists have been permitted by the Government practically to control the whole of the Government of Palestine. Herbert Samuel, before he went to Palestine.... was the go-between of the Zionists and the Cabinet and was able to press Zionist views on the Cabinet. When he went out to Palestine he went with the knowledge of all the people in Palestine that the Zionists claimed him as their representative. That is the real difficulty. It is necessary that the people of the country, 90% of whom are Arabs, should believe him to be above suspicion."

Joynson-Hicks went on to recall a statement made by Chaim Weizmann at the time of Samuel's appointment: "Sir Herbert Samuel is our friend and has worked loyally with us from the first moment. At our request, fortified by our moral support he accepted the difficult position. We put him in that position. He is our Samuel; he is the product of our Jewry."(94)

Such emotive words, considered Joynson-Hicks would do little to encourage the Arabs to trust the British Administration or believe it to be an impartial body. Implicit in this criticism was a

condemnation of the Colonial Secretary, and a series of speakers continued the attack. At the end of the onslaught Churchill rose to present his reply; a reply which effectively silenced the opposition from his own ranks. He held in his hand a list of all those who had voiced a criticism of the Jewish National Home policy and proceeded to read aloud the statements which they had made, some five years previously, at the time of the Balfour Declaration. He stated acidly: "Sir J. Butcher, who has just addressed us in terms of such biting indignation was almost lyrical on the subject. He said 'I trust the day is not far distant when the Jewish people may be free to return to the sacred birthplace of their race and that they may attain their ideals and fulfil their destiny'." Finally, Churchill related Joynson-Hicks' previous statement: "I will do all in my power to forward the views of the Zionists in order to enable the Jews once more to take possession of their own land."(95) Churchill adeptly defeated the vote by 250 and some two weeks' later the Mandate inclusive of the Declaration was approved by the League of Nations.

Churchill's skill in Parliamentary debate is not in doubt, yet the whole affair raises questions about Conservative Party policy. It is possible to see the Conservative Members' volte face in terms of wartime expediency as opposed to peace-time rationalism. Churchill, in a letter to Lord Sydenham, a critic of Zionism,(96) attempted to explain the shift in policy: "There is one reason for a change of view, namely that it was an easy and popular thing to advocate a Zionist policy in the days of the Balfour Declaration, and that it is a laborious..... task to try to give honourable effect at the present time to the pledges which were given then."(97) In the absence of an ideology to hold the Party together on the question of Palestine, it was perfectly possible and, indeed, not altogether unusual, for individual members to change their opinions. Churchill's personal commitment to the Jewish National Home had undoubtedly furthered the cause of Zionism. In his two major speeches in the House of Commons, he had spoken with admiration of all that the Jews had achieved in Palestine, and of its potential, and of Britain's determination to allow the National Home to grow and flourish under British protection. However, it must be remembered that there was no Party dictate on this issue and Churchill, essentially, pursued his own policy towards Palestine. This fact was clearly recognised by the Zionist organisation, who proffered their thanks not to the Conservative Party but to the Colonial Secretary personally:

Weizmann wrote to Churchill: "To you personally, we tender our most grateful thanks. Zionists throughout the world deeply appreciate the unfailing sympathy you have consistently shown towards their legitimate aspirations and the great part you have played in securing for the Jewish people the opportunity of rebuilding its national home."(98)

It is interesting to note that within the short period of five years two leading Conservative politicians had deeply committed themselves to Zionist policies and yet, the issue was not once discussed at Conference level. In a sense, the Party stood aloof from the whole question of Zionism. Given the absence of debate on the Palestine issue within the Party machine and as the Committee on Imperial Affairs existed only after 1945 one is forced to rely of fragmentary pieces of information which fail to supply a comprehensive picture of Conservative policy during the years under study. The links between Conservatism and Zionism were at best tenuous and then only formed with individual members of the Party. All that really can be observed of Conservative Party policy towards both the Arabs and the Jews up to 1937 is that it remained fluid and apparently uncommitted to either faction. In the circumstances, Party policy, if that is indeed what it should be called, could change as the mood, or the events in volatile Palestine, took it.

3. The Colonial Office, The Foreign Office and the Palestine Question

Departmental responsibility for the Palestine question oscillated between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office from the announcement of the Balfour Declaration until the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. The object of this introductory section is to place the varied policies pursued by successive governments towards Palestine during the preliminary years from 1917 to 1936 within the context of departmental attitudes and responsibilities. In so doing, it is hoped, a fuller understanding will be gained of the implications of the actions undertaken by Colonial and Foreign Secretaries in the period immediately preceding the Second World War, and in the later post-War years.

3 (i) The 1920s

As has been outlined in the previous section the Palestine issue came under the aegis of the Foreign Office until 1921 when Churchill became Colonial Secretary and set up the Middle East Department within the Colonial Office. The Department had special responsibility for the newly mandated territories: Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine; a development which, according to Sir Charles Jeffries, one time Deputy Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, changed the character of the Colonial Office by "diversifying and expanding its range of functions."(99) The Foreign Office, however, was not to forget the important role it had played in the formulation of the Balfour Declaration and all the implications the statement had for Palestine, and it continued throughout the period to maintain an interest in the area even if the interest remained covert. Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary at the time of the change over, succinctly articulated the Foreign Office attitude towards Palestine in a letter to Winston Churchill: "I should not dream of making a speech about Palestine now that you have taken it over... although I may say that the connection between Palestine and the Foreign Office is very close."(100)

The Colonial Office, although in many ways strengthened as a department by its Mandatory responsibilities, became less enamoured of Palestine as time went by. Sir Charles Jeffries complains of the years "in which a wholly disproportionate amount of time and effort had to be devoted by Ministers and senior officials to the thankless task of administering Palestine."(101) In later years much criticism was levelled at the Balfour Declaration by subsequent members of the Foreign Office; Sir Harold Beeley considered the Declaration to be "a very great mistake" although conceding that perhaps it was "not easy to see it at the time in 1917". He maintains that it was a commitment at variance with the post First World War trend against colonialism and argues that in essence, "it was the last fling of colonial settlement."(102)

The Colonial Office, however, professed to view its mandated territories quite differently and considered itself to be in the position of "trustees for the interest of the people in those areas, and committed to lead them to self-government."(103) Article 2 of the Palestine Mandate made Britain responsible "for placing the country

under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the development of self-governing institutions",(104) although it failed to state exactly what the nature and composition of these 'self-governing institutions' were to be. With such a vague remit as regards to Palestine it is difficult to judge exactly what the Colonial Office actually meant by the term 'self-government', and whether, in fact, on occasions it could be viewed as little more than pious sentiment.

However, the Colonial Office endeavoured to distance itself from the Foreign Office by asserting that in contrast to the objectives of the Foreign Office, its primary consideration was for the "interests of its wards and not the interests of the British Government."(105) This apparent polarity in the perspective of the two Departments towards the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular is evident throughout the period under study. The Foreign Office would often display an interest in the Palestine issue when British interests in the area were under threat, but it would be erroneous to view the Colonial Office as being above such considerations. In fact, Leo Amery, the Colonial Secretary in 1925 readily admitted that his interest in Palestine was, at first, "largely strategical."(106)

Contemporary studies of the roles played by the Colonial Office and Foreign Office in relation to the Palestine question have tended to be critical of the power and influence exerted by both Departments.(107) Gabriel Sheffer suggests that an elite consisting of a "small identifiable and little-changing group of Ministers and Officials",(108) essentially shaped policies towards Palestine. Although the main body of criticism concentrates on British Governmental policy formulation during the 1930s and 1940s attention will now be paid to the earlier period in order to assess whether or not such views of the Civil Service were justified in the 1920s.

Churchill, on assuming the duties of Colonial Secretary in 1921, appointed Sir John Shuckburgh, his Assistant Under Secretary, as head of the newly formed Middle East Division. Shortly after the appointment had been made, Churchill attended a private meeting with Arthur Balfour, Dr. Weizmann and Lloyd George at the Prime Minister's residence. Weizmann emerged from the conference evidently reassured at the progress which had been made and

reported that he was confident that the British government would undertake "definite action in Palestine" which would "ameliorate the situation."(109) Shuckburgh, upon learning of the meeting some months later, registered his disapproval, not only of the fact that the Colonial Office had not been consulted, but also of the influence exercised by Dr. Weizmann. In a confidential letter to Sir James Masterton Smith, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, Shuckburgh complained of the Zionist Organisation, in the person of Dr. Weizmann, enjoying "direct access to high political personages outside the Colonial Office."(110) This is not to suggest, of course, that Shuckburgh had any persoanl animosity towards Weizmann, in fact, he was "convinced of the necessity of Dr. Weizmann's co-operation in such a difficult task" and maintained that "he is much the best and most reliable of Zionists."(111) However, Shuckburgh's correspondence does indicate that the influence he exercised over the Colonial Secretary was minimal, and his role was that of a subordinate.

Sir Charles Jeffries of the Colonial Office recalls that "outside a limited circle, there was little public knowledge of or interest in the Colonies, their problems or the Colonial office," and maintains that "the small attendance at Colonial debates in Parliament was notorious."(112) Leo Amery, Colonial Secretary during the four years from 1925 to 1929, confirms Jeffries' views and maintains that the period passed uneventfully until 1929, when an outbreak of rioting in Palestine brought the issue forcibly to the attention of the newly elected Labour government.(113) However, Amery's recollection overlooks the Colonial Office's policies towards Palestine in the late 192Os for which he was responsible. It is a serious omission for those policies were to have profound repercussions for the subsequent Colonial Secretary.

Negotiations had continued between the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office throughout Amery's terms of office and despite the relative calm in Palestine during those years, the Zionist Organisation was anxious to acquire more agricultural land for Jewish settlement. The Colonial Secretary regarded the Zionists as having first claims on land suitable for agricultural development and the Palestine Government was active in procuring land for the Jews.(114)

These policies of the Colonial Office, although within the objectives of the Balfour Declaration, served to exacerbate the Palestinian Arabs' fears of economic disadvantage and political under-representation which were to provide the backcloth to the religious disturbances in 1929. The Peel Commission, appointed in 1937, observed that until 1929: "The highly incendiary element of religion had had little to do with the growth of Arab antagonism to the National Home. In Palestine, nationalism had been more political than religious." However, the Report concluded that in circumstances in which it was "widely and genuinely believed that the coming of the Jews to the country meant not merely their economic and political ascendance but also the full re-establishment of ancient Judaism and the invasion and desecration of the Holy places, then there could be little doubt that Arab hostility would be more unanimous, more fanatical and more desperate than it had ever been."(115)

3 (ii) The Prelude to the 1931 White Paper

The onerous responsibility for the renewed clashes between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine fell upon Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary in the new Labour administration. The situation in Palestine quickly became critical in the wake of the anti-British sentiments espoused by the Arabs. Sir John Chancellor, who had replaced Lord Plumer as High Commissioner, received a Memorandum from the Arab community complaining that the crisis was a natural result of the British Government's policies: "The inhabitants of Palestine can no longer tolerate any unjustices in addition to the injustices done to them up till now as an outcome of the present system of Administration. In fact, this Administration has placed the country in great economic crisis which compelled a not inappreciable number of the inhabitants to sell their lands to foreigners (Jews) who only buy land for political purposes...."(116)

Within a few months of Passfield's appointment a Royal Commission chaired by Sir Walter Shaw, was sent to Palestine to investigate the disturbances. However, the Commission's final terms of reference excluded any mention as to whether the 1929 outbreak of violence could be "regarded as having been pre-concerted or due to organised action."(117) This decision was taken by the Colonial Secretary and was a direct consequence of the overtures which had been made to him by Sir John Chancellor. The High Commissioner

had previously engaged in a series of private interviews with Hajj Amin, the Mufti, and had been reassured that the mass of the Arab population were amicably disposed towards Great Britain. The Mufti sought to impress Chancellor with his loyalty and asserted that he believed it possible to confine Palestinian opposition to Britain's Zionist policies and to the Zionists themselves in an attempt to avoid a direct clash between Britain and the Arabs.(118) Chancellor, of course, relayed the Mufti's views to Passfield, who immediately recognised the importance of maintaining Hajj Amin's conciliatory attitude towards the British Government as a means of avoiding an Arab-British confrontation in Palestine. The restricted terms of reference of the Shaw Commission could, therfore, be interpreted as a sign of deference to the Mufti.

Chancellor, in his role as High Commissioner in Palestine, has been criticised for "psychologically identifying with the Arab community"(119) and for his inability to view the situation objectively. That he had qualms about the moral position of his rule in Palestine is not in doubt but a more feasible analysis of his attitude would reveal that he was merely trying to rectify what he saw as an anti-Arab bias in London. In a Colonial Office minute, Chancellor outlined his position and emphasised that it was essential he should do or say nothing that would embarrass HMG and in that sense he "could not support the Arab cause".(120) However, it was his unease which gave rise to the Foreign Office instigating a reappraisal of the McMahon-Hussein correspondence,(121) in an attempt to gain a further understanding of Britain's promises to the Palestinian Arabs.

The Shaw Commission reported that essentially it was Jewish land acquisition which had incensed the Arab community; and stressed that throughout its investigations "the fears of the Arabs that the success of the Zionist land policy meant their expropriation from the land were repeatedly emphasised."(122) In the Cabinet meeting which followed the publication of the Report it was decided that a more authoritative examination of land settlement, immigration and development was required and one which "to such an extent as might be deemed desirable, considered the political questions in the background."(123)

According to Weizmann, General Smuts, a committed Zionist, had been earmarked to conduct the investigation and should he not be available, then a real statesman "with Palestine in his bones"(124) would replace him. However, the Colonial Secretary had other ideas and informed Weizmann that Smuts had been discounted on the grounds that he was believed to be too pro-Zionist.(125) The Colonial office was seeking to re-establish a more balanced view between the conflicting sides and as such Sir J. Hope-Simpson's appointment was presented to the Zionists as a fait accompli. Weizmann, recognising the need to gain Hope-Simpson's acquaintance requested of Passfield that he be given the opportunity of meeting him before he left London for Palestine, to which the Colonial Secretary agreed. However, Passfield failed to arrange any meeting and Weizmann, unused to such responses from Ministers, complained of being badly treated. It is unclear why Passfield broke his word but not altogether unlikely that he felt it imperative to scotch rumours which had emanated from the Palestinian Arabs that the British government was in the pocket of the Zionists.(126) In essence, he was attempting to emphasise Britain's role as an independent umpire in the dispute.

In the wake of this incident tension grew between the Jewish Agency and the Colonial Office and Weizmann was advised by his associates that "the Colonial Office officials, acting in collusion with the Palestine administration, were unravelling the work of the politicians." Weizmann evidently agreed and described the effect as "devastating... (we are) literally hitting our heads against a blank wall. The officials seem to be utterly impervious to reason and certainly haven't a spark of sympathy."(127) Of course, this response is not totally surprising, the Jewish Agency was notably sensitive to any development which they perceived to be, often without reason, an anti-Zionist bias within the British Government.

Passfield in particular came in for a good deal of criticism from the the Labour Party and the Zionists and was thought to be not in sufficient control of his officials. Beatrice Webb recalled that she was told that the "Parliamentary Labour Party thought Sidney too much in the hands of his officials. But this is inevitable. By temperament and training Sidney belongs to the civil service."(128) Ramsay MacDonald is reported to have said of Passfield: "He is old, in some ways efficient, but he has the mind of a German professor and an indestructable belief in the experts who sit in the Colonial

Office."(129)

At this juncture it is necessary to return to the criticism by contemporary historians of the influence exerted by the civil service. Sheffer points out that by virtue of the secure tenure of office various Colonial Secretaries were assisted by the same "small cluster of senior officials, Shuckburgh, Cosmo Parkinson and Gratton Bushe" all of whom operated within the Middle East Department, and suggests that this resulted in a consistent approach to Palestine's problems.(130) This line of argument is dubious given the distinct change of policy adopted by the British government in 1929. In fact, it was this shift in policy which occasioned so much criticism from the Zionist camp and which led to accusations of partiality against the Colonial Office.

Implicit in Sheffer's argument is the opinion that the Colonial Office was in some way anti-Zionist and pro-Arab yet documentary evidence suggests otherwise. The Office was fully cognizant of the difficulties of administering Palestine and Cosmo Parkinson drew particular attention to the "activities of Arab agitators, their devices for keeping Arab public opinion in a state of ferment, their attempts to enlist the sympathy and co-operation of the Muslim world.... and their disturbances which resulted in attacks upon Jews..."(131) If the Colonial Office did display an irritation with the Zionists it was invariably caused by what it considered to be Weizmann's behind the scene activities. In his dealings with many influential people Weizmann was aware that he would certainly, "foster antagonism at the Colonial Office which is always sensitive at being by-passed."(132)

Whilst the Hope-Simpson investigations were continuing, Shuckburgh in a memorandum to Chancellor succinctly defined the dilemma facing the Colonial Office in its policy towards Palestine: "We have to consider not merely the existing population (in Palestine) but the 14 odd millions of Jews all over the world who regard themselves as potential Palestinians. The embarrassing results of this position are obvious. But they are inherent in the Zionist policy and must be faced."(133)

The findings of the Hope-Simpson study did little to ease the contradictions in British policy for it bore out Arab contentions as

thoroughly in detail as the Shaw Report had favoured them in general trend. It drew attention to the increasing polarity between the two communities which it felt had been aggravated by high levels of Jewish immigration which exceeded the economic capacity of the country; rising Arab unemployment which was a direct consequence of their displacement from the land; and the lack of any measure of self-government. Therefore, the Report suggested the British government should reduce, or even suspend Jewish immigration into Palestine and should stop Zionist acquisition of land without special authority of the British administration.(134) Following the publication of the Report the government decided to issue a White Paper which would enounce the course of its future policy in Palestine. It essentially incorporated the recommendations of the Hope-Simpson investigation albeit within the theory of 'dual obligation' under the Mandate.

Weizmann's response to the White Paper was predictable and he roundly condemned the government for completely misunderstanding the whole purpose and meaning of the National Home. However, the Jewish Agency was anxious to avoid all possible contact with the Colonial Office whom they considered to be totally responsible for the policy. As a means of circumventing the Colonial Office the Zionists wanted the responsibility of Palestine removed from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office; "If that is done we shall deal with infinitely more intelligent officials ..... with men of a wider view than the rather parochial Colonial Office officials and more accessible to influence from America.... the pros are decidedly in favour of the Foreign Office."(135) Weizmann also considered the possibility and stated as much in a revealing note: "I might demand from the Prime Minister that Palestine be transferred from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office so as to get rid of Passfield and his clique... (it) needs careful handling."(136)

Whether or not Weizmann's assumed influence over Ramsay MacDonald was simply a flight of fancy is open to debate, but clearly his assertive attitude did little to endear him or his cause to the Colonial Office. Although, of course, the Colonial Office was quite aware of the difficulties inherent in the Palestine issue they justly interpreted any prospective move as a slight upon their political objectivity and departmental efficiency. The fact that Weizmann and other members of the Jewish Agency had conducted private meetings with the Prime

Minister only served to exacerbate the feelings of resentment nurtured by the Office. This was evidenced in a Memorandum from Drummond Shiels, the Colonial Under Secretary, who stated that the Department was "positively indignant at the way in which the Colonial Office was being by-passed."(137)

However, it was Passfield who suffered the brunt of personal condemnation from embittered Zionists and who considered himself to be a failure. Nathan Laski referred to him as an "aged minister... who has long been anxious to seek repose." While another member of the Jewish Agency announced that the White Paper was "less a statement of the policy of HMG than a revelation of the prejudice of one man, Lord Passfield."(138) There existed widespread feeling among Zionists and Zionist sympathisers that the White Paper had somehow dishonoured Great Britain and that the Government's performance in general and Passfield's performance in particular had been less than competent.

It was in the midst of this outcry against the White Paper that Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, came to take an active role in the Palestine problem. Henderson was fully alive to the international aspects of the Government's predicament over Palestine and the ramifications it might have on the domestic standing of the Labour Administration. The Foreign Office, therefore, began to take an interest in the problem and in the process assumed a rather superior view of the crisis. It condemned the Colonial Office for not keeping the Foreign Secretary properly informed of the situation in Palestine which, it claimed, had denied the Foreign Office the opportunity to "anticipate and possibly forestall some of the difficulties."(139)

Nevertheless, despite its momentary interest in the affairs of Palestine, the Foreign Office was disinclined to accept the responsibility on a permanent basis and at a Cabinet meeting both Passfield and Henderson submitted memoranda arguing against the transfer of Palestine from the Colonial Office.(140) The Cabinet accepted their recommendations and the whole idea was publicly quashed when Shiels, in answer to a question in the House, stated: "There is no intention of transferring the supervision of the affairs of Palestine from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office."(141)

Although the question of transference had been dropped the Cabinet discussed the possibility of establishing an inter-departmental committee which would be designed to supervise the development schemes in Palestine.(142) The membership of the Committee was to comprise: the Lord Advocate; Malcolm MacDonald, the Prime Minister's son and an avowed Zionist sympathiser; and one representative from the Foreign Office, the Colonial office and the Treasury. The Jewish Agency readily approved of the idea and considered it a means of evading the supervision of the Colonial Office. However, the scheme failed to leave the ground principally because the Colonial Office, perturbed at the prospect of its diminishing role in the affairs of Palestine, "blocked the way to agreement."(143)

Zionist sympathisers interpreted this action on the part of the Colonial Office to be yet another indication of the Department's pro-Arab leanings and have pointed to evidence, however, slight, in support of their claims. One Arab notable, Jamal Husseini, on his return to Palestine from London spoke of "the courtesy and consideration with which he was treated by Officials of the Colonial Office," who he maintained "were sympathetic to the Arab case."(144) Yet it could be seen that if the Colonial Office was to appear as an 'honest broker' between the two parties it was not unnatural that the Department would lend a sympathetic ear to the grievances of both Arabs and Jews. That, as a result of the investigations and recommendations of two independent enquiries, the office issued a White Paper which reflected their findings, is no indictment of the Department's objectivity. Of course, there is little doubt that the Zionists' direct access to the Prime Minister had been a cause of some irritation in the Colonial Office but it would be fallacious to draw the conclusion that this had created an anti-Zionist backlash within the Office. The fact that the Department disapproved of the methods used by the Jewish Agency did not necessarily imply its opposition to the merits of the Zionist case.

The retreat from the White Paper ultimately took the form of a letter written by MacDonald to Weizmann which essentially reversed the recommendations made in Passfield's Paper. During this period the Colonial Secretary stayed in the background although he still remained the butt for Weizmann's attacks and was constantly criticised for "causing trouble all the time."(145) Weizmann, in fact,

wrote a note to the Prime Minister personally thanking him for his work in altering the Colonial Office's policy towards Palestine.(146)

This was perceived by the Colonial Office to be the final blow in a debilitating affair, and the issue eventually came to a close with Sir John Chancellor leaving his post as High Commissioner; Lord Passfield contemplating resignation and a feeling of bitterness pervading the Colonial Office.

3 (iii) Post 'Passfieldism'

The Zionist Movement greeted the election of the National Government in 1931 with unconditional approval: "It is impossible to exaggerate the importance to Zionism of the National government's assumption of Office." However, still nursing its grievance towards Passfield it went on to state: "A continuance of 'Passfieldism' would have been fatal for the Zionist Movement. The National government can re-examine Britain's Palestine policy and this delicate task can be most conveniently undertaken by the government which has the advantage of not being hindered by Party commitments. Mr. J. Thomas, the Colonial Secretary, is fully aware of the present opportunity for immpressive action."(147)

Unfortunately for the Zionists neither the Colonial Secretary nor the National Government had any intention of engaging in 'impressive action' towards Palestine, in fact, the reverse was the case. Only five weeks after the National Government had been elected it was decided at a Colonial Office meeting that: "As regards Palestine in particular it is considered important to avoid taking any action....at the present time."(148)

J.H. Thomas remained Colonial Secretary for only three months and was succeeded in November 1931 by Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister. On learning of Cunliffe-Lister's appointment, Professor Brodetsky of the Jewish Agency wrote a letter to the Colonial Secretary congratulating him, if in a rather sycophantic manner, on his appointment: "We hold ourselves fortunate in that the new Colonial Secretary with whom we shall be privileged to co-operate is one whose wide experience alike in the administrative and economic field will be of the greatest value to Palestine."(149)

Cunliffe-Lister, unsure of how to reply looked to his officials in the Colonial Office for guidance. O.G.R. Williams of the Middle East Section advised that a personal letter should be sent in reply but emphasised that "its wording required a little consideration." Williams went on to suggest that "Professor Brodetsky may be trying to make good the claim, which we are always trying to resist, that the Jewish Agency have a right under the Mandate of co-operating and advising - not with the Palestine Administration as Article 4 of the Mandate explicitly states - but with HMG direct." He continued, indicating clearly that the bitter lessons of Passfield's term of office had not been forgotten: "It is the tendency of the Jewish Agency to overdo direct recourse to the Prime Minister that has often created difficulties for us."(150)

Williams also drew the Colonial Secretary's attention to a comment in Brodetsky's letter which referred to the Jewish Agency assisting the representatives of HMG in the execution of the Mandate, which, he maintained implied: "as we know from previous events a sort of partnership with HMG. This is, of course, all wrong. The execution of the Mandate is the responsibility of HMG alone and HMG is responsible to the Council of the League for what they do in Palestine and not to the Jewish Agency or the Arab executive."(151)

Cosmo Parkinson, who had recently replaced Sir John Shuckburgh, also commented on the letter and stated that if "would be desirable, indeed it is probably inevitable, that the Secretary of State should receive Professor Brodetsky soon, as a matter of courtesy."(152) The proposed meeting took place a few days later between the Colonial Secretary, Cosmo Parkinson, Brodetsky, and Nahum Sokolow, another representative of the Jewish Agency.

Although the meeting was brief Cunliffe-Lister informed the visitors that the newly appointed High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wauchope was very highly thought of and was considered to be a first-rate man who would carry on the tradition in Palestine of such a High Commissioner as Lord Plumer. It is interesting that no mention was made of Sir John Chancellor, which perhaps could be seen as an indication of the conciliatory way in which the Colonial Office was approaching the Zionist movement. The Secretary of State reassured Brodetsky and Sokolow that the Mandate would be followed and that they could rely upon law and order being maintained. However, the

Colonial Secretary emphasised the fact that it was essential to take account of the 'absorptive capacity' of the country in considering the question of further immigration. Before the meeting came to a close, Cunliffe-Lister urged the Jewish Agency to establish good relations with the High Commissioner who, he argued, could weigh up the various local factors and upon whom a Secretary of Sate relied; with such a man as Wauchope he felt sure that the Agency would be able to co-operate.(153)

The Zionists seemingly took Cunliffe-Lister at his word and established such good relations with Wauchope that it ultimately led to an Arab revolt. Wauchope essentially followed the guidelines set by Cunliffe-Lister. The Colonial Secretary, alarmed at the Depression in Britain, had defined the question of Jewish immigration into Palestine in a wide sense and had relaxed the regulations concerning it and the related land sales to the Jews. By approving larger Labour Schedules, he hoped to transform Palestine into a self-sufficient economic unit which would become, as a result of larger Jewish capital imports, less dependent on the British tax-payer.(154) Wauchope carried through these policies, under the guise of attempting to assimilate the communities in more or less equal numbers.

During the early 193Os, Jewish immigration into Palestine was an incendiary issue, particularly as the rise of Fascism in Europe had encouraged more Jews to seek refuge in Palestine. The situation, as a result, became increasingly tense as Palestinian Arabs staged a number of demonstrations. However, when Wauchope received an Arab deputation who complained of the high immigration rates, he replied that he could see they had a legitimate grievance against only one aspect of Jewish immigration, namely those persons remaining in Palestine without authority, in other words, illegal immigrants.(155)

As the High Commissioner ignored the hostilities aroused by the Palestine Administration's immigration policy, the Colonial Secretary outlined the obligations contained in the Mandate: "The Mandate carries with it a clear duty to Arabs and to Jews. There is under it the obligation to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for Jewish people. But at the same time there is an equally definite obligation to safeguard the rights of all inhabitants

of Palestine." Cunliffe-Lister went on to assure a meeting of Arabs in Haifa that the constant aim of British policy was to "foster and promote the well-being of all Palestine."(156)

It was a fine sentiment but it had little impact on the Arab community who were not only disillusioned with the British Government in the wake of the reversal of the 1931 White Paper but were also hardening in their opposition to the Jews. Their views were expressed in an article: "Zionism is nothing but a criminal enterprise encouraged by Britain and..... aimed at oppressing the Arabs and bringing them under its control."(157)

Riots, demonstrations and violent incidents characterised Palestine in the years leading up to 1936. In the light of the outcry against Passfield and the White Paper it is not surprising that the Colonial Office should endeavour to appease the Jewish community in Palestine. However, it was this attitude which served to arouse Arab hostility and culminated in the disorders of 1936.

CHAPTER 2

FOOTNOTES

1. Memorandum on War Aims.Approved by the Special Conference of the Labour Party and TUC. December 1917.

2. Cited in Andrew Sargent The British Labour Party in Palestine 1917-1948. Ph.D. Nottingham University 1980. p.19

3. See Chapter I for the text of the Declaration

4. M. Leifer. Zionism and Palestine in British Opinion and Policy Ph.D. University of London 1959. p.43

5. See B. Shaw. (Ed) Fabian Essays London 1948. pp75-77

6. For an outline of J.A. Hobson's views see P.S. Gupta Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964 London 1975. pp31-32

7. C.R. Rose. The Relation of Socialist Principles to British Labour Foreign Policy 1945-1951 D.Phil, Nuffield, Oxford.1959. p134

8. A.Sargent. Op Cit p34

9. H. Fineman. Poale Zionism - An Outline of its Aims and Institutions New York 1918. For a comprehensive account of Poale Zion's involvement within the wider International Socialist Movement, see A. Sargent Ibid pp60-74

10. Encyclopaedia Judicea Jerusalem 1971. p.661

11. Zionist Review June 1919

12. A. Sargent. Op Cit p43

13. LPACR 1920. p177

14. J.R. MacDonald. A Socialist in Palestine 1922. Interestingly no mention is made of MacDonald's attitude to Palestine in David Marquand's recent biography. Herbert Morrison was also enamoured of Palestine and at one time stated that he would like to live there.

15. HC Deb. Vol.156 c.327. 4/7/22

16. Arthur Henderson. The Aims of Labour 1917

17. HC Deb. Vol.112 c.159. 12/2/19

18. A. Sargent. Op Cit p.58

19. LPACR 1921 p58

20. See Chapter I

21. H. Snell. Men, Movements and Myself London 1936 p239. Snell was greatly surprised at being chosen to participate in the Royal Commission and initially considered declining the offer.

22. Lewis Minkin. The Labour Party Conference Manchester 1980 pl3

23. See later in Section I

24. New Statesman and Nation 7/9/29

25. LPACR 1929 p206

26. See Chapter I. Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929. Cmd.3530. 1930.

27. H. Snell. Op Cit p240

28. Weizmann Archives, Israel. cited in N.Rose Gentile Zionism and Anglo Zionist Diplomacy 1929-1939 Ph.D. University of London, 1968. p36

29. J.M.N. Jeffries. Palestine - The Reality London 1939. p.xvii-xix

30. HC Deb Vol.238 c.1089-1100 7/5/30

31. HC Deb Vol.242 c.900-902 1/8/30

32. CAB 23/63

33. G. Sheffer. Policy Making and British Policies Towards Palestine 1929-1939 D.Phil Oxford 1971. p429

34. Weizmann Archives cited in N.Rose Op Cit p38

35. A. Sargent. Op Cit p90 MacDonald made this comment to Marcus Morris MP an enthusiastic Zionist.

36. See Chapter I

37. N. Rose. Op Cit p17

38. LPACR 1930 p220-223

39. The Times 28/10/30

40. CAB 23/64

41. The Times 23/10/30

42. The Times 4/11/30

43. David Marquand. Ramsay MacDonald London 1977 p577

44. N. Rose Op Cit p37

45. A. Sargent. Op Cit p.109

46. LPACR 1946 p166

47. A. Sargent. Op Cit p113

48. G.T. Garratt. Political Quarterly Jan - March 1931 p53

49. cf. R.M. Punett. Front Bench Opposition London 1977 p210 and M.Burch Conservative Party in Opposition Ph.D. Glasgow University 1975 p332

50. P.S. Gupta. Op Cit p228

51. HC Deb Vol.233 c.259 23/11/33

52. Imperial Advisory Committee Minutes. November 1934

53. Creech Jones Papers.CJ 30.1.49 Rhodes House, Oxford.

54. Ibid CJ 30.1.55; HC Deb Vol.309 c.431-432 26/2/36

55. Ibid CJ 30.1.49

56. HC Deb Vol.309 c.431-432 26/2/36; HC Deb Vol.310 c.1090 25/3/36

57. HC Deb Vol.310 c.2760 8/4/36

58. A.W. Kayyali. Palestine - A Modern History London 1978 p178

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60. The Situation in Palestine CO 733/297

61. LPACR 1937 p241

62. Anglo-American Committee Hearings PRO 30/78.10

63. For an interesting account of the manner in which Weizmann met Balfour, see L. Stein Balfour Declaration London 1961 p147

64. John Ramsden. The Making of Conservative Party Policy London 1980 p12

65. Lord Boothby. My Yesterday, Your Tomorrow London 1962 p261

66. R. Crossman. The Charm of Politics London 1958 p134

67. L. Stein. Op Cit p155

68. cf Robert Blake. The Unknown Prime Minister London 1955 p41;
Lord Vansittart The Mist Procession London 1958 p232

69. UNSCOP Report Vol.III. 8/7/47

70. CAB 23/4 War Cabinet 261 31/10.17

71. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939. First Series IV.
no.242, p345 11/8/19

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73. See Chapter I for a detailed account

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75. Ibid

76. Ibid p513

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82. For greater detail of the Arab deputation to Churchill see
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104. Cmd. 1785 The Mandate for Palestine 1922

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108. G. Sheffer Ibid p308

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110. CO 733/15 7/11/21

111. Ibid 16/11/.21

112. C. Jeffries Op Cit p43

113. L. Amery Op Cit p319

114. CO 733/118 4/1/27; CO 733/133 7.10.27

115. Cmd. 5479

116. Memorandum from the Palestine Arab Committee. CO 733/167 17/6/29

117. CO 733/176 19/9/29

118. CO 733/163 17/10/29

119. G. Sheffer Op Cit p.314

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121. See Chapter I for details of this correspondence.

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CHAPTER 3

THE 1937 ROYAL COMMISSION

Introduction

The preliminary chapters have provided an historical perspective to the events leading up to the Arab rebellion of 1936 but this chapter will mark the beginning of the main body of the thesis. The decision to commence at this point is not an arbitrary one for the Royal Commission, instituted in 1936 as a direct consequence of the Arab revolt - the worst outbreak of violence in Palestine to confront the British Government - had a profound implication for subsequent British policy. The Commission's importance not only lies in the fact that it was unquestionably the most authoritative enquiry undertaken during the inter-war period, but also, its recommendations were to have such a crucial impact on party attitudes in the years which followed.

(i) The Prelude

During the months preceding the Arab rebellion Sir Arthur Wauchope, the High Commissioner, consolidated his influence on Britain's policy decisions towards Palestine. This arose chiefly as a result of a re-shuffle within the Colonial Office and the appointment of two Colonial Secretaries in quick succession. Malcolm MacDonald had assumed office in June 1935 immediately after the General Election but his appointment was of a temporary nature and lasted a mere five months. J.H. Thomas remained in office for a similar period of time and finally resigned following his involvement in a financial scandal.(1) Consequently, for the better part of a year Wauchope commanded an authority previously unknown throughout Cunliffe-Lister's term of office. Wauchope had enjoyed a certain success since his appointment in 1931, in securing the rapid development of the country and his immigration schemes had undoubtedly endeared him to the Zionists. In a discussion between David Ben-Gurion and Wauchope in Jerusalem in 1933, the former reported that he had been given a "sympathetic hearing,"(2) which

was a significant comment given Ben-Gurion's radical leanings.(3)

However, the beginnings of a rift between the High Commissioner and the Zionists appeared when he advocated the establishment of a Legislative Council(4) on which both communties in Palestine would sit. The Arabs had been pressing for the institution of such a Council since November 1935, yet Wauchope's support of the scheme came as a disappointment to the Jews. Weizmann recalled in his biography: "From the time of his arrival in 1931 Sir Arthur had entered into the problems of the country with great enthusiasm and had realised from the outset that the mainspring of our progress was immigration. By 1935 the annual immigration figure passed the sixty thousand mark and we thought that if this would only continue for another few years we would be past the difficulties which had given us most trouble." He concluded that the setting up of a Legislative Council would inevitably lead to "the complete arrest both of Jewish immigration and of Jewish progress generally."(5)

One fact which the Zionists and the British Government could not overlook, however, was the Arab community's growing militancy as a result of the high rates of Jewish immigration. The Arabs had warned Wauchope of the probability of a "rapid deterioration" in the political situation in Palestine if their demands for a Legislative Council were not met.(6) In view of these provocative statements the question of a Legislative Council was discussed in the Commons on 25th March 1936. During the debate there emerged serious doubt in all parts of the House as to the desirability of proceeding with the proposals. In fact, the Secretary of State's speech was constantly interrupted as other members pointed out that the introduction of a Council would contravene the aims of the Mandate.(7) This assertion was not strictly correct as the Mandate's articles had allowed for the possibility of some form of self-government being established. The stumbling block to this development which worried a number of MPs was that it would directly contravene Britain's other commitment i.e. it would retard the development of a Jewish National Home.

Thomas regarded himself as the unfortunate caretaker of his predecessor's policies, essentially, as he put, "left to carry the baby", but others saw in his poor defence of the Legislative Council yet another indication of his "low political calibre."(8)

Wauchope's own position was naturally shaken by the rejection of a policy to which he had been committed, and it was he who had to face the Arabs' response. They likened the Government's reversal of policy to that of MacDonald's 'Black Letter' in 1931 and their feelings of resentment were exacerbated by the attitude of the Jews. Wauchope reported to Thomas: "I am told on good authority that they (the Jews) have boasted to the Arabs in private that they can square matters in London."(9) The Arabs reasserted their demand that all Jewish immigration should cease. The Government, however, announced a new Jewish Labour Schedule of 4,500 immigrants to be admitted over the following six months. It was this development combined with the failure of the Legislative Council which precipitated the Arab revolt against the British authorities and resulted in military reinforcements being sent into Palestine from Egypt and Malta.(10)

The Peel Commission judged that the Parliamentary defeat of the scheme had been instrumental in provoking the Arab rebellion in the sense that it demonstrated to the Arabs that any policy favourable to them could be neutralised by Jewish pressure in London.(11) The rebellion in Palestine, which initially took the form of riots in the streets progressed to random killings and finally culminated in a strike by all Arabs, generated a nervousness within the Foreign Office who, mindful of Italy's aggrandisement policies in Abyssinia, were anxious lest repressive measures against the Palestinian Arabs would bring repercussions in the surrounding Arab states. In the event there was no need for anxiety for Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt had no desire to enter into a conflict with the British Government and offered their good services to quell the rebellion.(12) However, the Foreign Office had views on the situation in Palestine and were outlined by L. Oliphant, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Department: "The Jews have been forcing the pace of immigration and it is unfortunate that German persecution precipitated a flood of immigrants but the Jews must see that Palestine has to be related to the global picture. If British resources are overstrained, the Jews may find themselves under a different mandatory power, one which is not so amenable."(13)

It is difficult to pinpoint the country to which Oliphant alluded. There was certainly some talk much later as to whether the United States would be a possible candidate to assume the Mandatory

responsibilities of Palestine, but there is no evidence to suggest that these ideas had surfaced in June 1936. In any case, America with its sizeable politically powerful Jewish population was hardly a country Zionists would find less 'amenable.'

Amid the increase in Arab attacks and murders and the corresponding Jewish reprisals, Wauchope found himself in the unenviable position of having annoyed both Arab and Jewish communities. In a bid to resolve the situation Wauchope suggested to Thomas that a Royal Commission be dispatched to Palestine to investigate the disturbances. Thomas brought Wauchope's proposal before the Cabinet, not for specific decisions on the Commission's terms of reference or its composition, but for the Cabinet's agreement to a new Commission in principle.(14) The Cabinet delayed its decision until 13th May. During the interval the Zionists learnt of the proposed initiative. The last thing the Zionists wanted was another Commission of Enquiry; they were still haunted by the findings of the Shaw Commission and its resultant White Paper and were less than eager to participate in a new Commission. The Zionists mobilised Leo Amery in an attempt to 'head off' the Commission at Prime Ministerial level. However, Amery reported that the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, "had very great faith in Wauchope", and that it would "take a lot to move him to oppose."(15)

Weizmann was out of the country and pressure was exerted on Thomas to defer a decision until he returned to London. The Colonial Secretary argued this point in Cabinet: "while taking the view, as a matter of general principle, that it is better to follow the advice of the man on the spot, the Secretary of State for the Colonies felt some doubt whether in view of his own announcements about not capitulating to a threat of force it would be wise to announce a Royal Commission at the present time, at any rate before seeing Dr. Weizmann."(16) Nevertheless, the Cabinet supported Wauchope's proposal, concluding that if it became known that Weizmann, but not the Arabs, had been consulted prior to the Cabinet's decision, the good effects contemplated might be discounted. It was agreed, however, that the decision must not seem like a concession to Arab violence and the Cabinet decided to announce that the Government's first task would be to restore law and order, after which some form of enquiry would be undertaken.(17)

Weizmann arrived in London on the day before the Cabinet was due to ratify the draft announcement that had been drawn up by the Ministers concerned. Weizmann rushed to see Thomas but without effect. The Colonial Secretary's own deteriorating position rendered him unable, even had he been willing, to controvert a draft document which he himself had participated in composing. The Cabinet gave its approval and Thomas duly made the announcement in the Commons on 18th May 1943.(18)

The announcement in Parliament to the effect that the Royal Commission would only get under way when the Arab disturbances and strike had been called off did not receive the desired result in Palestine. The Arabs declined to concur. Wauchope insisted that their action did not indicate a rejection of the Royal Commission in principle, but merely a refusal to accept the appointment of the Commission as a concession sufficient to warrant calling off the strike. What the Arabs wanted, he claimed, as a first step was the suspension of Jewish immigration.(19) The prospects of an early peace in Palestine were clearly not improving, particularly as a controversy was developing between the civil and military authorities as to how Palestine should be administered.

Wauchope debated with the GOC in Palestine, Air vice-Marshall Peirse, the advisability of instituting martial law in the country. In such an event, executive authority would pass from the High Commissioner to the military, which had increasingly become frustrated by the administrative restrictions imposed on its military operations. It was Wauchope's view that the harsh consequences of martial law might doom all prospect of future peaceful development in the country. The dispute was referred to London where Wauchope recommended piecemeal political appeasement in the form of the Royal Commission together with a show of strength in the shape of troop reinforcements. In contrast, the military proposed an all-out repression of the rebellion under the powers of martial law.(20) Wauchope's unwillingness to, as he saw it, further divide the two communities and to lose the Arabs' goodwill by resorting to stern measures against the rebels earnt him contempt and castigation by the military officials. The War Office, not notably sensitive to political considerations, commented: "....the conclusion cannot be avoided that the method adopted by the High Commissioner was entirely ineffective. Martial law and unfettered military control

should have been exercised from the first. The behaviour and general conduct of the defence forces in very trying circumstances were admirable."(21)

The fact that Wauchope's interpretation of events was accepted in London essentially meant that the Colonial Office had to improvise new ideas which might possibly break the impasse in Palestine. O.G.R. Williams, an official at the Colonial Office commented: "The situation has now developed in such a way that a continuance of the present measures of suppression, even if they are not as intensive as the Jews would like them to be, is likely to convert Arab goodwill into hatred for Great Britain. I am not in a position to express opinion as to the probability of this enmity spreading, nor whether this probability would justify HMG's effort to alter Arab feeling by timely concession, for example by temporary suspension of immigration..."(22)

On 13th June Wauchope himself proposed that the Government intimate to the Royal Commission that it might suggest the suspension of immigration. The Colonial Office had rejected the idea, for "the natural reaction of the Royal Commission to any such suggestion would be to hand in their resignations at once."(23) At this time, W.Ormsby-Gore replaced Thomas as Colonial Secretary and the Foreign Office, sensed the time was right to press the Colonial office to take immediate steps to suspend Jewish immigration pending the Royal Commission's investigation. At a Cabinet meeting Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, make a recommendation that immigration into Palestine be stopped.(24) As a result of this pressure, Ormsby-Gore invited Weizmann and Ben-Gurion to attend a meeting at the Colonial Office.

The Colonial Secretary informed the two Zionist leaders that he was contemplating announcing in the Commons that as soon as the Royal Commission began its work immigration would be stopped, though the actual word 'suspension' would be used. Ben-Gurion was totally opposed on principle to any suspension of immigration, even if only for a short period. Weizmann, however, adopted a more conciliatory approach and proposed that, if it would help matters, "we might be prepared to postpone applying for the Labour Schedules while the Commission was in Palestine."(25)

Weizmann's suggestion seems curiously at odds with the ideas prevalent in the Zionist movement over the question of a Royal Commission, which they considered would be antipathetic to their interests, and in stark contradiction to his previous opposition to the scheme. It is possible, of course, that he considered the Government to be so deeply committed to the Commission and unlikely to change its policy that he had no option but to alter his position. In any case, Weizmann, always ready to seize a diplomatic initiative, probably perceived that in the face of Arab intransigence, Jewish co-operation would encourage the Government to look upon the Zionist case more favourably.

Heartened by Weizmann's response Ormsby-Gore proposed to the Cabinet that the Government announce a suspension of immigration for the duration of the Commission's work, to be announced once law and order were restored and the Commission able to leave for Palestine. The Cabinet approved his recommendation.(26) However, although the Government had seemingly defined its policy towards Palestine the question remained as to when law and order would be restored. The Arabs continued to refuse to call off the strike and the apparent instability within Palestine attracted the attention of the other Arab states. Both Ibn Saud, the ruler of Saudi Arabia, and Nuri Said, the Foreign Secretary of Iraq offered to mediate between the Palestinian Arabs and the British Government.(27) However, the involvement of the Arab Nations carried with it implications that they would in future meddle in what were essentially the affairs of the Mandatory Power and this probability was fully recognised by the Foreign Office: "It is obvious to us that Nuri (Said) is making the utmost use of the present situation to create maximum amount of elbow room for future Iraqi intervention in Palestinian affairs and to further his own Pan-Arab ideas..."(28) Nevertheless, the intervention did mark a precedent and without doubt served to further involve the Foreign Office in the Palestine issue.

Negotiations continued between the Palestinian Arabs and the British Government via representatives of the Arab States, yet Britain refused to make any concessions. Within one month the Palestinian Arabs, sensing that they had conceivably overplayed their case and in the face of the threat of martial law, decided to call off their strike and order was once again restored in Palestine.

The immigration issue, shelved during the negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs, had still to be finally settled. Wauchope, having regained his confidence, now advised against any concessions to the Arabs on the question of Jewish immigration as "it would merely invite a recurrence of armed rebellion as a method of gaining political ends,"(29) and the Colonial Office recommended that Wauchope make "a conservative estimate" of the economic absorptive capacity of the country.(30) The Cabinet accepted the Colonial Office contention that any concessions made now the disorders had ceased would smack of a deal between London and the Arab rulers and as a consequence Jewish immigration was maintained.(31) It was later agreed at a Cabinet meeting that an announcement be made that any change in the status quo with regard to immigration might prejudice the findings of the Royal Commission.(32)

The fact that the Palestinian Arab rebellion had come to an end under the threat but not the weight of martial law, led Military Intelligence to arrive at the conclusion that the militancy of the Arab leaders in Palestine had only been curtailed in the short-term: "The last rebellion was mainly raised and controlled by the Higher Arab Committee led by a gentleman called the Grand Mufti. The fact that the rebellion was not suppressed by military action and the institution of martial law, and that no direct measures were taken against the Grand Mufti and his Arab Committee had left them with their power and prestige largely unimpaired."(33) With this rather salutory reminder of the incendiary nature of Palestinian affairs in mind, the Royal Commission prepared to leave London for Palestine on 5th November 1936.

(ii) <u>The Investigation Begins</u>

The terms of reference of the Royal Commission were firstly, to investigate the origin and underlying causes of the disturbances; secondly, to examine the grievances of the Jews and the Arabs in the light of the dual obligation contained in the Mandate towards the Jewish people and towards the Arabs and other non-Jewish sections of the population of Palestine; and thirdly, to make recommendations for effectually implementing the Mandate while preventing the recurrence of disturbances and promoting more harmonious relations between Jews and Arabs.(34) The Commission, headed by Lord Peel

had a distinguished membership; it comprised: Sir Maurice Carter, an eminent barrister; Sir Lauri Hammond; Sir H. Rumbold, the former British Ambassador to Berlin; and Professor R. Coupland, Fellow of All Souls, Oxford. Sir John Martin, an official within the Colonial Office, was the Secretary to the Commission.

On 12th November 1936, Wauchope welcomed the Commissioners officially at Government House in Jerusalem. The following days were spent on an extended tour of Palestine, the Commissioners visiting the main Arab centres and several Jewish settlements, as well as Tel Aviv. The Commission's first public session took place on 18th November and it began by interviewing local officials in Palestine. November 25th was given over to the evidence and cross-examination of Weizmann. Weizmann recalls that, although he had complete confidence in the Commissioners' fairness and intellectual honesty it was with "considerable trepidation that I went up to Jerusalem on November 25th to deliver my evidence. I remember that, as I walked between two rows of spectators to the door of the building where the sessions were being held there were audible whispers on either side of me 'Ha-shem yatzliach darkecho' (God prosper you on your mission) and I felt that I carried the burden of these well-wishers... I knew that a misstep of mine, any error, however involuntary, would be not mine alone, but would rebound to the discredit of my people. I was aware of a crushing sense of responsibility."(35)

During this first meeting, Weizmann outlined the history and aims of Zionism and pointed to the achievements which the Jews had already accomplished in Palestine: "After only 16 years we stand before an achievement on which I think we can look with a certain amount of respect and on which, I will not hide from you, we look with a certain amount of pride."(36) The interview at the next public session was with Moshe Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. Rumbold questioned Shertok on the Jewish Agency policy of granting Labour certificates to European Jews and whether it took account of the 'economic absorptive capacity' of the country. Shertok claimed that it did, but when Rumbold queried the reply Shertok retorted: "We are never oblivious of the conditions under which our people live in the Diaspora."(37) Jewish immigration, not surprisingly, was an issue which arose throughout all the interviews with members of the Jewish Agency and it

ultimately led Rumbold to state that immigration seemed like an unending process. Zionist leaders began to fear that Britain might give up the idea of an eventual Jewish majority in Palestine and Weizmann outlined his anxieties to the High Commissioner. Wauchope informed Ormsby-Gore of his conversation with Weizmann: "He (Weizmann) had heard that it was generally held that there was a solid block of Arab people who could make the position for the British in Palestine so difficult and so constantly threatened that the English were tempted to say that they had done their duty, a National Home is now established, formed and existing and it is neither their duty nor their interest to go on allowing immigration when that course will only mean war or constant strife against the Arabs in Palestine." Were England to "throw over the Jews" it would be faced "with 400,000 Jews all in revolt in Palestine backed by millions of Jews in America and elsewhere determined to gain their just rights and the fulfilment of the promises made to them."(38)

In threatening this response, Weizmann implied that it had been the intention of the British Government to install a Jewish majority in Palestine. This may, and probably was, the intention of those within the Government who supported the Zionist cause, but to argue that this was Britain's interpretation of her Mandatory responsibilities is certainly inaccurate. Britain essentially followed a piecemeal policy towards Palestine taking short-term measures in order to circumvent the obvious contradictions evident in the Balfour Declaration which had been enshrined within the Mandate. Over the fourteen year period of Mandatory rule, Britain had followed no clear, definite, long-term policy towards Palestine. HMG's responses had changed to meet the internal and external exigencies of the day.

The Jewish leaders appeared to be labouring under a misapprehension yet given Weizmann's astute mind this seems curious. It is far more probable that Weizmann deliberately overstated British policy by opting for an extreme, but permissible, interpretation of it, in order to put pressure on the Government.

Upon reading the text of Weizmann's interview with Wauchope, George Rendel the head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, resented the implication that Palestine must provide a solution, by way of Jewish immigration, for a problem which was not, in his view, a Palestinian problem at all. He stated in a

departmental minute: "The position of the Jews is indeed a tragic one, and commands the utmost sympathy. They are suffering an intense persecution in Germany and the problem of the disposal of the surplus Jewish population of Poland is clearly becoming one of the major difficulties of central European politics." He then went on the draw a rather curious analogy by stating that this problem was of the same type as "the redistribution of raw materials and the opening up of markets....It is submitted that, even if Palestine were, as the Jews would like to represent it, a practically empty place capable of absorbing a very much larger number even than at present of Jewish refugees, it is neither practical nor just to regard the Palestine problem simply as an escape from a major world problem."(39)

Rendel, of course, was a committed Arabophil, on his own admission(40) and had developed close and cordial relations with Ibn Saud. In fact, after a visit to the Middle East, Rendel circulated his impression to the Colonial Office, stressing "the need to solve the Palestine problem in a way which would placate the Arabs."(41) Rendel wanted to submit a memorandum to the Peel Commission to this effect, but Ormsby-Gore quashed such a proposal: "I realise that Mr. Rendel is sincerely pro-Arab and anti-Jew and a critic of His Majesty's policy of carrying out the Mandate of the League of Nations, but that he had the right to submit to a Royal Commission his own erroneous opinion of that policy is a right I cannot admit...."(42)

The Colonial Secretary, of course, was on shaky ground when he tried to assume the role of impartial adjudicator, for he had to live down a 'Zionist past' dating from 1918 when he went to Palestine as a member of the Zionist Commission. Weizmann never let Ormsby-Gore forget his former sympathies and urged him "not to become impartial" in the light of the whole-hearted help he had given the Zionists in earlier days.(43)

The Commission continued its interviews, this time with the Arabs, who had belatedly agreed to attend. When the Muti, as leader of the Palestinian Arabs,(44) stated that "we object to the existence of 400,000 Jews in this country"(45) it soon became apparent to the Commissioners that co-operation between the Arabs and the Jews was a remote possibility. Coupland had already come to that conclusion

and in a secret session with Weizmann suggested the question of partition. Coupland told Sir John Martin that Weizmann would "think it over."(46) Weizmann recalled that on being presented with the notion he was placed in an impossible position, and maintained that as the head of a democratic organisation, he could not give the Commission his views on such an important subject without consultation with his colleagues.(47)

S. Brodetsky of the Jewish Agency, when hearing of the partition proposal itemised the points which needed to be considered before such an idea became acceptable to the Jewish people. He argued that it was possible to favour the idea only if four aspects were included: firstly, freedom of entry and settlement for Jewish individuals; secondly, sovereign status; thirdly, a sound economic basis and fourthly, cultural independence. Within these areas Brodetsky outlined the need for 'population transfer' which in effect meant that Arabs would be transferred or expropriated from Jewish territory, although no mention was made of Jews being moved from Arab areas. He explained that any Arabs in the proposed Jewish state would be "definitely the 'bottom dog'", and considered that partition would involve further fighting and bloodshed in Palestine. Speaking, as he was, on behalf of the Jewish Agency, he decided that it would be inopportune for the Agency to arrive at any conclusion, which he thought should be left to the Zionist Congress, but by way of a concluding note he stressed an interesting and revealing point: "It must be remembered that if general opinion accepts the view that we favour partition, by implication it will be assumed that we have given up our present claims to the whole of Palestine."(48) This statement clearly highlights the aims of the Zionists, that is, to control Palestine, ultimately, if taking Brodetsky's argument to its logical conclusion, to the exclusion of Arabs. Weizmann, of course, had skilfully managed to blur these objectives throughout his discussions with the British Government.

Shortly after writing the memorandum, Brodetsky and Weizmann had a meeting with Ormsby-Gore during which a discussion ensued on the procedural arrangements of the Royal Commission's report, i.e. how long it would take to be completed and channelled through to Parliament. Brodetsky asked the Colonial Secretary if the Report could be made available to the House of Commons before the

Government took its decision about policy, in order that there might be an opportunity of wider discussion. Ormsby-Gore replied that this was out of the question stating that "there would be no point in such a procedure because the only thing the House could discuss would be a definite Government proposal."(49) Significantly, Ormsby-Gore was to reverse his decision only two months' later.

Meanwhile, the Commissioners in Palestine were preparing to return to London although their work had not finished. It was now the turn of the politicians in Britain to give evidence to the Commission and the first to be interviewed was the former Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill. The interview was an uneasy one. Rumbold, on referring to the Arabs spoke of the "indigenous population" being subjected in 1918 "to the invasion of a foreign race." Churchill strongly objected to the term "foreign race" and replied that it was the Arabs who had come in after the Jews. In any case, he argued, it was "the great hordes of Islam who had smashed Palestine up."(50) By this time, the Commissioners had become aware that both the Arabs and the Jews held irreconcilable positions, and they began to prepare their report on the basis of the establishment of two separate states in Palestine, one Jewish, the other Arab.

The Report was radical and unprecedented. Palestine would be partitioned into Arab and Jewish States. The latter would be a strip of coastline running from south of Tel Aviv and widenening south of Haifa to include Nazareth and the western shore of Lake Tiberias. Britain would retain under permanent Mandate the Holy places, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and a corridor to the sea at Jaffa. The remainder would constitute the Arab State. As such, the 1922 Palestine Mandate would be abrograted.(51)

(iii) <u>The Partition Debate</u>

The Peel Report was introduced to Cabinet on 25th June 1937. However, prior to this date a series of meetings had taken place between Weizmann and Ormsby-Gore. On 13th June, Weizmann met the Colonial Secretary to discuss the proposed Jewish State. Weizmann asserted that he did not stand committed to the acceptance of the Report and that if it was unacceptable to the Jews they would do everything possible to oppose it. Ormsby-Gore suggested to

Weizmann that, without committing himself, he outlined the points which would make the Report favourable in Jewish eyes. He replied that the partition proposal was not his and he, in fact, did not want it at all, but if it was going to be put through, there were certain minimum requirements which would be essential in order to satisfy the Jewish community. Firstly, he maintained it was necessary that the Negev be included in the Jewish area (the Report had included this in the Arab State); secondly, the eastern boundaries of the state should be sufficiently advanced into the hills to afford adequate protection to Jewish territory; thirdly, the Jews in Jerusalem should form part of the Jewish state, and finally, there must be a real possibility of large scale development and immigration. Ormsby-Gore stated that some of these points really required discussion with the Government's strategic experts, that is to say, the Chiefs of Staff and concluded the meeting by saying that the Government had before it the alternatives of coming to Parliament with its policy ready made and allowing discussion only after the announcement of that policy, or of coming to Parliament and giving the House the opportunity of discussing the Report first and only then arriving at a final decision. The Colonial Secretary then asked Weizmann which alternative he favoured. Weizmann replied that he had always preferred the latter option, indeed had argued this point with Ormsby-Gore only two months' previously. The Secretary of State responded that he now inclined to the view that Parliament be given the opportunity of speaking first.(52)

At the Colonial Secretary's suggestion, Weizmann wrote a letter to Ormsby-Gore, two days' later outlining the points which had been raised at their meeting.(53) Also as a result of the meeting on 13th June, Sir Herbert Creedy of the War Office contacted the Jewish Agency in an attempt to discern which boundaries, from a defence point of view, would be acceptable to the Jews. The Agency replied that over and above the agricultural, industrial and commercial aspects which could be developed in an enlarged Jewish State, the State could be "strategically utilised by Great Britain."(54)

In presenting the Peel Commission Report to the Cabinet, Ormsby-Gore strongly advised his colleagues to accept the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, calling the report a "lucid and penetrating analysis" which had led him to accept "without hesitation the Commission's diagnosis of the root of trouble

as a conflict of irreconcilable national aspirations." He also accepted that partition, although a "drastic and difficult operation" had, "the best hope of permanent solution, just to both parties and consonant with our obligations to both Jews and Arabs."(55) The Foreign Office objected to the scheme on two grounds: firstly, to the details of the partition proposal, and secondly, to the fact that partition would have to be strictly imposed, possibly by martial law. Eden claimed that the Peel plan created a small Jewish state with unviable frontiers alongside an Arab state without access to the sea, and argued that the Government should make the frank admission that fulfilment of the Mandatory's obligations had proved impossible.(56) The Secretary of State for India, thought the Arabs had been given a "raw deal" and amid the uncertainty surrounding the Report's radical suggestions, it was decided that the Government would not commit itself to details but would confine itself to the approval only of the principle of partition.

Rendel, of course, opposed the establishment of a Jewish state in any form and particularly resented what he considered to be the "indecent haste" with which the Colonial office sought to divest itself of all responsibility for Palestine.(57) It is possible to discern the Colonial Secretary's exasperation with the whole affair in a minute he wrote to Lord Dufferin. Despairing of the attacks on Britain by both the Arabs and Jews, Ormsby-Gore stated that he was inclined to tell both communities that partition "was the Government's proposal and they could either take it or leave it."(58)

The Zionists ostensibly condemned the whole idea of partition and Ben-Gurion outlined as much in a interview with Ormsby-Gore. He made it clear that the Zionist Movement was strongly against any partition scheme at all and pressed for the fulfilment of the Mandate, which he interpreted as being Jewish control of the whole of Palestine. Ben-Gurion pointed to the fact that Palestine had been partitioned twice; once when the frontier was drawn between the British and French Mandated territories and a considerable part of Northern Palestine had been included in Syria and later when the whole of Transjordan had been excluded from the scope of the Mandate. The Zionists were, he argued, justly concerned over the results of a third partition.(59)

Weizmann, who was also present, ignored Ben-Gurion's line of attack and asked the Colonial Secretary if the Jewish Agency could have an advance copy of the Report before publication on 7th July, pointing out that this would enable them "to prepare their people beforehand." He suggested that if any issues arose from their perusal of the Report they could discuss the points with Cosmo Parkinson or Shuckburgh and the issues could be "ironed out in advance of publication." Ormsby-Gore replied that he was unwilling to show the Report to any private person, to which Weizmann replied that the head of the Jewish Agency could hardly be regarded as a private individual. Ibn Saud was not seeing a copy of the Report, remarked the Colonial Secretary and Weizmann enquired as to what Ibn Saud had to do with the matter anyway: "He has no standing whatever as regards Palestine, but the Jewish Agency are the people who will have to carry out what might be decided." Ormsby-Gore agreed to raise the matter at the next Cabinet meeting but cautioned: "We should certainly have to keep it confidential."(60)

In the event, the Cabinet rejected the suggestion and Weizmann, in a fit of pique, wrote a long condemnatory letter to the Secretary of State, accusing him of being responsible for the disorders in Palestine which had occasioned the appointment of the Royal Commission: "...the paralysis of Government, the surrender to crime; the demoralisation of the Civil Service; the denial of justice; the failure to protect the lives and property of law-abiding Jewish citizens. These things fall to a great extent into your own term of office." He stresssed the long connection between the Zionists and the Colonial Secretary: "You have been working with us for the last 20 years. This is the more tragic for me when I see you at the head of the Colonial Office, you who have helped us whole-heartedly in earlier days, I remember - and I shall never forget - our old friendship and the work we did in common. But however I feel towards you personally, how can I trust the system with which you have now become identified."

Weizmann went on to complain that the Zionists would receive a copy of the Report "at about the same time as it will be given to the Lobby correspondents of the newspapers, that is, two days before publication."(61) Nevertheless, although Ormsby-Gore appeared to the Zionists as unsympathetic to their cause, a number of Zionist supporters, including members of the Opposition were gathering to

discuss tactics in order to oppose partition when it came up for discussion in Parliament. A certain irony appears at this stage as the Zionists, by vocally emphasising their opposition to the question of partition and thereby carrying their supporters with them, overstated their criticism of the plan. Blanche Dugdale warned the Zionists not to make partition the "cat's paw of English politics."(62) A Jewish Agency report, written two weeks before the issue was debated in Parliament, indicated that some Zionists were not completely opposed to the scheme: "To attempt to upset the Report is to run our heads against a brick wall. The alternatives to partition are disastrous. Therefore, partition must be made workable."(63)

However, on the same day, Wauchope reported to Cosmo Parkinson that Ben-Gurion and other members of the Jewish Agency in Palestine "have openly declared they are against partition."(64) The equivocation of the Zionists encouraged their supporters to argue against partition. Dalton maintained that "many of my colleagues who are very friendly to the Jews would be inclined to oppose partition in the interests of the Jews themselves."(65) Churchill, Creech-Jones and Attlee all roundly condemned the proposal. Attlee was shocked at the idea of partition and felt it was a concession to violence and a confession of failure.(66)

Creech-Jones clarified the reasoning behind the Zionist sympathisers' opposition to partition: "...I do not know whether at this stage it would be wise for those who have supported the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine to support such a proposal which is a considerable limitation and might prove to be a big modification in the conception of the Balfour Declaration."(67)

With the current of opinion running against partition among Zionist supporters, Ormsby-Gore decided to keep his statement in the House of Commons vague in the anticipation that he would have "rather a bad time."(68) The Colonial Secretary was accurate in his prediction: with an overwhelming majority of Zionist sympathisers: Morgan Jones, Sinclair, Wedgwood, Tom Williams, Churchill and Lloyd George arguing against the proposal. Only Amery gave "preliminary approval of the broad principle" and maintained that the final partition scheme should take into account future Jewish needs in conjunction with the European situation.(69) The Commons did not

want to be rushed into endorsing a scheme which a Royal Commission had taken six months to compile, and a delaying amendment, first proposed by Churchill, was adopted without division. The partition scheme would be submitted to the League of Nations and it was resolved that during the interim period the Government would be able to make adequate inquiries so as to return to Parliament with a definite scheme which took into account the recommendations of the Commission.(70)

It appeared that Zionist logic in emphasising the negative aspects of the proposal distorted their acceptance of the general principles involved. The Peel Report had clearly presented a quandary for the Zionists; they could neither accept it nor ignore it. The issue required a carefully balanced evaluation but this was not always forthcoming. Weizmann claimed, somewhat disingenuously, that the Zionists' failure to display adequately their conversion to partition had been due to their having been denied an advance copy of the Report.(71)

On 11th August 1937, the Zionist Congress met in Zurich to discuss the question of partition, and a majority of delegates authorised the Zionist Executive to negotiate with HMG the precise details of the scheme.(72) One month later the Foreign Secretary, presented the Government's proposals to the League of Nations Council. He argued the case for partition in the light of the unworkability of the Mandate, and stressed the fact that the Mandatory Power could take no steps without the authority of the League. The Council adopted a resolution which in effect allowed Britain to conduct further investigations but did not commit itself to the concept of partition: "the Council agrees to the UK carrying out the study and ...defers consideration of the substance of the question until the Council is in a position to deal with it as a whole and in the meantime entirely reserves its opinion and its decision."(73)

A few days later the Palestine issue was discussed at the League Assembly Meeting and Arab opposition to the partition plan was considerable. Tewfik-el-Swaidy, Iraq's Foreign Secretary warned the British Government that their policy in Palestine was doomed to failure and that the disorders in the country were bound to have repercussions in the neighbouring countries and consequently disturb the peace in the Middle East. The Egyptian Foreign

Minister, Butros Ghali Pascha, strongly condemned partition which he considered to be "irreconcilable with Arab national rights. The creation of two small states," he maintained, "was untenable". Lord Cranborne, speaking on behalf of the British Government, argued that these opinions only "served to underline the complexity of the problem," and reassured the delegates that all views would receive the fullest consideration of the British Government. He went on to say that although the British Government viewed partition as the best and most hopeful solution of the problem, it was not committed to the details of any definite scheme.(74)

However, the opinions espoused by the Arab states did not go unnoticed by the Foreign Office and in many ways reinforced the Department's antipathy towards the scheme. The Office considered the implementation of partition would undoubtedly bring with it the risk of a general conflagration in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office did not advocate a return to the pre-Royal Commission policies but rather that Britain openly admitted that the task of implementing the Balfour Declaration had proved beyond its capabilities. Britain, the Department argued, could offer the Jews "a free gift of British territory elsewhere."(75) Vansittart, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, ruled out this approach sensing, quite accurately, that it would prove unacceptable to the majority of Jews, and would arouse the opposition of the Colonial Office. As it was, the Colonial Office could not understand the Foreign Office's objections to partition, which appeared to them to be the only honourable departure from a debilitating affair: "...the falseness of our position hampered us at every turn; now at length we have a means of escape... by which we can do substantial justice to both parties and clean our conscience of the odious imputation of breach of faith. We are..in sight of shore after prolonged buffeting in heavy seas. Are we to scuttle the lifeboat merely because the coast looks rocky and dangerous?"(76)

The Foreign Office , of course, could take the view that as the Government's recommendation to implement partition had not been endorsed by Parliament, largely on account of Zionist opposition, and as there had been negative reactions to the policy from the Arab nations, there was little reason to support a scheme which clearly antagonised the two communities it sought to appease. The fact that the Zionists belatedly began to favour the idea of a separate Jewish

state was a case of misjudged timing. Had the Jewish Movement and its supporters appeared enthusiastic towards the notion of partition it is possible that the British Government, with the support of the League of Nations, could have effectively progressed with the Commission's recommendations before the deteriorating European scene obliged Britain to view the Middle Eastern situation, in general and Palestine in particular, in a rather different perspective. As it was, the six month interval between the publication of the Peel Report and the appointment of the Woodhead Commission, which was to examine the technical feasibility of partition, allowed time for the Foreign Office to interest itself in the Commission's terms of reference. The Foreign Office stated that the "British were faced with solid and growing opposition from the native inhabitants of Palestine and more seriously, from the whole Arab world."(77) The Government, by this time, had decided that it would not agree to the compulsory transfer of populations and land and this clearly limited the feasibility of partition.(78) As such, the terms of reference were widened to enable the Commission not only to examine alternative schemes but also to reject the idea of partition totally.

In Gabriel Sheffer's view the Peel Commission's Plan was not: "a genuine attempt at solving the problem for good...in its final form the plan was primarily aimed at safeguarding Britain's national interests and only secondarily at solving the inter-communal strife."(79) However, Sheffer's view is overdrawn for it assumes there was one identifiable perception of how to maintain British interests. Certainly, the British Government was aware of the strategic importance of Palestine, but opinions differed, particularly between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office, as to the best means of preserving those interests.

The Report contradicted Foreign Office's conception, at that time, of the desirable political shape of the Middle East. The Foreign Office favoured a Muslim federation rather than secular national states as the optimum arrangement for securing British interests in the area. This view ran counter to the ideas held by Ormsby-Gore and his Department. It was their opinion that the British Government should encourage the creation and existence of national states, including a Jewish state, as it was felt a disunited Arab world would best suit Britain's concerns.(80)

The notion of partition raised for the first time by the Peel Commission was an idea to which Zionists and their sympathisers would return in future years, yet paradoxically in 1937 their less than enthusiastic response to the policy inclined the British Government to reconsider the proposal. In essence, the whole question of partition was on the verge of being rejected just as the Zionists were beginning to recognise the benefits of such a scheme.

FOOTNOTES

1. An Exchequer Court of Enquiry found Thomas guilt of having made "unauthorised disclosures" regarding the Budget. The Times 3/6/36

2. Jewish Observer and Middle East Review 4 October 1963. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

3. See Chapter 6

4. Chaim Weizmann Trial and Error London 1949 p466

5. Ibid p466-7

6. CO 733/294 7/12/35

7. HC Deb Vol 310 c.1090 25/3/36 See also Chapter 2

8. As reported in Report of Palestine Royal Commission. Cmd 5479

9. CO 733/293 31/3/36

10. See Chapter 2

11. Cmd. 5479

12. FO 371/20024 28/8/36

13. FO 371/20110 9/6/36

14. CAB 23/84 11/5/36

15. L. Amery My Political Life. The Unforgiving Years Vol 3 London 1955 p250

16. CAB 23/84

17. Ibid

18. CAB 23/84 18/5/36, and HC Deb vol 312 c.837-8 18/5/36

19. CAB 23/84 19/5/36

20. CO 733/297 3/6/36 also, WO 32/4177 Peirse Report on 1936 Disturbances

21. WO 32/4177 31/12/36

22. CO 733/314 24/6/36

23. Ibid

24. FO 371/20021 18/6/36

25. CO 733/297 30/6/36

26. CAB 23/85 4/7/36

27. CO 733/314 22/8/36

28. FO 371/20024 1/9/36

29. CAB 24/264 1/10/36

30. Ibid

31. Ibid

32. CAB 23/86 28/10/36

33. WO 106/1594 22/6/37

34. Cmd. 5479

35. C. Weizmann Op Cit p471. Weizmann records the considerable courtesy extended to him by Lord Peel who was seriously ill and died shortly after the Report was published.

36. Palestine Royal Commission. Minutes of Evidence Heard at Public Sessions. 1937 London

37. Ibid

38. CAB 24/267 15/12/36

39. FO 371/20804 9/1/37

40. Sir George Rendel The Sword and the Olive London 1957 p99

41. CO 733/348 12/4/37

42. CO 733/348 14/4/37

43. Letter from Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore. 4/7/37. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Bodleian, Oxford

44. See Chapter 6 for a detailed account of the Mufti and his political role in Palestine.

45. Palestine Royal Commission Minutes Loc Cit

46. Sir John Martin. Thames Papers Box 1, File 2, St. Antony's Loc Cit

47. C. Weizmann Op Cit p473-474

48. Memorandum on the Partition of Palestine. S. Brodetsky. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc Cit

49. Note of interview with Ormsby-Gore by Brodetsky. 20/4/37 Ibid

50. Royal Commission Minutes Loc Cit

51. Cmd 5479. 1937

52. Notes of conversation between Ormsby-Gore and Weizmann 13/6/37 Leonard Stein papers Box 123 Loc Cit

53. Letter from Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore 15/6/37 Ibid

54. Ibid

55. CAB 24/166 25/6/37

56. Ibid

57. FO 371/20808 2/7/37

58. CO 733/351 14/6/37

59. Note of conversation between Weizmann, Ben-Gurion and Ormsby-Gore 28/6/37 Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc cit

60. Ibid

61. Letter from Weizmann to Ormsby-Gore 4/7/36 Ibid

62. N. Rose Baffy Op Cit p35

63. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc Cit

64. CO 733/332 19/7/37

65. Dalton's Diaries. 18/6/37 LSE

66. Ibid

67. Creech-Jones Papers CJ/30/3/1/ Rhodes House, Oxford

68. Leonard Stein papers Box 123 Loc Cit

69. HC Deb 326 c.2235-2367 21/7/37

70. Ibid

71. CO 733/333 13/10/37

72. The Times 15/9/37

73. Ibid

74. Palestine Correspondence Agency No 11 (New Series) 19/9/37 and 22/9/37. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc Cit

75. FO 371/20811 13/8/37

76. CO 733/354 6/12/37

77. FO 371/20819 1/11/37

78. Ibid

79. G. Sheffer Op cit p443

80. Thames Papers Box 1, File 2 Loc Cit

CHAPTER 4

THE RETREAT FROM PARTITION

(i)The Woodhead Commission

During the summer of 1937 Chaim Weizmann began to sense a change in the climate of opinion towards partition and remarked that, while he exerted himself in breaking resistance to the plan within the ranks of the Jewish Agency, "the government seemed to grow increasingly cool towards it."(1) Weizmann's interpretation was correct. The British government was beginning to doubt the viability of partition particularly in view of the renewal of disturbances by the Arab community in Palestine.

The outbreak of violence in Palestine which erupted in August 1937 could be seen as the second phase of the rebellion which had preceded the Peel Commission's investigation. It was still, of course, anti-Zionist in character, although this recourse to violence related to the partition proposals and, as such, hostilities went one step further in that they were manifestly anti-British. During the campaign of personal terror the District Commissioner responsible for arranging the Peel Commission's travels through Palestine, was murdered. As a response to this outrage Ormsby-Gore sought and obtained Cabinet authorisation to arrest all members of the Higher Arab Committee, the organisation in Palestine which represented Palestinian Arab interests. It was believed in British circles that the Mufti, who was an executive member of the Arab committee, orchestrated the rebellion and orders were given that he too should be arrested.(2) In the course of the Cabinet meeting the Colonial Secretary maintained that the murder had been accompanied "by many other murders of moderate Arabs" and that a reign of terror had seemingly been inaugurated.(3)

Following Ormsby-Gore's representations in Cabinet, British troops began an intensive military campaign against Arab terrorists and on 6th October, the Colonial Secretary reported to the Cabinet that five of the ten members of the Arab Higher Committee had been arrested and deported to the Seychelles.(4) The Mufti, however, managed to

elude arrest and escaped to the Lebanon in the guise of an old woman. Nevertheless, it was not Beirut in the Lebanon which was the source of the terrorism in Palestine, but Damascus in Syria.

The apparent participation of the neighbouring Arab states in the disorders within Palestine aroused the interest of the Foreign Office and a number of communiques were received from the Department's representatives in those areas. However, it was a report from the British Consul in Damascus, Gilbert Mackereth, which threw an interesting light on the nature of the disturbances. In his memorandum to Rendel, Mackereth maintained that although it was posible to sympathise with the pan-Arab and anti-Zionist activities of the Arab world, there was, in his view, another aspect to the present anti-British and anti-Jewish campaign. "It should not be thought," Mackereth wrote, "that the Arab nationalists, either in Palestine or Syria offer themselves as heroes in a noble cause," and went on to explain: "During the past two months they (the Arab Nationalists) have been scouring the slums of Syrian towns for known criminals. I have myself compiled in the course of my efforts to prevent them from going to Palestine a list of about one hundred and fifty Syrians and Palestinians resident in Syria who have in this way been canvassed; many have been hired and have gone to Palestine with a sordid and purely mercenary mission to create what havoc they can." To his knowledge, Mackereth asserted, "not a single honourably known Syrian or Palestinian from Syria has crossed the frontier to join any of the groups of bandits who in Palestine pass their time menacing and murdering officials, defenceless soldiers, policemen and civilians, Arab, Jew and Christian alike." He concluded by emphasising that he would not normally refer to Arabs as bandits but on this occasion he could "fully justify the use of these epithets. I chose the terms deliberately in the hope of thus distinguishing their activities from a legitimate manifestation of proper Arab feeling."(5)

Exactly what a 'legitimate manifestation' of Arab feeling implied is unclear; presumably it could be taken to mean Arab deputations to the Foreign Office not dissimilar to those taken by the representatives of Egypt who continued to reiterate their hostility to any future Jewish State and the inadvisability of the British Government adopting a policy "which would be hateful to the Arabs."(6)

Rendel took exception to Mackereth's description of the Arab terrorists and, completely overlooking the fact that moderate Arabs(7) were continuing to be killed by Arab extremists, stated "The trouble in Palestine is political and not criminal, though naturally our political opponents are using criminal measures, since no others are at present open to them." Rendel was clearly alluding to the widespread Palestinian Arab contention that because the British Government allegedly ignored the Arab case a recourse to violence was the only alternative and, as such, he went on to assert that many of those whom Mackereth had described as 'thugs' were,in fact, "sincere Arab patriots."(8)

Rendel's views on the question of partition and his apparent condonation of Arab violence begin to seem less than impartial. Opposition to the proposed Jewish State undoubtedly existed within the Arab nations as evidenced at the League of Nations debate on the issue, and it was believed at the Foreign Office that Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia was "genuinely in something approaching despair about our Palestine policy."(9) Yet it is difficult not to gain the impression that Rendel's personal bias against the institution of an independent Jewish state, a development which he had opposed even before the Royal Commission published its recommendations, coloured his perspective to such an extent that he seemed ready and almost willing to dismiss the fact that Arabs were, in fact, being killed by Arabs. This would seem to suggest, as Mackereth implied, that a polarity of views existed both within the Arab community in Palestine itself and in the wider context of the Arab states. A report from an official at the British Embassy in Cairo noted that the sense of outrage at the partition proposal expressed in Egypt was not necessarily spontaneous and that internal Egyptian political rivalry, "may provoke an artificial and inconvenient interest in the Arab cause in Palestine."(10)

Throughout these months the Colonial office still adhered strongly to the opinion that partition was the best policy and Ormsby-Gore argued this point in Cabinet: "Either we must carry out our pledges to the Jewish people, as now interpreted by an impartial Royal Commission, or we shall have to tell the Jews that we cannot fulfil our frequently reiterated pledges, for fear of jeopardising our relations with the Arab rulers outside Palestine..."(11) However, it was Foreign Office opinion that the new Commission's terms of

reference would have to be enlarged to ensure that they did not exclude all evidence other than that having a direct bearing on the partition scheme and Eden proposed that the Commission be allowed complete freedom to consider whatever proposals it thought best suited the new situation. The Cabinet, cognisant of the controversy between the two departments decided to defer a decision.(12) Ormsby-Gore disliked the delay and considered that uncertainty about the government's direction would inevitably lead to an increase in Arab intransigence.

Before the next decisive Cabinet meeting a Foreign Office memorandum was prepared and signed by Eden. The document argued the case for the Arabs pointing out their subjection to "an alien and dangerous invader" and outlining the serious opposition to partition within the Arab states. The Memorandum went on to state, in the first person: "It has been suggested to me that there is only one way in which we can now make peace with the Arabs and avoid any danger, that is, by giving the Arabs some assurance that the Jews will neither become a majority in Palestine nor be given any Palestinian territory in full sovereignty. We would go a long way towards recovering the confidence and friendship of the Middle Eastern States and greatly strengthen our moral and political position in that vital area by re-establishing peace with the Arab world and fulfiling our obligation to the Jews by the establishment of a fixed numerical proportion between the two races." A failure to do so would not only involve the British government "in continuing military commitments of a far-reaching character in Palestine itself, but also would bring on Britain the permanent hostility of all the Arab and Moslem Powers in the Middle East."(13)

In the Cabinet meeting on 8th December, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, accepted the thrust of Eden's Memorandum and it was agreed that whilst the Woodhead Commission would consider the viability of partition it would be mindful of the limitations of such a proposal and would be enabled, after sufficient investigation, to suggest any other scheme it felt to be preferable.(14)

The appointment of the new Commission in January 1938, headed by Sir John Woodhead, a former Indian Civil Servant, was regarded by the Colonial Office as an instrument with which the Foreign Office intended to slowly eliminate partition. Although a Cabinet

appointment, the Commission was regarded by the Colonial Office as a Foreign Office creation; Shuckburgh, Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office commented:"....I am extremely anxious about the whole position. It is unique in my experience. Here we have a policy (good or bad is not the purpose) which was formally adopted by the Cabinet as a whole, but which the Foreign Office are doing their best.....to render nugatory."(15)

It was widely believed in the Colonial Office that the Peel Commission was betrayed by the Woodhead Commission. In fact, it came to be known at the time as the 'Repeal Commission'.(16) Sir John Martin, of the Colonial Office, quite accurately considered the Woodhead Commission to be of an entirely different calibre to that of the Peel Commission, and in no sense as authoritative. It was his opinion that, in a sense, the Peel Commission had been mistaken in not requesting more time for their investigations, which would have permitted them to produce a detailed scheme of partition based on greater information about population figures; "the scheme might then have been imposed swiftly on the strength of their authority and would have saved a lot of subsequent trouble."(17) Of course, issues always seem much clearer when viewed with the benefit of hindsight and although it would not be unreasonable to suggest that HMG acted with inordinate delay in appointing the second commission at a stage when time was of the essence, a doubt must still exist as to the acceptability of any partition plan to the Zionist Movement, be it definitive or not, at a time when such a scheme was considered to be a vital departure from the commitments of the Mandate. The fact that Zionists only began to favour the scheme when British government policy focussed on the fixing of a permanent minority status on Palestinian Jewry in the January of 1938 compounds the view that Zionists viewed partition to be the lesser of two evils and only supported the proposal when all hope was apparently lost of fulfilling their claims to control the whole of Palestine.

Weizmann, aware that partition was under threat and the Jewish immigration into Palestine was being curtailed, warned Shuckburgh that "Jews are not going to Palestine to exchange their German or Polish ghetto for an Arab one."(18) He also complained of what he thought to be the deference shown to Ibn Saud by the British Government, and asserted, somewhat ironically, that the Arab leader was "an astute politican, he chooses his time for the exercise of

gentle pressure on the Foreign Office and unfortunately he finds a sympathetic ear....."(19)

Paradoxically, Weizmann's easy access to high places which characterised the earlier part of his career began to diminish at a time when certain Arab leaders began to assert their influence. On his return to Palestine in order to prepare his evidence before the Woodhead Commission, Weizmann endeavoured to reassure himself as to the role the Commission would adopt. The Chief Secretary to the Commission reported to the Foreign Office that Weizmann accepted that the Commission would favour partition. Evidently, the High Commissioner had told Weizmann that the Commission's note-paper was headed 'Partition Commission' and Weizmann deduced that that "must mean something!"(20)

Ormsby-Gore continued to favour the establishment of a Jewish State as proposed by the Peel Commission and in a letter to Lord Halifax, the successor to Anthony Eden, he stressed that he was "absolutely committed to partition. I am convinced that the Peel Commission were right and that the only solution of the Palestine problem compatible with the Balfour Declaration is self-government for Jews and Arabs in separate states within Palestine."(21) Time, however, was running out for Ormsby-Gore and in less than two months he was replaced at the Colonial Office by Malcolm MacDonald. Zionist sources claim that he resigned from office a broken man(22) but governmental records reveal him to be, if not quite a broken man then unquestionably an embittered one: "...the Arabs are treacherous and untrustworthy, the Jews greedy and, when freed from persecution, aggressive....I am convinced that the Arabs cannot be trusted to govern the Jews any more than the Jews can be trusted to govern the Arabs."(23)

Malcolm MacDonald's appointment initially pleased the Zionists for he had long established links with the Jewish Agency. Weizmann speaking at the time of the 1931 White Paper expressed his appreciation of the efforts Malcolm MacDonald had exerted in his role as go-between for the Jewish Agency and the government, and the 'extreme sympathy' he had shown for the Zionist cause.(24) The Jewish Chronicle reported favourably on his appointment: "Mr.MacDonald had declared his sympathy with the Zionist Movement. He was a member of the Palestine Mandate Committee which worked

unofficially to mould public opinion in favour of the Balfour pledge and the upbuilding of the Jewish National Homeland. He did helpful work during the negotiations which succeeded the publication of the Passfield White Paper."(25)

MacDonald restated his commitment to partition in his opening address to Parliament: "...the change of personnel in the Colonial Office does not mean any change of policy of the Government..." who were still of the opinion that "a scheme of partition on the general lines recommended by the Royal Commission represents the best and most hopeful solution of the deadlock."(26)

Between June and September 1938, MacDonald took soundings of opinion on the Palestine question, and even paid a short visit to the country to gauge the views of both the Administration and the military authorities. These sources indicated it was unlikely that Arab and Jew could arrive at any agreement on the basis of partition.(27) MacDonald also learnt of sporadic Arab attacks on Jewish civilian settlements which continued unabated despite Britain's military presence. MacMichael, the new High Commissioner, reported a catalogue of atrocities including an account of the attack on one settlement: "..a family of three was burnt in one hut and a woman and child shot in another."(28) Yet, HMG was disinclined to send reinforcements to Palestine for fear of tying up large bodies of troops in the area which, in the increasing likelihood of a European war, might be required elsewhere.

With the background of Munich in Europe the British Government could no longer view the problems of Palestine in isolation, and policies had to be seen from a wider perspective than that of purely Arab/Jewish animosities. MacDonald outlined the difficult situation to Weizmann on 13th September. He maintained that although he still personally favoured partition, a number of factors had impressed him: firstly, the inherent danger of including a substantial Arab minority in a Jewish state, particularly, when that state would be surrounded by powerful neighbours in sympathy with the minority's national aspirations, and he pointed to the case of the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia; secondly, the dangerous position created in the Near East by the support which Arabs received from their sympathisers, and from Italy and Germany; and lastly, he was beginning to believe that there might, in fact, be a conflict of

policies with regard to the promises made in the MacMahon correspondence,(29) i.e. the dual policies of establishing a Jewish National Home and promoting the welfare of the indigenous Arabs. MacDonald mentioned the possibility of reviving the Mandate along with the principle of economic absorptive capacity, to which Weizmann evidently reluctantly agreed.(30)

It was clearly the beginning of the end for the policy of partition, its ultimate decline being facilitated by the report of the Woodhead Commission. The Report, published on 19th October, was unlike the Peel Report in that it was not unanimous, and three alternative partition plans were presented although with the caveat that as a whole the Commisssioners were unable to recommend definitive boundaries for "self-supporting Arab and Jewish states." As a consequence, the three plans proposed variations of an extremely reduced Jewish state, one of which diminished the state to a mere four hundred square miles of coastal plain.(31)

Mindful of the fact that the Jewish Agency had rejected the partition proposals of the Peel Commission on the grounds that they were too limited, Malcolm MacDonald maintained that it would not be difficult to predict Jewish reaction to the new plans. MacDonald had, by this time, decided against partition and on 24th October he informed his colleagues in Cabinet that "if Britain were to insist upon the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, we should forfeit the friendship of the Arab world." During the course of the discussion Neville Chamberlain stated quite bluntly that Palestine had become "a pan-Arab question", in that the issue had to be viewed within the wider context of the Middle East, and it was agreed that the Woodhead Report would be published together with a Government White Paper rejecting partition.(32)

The House of Commons debated the Woodhead Commission Report on 24th November 1938. The Colonial Secretary opened the discussion by defining the government's attitude towards Palestine and asserted that "when Britain promised to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine, we never anticipated this fierce persecution in Europe... The problem of the refugees in Central Europe cannot be settled in Palestine." He went on to argue that partition "is impracticable." This was the rationale behind the government's decision to reject partition. "A part of Palestine is not

to be handed over to control by the Jews, another part is not to be handed over to control by the Arabs. The government," he argued, "have declared that they will continue their responsibility for the government of the whole country," and it proposed to hold discussions between the Arabs and Jews in London in order that Britain could formulate and declare future policy.

Herbert Morrison, the Labour spokesman, in a long and rambling speech expressed sympathy with the Colonial Secretary's views and remarked somewhat naively that if the Palestine problem "is amicably settled and everybody is satisfied, we shall all be happy." He also pointed to the fact that the House had never been committed to the partition proposal and asserted that in the light of the Woodhead Report "how wise the House has proved to have been..." Churchill also extolled the virtues of Parliament in that it had previously been disinclined to endorse a policy which was admitted to be 'impracticable', and emphasised that it was not partition that was required but "perseverance".(33) The question of partition was dead.

The Government, in essence, had little or no opposition to their decision to hold a conference in London, a proposal which surely must have been seen to be doomed to fail. In many ways, the Government had come full circle, via two Commissions, to the point at which it had begun in 1936. The Arab rebellion still raged, the Government still seemingly vacillated, in fact, the whole cycle of events prompted Sir John Martin to commment: "Within the Government, during the years 1937/8/9 there was a terrible feeling of muddle and desperation and searching for a solution."(34) If the Government had not yet reached the point of desparation it was more than aware that a solution to the problem had to be found, and quickly.

(ii) The Search for a Solution

As 1939 opened, Jewish and Arab leaders were invited to London for a Round Table Conference. In preparation for their arrival MacDonald set out for his Cabinet colleagues the crux of the new policy in a secret Cabinet Memorandum which explained: "We cannot accept the contention that all Jews as such have a right to enter

Palestine. We cannot avoid an eventual clash, if we continue to carry out the Balfour Declaration, between the forces of persecuted, desperate, brilliant, constructive Jewry in Palestine and the widespread pan-Arab movement which is rallying to the defence of its weakest brethren, the Arabs of Palestine. Arab detestation of the Jewish invasion into Palestine being what it is, it would be wholly wrong to suggest that this large Arab population should one day in their own native land and against their will come under the rule of the newly arrived Jews."(35) These paragraphs became the basis of the government's policy. Meanwhile, pressures were growing against the flood of illegal immigrants seeking to escape from Eastern Europe into Palestine. A member of the Foreign Office, C.W. Baxter, explained to the Colonial Secretary "It is equally arguable that it is morally wrong for us to insist on sending more and more Jews into Palestine against the wishes of the Arab inhabitants of that country and the Middle East. After all, the moral satisfaction we may derive from sending more Jews to Palestine without Arab consent must be weighed against the moral right of the Arabs to have some say in the question of admission of aliens into their country."(36)

On the same day as MacDonald received this memorandum from the Foreign Office, Weizmann was holding discussions with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax. Halifax noted in his report of their conversation that Weizmann was anxious that "while he was not particularly concerned with the numerical limit at which immigration might be fixed - a thousand more or less, was, he said, a matter of no great importance on a long view - the thing that was fundamental was that HMG should not undermine the whole basis of right by which Jews were in Palestine at all." Weizmann had apparently gone on to explain to the Foreign Secretary that "it would be to place Jewry in an unbearable position were we to say that immigration was to be permitted only by agreement with the Arabs. This would have the effect of reducing the position of the Jews in Palestine to one of sufference instead of one, as they claim, of right."(37)

The Zionists, it was obvious, still adhered to the terms of the Mandate and in particular to the aims of Churchill's White Paper in 1922 whereby Jews were to reside in Palestine as of right. Yet it was this principle which was re-interpreted by MacDonald at a Cabinet meeting on 27th January 1939. "As of right," the Colonial

Secretary maintained, "referred only to those Jews who were already living in Palestine in 1922 and not to those Jews who reached Palestine later, or might do so in the future."(38)

The burning question at the beginning of 1939, with the prospect of a European war on the horizon, was how to avoid forfeiting the confidence and friendship of a large part of the Moslem world, and this view was clearly outlined to Weizmann during a session of the London Round Table Conference on Palestine. MacDonald informed the Zionist leader that "If it came to a choice between Jewish or Arab support, he did not believe that, valuable as Jewish assistance would be, it would make up for what would have been lost by the lack of vital support of the Arab and Moslem world."(39)

The Colonial Secretary, in an interview many years later, summed up Government policy at the time as being: "Perhaps a little bit cynical. We knew that if it came to war, the Jews would be on our side whatever happened; they had no choice. The question was: Would the Arabs be on our side? They had been our allies before... but if we supported a situation in Palestine for the building of a Jewish National Home, then the Arabs would be pushed into the war against us."(40)

Throughout the Round Table negotiations, British policy was presented to the Zionists in rather vague terms, with Halifax explaining that there existed "... a contest between the profoundest philosophies of human life," and urging that the Jews "should of their own free will dispose of their rights by offering terms of conciliation," in order to reach a solution.(41)

The Zionists, predictably, were not impressed with this line of argument, and MacDonald returned to Cabinet reporting: "We must not enable the Jews to hold up the constitutional process by refusal to co-operate with the Arabs." Chamberlain agreed and emphasised the importance of having the Moslim world "with us", in the event of a war. "If we must offend one side," the Prime Minister added, "let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs."(42)

For the Arabs' part, their demands were as they had always been. Jamal Husseini, acting as spokesman for the Palestinian Arabs (the Mufti continued to live in exile and had not been invited to the

Conference) demanded an independent Palestinian Arab state, the abrogation of the Mandate, the end of the 'Jewish National Home' experiment, and the creation of a sovereign state in treaty relations with Britain.(43) It became clear to MacDonald that no solution could be reached by agreement and that in the final analysis the British Government would have to impose a solution which may or may not be just within the Palestine context, but would suit the external exigencies of the day.

At a private meeting with Ben-Gurion, the Colonial Secretary stressed the impossibility of the situation: "...the Palestine Arabs are insisting on the immediate establishment of an Arab state and they are not going to budge from that position. I do not see any chance of an agreement with the Arabs."(44) The Conference came to a close and by the end of April 1939, the Palestine White Paper was finalised, imposing upon Palestine restrictions which would fix an upper limit of 100,000 on the number of Jewish immigrants to be admitted over the following five years, after which the Arabs would have an effective veto on any further Jewish immigration.(45) The Paper outlined the government's intentions as to the future of Palestine. It was Britain's objective to establish "within ten years an independent Palestine state in such treaty relations with the UK as will provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries in the future." Ultimately, it stated "the proposal for the establishment of the independent state would involve consultation with the Council of the League of Nations with a view to the termination of the Mandate."(46)

MacDonald was fully aware of a level of injustice in the Paper and admitted to Cabinet colleagues that as regards the policy itself: "certain points have been inserted to meet Arab pressure and which, perhaps, would have been omitted if the matter were looked at on strict merits."(47) In Zionist eyes, MacDonald was a traitor and it was reported that he "had earned nothing but their (the Jews) contempt, disgust and hatred."(48) Although, Weizmann somewhat phlegmatically remarked: "why was it an invariable rule that politicians who previously were enthusiastic for the Jewish Homeland, forgot about it completely if they returned to office."(49) This statement was a peculiarly ingenuous one, coming from a man of Weizmann's calibre and diplomatic skills. He, of all people, should have been the first to recognise a pragmatic policy when he saw it,

yet, when writing a report on the Government's policy he noted: "It is difficult to find a rational explanation for the change in the attitude adopted by the government. Fear of the Arabs cannot explain it all."(50)

The White Paper was debated in the House of Commons on 22nd May 1939 and MacDonald in his opening speech explained that he had foreseen the criticism he would receive from Zionist quarters: "When the Prime Minister appointed me to the Colonial Office, a misguided friend of mine offered me warm congratulations. I replied that his sentiments seemed hardly appropriate, since whatever policy the government pursued in Palestine, within twelve months I should be the most bitterly criticised Colonial Secretary of modern time. My calculation was wrong by two days. It was one year and two days after my assumption of my present office before the White Paper, which the House is to discuss today was published."(51)

The government's policy was castigated by members on all sides of the House. Herbert Morrison spoke of the Jews being sacrified to the government's incompetence; the Liberal leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, declared that the good name of Britain would be tainted if Parliament accepted the White Paper; Leo Amery protested that all "pledges and promises" made to the Jews had been broken and Winston Churchill in an impassioned speech spoke of the White Paper as a "violation of a pledge; an abandonment of the Balfour Declaration; an end of the vision, the hope and the dream."(52) The final vote was cast in favour of the Government but with a severely reduced majority of 268 to 179; 110 Members abstained.

The debate on the White Paper appears as a sharp contrast to the discussion in the House on the Woodhead Commission's Report six months' previously. Clearly, the direction of British policy had not been foreseen and the White Paper certainly marked a change in tenor from former policy statements. The abrogation of the Mandate aroused Zionist sympathisers, yet perversely, the findings of the Peel Commission, which also recommended an end to the Mandate, but which in many ways were advantageous to the Jewish community, had been summarily dismissed by Members of the House. It almost seemed that the maintenance of the Mandate, with all its inbuilt ambiguities, was all that mattered to Jewish sympathisers, and they manifestly refused to contemplate any diversion from that

commitment, for any reason. Their refusal to countenance any move from the Mandate suggests that at this point in time, its continuation was the only possible route to the achievement of a Jewish National Home.

The White Paper, of course, represented a shift in a pro-Arab direction at a time when many Jewish exiles from Europe were seeking refuge in Palestine and it is not altogether unlikely that this seemingly inhumane policy incensed Zionist supporters. Nevertheless, the debate in Parliament revealed a great deal of rhetoric, with little substance, reminiscent, in fact, of previous debates on the Palestine issue. However, it served as propaganda for the Zionist cause and crystallised the belief that MacDonald's paper was not to be the definitive policy of the British government. As a response to the debate the Jewish Agency reported that its objective would be "to put the White Paper into refrigeration and create conditions in which it would appear to be a grotesque and unseemly anachronism."(53) These aims were to characterise Zionist attitudes not only throughout the war, but also, the years which followed.

FOOTNOTES

1. C. Weizmann Trial and Error London 1949 p.485

2. CAB 23/89 29/9/37

3. Ibid

4. CAB 23/89 6/10/37

5. FO 371/20821 15/11/37

6. FO 371/20820 16/11/37

7. The political factionalism which existed in Palestine between the Husseinis and the moderate Nashashibis was successfully exploited by the Mufti who assumed the role of President of the Supreme Muslim Council. For details, accounts of Palestinian Arab political machinations cf/ A.Kayyali Op Cit and M. Cohen Op Cit

8. FO 371/20818 5/11/37

9. Ibid

10. M. Gilbert. Exile and Return London 1978 p.189

11. CAB 24/273 1/12/37

12. Ibid

13. CAB 23/90 8/12/37

14. Ibid

15. CO 733/354 31/3/38

16. Sir John Martin Thames Papers Box 1.File 2. Loc Cit

17. Ibid

18. C. Weizmann Op Cit p.485

19. Weizmann Archives, Israel cited in N. Rose Op Cit p.302

20. FO 371/21862 21/4/38

21. M. Gilbert Op Cit p.197

22. Weizmann Archive cited in M. Cohen Op Cit p.49

23. FO 371/21862 9/1/38

24. C. Weizmann Op Cit p.411

25. cited in J.M.N. Jeffries Palestine, The Reality London 1939 p.677

26. HC Deb Vol.337 c.83 14/6/38

27. FO 371/21863 6/8/38

28. CO 733/358 24/7/38

29. See Chapter 1 for details for the MacMahon correspondence.

30. Minutes of meeting in Weizmann Archives, Israel cited in N. Rose Op Cit p.325

31. Cmd 5854 Palestine Partition Commission Report (Woodhead Commission)

32. CAB 27/651 24/10/38

33. HC Deb Vol.341 c.1987-2107 24/11/38

34. Thames Papers Loc Cit

35. FO 371/23221 18/1/39

36. FO 371/23221 24/1/39

37. Ibid

38. CAB 27/651 27/1/39

39. Palestine Round Table Conference Minutes FO 371/23224. February 1939

40. Transcript of Independent Television Film on Palestine. Transmitted 27 June, 4 and 11 July 1978

41. Palestine Round Table Loc Cit

42. CAB 24/285 20/4/39

43. Palestine Round Table Loc Cit

44. Meeting between MacDonald and Ben-Gurion 18 February 1939. Weizmann Archives cited in M. Cohen Op Cit

45. Cmd 6019. Palestine: Statement of Policy May 1939

46. Ibid

47. CAB 23/99 1/5/39

48. N. Rose Baffy - Dugdale Diaries Op Cit p. 54

49. C. Weizmann Op Cit p.323

50. Weizmann Archives, cited in N. Rose Op Cit p.390

51. HC Deb Vol.347 c.1937-2056 26/5/39

52. Ibid

53. Weizmann Archives cited in N. Rose Op Cit p.421

CHAPTER 5

THE WAR YEARS

(i) Labour's Role in Government

Events which occurred both within Britain and Palestine during the Second World War were to have significant implications on the direction of British policy in the Middle East. The fall of the Chamberlain Government on 8th May 1940 and the emergence of a Coalition government immediately suggested that policies more favourable to the Zionists would be pursued. In fact, Lewis Namier of the Jewish Agency, at once contacted Labour leaders with regard to their possible participation in Office. Following discussions at NEC level Namier was informed of their willingness to enter Government under a new leader if invited to do so.(1)

Winston Churchill assumed the role of Prime Minister and, predictably, Attlee and Greenwood entered the War Cabinet. Ben-Gurion remarked at the time that "three of the five members of the War Cabinet are friendly to us."(2) The Labour leaders were eager to confirm this development and on 22 May 1940 Greenwood and Morrison, during a meeting with representatives of the Jewish Agency, asserted "...things are quite different in the War Cabinet now, they are three to two and the Prime Minister (is) on our side in Jewish matters."(3) However, Labour was not alone in reassuring the Agency of its commitment to the Jews. Brendan Bracken in conversation with Chaim Weizmann reported that Churchill had insisted only ten days after gaining office that "no obstacles are to be put in the way of the Jewish War Effort."(4) Even if one disputes Bracken's role as Churchill's confidante, the Prime Minister himself lost little time in reiterating his rejection of the White Paper policy and asserting that "the Jews must have territory."(5)

Some six months before becoming Premier, Winston churchill forwarded a paper to his Cabinet colleagues stressing the need for a "softer and smoother" policy towards Palestine.(6) The White paper policy, he suggested, could lose Britain the powerful support of American Jewry. If the war sharpened and a Coalition government

had to be formed, he prophesised, the White Paper would have to be shelved. Churchill had never approved of the White Paper and with this line of argument he successfully managed to combine principle with expedience. However, at that time Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty and although without doubt a force with which to be reckoned and a possible challenger for the premiership, he had not yet acquired the role of decision maker.

Churchill's fears of alienating influential sections of American public opinion were not, at that time, shared by the Colonial Office. Sir John Shuckburgh, the Deputy Under-Secretary minuted: "The importance in present circumstances of retaining the goodwill of the United States needs no demonstration; but it is very doubtful whether the influence of the American Jews over the United States Government or over general opinion in America is really as potent as the Zionists and their supporters would have us believe... There is evidence to show that Jewish stock in the US is on the decline. Generally speaking, I doubt whether we need be unduly alarmed over the American bugbear. In any case we ought not to allow it to deflect us from the policy which we have deliberately adopted on the Palestine question."(7) Shuckburgh, as a consequence of his argument, had the dubious privilege of being regarded as a "miserable insect" by members of the Jewish Agency,(8) and was considered to be an influential anti-Zionist force within the Colonial Office. Yet only three years' previously he had been considered to have "a good record" with the Zionists. They had hoped he would be appointed head of the Commission which was later led by Sir John Woodhead.(9) It is unlikely, however, that Shuckburgh did, as suspected by Zionists, dictate policy but merely followed the direction of policy as set by the Colonial Secretary of the day. It would clearly have been immensely embarrassing for Malcolm MacDonald had his Deputy Under-Secretary overtly disagreed with the stated policy of the Colonial Office.

When Churchill became Prime Minister he quickly banished MacDonald to Canada as High Commissioner and appointed Lord Lloyd to take his place. Lord Lloyd died some eight months' later and was succeeded for a short period by Lord Moyne and later Lord Cranborne. These Colonial Secretaries, moving in and out of office in quick succession adhered faithfully to the principles of the White Paper policy.

The primary ambition of the Jewish Agency during the early years of the war was to secure the establishment of a 'Jewish Fighting Force', which would, in effect, be an exclusively Jewish army unit, fighting under a Jewish flag. Throughout 1939 the British Government expressed doubt as to the efficacy of instituting such a unit which, it suspected, might in certain circumstances be used against the British. There already existed the embryo of a Force in the form of the Jewish Supernumerary Police unit, which had been created at the time of the pre-war Arab rebellion and which had assisted the Palestine Administration in quelling the riots. This organisation still existed in a para-military style in the October of 1939 and it was not long before it became the foundation of the illegal Haganah, the armed force of the Palestinian Jews. The formation of the Haganah alarmed the British Government to such an extent that the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald informed the civil and military authorities in Palestine "to take the firmest possible measures to suppress this illegal Jewish organisation."(10)

The Jewish Agency defended the organisation and explained to MacDonald that "They had no doubt that they (the Haganah) might be called upon to perform certain duties by way of assistance to British troops and were anxious to get ready for the job."(11) However, neither the High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, nor his army commander, Lieutenant-General Michael Barker considered the Haganah to be Britain's faithfull ally. Its aims, they thought, were to establish a Jewish army and to secure "eventual Jewish military supremacy in Palestine."(12)

Weizmann disputed these views and complained to MacDonald that "the idea is fantastic. No doubt there are a few extremists who toy with the idea of turning against Britain, but it is repulsive to the Jewish community as a whole."(13) MacDonald dismissed Weizmann's argument and asserted perspicaciously that although Jewish advocates of violence might be few in number they, nevertheless, posed a real danger and a not insignificant potential threat to Britain. Consequently, throughout the first three years of the war Zionist demands to raise an independent Jewish army were consistently resisted by the British Government.

The Jewish Agency, during this period, were clearly dismayed at the intransigence of HMG and sought to enlist the assistance of the new

Minister of Labour and National Service, Ernest Bevin. The minutes of a Jewish Agency Executive Meeting in the December of 1940, reveal the unanimous belief that Bevin "is the only man who understands our problems and is willing to listen to them and take action."(14) Weizmann considered Bevin to be "open-minded and energetic,"(15) and there is little doubt that at this stage Bevin was held in high esteem by the Zionist Movement. His association with the Zionist cause in a by-election some ten years' previously had enhanced his reputation.(16)

A meeting had taken place between members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency and Bevin in the August of 1940. This was an important occasion, for Churchill had decided to raise six Palestinian companies, three Jewish and three Arab; and to recruit in roughly equal numbers from each community. The Zionists were extremely disappointed with what they saw as a parity restriction and, consequently, were eager to conduct a meeting with Bevin. The outcome of the discussion pleased the Zionists. Bevin had agreed that separate military units were desirable, and had also suggested a possible solution to the imposed restrictions on Jewish recruitment. Jewish volunteers in excess of the Arab number could, he proposed, be sent to Egypt as part of the general defence forces in the Middle East. As a result of this meeting Bevin contacted the Colonial Secretary, Lord Lloyd, and the subject was brought to the attention of the Prime Minister. The Zionists, clearly appreciative of Bevin's intervention, quickly expressed gratitude for "the interest you have so kindly shown in the matter and for bringing it to the notice of the Prime Minister." Weizmann reported after an interview with the Prime Minister that Churchill had apparently given the suggestion a "favourable reception" and "seemed to approve of the idea."(17) It remains unclear as to why Bevin, at this particular time, should concern himself with an issue that was so far removed from his ministerial brief.

Bevin, however, always remained the realist and at a meeting over lunch at the Dorchester Hotel with Arthur Creech-Jones and representatives of the Jewish Agency he outlined his thoughts on the Palestine problem.(18) The conversation, of course, centred on Zionist ambitions, during which Bevin remarked that he "personally would greatly like to see the Jewish people firmly established in Palestine." However, adding a caveat, he stated there was "another

important factor in the situation - the Arab factor. Even with all our recent victories in the Mediterranean they (the Arabs) were still not too friendly." Bevin assured the gathering that he hoped he was being too pessimistic, but he nevertheless felt that Zionists had to envisage: "the possibility of an onslaught (from the Germans) on three fronts, including the Eastern Mediterranean," and, therefore, he was obliged to emphasise that HMG could "not afford to do anything which might make our relations with the Arab countries more difficult." Weizmann and Locker accused the Government of appeasing the Arabs and after a few vexed words the discussion turned to the topic of Jewish immigration into Palestine after the war, not, it must be added, without a certain irony. Locker pointed out that the Palestine Government had asserted that even after the war refugees would not be allowed to enter Palestine. Bevin seemed appalled at such an idea and stressed tha he "knew nothing of this; there has been no such Cabinet decision," and that he would immediately look into the matter. He did not realise at the time, of course, that within four years he would again be concerned with this problem but from a rather different perspective, that of Foreign Secretary.

The meeting ended cordially with arrangements being made for another luncheon party and Bevin informed Creech-Jones that he had been much impressed.(19) However, not all Bevin's interventions on behalf of the Zionist Movement came to fruition. In a letter from Locker to Creech-Jones the question of a Jewish Fighting Force was again mentioned. Locker drew attention to Bevin's suggestion as to the recruitment and training of Jewish volunteers and referred to the fact that the Prime Minister was favourably disposed to the idea. The letter went on: "Since then negotiations have been taking place with the Colonial Office, the War Office and the Foreign Office and we had reached agreement on practically everything except a couple of minor details." Nevertheless, a decision had now been taken to postpone the establishment of such a unit allegedly because of "lack of equipment". Locker continued: "I thought I had better tell you immediately about this latest development, before you speak to Bevin so that he may be in a position to decide upon the line of action which he may now be prepared to take."(20)

There is no evidence, however, to suggest that Bevin again involved himself on this topic although he apparently continued to exhibit

concern about Palestine, if in a somewhat desultory manner. In June 1942 Lewis Namier conducted an interview with Professor Coupland, a member of the Peel Commission of 1937. During the discussion Professor Coupland recalled a meeting he had conducted with Lord Moyne, then Colonial Secretary; Bevin; George Hall, the Colonial Under-Secretary, and Cosmo Parkinson, in the Summer of 1941. Coupland related what he terms as Bevin's "two extraordinary ideas." Firstly, Bevin considered that the High Commissioner for India's proposal that "an Indian Moslem should be appointed High Commissioner in Palestine" would be a "pleasing compliment to the Arabs." Bevin's second proposal was "to nationalise the land in Palestine." Coupland evidently explained the inadvisability of the first suggestion and the difficulties of the second, and quickly left the meeting.(21) The impression one gains from this meeting is of Ernest Bevin's complete lack of understanding as to the complexities of the issue and his surprisingly naive comprehension of the animosities existent between the Arabs and the Jews.

It is not unreasonable to deduce that although Bevin clearly had established creditable contacts with the Zionist Movement and was unquestionably concerned as to the future of Palestine and the role of the British Government, his knowledge of the problem essentially remained superficial and this, in turn, was largely reflected in his attitude towards the issue when he assumed the role of Foreign Secretary in the 1945 Labour Administration.

Meanwhile in May 1941, the question of the Jewish Fighting Force was brought up in Parliament. The Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Labour minister, George Hall, was asked whether the government had authorised the formation and arming of a Palestine Volunteer Force. He replied that it had but that the Force would be limited. Emmanuel Shinwell and Eleanor Rathbone complained of the limitation, "If Jews wish to join and are willing to serve in the war effort why should they be precluded from doing so."(22) However, despite the evident sympathy for Zionist aims within the Labour Party, support for such a unit was not sufficiently widely held to make a significant impression on government policy. The issue also suggested that the Party's new position had drawbacks as well as advantages for the Zionists. The positions of power now held by sympathetic Labour politicians undoubtedly gave the Zionists support within the Government, but wartime exigencies made the party less

willing officially to voice criticism and led to a greater acceptance of the demands of 'high policy' as perceived by a Government which now included the Party's own representativs. In other words, the Labour Party's first taste of office since 1929, albeit under immensely difficult conditions, revived its pragmatic leanings.

Herbert Morrison, although a Zionist sympathiser, acted quite differently in his position as Home Secretary. At a meeting of the newly established Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees, Morrison stated that "the Home Office would not refuse to take a limited number of refugees say, from 1000 to 2000, but certainly not more....on the condition that they were sent to the Isle of Man." The Home Secretary stipulated that such immigration was contingent upon "the firm understanding that the United States and the Dominions would accept proportionate numbers," and added a warning that "there was considerable anti-Semitism under the surface in this country. If there were any substantial increase in the number of Jewish refugees or if these refugees did not leave this country after the war, we should be in for serious trouble."(23) Morrison produced no evidence in support of his contention and one can only assume that his judgement of public opinion stemmed from a personal assessment. He may have gleaned from the Jewish Chronicle that anti-semitic feeling within the country was "noticeably increasing"(24), yet it is doubtful whether Morrison, as Opposition Spokesman on Home Affairs, would have accepted the logic of this argument had it been espoused by a Conservative Home Secretary.

Although many Labour Ministers were concerned about the continuing operation of the White Paper there was little sign of any bold or compassionate intervention of behalf of Jewish refugees. Clement Attlee was criticised by Weizmann as behaving "very much in the manner of Lord Passfield."(25) Attlee, of course, on his own admission endeavoured to view the problem objectively and although sympathetic to the sufferings of the Jews under Nazism argued that "the Arabs, as the inhabitants of Palestine for centuries, had a case which was sometimes ignored."(26) However, Attlee's position vis-a-vis Palestine was ambiguous and at times unclear. In the October of 1943 Attlee purportedly favoured partition. During a discussion between Weizmann, Churchill, and Attlee, the Prime Minister assured the Zionist leader that Attlee and the Labour Party

were committed to partition, to which Attlee nodded his agreement.(27) Notwithstanding Kenneth Harris' unconvincing biography,(28) Attlee may have been unduly influenced by Churchill at the time, yet the episode points to a certain indeterminacy in the character of the Labour leader.

The Labour Party continued to develop prospective policies for enactment after the war and it was within this context that Hugh Dalton was called upon to prepare a draft on Labour's post-war foreign policy. Included in the proposals would be a section on Palestine. Dalton, unlike many of his colleagues, had not visited Palestine. Nor, as he later recounted, was he then in close touch with the Zionists, "though over a long period I used to see Weizmann from time to time and Lewis Namier occasionally, and some of my pupils in the LSE had been, and still were, keen Zionists."(29) Dalton was determined to tackle the Palestine problem from scratch and, clearly, had little alternative to do otherwise given his cursory knowledge of the area. The Jewish massacres had had a profound effect upon Dalton, as indeed upon many others, and the onslaught strengthened his resolve to find a solution: "I had been trying to think out this whole problem afresh, in the light of its urgency and the horror of the Hitlerite atrocities."(30) However, Dalton's pronouncements, particularly over the contentious issue of Palestine, were to prove an ultimate embarrassment to the Party.

(ii) Labour's Policy Making Machinery

Upon Dalton's appointment by the National Executive Committee a number of Arab sympathisers within the Party sought to impress upon him Britain's commitment to the Palestinian Arabs. Richard Stokes asserted "whether we like it or not the persistent tendency in Britain to ignore MacMahon's promises lends colour to the contention that we are more influenced by the rich Jews in London and New York than by our pledges to the Arabs."(31) Another Labour MP argued that the government should affirm that "we do not threaten (the Arabs) existence in Palestine and that we stand by the principle of the White Paper."(32) However, there is no sign that Dalton took notice of any of these suggestions, not necessarily because they were unfashionable within the Party but rather because

he believed that "we were at a point of sharp discontinuity in world history."(33) It was his view that many old arguments were irrelevant and that most importantly the massacres of the Jews had "destroyed the case for any limitations, by the Mandatory power, on Jewish immigration into Palestine". Consequently, the concept of 'economic absorptive capacity' had little meaning.

Dalton had great faith in the potential of Palestine and saw his goal clearly: "given sufficient capital expenditure on developments, given intelligent planning on the spot, and given the diverse and distinguished talents, driving energy and fanatical faith of the Jews, I am sure Palestine could become a most successful, popular and predominantly Jewish state."(34) His optimism was formidable: "This", as he later wrote, "would be a unique moment, I judged, when.... a determined and imaginative leadership could telescope into a few years changes which otherwise would drag along, slowly and painfully, through centuries." But what of the Arabs in this Messianic vision of a predominantly Jewish State? "An Arab minority might wish to remain in Palestine...."(35)

Dalton quickly formulated his first draft, or as he called it: his "sketch, a rough outline and in simple terms for the preliminary consideration of my colleagues." He intended it to "help provoke discussion and to test how far we really disagree among ourselves,"(36) and, as such, stated his views frankly. The paragraph on Palestine read: "Here we have halted half way. I see neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. Here too surely is a case for the transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully attended to. The Arabs have not done very well in the war, either for themselves or for us. We should not give in to their policy of Dog in the Holy Manger. They have many wide territories of their own, compared with poor little Palestine. Indeed, I would like to extend the Palestinian boundaries either into Egypt or Transjordan. There is also something to be said for throwing open Libya or Eritrea to Jewish settlement, as satellites or colonies of Palestine. In any case, we must seek to remove Russian dislike of the Palestine experiment and encourage American interest and support for it."(37)

Although Dalton claimed that this remarkable paragraph was his own and owed nothing to the views of the Advisory Committee members or to the direct representations of Zionists, there is reason to suspect that Dalton's interpretation of the situation in Palestine related closely to Winston Churchill's appraisal of the issue. Dalton, of course, was a member of the War Cabinet and was a recipient not only of party documents on Palestine but also, of Government papers. On 28th April 1943, Churchill, seeking to re-open consideration of Palestine, circulated a memorandum of his thoughts. A comparison with those of Dalton is interesting. "Churchill expected full American support for a new policy in Palestine...he advocated an investigation into the possibility of making Eritrea and Tripolitania into Jewish colonies that might be affiliated to the Jewish National Home."(38) As for Arab claims, Churchill considered that, apart from Ibn Saud and Emir Abdullah, the Arabs had been virtually no use to the allies in the present war. The only fighting they had done was against the British. Unlike the First World War, the Arabs could make no demands on the victorious allies.

The similarity of the two perspectives is stark. Both hinged upon the clearly unsatisfactory pro-German leanings of the Arabs throughout the war as the basis for their proposed exodus from Palestine. The Foreign Office, of course, reacted sharply against Churchill's views, claiming that he had entirely missed the point and asserting: "The question is...not whether we owe the Arabs a debt of gratitude, but whether we have important interests centring in the Arab world. The answer must be emphatically that we have; and in particular our oil interests."(39) Dalton's statement received no such stricture from the Labour Party hierarchy. Yet he was a member of the Cabinet and unquestionably shouldered Governmental responsibility; however, whilst devising policies for enactment by a future administration he paid scant regard to the possible difficulties which might arise in the pursuit of such a programme. No one could consider Dalton to be an ideologue, yet his views on Palestine seem strangely devoid of his characteristic pragmatism.

Dalton's call for free immigration was clear enough, but much else was vague. Partition was seemingly rejected since Palestine, with a Jewish majority, was to be given the opportunity to extend its boundaries. Paradoxically, as a member of the post-war Labour government Dalton was to criticise Bevin's attempt "to make a

synthetic glue of all the Arab States,"(40) yet in 1943 he apparently regarded the 'Arabs' as an homogeneous people 'with wide territories of their own', clearly enabling them to absorb their kin who happened to live in Palestine.

Dalton introduced his document to the Sub-Committee of the NEC on 16th November 1943 and was evidently pleased with the response: "It is extremely well received, much better in some quarters than I had expect." Harold Laski was, reportedly, "deeply touched by my Palestine Paragraph."(41) However, the one piece of adverse criticism of the complete draft centred on Dalton's statement on Palestine. It was William Gillies, who, as Secretary of the International Department, expressed alarm at the paragraph and assessed the enormity of Dalton's suggestions. Dalton dismissed Gillies' doubts with cursory contempt: "Poor little Gillies is terrified of my Palestine paragraph and thinks this should be referred to a separate committee. I say this is all nonsense."(42)

The episode was significant. The programme was not being considered by a special International Relations Sub-Committee and Gillies' defeat finally ruled out the possibility of any party 'experts', whether from Poale Zion or the somewhat less pro-Jewish Imperial Advisory Committee, participating in the policy making process at an early stage. Dalton, of course, was quite satisfied with the situation: "It is all going along quite nicely and I have got things pretty comfortably in my own hands."(43) However, Dalton redrafted his paragraph on Palestine and presented the revised edition to his colleagues in the February of 1944. Section 18 now read: "Here we have halted, half way, irresolute between conflicting policies. But there is surely neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. There was a strong case for this before the war. There is an irresistable case now, after the unspeakable atrocities of the cold and calculated German plan to kill all the Jews in Europe. Here too surely in Palestine is a case, on human grounds and to promote a stable settlement, for transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully organised and generously financed. The Arabs have many wide territories of their own; they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small area of

Palestine, less than the size of Wales. Indeed, we should re-examine also the possibility of extending the present Palestine boundaries, by agreement with Egypt or Transjordan. Nor should we close our minds to another possibility, namely of throwing open Libya or Eritrea to Jewish settlement. But we should seek to win the full sympathy and support of the American and Russian governments for execution of the Palestine policy."(44)

Essentially, the paragraph remains fundamentally unchanged. Arab wickedness is replaced by Jewish need; the resettlement of displaced Arabs is to be 'carefully organised' and 'generously financed' and Arabs are reminded not to seek to exclude Jews from Palestine; but in essence, the sentiments contained in the statement are unaltered. Yet there was no indication that Zionists would have any interest in a settlement in Libya or Eritrea.

Dalton's grip on policy formulation was not shaken: "it all goes wonderfully well," he recorded, "there is hardly any opposition. I am amazed at the facility with which it has practically all gone through."(45) In March 1944 he framed his final redraft for submission to the NEC and, with Noel Baker, dined with Weizmann and another member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency. He could hardly disguise the fact that he had written a decidedly pro-Zionist section on Palestine and almost revealed as much to his companions: "I all but tell them that I have drafted a very hot paragraph for the Labour Party on post-war Palestine. I hint as much on leaving."(46)

On 14th March, Dalton's draft was finally passed by the Sub-Committee. Once again the discussion appears to have been cursory: "Phil and Harold Clay, the two likeliest critics, came in late when we had finished this item."(47) However, when the printers preparing the proofs of the document were bombed, thus necessitating a delay of two weeks before the NEC could meet, Dalton commented revealingly "this is rather a pity for it is likely to be more closely examined than it might have been today, run through with other items."(48) Dalton was accurate in his prediction. When a special meeting of the NEC finally took place the following month, a lengthy discussion occurred and each paragraph of his document was considered in turn. As a consequence, two alterations were made to the Palestine section neither of which dramatically

changed the text. The sentence suggesting colonisation of Eritrea and Libya was deleted, and Syria was included as a country which could be approached with regard to boundary revisions. The finalised paragraph as it appeared in the Labour Party's publication, 'The International Post-War Settlement' read: "Here we have halted half way, irresolute between conflicting policies. But there is surely neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. There was a strong case for this before the war. There is an irresistable case now, after the unspeakable atrocities of the cold and calculated German Nazi plan to kill all the Jews in Europe. Here too in Palestine surely is a case, on human grounds and to promote stable settlement, for transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully organised and generously financed. The Arabs have very wide territories of their own; they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small part of Palestine, less than the size of Wales. Indeed, we should examine also the possibility of extending the boundaries by agreement with Egypt, Syria and Transjordan. Moreover, we should seek to win the full sympathy and support both of the American and Russian governments for the execution of this Palestine policy."(49) Dalton still remained satisfied with his endeavours and noted in his diary: "It has been a long struggle of successive reviews, compromises and consultations, but it is not such a bad document in the end."(50) Not everyone, however, was to share Dalton's verdict.

Chaim Weizmann expressed alarm at the document's suggestion that Arabs should be encouraged to move out: "I was greatly concerned about this proposal. We had never contemplated the removal of the Arabs, and the British labourites in their pro-Zionist enthusiasm went far beyond our intentions."(51) The Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, was particularly disturbed by the section on Palestine and visited Dalton to inform him of his doubts. Stanley considered the sentiments contained in the paragraph to be "Zionism plus plus". His criticism, of course, was quite legitimate: "He is afraid that it may do harm in Palestine, both by encouraging the Jews to believe that the next British Government, which they think may well be a Labour government, will do everything for them and equally be unsettling to the Arabs."(52) Dalton may have condemned these

views as unfounded and unnecessary yet the Colonial Secretary's perception was to be vindicated in the post war years.

The Colonial Office echoed Oliver Stanley's forebodings but viewed the situation phlegmatically: "We do not see how we can prevent the discussion from taking place, ill advised though it be."(53) However, the High Commissioner in Palestine was clearly alarmed at the possible repercussions of Dalton's statement and reported that: "Feeling among the Arabs has been sharply stimulated during the past months by various manifestations of Jewish political activity and in particular the reported resolution of the British Labour Party.... They are genuinely shocked at the disregard that the chosen representatives of a large section of the British public could show in contemplating the removal of Arabs from their homes in Palestine in favour of the Jews."(54)

The Labour Party's Imperial Advisory Committee, was far from delighted with Dalton's proposals. The Committee called a meeting during which it was resolved to draw the attention of the NEC to the unfortunate implications of the policy.(55) The suggestion causing most concern was that of population transfers which Leonard Woolfe described as an example "of the folly of believing that spectacular settlements are desirable and feasible."(56) However, before the NEC met to consider the issue, Berl Locker, a member of Poale Zion and a representative of the Jewish Agency, wrote to William Gillies, arguing that "it would be wrong to take out the transfer clause now that it has appeared; its removal might be interpreted as an admission that the Labour Party's proposals involved an injustice to the Arabs."(57) He explained that in the opinion of the Jewish Agency such transfers might take place but were not a pre-requisite for large scale Jewish immigration, although he conceded that under certain circumstances a transfer of population might be a means of solving the conflict.

Gillies took note of Locker's comments and issued a memorandum to Dalton outlining the points Locker had made: "I think that the paragraph cannot be redrafted at this stage. This is also the opinion of Berl Locker, who as far as we are concerned, expressed the views of the Trade Union and Socialist movement in Palestine. Locker thinks the phrase: "let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in' is unfortunate. He calls for an emphatic, clear

statement that no measures of compulsion will be used under any circumstances."(58) It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that when the NEC met on 20th June 1944, it decided against changing the paragraph. For Dalton and his colleagues, "the terms of the paragraph as drafted makes it clear.... that no compulsion was contemplated."(59) Conference began in London on 11th December 1944 and the 'International Post-War Settlement' was adopted by an overwhelming majority. The document was six pages long and the paragraph on Palestine was not mentioned once during the whole debate.(60)

In later years, Arthur Creech-Jones, the Colonial Secretary in the post-war Labour Administration attempted to distance himself from the 1944 Conference decision on Palestine. He claimed to be opposed to the resolution on the grounds that it was "too extravagant, unjust and impracticable."(61) In a draft of a book on Palestine - left incomplete at his death - he endeavoured to explain the nature of Labour Conference decisions concerning Palestine "whose significance cannot be overrated." In his view: "Delegates too often cast their votes in ignorance of many of the facts concerning the matter on which they are making policy. Conference is not constituted for careful study, deliberation and consideration. Delegates are often subject to pressure groups and propaganda, often they are not 'delegates' in the proper sense of the word. In the case of Palestine, Zionist activity among constituency parties, affiliated organisations and delegates did not contribute to calm reflection. The Arab case was never understood or discussed or publicised."(62)

No-one could reasonably dispute Creech-Jones' account of the inadequacy of Conference decisions yet the nagging aspect of his condemnation lies in his exclusion of the role he played at the time. There is little indication that he made an effort to ensure that the Palestinian Arab case was fairly stated. In fact, he had strong pro-Zionist leanings and campaigned actively for the British Association for a Jewish National Home.(63) A speech he gave in 1941 to the Anglo Palestine Club and reported in the Zionist Review clearly reveals his feelings and prejudices to be closely aligned to those of Dalton: "The Arabs had a vast territory over which they could roam and it occurred to him (Creech-Jones) that they had not made particularly good use of the areas in which they had roamed.

After all, with such a vast territory, it seemed to him no small advantage to the Arabs that a portion of that territory should be given to an energetic people in order that they might bring about the economic changes on which the general well-being of the Arab people would depend. He was a firm believer in the Zionist cause and was convinced by what he had seen and by talks he had had with Jews and Arabs alike that a national home founded by the Jews was not only a blessing to the Jewish people themselves but a colossal blessing to the Arab people and a contribution to the stability and peace of the world."(64)

If one makes allowances for the fact that he was unlikely to deliver a less than pro-Zionist speech to the Anglo Palestine Club there is no evidence to suggest that he personally contributed, or even desired, a wider, objective discussion of the Palestine issue within the Party itself. His later flirtation with impartiality resulted from the trials of his period in office during which we was confronted with the essential incompatibility of relating ill-thought out Conference decisions to the evident constraints of Government.

In stark contrast to Dalton's breezy optimism about future developments in Palestine was a comment made by Ernest Bevin during a meeting with Dr. Israel Goldstein, a leader of the Zionist Organisation in the United States: "Now is not the time to make declarations which will cause trouble."(65) Devastating declarations had already been made and trouble was undoubtedly developing for a Labour Party that had apparently lost its grip on realistic judgement.

(iii) Governmental Policy

The question of Palestine was discussed at Cabinet level in July 1943, whereupon it was agreed that in the short term Jewish immigration should be permitted beyond the White Paper termination point of 31st March 1944.(66) As regards the long term, Churchill reiterated his view that the Government was not tied to the White Paper and that when the time arrived the Government would continue to carry out its solemn undertaking towards the Jewish National Home. As such, it was decided to set up a sub-committee which would consider and report to the War Cabinet on the long term policy for Palestine. The Committee was guided to take the Peel

Commission's plan of partition as its starting point, and membership of the Committee was to be left to Churchill's discretion. The Prime Minister appointed Herbert Morrison as Chairman, Leo Amery, Oliver Stanley, A. Sinclair and R.K. Law as the spokesman for the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden was dissatisfied with the Committee's apparent pro-Zionist leanings and endeavoured to have Amery removed, which in the event was quickly rebuffed by Churchill. Eden, in an attempt to placate his officials at the Foreign Office remarked acidly: "...there is going to be much trouble on this subject, internal as well as external before we are through. It is a comfort to reflect that Mr. Amery has never been right on any subject that I can recollect from Palestine to the League of Nations...."(67)

The Committee, it must be said, had a pro-partition bias and Leo Amery was its chief advocate. Views, however, differed between members of the Committee as to the size of a proposed Jewish state. At the first meeting of the Cabinet Committee, the Colonial Secretary opened the discussion by stating that they would have to accept the fact that Arabs and Jews would not be able to live together peaceably in Palestine. This left two alternatives, firstly, continued British administration over the whole country under some form of colonial system, or secondly, partition. Oliver Stanley agreed with Amery that partition would have to be considered now on principles other than those which had guided the Peel Commission. As distinct from the recommendations of the Peel enquiry, areas which were predominantly Jewish or Arab would not necessarily remain so, and the Jews would have to have unfettered control over immigration into their area. Morrison, however, seemed less enthusiastic: "the Chairman... said that Palestine was already a small country and to partition it as it stood would create two States even smaller."(68) He suggested 'readjustments' over a larger area, including Transjordan - a view which was currently being espoused by Hugh Dalton. Nevertheless, there is little indication that from this point onwards Morrison argued the Labour Party line during the Committee meetings and much to suggest that he confined his role to that of a neutral Chairman. Of course, although as Chairman and representative of Labour he assumed his full share of responsibility for the decisions of the Committee, it is interesting to note that in the months which followed the views of the Cabinet committee and the Labour Party began to sharply diverge. Whilst the Labour Party Sub-Committee

considered and accepted a plan for territorial expansion and possible transfer of population, a Cabinet Committee with a Labour Chairman passed a scheme recommending partition.

The Committee, throughout its subsequent meeting focused attention on Amery's plan of partition. It was Amery's belief that the area assigned to the Jews by the Peel Commission was less suitable than a mainly coastal area extending down to the Egyptian border, which would include the greatly disputed area, the Negev, with access to the Dead Sea and to the Gulf of Akaba. The Arabs would then have all of northern Galilee, previously allocated to the Jews under the Peel Enquiry, and most of the inland, hilly Samaria and Jerusalem districts.(69)

The Foreign Office, upon learning of the proposed scheme, immediately prepared its attack. Criticism centred especially on the assignment of the Negev to the Jews, for three reasons: a) a Jewish-held Negev, combined with the Gulf of Akaba, would interpose a barrier between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world; b) reports indicated that the Negev was hopeless from an agricultural point of view; and c) to give the Jews so large an area would bound to cause repercussions among the Arabs.(70)

In reply, Amery argued that there was no reason to suppose that Egypt and Syria were worried about physical contiguity. On the contrary, asserted Amery, the nearer the Jews were brought to the Canal the better - so as to secure in that area a developed State bound to Britain by ties of gratitude. The reason for giving the Negev to the Jews was not so much for its agricultural value, although he did not rule this out, but for the access it gave to the Dead Sea minerals and their export via Akaba. Amery concluded his memorandum with a barbed comment directed at the Foreign Office: "...if we are precluded from doing anything which could in any way offend Arab susceptibilities.... then surely our enquiry is superfluous."(71)

The Foreign Office, despite its antipathy towards the question of partition, would seem now to be obliged to take into account the weight of opinion inside the Cabinet Committee in favour of the notion, and of the influence of the Prime Minister himself. It should not, therefore, have been an unexpected development that the

Committee, when it finally prepared its report, should recommend partition. Yet this is exactly what Eden deemed it to be when counselling his Ambassadors to the Arab States: "You may be surprised that the Committee, in the light of their past knowledge of the history of Palestine, should have recommended what is essentially a return to the Peel Plan, which was responsible for so much opposition and bloodshed in the years before the war..."(72) Eden went on to explain to his Middle East envoys that the change in Government policy was due to two factors: firstly, the change in the political balance of the Cabinet effected by Churchill; and secondly, the difficulty in carrying out the later stages of the White Paper provisions in a world radically changed from that of 1939.

The Cabinet had given its general endorsement to the Palestine Committee's report considering it to be: "as good as any that could be devised."(73) Nevertheless, a decision as to its implementation was reserved. Churchill advocated delaying tactics until the successful conclusion of the European war but more importantly until after the American Presidential elections due to be held in the November of 1944.(74) However, the issue was to remain unresolved. On 6th November 1944, three days before the question of Palestine was to have been discussed again at Cabinet level, Lord Moyne, the Minister Resident in the Middle East, was assassinated by a Jewish terrorist organisation, the Stern Gang. Churchill, deeply touched by the murder of a close personal friend issued a stiff warning in the House of Commons: "If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of an assassin's pistol and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently in the past..."(75) On Churchill's orders Cabinet discussion of partition was to be postponed, it being impossible, he maintained, to discuss plans for the future of Palestine while such outrages continued.(76)

Upon hearing of the assassination Weizmann immediately wrote to the Prime Minister: "I can hardly find words adequate to express the deep moral indignation and horror which I feel at the murder of Lord Moyne. I know that these feelings are shared by Jewry throughout the world. Political crimes of this kind are an especial abomination in that they make it possible to implicate whole communities in the guilt of a few. I can assure you that Palestine Jewry will go to the

utmost limit of its power to cut out, root and branch, this evil from its midst."(77) However, Weizmann was later to completely miss the significance of the Moyne assassination: "I wish to observe that the harm done our cause by the assassination of Lord Moyne was not in changing the intentions of the British Government, but rather in providing our enemies with a convenient excuse and in helping to justify their course."(78)

There can be no doubt that the murder of Lord Moyne created an hiatus in British policy towards Palestine and was, without doubt, the reason why the White Paper of 1939 remained HMG's policy when the General Election was called in July 1945.

FOOTNOTES

1. N.A. Rose. Baffy Op Cit p.169

2. M. Weisgal & J. Carmichael. Chaim Weizmann - A Biography by Several Hands London 1963 p.258

3. Dalton's Diaries. Vol.30. LSE

4. N.A.Rose.Op Cit p.172

5. Ibid p.187

6. CAB 65/5 23/12/39. For details of the 1939 White Paper see Chapter 4.

7. CO 733/426 7/2/40

8. N.A. Rose. Op cit p.182

9. Ibid p.62

10. CAB 67/4 30/10/39

11. cited in Moshe Dayan. Story of My Life London 1976 p.35

12. CAB 67/4 30/10/39

13. FO 371/23242 2/12/39

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15. Ibid

16. See Chapter 2 for details of the Whitechapel by-election in 1931.

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18. Ibid

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22. HC Deb Vol.371 c.1840-1 28 May 1941

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26. Clement Attlee As It Happened London 1954 p.245

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35. Ibid

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42. NEC Minutes 16/11/33; Ibid

43. Ibid

44. Dalton's Papers 7/10 Loc Cit

45. Dalton's Diaries. Volume 31 22 March 1944

46. Ibid

47. NEC Sub-Committee Minutes 14/3/44; Ibid

48. Dalton's Diaries. Volume 31 22/3/44

49. NEC Minutes 5/4/44

50. Dalton' Diaries. Volume 31 25 April 1944

51. Chaim Weizmann Op Cit p.535

52. Dalton's Diaries Volume 31. 26 April 1944

53. CO 733/463 12/5/44

54. Ibid 29/5/44

55. Imperial Advisory Committee Minutes. 10 May 1944. Labour Party HQ

56. Ibid

57. Dalton's Papers 7/10 15/5/40

58. Ibid

59. NEC Minutes 20/6/44

60. LPACR 1944 p.140

61. Creech Jones Papers. CJ 32/6/34 Loc Cit

62. Ibid CJ 32/2/50

63. A. Sargent Op Cit p.271

64. Zionist Review 15/10/41

65. L. Stein Papers Box 123. 16 March 1944 Loc Cit

66. CAB 65/39 2/7/43

67. FO 371/35038 6/9/43

68. CAB 95/14 4/8/43

69. Ibid 14/8/43

70. Ibid 25/8/43

71. Ibid 27/8/43

72. CAB 65/45 1/2/44

73. Ibid 25/1/44

74. M. Cohen Op Cit p.172

75. The Times 18 November 1944

76. M. Cohen Op Cit p.179

77. Chaim Weizmann Op Cit p.538

78. Ibid

CHAPTER 6

ZIONIST AND ARAB ORGANISATIONS

(i) The Zionist Camp

The division within the Zionist hierarchy, which manifested itself during the later years of the Second World War, first became apparent in 1936. It was in the July of that year when Chaim Weizmann, in conversation with a colleague, prophetically claimed that: "In due course I shall be called a traitor."(1) The schism lay in what was essentially the strained relationship between the Jewish Diaspora and those who lived and worked in Palestine. Of course, Weizmann's own position in the Zionist movement rested upon his diplomatic campaign, political reputation and international prestige.

During the early period of Mandatory rule Weizmann, as President of the World Zionist Organisation, was indisputably the leader of world Jewry. So long as the Palestinian Jews retained their faith in HMG Weizmann remained their chief negotiator in London. However, when David Ben-Gurion became the Chairman of the Jewish Agency in 1935 a shift in power occurred and a greater importance was attached to the Palestinian based wing of the Zionist Movement. David Ben-Gurion was head of the Mapai Party in Palestine, an organisation which was closely identified with the Histadruth, the Jewish Trade Union Federation and hitherto had been little known outside the context of the Palestinian Labour Movement. Nevertheless, his ascent to the Chairmanship of the Agency Executive enabled him to challenge Weizmann's authority and as a consequence the relationship between the two men, on a personal level, deteriorated significantly. In fact, Baffy Dugdale, a close friend of Weizmann's for many years, concluded that there "might be a touch of jealousy of the old leader for his successor."(2) Jealousy was certainly considered to be a feature of Weizmann's character and he had at times been criticised for "trying to thwart anyone who might come up in competition against him."(3)

However, personal animosities apart, the unease in their comradeship was symptomatic of the militant/moderate dichotomy in their

respective aims, ambitions and means of achieving a Jewish National Home. Weizmann was, of course, the diplomat; a naturalised British citizen whose approach to the Mandatory Power was in many ways conciliatory. He outlined the sensitivity of his identification with Britain in a letter to an American colleague: "...as a British subject I have to be extremely careful not to contribute to a strain in relations ... Perhaps Ben-Gurion does not feel it, but I do. We have one great friend in England, the Prime Minister (Winston Churchill).... I find myself in an extremely delicate position..."(4)

Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, held quite different views. Although born in what was then Polish-Russia he had lived in Palestine for the greater part of his life.(5) Involving himself in the Trade Union Movement and the Socialist Mapai Party he had developed a perspective which emphasised the urgency of establishing a home for the Jews. In a speech given in February 1937 he maintained that this aim could only be facilitated by mass immigration: "The most vital issue before us now is immigration. The scope of immigration will determine everything else - including the achievement of the 'final goal'... We want a Jewish majority and a State because they are prerequisites for the fulfilment of Zionism."(6)

Consequently, his response to the partition plan recommended by the Peel Commission in 1937 was equivocal. He had not envisaged a Jewish State in a truncated Palestine in which "people would have to live and suffer its claustrophobic restrictions."(7) Instead, Ben-Gurion saw beyond the implications of partition and in doing so revealed the essence of his aspirations: "A partial Jewish State is not the end, but only the beginning.... We shall bring into the State all the Jews it is possible to bring.... we shall establish a multi-faceted Jewish economy - agricultural, industrial and maritime. We shall organise a modern defence force, a select army.... and then I am certain that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country, either by mutual agreement with our Arab neighbours or by some other means. Our ability to penetrate the country will increase if there is a state. Our strength vis-a-vis the Arabs will increase. I am not in favour of war.... but if the Arabs behave in keeping their barren nationalist feelings....then we shall have to speak to them in a different language. But we shall only have another language if we have a state."(8) Ben-Gurion's

objectives were clear, partition was to be a means to an end; the end being the ultimate control of the whole of Palestine whether by agreement or conquest.

Whilst Britain pondered the viability of the partition of Palestine it was obvious that Weizmann's diplomatic skills were required. Yet the Jerusalem branch of the Jewish Agency mistrusted him and attempts were made to keep him under close surveillance. As one member of the Executive put it: "As for Weizmann, we knew his weakness. That was one of the reasons we thought it vital that our people should be next to him in London. That was one reason why Ben-Gurion had to return there immediately."(9)

There existed the belief that Weizmann would not exert sufficient pressure on British government officials and that he did not forceably press the urgency of establishing a Jewish Home. He was suspected of being easily swayed by HMG. The Foreign Office recognising the growing division between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion, minuted: "Our latest information suggests that Ben-Gurion wishes to return to Palestine principally in order to obtain increased influence for himself from the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem as against Weizmann whom he regards as having 'appeased' HMG too much... Weizmann reported that Ben-Gurion had been pretty difficult with him..."(10)

In December of 1937 when the British government officially declared that it no longer considered itself bound to the partition plan, Ben-Gurion's response was unambiguous: "If the British decree that we are to be abandoned to the Mufti, only the Jewish community in Palestine can save us." It would be necessary, he argued, to oppose such a policy: "not with words, not with demonstrations, but by concrete deeds.... The youth will arise - they will raise the banner of revolt and fight." If Britain was attempting to abrogate its commitments then the Zionists would: "withdraw our support of Britain, and build up our own military strength, so that we can, if necessary, fight the British as well."(11)

The 1939 White Paper exacerbated not only the growing rift between HMG and Ben-Gurion but also the rivalry between Ben-Gurion and Weizmann. The diplomatic skills of Weizmann were seen by Ben-Gurion to be wanting and he pointed to the White Paper policy

as a clear indictment of Weizmann's incompetence. However, the enactment of the White Paper also provoked dissension within the Agency Executive in Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion proposed that the fight against the White Paper take precedence over all else and argued that only force would bring London to rescind its policy: "the only hope for Zionism is if it becomes a fighting Zionism."(12) However, other members of the Executive rejected this line of action believing that a conflict with Britain on the eve of a war with Germany might prove disadvantageous to the Zionist cause. Ben-Gurion, although recognising the merits of this argument still held discussions with the Haganah commanders and outlined his war aims. He declared: "the World War of 1914-18 brought us the Balfour Declaration. This time we have to bring about a Jewish State."(13)

Ben-Gurion's views modified somewhat during the early period of the war; his attitude changing with the circumstances to one of co-operation with Britain. The relationship between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion continued to be tense and certainly reproachful as Weizmann was again attacked for failing the Zionist cause through his protracted negotiations with the British Government on the question of the Jewish army proposals. Ben-Gurion spent much of 1940/42 in the United States and it was during this period that American Zionist leaders, headed by Nahum Goldmann and Meyer Weisgal, organised the first national conference of American Zionists. According to his biographer, Ben-Gurion "saw the conference as the long hoped-for platform from which he could present his political programme."(14)

The essence of the resolution adopted by the Conference held in May 1942 at the Biltmore Hotel, which was later to become known as the Biltmore Programme, focused attention on three specific areas which would satisfy Zionist demands after the War: "Firstly, Palestine would be opened to immigration; secondly, the Jewish Agency would be vested with control of immigration and with the authority necessary for developing the country and, thirdly, after the war Palestine would be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world."(15) The Biltmore Programme emphasised the split within the Zionist leadership, not particularly over the content of the resolution but rather more on the interpretation of it. Weizmann and Ben-Gurion assessed the Programme quite differently. "I would like to say a word about the Biltmore Programme, of which such a fuss has been made by

Ben-Gurion," Weizmann wrote acidly some months after the Conference: "It has become a new Decalogue... it is nothing of the kind. The Biltmore Declaration is just a resolution, like the hundred and one resolutions usually passed at great meetings in this or any other country. But Ben-Gurion (who has)....absolutely nothing to show by way of achievement has stuck on the Biltmore resolution, more or less conveying the idea that it is the triumph of his policy as against my moderate formulation of the same aims, and he injected into it all his own extreme views."(16)

Ben-Gurion, in outlining his view of the Biltmore Resolution stressed the importance of immigration. "Support", he argued "would have to be gained for mass immigration or for the transfer of perhaps 2 million Jews in one operation," adding that he "had no doubt that this programme...would after the War become the objective of the Jewish people."(17) As the Jewish historian, Michael Bar-Zohar argues: "The Biltmore Programme was symptomatic of the two men's long-smouldering disagreement on principles."(18) Clearly, the 1939 White Paper and the subsequent resistance on the part of the British government to the formation of a Jewish army created in Ben-Gurion a disenchantment with the policies of Britain, whilst Weizmann, at the same time, continued to adhere to his diplomatic tactics. Weizmann refused to lose faith in Winston Churchill's Zionist sympathies, and Ben-Gurion's extreme proposals aroused his fear and indignation. Some years later in the course of a conversation with Sir Alan Cunningham, the post-war High Commissioner in Palestine, Weizmann admitted that he "detested the politics of Ben-Gurion."(19)

The Biltmore Programme, as interpreted by Ben-Gurion with its emphasis on large scale immigration, was accepted unanimously by the Zionist Executive in Palestine. Henceforth, the thrust of Jewish Agency policy was to be one of potential confrontation with the British government. Yet although Ben-Gurion espoused militant rhetoric and clearly maintained close links with the Haganah it would be erroneous to associate him with the terrorism evident in Palestine during the years of the Second World War. The terrorist activities of that period were perpetrated by fringe organisations of the Revisionist Party, a movement of the right diametrically opposed to the socialist Mapai Party. The Revisionist Party had been founded by Zeev Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1935 and persisted in claiming that Zionist rights extended to the area of the original Mandate, i.e. to

Transjordan, which had been annexed in 1922.(20) These off-shoot military organisations, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, led by Menahem Begin, and the even more extremist Stern Gang, initiated the reign of terror by randomly killing Palestinian soldiers; savagely atacking the then High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael; and ultimately, murdering Lord Moyne.(21) This scale of violence was to continue, disquietingly, during the years which followed the War.

Ben-Gurion, of course, quite accepted the possibility of a struggle with the British government over what would essentially be Zionist demands for the implementation of Jewish rights, as laid down by the Balfour Declaration, with "arms being used in self-defence against British attempts to deny those rights by force."(22)

However, although the potential for a recourse to violence was clearly within the remit of Jewish Agency policy and a discussion centring on the niceties of distinction, i.e. provocative or self-defensive action might be considered to be purely academic, Ben-Gurion's response to the murder of Lord Moyne was unequivocal. The Jewish Agency, at the behest of its leader, immediately passed a strident resolution: "The Jewish community is called upon to spew forth all the members of this harmful, destructive gang, (the Stern Gang) to deny them any shelter or haven, not to give in to their threats, and to extend to the authorities all the necessary assistance to prevent terror acts and to wipe out these organisations, for this is a matter of life and death."(23) The Jewish Agency had resolved to co-operate with the British Government against dissidents, but in doing so a further polarisation was created within the Zionist camp, that between the Militants and the Extremists.

The irony of this particular period of crisis in the policy direction of the Zionist Movement is that whilst the Jewish Agency was unquestionably becoming more militant and factions of the Movement were resorting to violence, the British Government under the leadership of Winston Churchill was in the process of adopting a basic programme for the partition of Palestine. Ben-Gurion's biographer posits the question: "Who would have imagined that the British Prime Minister was preparing plans for a Jewish State?"(24) Who, indeed, other than Chaim Weizmann who quite clearly knew, for in the November of 1943 Smuts had informed him that Churchill was, in fact, seriously considering partition.(25) However, by this time

Weizmann had effectively been ostracised by the Jewish Agency; dismissed as an "old man who has lost all personal feelings for the Yishuv."(26)

Thus, during the crucial period when Britain began to reassess the White Paper policy of 1939, the Zionist Movement suffered from a "lack of co-ordinated authority, duplication and confusion,"(27)which resulted in a rapid descent into violence.

(ii) The Arab Camp

If bitter wrangling and internecine struggle reflected the severely divided Zionist Movement during the years of the Second World War, they were characteristics not shared by the dominant, yet truncated, Palestinian organisation, the Arab Higher Committee of Palestine. This organisation, although coming into existence in 1936, was one year later proscribed as illegal by the British Government, and its leader, Haj Amin el-Husseini, better known as the Mufti, escaped into exile, not to return to Palestine until 1946.

This curious state of affairs was a direct consequence of the Arab rebellion in 1936; a riot claiming numerous British, Jewish and Arab lives, the responsibility for which was found to rest with the Mufti and his supporters in the Arab Higher Committee.(28) In response to this outburst the British Government ordered the organisation to disband and a number of its members were arrested and deported. As such, the Arab Higher Committee lost its formal existence although the Mufti continued to exercise control over the Palestinian Arabs from his exiled position in Syria, Iraq, and later, Germany. According to a Documentary Record submitted to the United Nations in 1947, the Mufti, by expedient use of his followers in Palestine, "succeeded in liquidating most of the Arab leaders in Palestine who opposed him and his policies."(29)

Haj Amin el-Husseini became the Mufti of Jerusalem in 1922 and thereafter embarked upon a continuing association with terrorism. The Shaw Commssion, appointed by the British government to investigate the riots of 1929 attributed to the Mufti a share in the responsibility for a series of outrages in which 133 Jews were killed and 239 wounded.(3O) After a period of relative calm the Arab riots

flared again in 1936. An interesting and revealing file of the German High Command, captured at the end of the War disclosed that the Arab rebellion of 1936 was carried out by the Mufti with funds supplied by the Nazis: "Only through funds made available by Germany to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem was it possible to carry out the revolt in Palestine."(31) If this statement is, in fact, true there is no indication that Britain was aware at the time of this funding or, indeed, of the Mufti's close association with Germany. If British Governmental records are to be believed, the major objective of the 1939 White Paper was the appeasement of the Arabs and the policy was viewed as an expression of pre-war expediency.(32)

Prima facie evidence, therefore, reveals that the British Government harboured a suspicion as to where affinities might potentially lie in the Arab world in the event of a war, but there is little sign that Britain actually knew of Germany's involvement in the affairs of Palestine. On the other hand, of course, it could be possible that the British Government was secretly aware of an association and this knowledge provided the basis for suspicion.

One scholar has argued: "It is well known that in the 193Os Germany and Italy - by skilful propaganda, by judicious disbursements, by powerful appeal of their efficiency and success - established themselves as the champions of, and set the pace for, Arab nationalism."(33) With the benefit of hindsight, Kedouries's claims appear accurate but as he neglects to substantiate his statement little light is shed on the rather shrouded issue of Britain's awareness of Germany's financial support of the Palestinian Arab leadership in 1936. Unfortunately, the whole question appear s to remain unclear

One fact which presumably must have been brought to the attention of the Foreign Office via its Middle Eastern emissaries but was not documented at the time, is the correspondence in 194O between the brief encumbent of power in Iraq, Rashid Ali al-Gailani and the German Ambassador in Turkey. The memoranda carried a list of demands including the confirmation by the Axis of independence of all Arab countries; the abolition of the Jewish National Home; and the recognition of Arab unity.(34)

The question of Arab unity was raised in Cabinet a few months later when Eden stated: ".... the Arabs generally agree that some form of 'Arab federation' is desirable, and I think that we should not only refrain from opposing such vague aspirations but even take every opportunity of expressing publicly our support for them."(35) It is not unreasonable to deduce that the British Government fully recognised the appeal of the Axis to the Arabs and sought in some way to redress the balance, by displaying a willingness to acknowledge the demand for Arab unity. However, the aspect which again is undocumented is the extent to which HMG knew of the Mufti's communications with Hitler and other members of the hierarchy in the German Reich during the years of the war.

The Mufti held a personal, if somewhat sycophantic interview with Hitler in the November of 1941, during which they both outlined the evils of Jewry and the prospective elimination of the Jewish National Home.(36) In many ways the Mufti, despite his willingness to resort to terrorism, was essentially a pragmatic figure in terms of what he perceived to be advantageous to himself and his supporters. He was attracted to Nazism not only by its crude anti-semitic sentiments and its opposition to Britain but also by the possible benefits which he considered could accrue to the Arab world in the event of Germany's success.

During his meeting with Hitler, the Mufti emphasised his objectives: "The objectives of my fight are clear. Primarily, I am fighting the Jews without respite, and this fight includes the fight against the so-called Jewish National Home because the Jews want to establish there a central government for their own pernicious purposes.... Our common enemies are Great Britain and the Soviets whose principles are opposed to ours. We are now in the midst of a life and death struggle against both these nations. This fight will not only determine the outcome of the struggle between National Socialism and Jewry, but the whole conduct of this successful war will be of great and positive help to the Arabs who are engaged in the same struggle.... Only if we win the war will the hour of deliverance also be the hour of fulfilment of Arab aspirations"(37)

Whilst Hitler expressed sympathy for the Mufti's aims and the Italian Government promised assistance for the Arab cause: "Italy is ready to grant to the Arab countries every possible aid in their fight for

liberation; to recognise their sovereignty and independence; to agree to their federation if this is desired by the interested parties; as well as to the abolition of the National Jewish Homeland in Palestine,"(38) Britain began an initial study of the possibilities of an Arab federation.

The Foreign Office considered a document prepared by an adviser to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, in which it was stated: "There is a basic incompatibility between support for a movement in the direction of Arab federation, and the fulfilment of obligations assumed in 1917 towards the Jewish people."(39) Despite Eden's statement to Cabinet in July 1941,(40) the Foreign Office still harboured doubts about the formation of such a union and warned the government: "This is not the time for endeavouring to formulate and carry through a scheme of political federation;" fearing that: "The Arab desire for closer union.... is in effect a wish to form a bloc of Arab States which will be strong enough to secure what are considered Arab rights in Palestine... and to present a united front to foreign powers, especially Great Britain."(41) However, the Foreign Office did not advise outright condemnation of such a policy but that Britain should show sympathy for Arab aspirations and guide them, as far as possible, along lines consistent with British interests in the area. Essentially, the initiative for such a union was to come from the Arabs and bearing these sentiments in mind the Foreign Secretary, in response to a question in the House, stated: "Clearly, such an initiative would have to come from the Arabs themselves, and so far as I am aware no such scheme which would command general approval has yet been worked out."(42)

Underpinning the Foreign Office line was the belief that Arab disunity would in effect prevent an alliance between the States. One memorandum stated: "Like little Black Sambo, we can sit up a tree and watch the tigers tearing themselves to pieces,"(43) and it would certainly be fallaceous to deny the existence of divisions within the Pan-Arab movement. A report from the British Embassy in Damascus stated: "The Syrian Arab regards the Iraqi as inferior to him in culture. The Saudi Arab he considers a poor, unenlightened person to be treated with tolerant condescension. The one possible cementing factor - the Moslem religion - in itself provides elements of further disruption. Sunni hates Shiah, both despise the Ismaili, whilst the Wahhabi considers himself the only real true follower of

the prophet."(44) These views were confirmed by Ibn Saud: "Ibn Saud repeats the warnings given regarding dissentient Arab leaders who are at present agitating for Arab Congresses... He trusts none of them as they are all playing their own hands in order to strengthen their positions in their own countries."(45) However, the Foreign Office was fully aware that if there were to be one unifying factor upon which they could all agree it would be Palestine. In such an event it was feared that the Mufti and his supporters in Palestine would set the pace, leaving the Arab States to vie with each other in support of demands which would most likely go beyond the limits set by the 1939 White Paper.(46) As a consequence, the Foreign Office viewed the announcement that an all-Arab Conference was to be held in the Autumn of 1944 with a high degree of apprehension.

Nevertheless, the Office still managed to exhibit an element of complacency when surveying the prospective conference: "The stage is now set. The Arab leaders are all at sixes and sevens. The Iraqis are jealous of Nahhas. Nahhas hates Nuri. The Amir of Transjordan wants to be King of Syria...Ibn Saud is backing Shukri because he hates all Hashemites. The Palestinian Arabs can't agree on a delegation to represent them in the absence of the leaders in Germany...there are all the elements of an unedifying dog-fight, but we really dare not crash in and tell them to put it off - they would then at least agree about our opposition to Arab unity."(47)

With regard to both Palestinian Arab representation and the possibility of Arab unity the Foreign Office made serious miscalculations. At the very last minute the Palestinian Arabs chose Musa el Alami as their delegate. Musa el Alami was purportedly a mild supporter of the Mufti,(48) whatever that term, in fact, meant, and was recognised by the Conference as the sole representative of the Palestinian Arabs, pending the re-formation of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee. The outcome of the meeting was significant. At the end of its deliberations the Conference issue five resolutions, which subsequently became known as the 'Alexandria Protocol'. The first four resolutions dealt with the formation of an Arab League and the political, social and economic relations between its members. The fifth resolution was concerned with Palestine and noted that "it was an important element of the Arab countries that the rights of Arabs could not be infringed in Palestine without danger to the peace and

stability of the Arab world." At the same time it stated that the engagements assumed by Great Britain, i.e. the 1939 White Paper, constituted the 'acquired rights' of the Arabs. These 'engagements' were itemised as: the stoppage of Jewish immigration, the protection of Arab lands and the preparation of Palestine for independence. While expressing sympathy for the plight of European Jewry, the Conference declared that this problem must not be confused with the question of Zionism.(49)

The Foreign Office quickly seized upon the relative moderation of the Conference's resolutions and lost little time in grasping the implications the Protocol had for Britain's Palestine policy: "It is not impossible that this solidarity of the Egypt-Arab world may be reconciled with our essential interests.....provided we are able to adapt ourselves to the new conditions quickly enough. If, however,...we have also in the interests of our world policy to adopt local policies in Palestine unacceptable to the Arabs, there is little likelihood of our being able to bring a consolidated Middle East into friendly co-operation."(50) The British Government it seemed was being swept along not entirely of its own volition, by a movement which it felt powerless to stifle but which was managing to narrow HMG's options in the Middle East.

The Pact which officially founded the Arab League in March 1945 directly resulted from the Conference in Alexandria, but although it followed the general lines of the Protocol, policy on Palestine was re-interpreted. Whereas the Alexandria Protocol was based on maintaining the status quo in Palestine as defined by the 1939 White Paper, the League Pact took for its point of reference the First World War, when the Arab countries, including Palestine, had been detached from the Ottoman Empire: "At the end of the last Great War, Palestine together with the other Arab States was separated from the Ottoman Empire. She became independent, not belonging to any other State. The Treaty of Lausanne proclaimed that her fate should be decided by the parties concerned in Palestine. Even though Palestine was not able to control her own destiny, it was on the basis of the recognition of her independence that the Covenant of the League of Nations determined a system of government for her. Her existence and her independence among the nations can, therefore, no more be questioned de jure than the independence of any of the other Arab States."(51) Moreover, the statement

continued, in consideration of Palestine's special circumstances and until such time that the country enjoyed effective independence, the Council of the Arab League would undertake the selection of an Arab delegate from Palestine to participate in its works.

Clearly, then the Palestinian Arabs were fully embraced by the Arab League and with such support their demands assumed a greater potency. The British government was, as a consequence, placed in a difficult position: no longer could it view Palestine in isolation from the rest of the Arab world. In fact, it was only a matter of a few months after the Arab League Pact that the Foreign Minister of Syria, Jamil Mardam, headed an Arab delegation to Palestine, the sole purpose of which was to solve the problem of re-establishing the Arab Higher Committee.

The Husseini family agreed to the re-formation of the Committee on the condition that the Arab League would induce the British to release Jamal Husseini, the nephew of the Mufti, from his internment as a pro-Axis leader. Assurance was also given to them that the chairmanship of the organisation would be held open for the Mufti on his return, and that the vice-chairmanship would be assigned to Jamal Husseini.(52) This, in fact, happened when in February 1946 Jamal Husseini was released by the British and permitted to return to Palestine. Four months' later the Mufti returned to Palestine, and as predicted assumed the role of Chairman of the Committee, with Jamal, his second in command.

These developments unquestionably limited the British Government's room for manoeuvre. Faced with solidarity from the Arab camp and increasing terrorism from Zionist quarters, the battle lines were now drawn for the acrimonious fight which was to colour British policy in the post-war years. Options were closing for HMG and as a Foreign Office minute outlined, Britain could no longer adopt the stance of an objective arbiter when Palestine was placed in the wider context of the Middle Eastern theatre: "The development of the League certainly makes it more than ever necessary that we should not evolve for Palestine a settlement which is too great an offence to Arab interests..."(53)

CHAPTER 6

FOOTNOTES

1. Weizmann Archives, Israel, cited in M. Cohen Palestine, Retreat from the Mandate London 1978 p127

2. N. Rose (Ed) Baffy - The Diaries of Blanche Dugdale 1936-1947 London 1973 p233

3. Statement made by Lewis Namier cited in N. Rose Lewis Namier and Zionism London 1980 p139.

4. Weizmann Archives cited in M. Cohen Op Cit p129

5. For biographical details of Ben-Gurion see David Ben-Gurion Israel A Personal History London 1972; M. Bar-Zohar Ben-Gurion London 1977; Barnet Litvinoff Ben-Gurion of Israel London 1954

6. Ben-Gurion Ibid p.50

7. B. Litvinoff. Op Cit p124

8. M. Bar-Zohar. Op Cit pp91-92

9. Weizmann Archive cited in M. Cohen Op Cit p126

10. FO 371/31379 1/7/42

11. M. Bar-Zohar. Op Cit p93

12. M. Cohen. Op Cit p128

13. M. Bar-Zohar. Op Cit p101

14. Ibid p107

15. M. Cohen Op Cit p131

16. M. Bar-Zohar Op Cit p108

17. Ibid p108

18. Ibid

19. Cunningham Papers, Box V. File 1, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's, Oxford

20. For a detailed, if somewhat biased account of the Revisionist Party and its off-shoot organisations, see Eitan Haber Mehahem Begin New York 1978

21. For a report of terrorist outrages perpetrated by the Stern Gang and the Irgun Leumi from January to December 1944 see HC Deb Vol. 406 c.557-561. 6 December 1944

22. M. Bar-Zohar Op Cit p123

23. cited in Ibid

24. Ibid p121

25. C. Weizmann. Trial and Error London 1949 p436

26. Report of a speech by Ben-Gurion. FO 921/6 12 October 1942

27. Weizmann Archives, cited in M. Cohen Op Cit p135

28. See Chapter 3 for details of the Arab rebellion which had been occasioned by the recommendations of the Peel Commission.

29. Documentary Record submitted to the United Nations, May 1947. Conservative Party Central Office Archive

30. Report of the Shaw Commission Cmd.3530 1930

31. Documentary Record Loc Cit

32. See chapter 4 for details of background to 1939 White Paper

33. Elie Kedourie The Chatham House Version and other Middle Eastern Studies London 1970 p220

34. Ibid

35. CAB 95/1 23/7/41

36. The Mufti's Diary. Documentary Record. Loc Cit

37. Ibid

38. Correspondence from Italian Government. Ibid

39. FO 371/27044 9/6/41

40. See Footnote 35.

41. CAB 95/1 9/1/42

42. HC Deb Vol.387 c.139 24 February 1943

43. FO 371/34956 3/4/43

44. FO 371/20024 21/8/36

45. FO 371/34957 26/4/43

46. FO 371/39988 1/6/44

47. FO 371/39990 16/9/44

48. Documentary Record Op Cit

49. FO 371/39990 8/10/44

50. Ibid 10/10/44

51. J. Norton (ed) Documents on the Arab/Israeli Conflict Vol.III Princeton 1974 p241

52. Documentary Record Loc Cit

53. FO 371/42237 3O/3/45

CHAPTER 7

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY

(i) Labour's Triumph

Three months before the General Election of July 1945 the National Executive of the Labour Party passed a resolution calling upon the British Government: "To remove the present unjustifiable barriers on immigration and to announce without delay proposals for the future of Palestine."(1) The resolution, in fact, confirmed the sentiments enshrined in the Party publication: 'The International Post-War Settlement', as indeed did the discussion which took place at Conference one month later. In Blackpool, Hugh Dalton reiterated the Party's policy on Palestine: "Last December the Conference accepted and welcomed without even the challenge of a card vote, the document entitled the Post War International Settlement. That stands as the policy of this Movement and of this Party and in that document there is a clear and definite statement regarding Palestine and the Jewish people. This Party has laid it down and repeated it so recently as last April that having regard to the unspeakable horrors that have been perpetrated upon the Jews of Germany and other occupied countries in Europe, it is morally wrong and politically indefensible to impose obstacles to the entry into Palestine now of any Jews who desire to go there... This is not a matter which should be regarded as one for which the British Government alone should take responsibility... it is indispensable that there should be close agreement and co-operation among the British, American and Soviet governments, particularly if we are going to get a sure settlement in Palestine and the surrounding countries. Steps should be taken in consultation with those two governments to see whether we can get that common support for a policy which will give us a happy, a free and prosperous Jewish State in Palestine."(2)

These views, supported by delegates at Conference and well intentioned as they may have been, were apparently impervious to the events actually taking place in Palestine and the 'surrounding countries'. Lord Moyne had, six months' previously, been assassinated by a Jewish terrorist organisation; David Ben-Gurion

was inexorably leading the Jewish Agency in a militant direction with the attendant risk of a confrontation with Britain, and the Arab States were about to arrange a conference, the purpose of which would be to discuss the possibility of Arab unity. Within the context of these developments, the Labour Party's aim to produce a 'happy, free and prosperous Jewish State in Palestine' appears at once simplistic and naive. Nevertheless, scepticism apart, if one is to judge policy intention by Conference resolutions, then clearly, the Labour Party entered the fray of a General Election with the avowed commitment of establishing a Jewish National Home.

G.Alderman in his recent study of British Jewry suggests that Labour's pro-Zionism may have resulted from a careful attempt to woo support from Jewish voters.(3) It is certainly true that Poale Zion urged Jews to vote for Labour, as they obviously would, yet a picture of the Party being dictated predominantly by electoral opportunism seems overdrawn. If this had been the case one suspects that the resolutions on Palestine would have been less strident in content and less radical in intent. In other words, the Party would have resorted to its own tried and tested habit: that of fudging the issue.

When the Election results were announced on 26 July 1945 it quickly became apparent that Labour had won an overwhelming victory with 393 seats in Parliament and the Party entered office with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. However, the composition of the Cabinet was not as might have been predicted and certain appointments were greeted with dismay from Zionist quarters. The London Office of the Jewish Agency dismissed unsparingly the new Colonial Secretary, George Hall, as "that caddish sort of fool."(4) In Zionist eyes Hall had not been found sympathetic to their cause during the war and in a report of an interview with Professor Coupland it was noted that he had "made some hostile remarks about the Jews and said they were 'grasping.'"(5) Hall, it appears, was not generally regarded as particularly competent and was referred to as "a willing carthorse who, if told to pull up hill would burst his collar doing it, but would never suggest that some other hill might be easier."(6)

Nevertheless, the Agency was heartened by the appointment of Arthur Creech-Jones as Hall's Under-Secretary; a long-time friend of Zionism who stated when gaining office, unrealistically as it turned

out, that "he should be consulted on all Palestine matters,"(7) although, Baffy Dugdale casting doubt on their abilities, referred to both Hall and Creech-Jones as "these little men...so inexperienced."(8)

However, it was the choice of Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary which came as a great surprise to many people including Hugh Dalton, who had confidently expected the post and to Bevin himself, who had hoped for the Treasury. The circumstances surrounding these appointments have given rise to many suppositions, the most popular of which is that they were the result of Royal intervention. It has been suggested that when Attlee submitted his Cabinet list to King George VI appointing Dalton as Foreign Secretary and Bevin as Chancellor, the King used his constitutional rights to query the post suggested for Dalton and Attlee promptly switched the two.(9)

That a switch occurred is confirmed by Attlee in his memoirs: "It is already known that I hesitated for some hours as to whether Bevin or Dalton should take the Exchequer or the Foreign Office. Various reasons impelled me to my final decision, which was, I think, justified in the event."(10) Kenneth Harris in his recent biography of Attlee fails to mention the apparent dilemma facing the Prime Minister over the respective posts for Bevin and Dalton and instead refers in rather general terms to Attlee's pursuit of 'quality' within the Cabinet. He asserts that he was a "good judge of men, objective with intuition; the emphasis was on a man's trustworthiness."(11) Yet in outlining these worthy attributes Harris deals cursorily with Attlee's evident disenchantment with Hugh Dalton and refers to a: "Note to Cripps about Dalton's economic policy suggested that Attlee did not believe in his economic expertise..."(12) This statement would indicate that either the Prime Minister acted imprudently in appointing Hugh Dalton as Chancellor, thereby belying Harris' claims or that Dalton's appointment was not the result of Attlee's own judgement.

If the choice of Ernest Bevin as Chancellor seems an odd decision then his appointment as Foreign Secretary was an even more curious one, and by any normal stretch of the imagination could also be considered an unfitting one. Although Bevin was widely respected within the Trade Union Movement and had performed well as Minister of Labour and National Service during the wartime coalition, his

wealth of experience did not formally encompass foreign affairs. Attlee, when referring to Bevin's appointment, remarked, "I thought a heavy tank was what was required, rather than a light sniper,"(13) yet there still exist shadows as to the character of Ernest Bevin. He was undoubtedly a formidable and intelligent man who allegedly "could get the essence out of a memo in minutes."(14) His great gift, according to Hugh Dalton, was that of "seeing apparently separate problems as part of a wider whole,"(15) whilst Sir Harold Beeley of the Foreign Office referred to Bevin as "a colourful personality....earning great respect because of his common sense, (and) his very quick penetration of the heart of a problem."(16) Yet he was also judged "an egotist and completely ruthless."(17) As to his possible leadership of the Party, Creech-Jones revealed interestingly and somewhat mysteriously some years after Bevin's death that "Ernie" would never have been leader of the Labour Party: "for personal reasons which will never be published and on which I would rather not be pushed.(18)

Bevin's contacts with the Jews both in the 1930s and during the early years of the War did not go unnoticed by appreciative Zionists yet their pleasure in his appointment was mitigated by the comments he made in 1944. In a note of a conversation with a leading American Zionist, Dr. Israel Goldstein, Bevin remarked that "Britain had had more than enough trouble in Palestine and that he was damned if he would allow British blood to be shed for either Jews or Arab." Nevertheless, Bevin thought Zionism was a "good thing because it gave the Jews status" and vowed that "if he should be in office when the time came he would see that justice be done to the Jewish people," adding after a pause, "and the Arabs."(19) What Bevin exactly meant by the term 'Zionism' is difficult to assess. According to Richard Crosmann it was defined in a religious context. Two years later, during a rather acrimonious conversation with Crossman, Bevin apparently asserted: "There's only a Jewish religion, not a Jewish nation. And if those Jews in Palestine aren't religious they ought not to call themselves Jews."(20) However, it is still unclear as to whether these were Bevin's sentiments in 1944.

The interesting aspect of Bevin's meeting with Dr. Goldstein is his perception of the role American would play after the war: "He was afraid that America might do the same as in 1918, ie. become isolationist." Bevin asked whether "the United States would go with

Britain to solve the problems of peace," and emphasised that "Palestine would have to fit into the international picture." Bevin was critical of the Jews, whom he considered were always "pressing for a solution of their own problems instead of the general problem." The meeting concluded with Bevin stating that he was "an internationalist."(21)

Bevin's informal interest in the affairs of Palestine was no passing whim yet there is little evidence to indicate why, at that particular time, he should concern himself with the problem. It may well have been an expression of his sympathy for the Jewish plight but he did not once reassure Dr. Goldstein of the Labour Party's commitment to establish a Jewish National Home, should the Party be returned at a General Election. His interest it seems stemmed less from anxiety as to the relative merits of the Jewish/Arab cases than from an overriding concern as to the position America would take vis-a-vis Britain in the new international climate which would exist in the aftermath of the war.

As a consequence, his reading of the intricacies of the Palestine issue appear superficial as he undoubtedly underestimated the depth of animosity which existed between Arabs and Jews. He seemed to interpret the situation as being something akin to a carbuncle on the flesh of the British Government which could be efficiently lanced if America was prepared to assist in the operation. If such were his opinions in March 1944 there is every reason to suspect that they remained with him when he assumed the mantle of Foreign Secretary; for in November 1945 Bevin, in his newly appointed position, invited the United States to participate in an Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry into Palestine.

The first few months of the Labour Administration proved disappointing to many Zionists who "had hoped so much from the change of Government."(22) On 22nd August Attlee reconstituted the Palestine Committee of the Cabinet which now comprised Morrison, once again in the Chair; Bevin, Hall, Dalton, Lord Pethwick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Lawson, Secretary of State for War and Viscount Stansgate, the Secretary of State for Air. The first meeting took place on 6th September which Morrison opened by summarising the work done by the Committee during the war. The Colonial Secretary concentrated on the problem of Jewish

immigration and emphasised that a decision would soon be needed as only 3000 of the 75,000 immigration certificates allowed under the White Paper still remained and these would be exhausted by November. Hall then went on to propose that the White Paper quota be adhered to whilst a long-term policy was being formulated although, he added that the Arabs could be approached with a view to further immigration. The meeting was thrown open to discussion. Bevin agreed to the proposal but stressed that "it should be our aim to associate the United States with our long-term policy in Palestine." Only Hugh Dalton raised doubts about the suggestion. However, Dalton's response could be considered predictable given that the substance of his views on Palestine had inspired the Party declaration, yet it soon became apparent that his opinions had modified significantly. He expressed great sympathy for the Jews and regret that settlement should be held up by the "intransigence of a backward local population." He also suggested, somewhat less stridently, and presumably alluding to his own work, that "party statements which have from time to time been made should not be overlooked." However, with an unmistakable sense of realism, notably absent from his previous utterances, he proclaimed that he "quite recognised the need for taking into account Arab feeling and the importance of avoiding civil outbreaks in Palestine."(23) The meeting concluded with the Committee recommending the continuation of the White Paper policy.

This volte face has been described by some as a consequence of inexperienced Labour Ministers being confronted with a novel problem with no knowledge or previous guidance other than a stream of party declarations.(24) However, Hugh Dalton was no inexperienced Minister, he had participated fully in the Wartime coalition as Minister of Economic Warfare and latterly President of the Board of Trade, and Palestine to him was certainly no novel issue. He had, in fact, been the architect of the latest Party statement on Palestine and had, four months' previously, been advocating the swift establishment of a 'Jewish State in Palestine.'(25)

Why, then, did he feel the need to alter his views when he became a member of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine? He reveals no clue as to the possible reason in either his diaries or autobiography and one is left with the uncertainties of speculation. He had, of course, been tipped for the post of Foreign Secretary and his wartime role

as Party spokesman on foreign affairs had given credence to this expectation. On becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer he may have felt that this domain was no longer within his sphere of influence. He had observed, shortly after acquiring his new position, that "Ernest Bevin is rather fascinated by the Middle East"(26) and it is conceivable that Dalton did not wish to interfere in Bevin's territory. On the other hand, and maybe more convincingly, he could for the first time have realised the profound complexities of the issue and the difficulties facing the Government. As Richard Crossman, who was to be a member of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, remarked: "..after a quarter of an hour with Dalton I was convinced that, though he had moved the Labour Party Conference motion, he knew practically nothing of the issues involved."(27)

The first meeting of the Palestine Committee coincided with a Conference of British representatives in the Middle East, meeting in London under the chairmanship of the Foreign Secretary. Attention was focused, during the Conference, on the implications for Britain of the formation of the Arab League. Although the Conference decided that the Arab League had not yet "developed sufficient cohesion to warrant its recognition as a corporate body representative of the Arab States as a whole," it nevertheless acknowledged the fact that it had established "some co-ordination among the constituent members of the League," and that it would be inevitable that the British Government would form "political contacts with the League from time to time."(28) Significantly, the Conference concluded that in order for Britain to "reach the right solution of our Middle East problems it is necessary to consider the area as a single region," adding the caveat that "it would be necessary to take into account the political and economic factors arising out of the Palestine question..."(29) Therefore, it is within this wider context that the recommendations of the Palestine Committee and the subsequent Cabinet decision on the matter have to placed. The Cabinet met on the 11th September and adopted the Committee's suggestion. A memorandum was issued stating that party policy should for the present be waived: "we consider that the balance of advantage lies in the temporary maintenance of the White Paper policy."(30) The Zionist Review predictably attacked the Government and urged Ministers to remember their own pledges(31) and The Times reported that Labour MPs were much in evidence at public meetings organised by Zionists and their sympathisers.(32) Ian

Mikardo, somewhat naively, informed such a meeting that "the Government is ruled by the authority of the rank and file and will fulfil its pledges."(33)

The episode provides a striking illustration of the Labour Government's dramatic reversal of policy over the question of Palestine, yet it would be erroneous to view the action as a whimsical departure from Party commitments or as it has been judged: "..a bad case of 'Passfieldism'",(34) if anything, it is a sad indictment of the profound inadequacies of Conference resolutions. As one Labour MP claimed: "I think the average member who attended these conferences had about as much knowledge of the Palestine problem as I have of the moon."(35) Party declarations on such a sensitive issue as Palestine devised, as they were, from a point far removed from the exigencies of governmental office, were bound to prove inoperable when Labour gained power. Harold Wilson muses over "how different Middle Eastern history might have been..."(36) had Hugh Dalton become Foreign Secretary, but a realistic appraisal would suggest that there was little that a British Government could do given the difficulties of the Middle Eastern situation in those early post-war months. The Labour Party viewed Palestine in isolation from its environment and in ignoring the formation, and potential power of the Arab League it had produced a myopic interpretation of the issue; one which was destined to be condemned by the evident constraints of office. As Rita Hinden, Secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau so accurately pointed out: "Labour Ministers....seem to have found themselves in an infinitely more ticklish position than they anticipated."(37)

Divisions within the Zionist movement at that time served to prevent full negotiations from taking place with the British government. On 8th October, Bevin conducted an interview with Chaim Weizmann during which he outlined the thrust of the Government's short-term policy towards Palestine. At the close of the meeting Bevin insisted that he must see Weizmann again very shortly.(38) When Weizmann reported the outcome of this meeting to his colleagues in the London Office of the Jewish Agency, Lewis Namier considered Bevin's request to be "very important." However, at this point Ben-Gurion "threw a spanner into the works and refused to talk at all to any Minister till the White Paper was abolished." He also disapproved of other members of the Agency holding interviews with officials of the

British Government. In response to Ben-Gurion's attitude Weizmann apparently "exploded and said that he could not go on if there were to be two policies of the Executive,"(39) but Weizmann's influence had waned and his style of diplomacy was now outmoded within the Zionist Movement. On Ben-Gurion's orders no further discussions were to be held with British Ministers and for Weizmann it was reportedly "the great Fade Out". According to Baffy Dugdale, Weizmann "could never again recover real leadership."(40)

This development may have suited Ben-Gurion and other Executive members of the Jewish Agency but it drastically changed the relationship between the British Government and the Zionist Movement. The traditional personal chats between Zionist leaders and senior members of the Cabinet, which had been such a pronounced feature of Jewish activity in previous years were quickly disappearing, to be replaced by a campaign within the Labour Party directed by Poale Zion. Poale Zion urged members of the Labour Party to protest to Ministers, the Government and Transport House in an attempt to redirect policy(41) and to this end it brought its case before the National Executive Committee, which at that time was chaired by Harold Laski. This process was an indirect attempt at pressurising the Government and may have been considered by Zionists to be a more fruitful method of influencing the Cabinet. In the event, it proved not to be.

The NEC decided to appoint a delegation to interview the Zionists and a meeting was arranged for 5th October.(42) The Zionists predictably recalled party pledges and stressed, as a first step, the need for the immediate admission of 100,000 refugees. They also emphasised that there were "no circumstances in which the Jewish people will accept the White Paper," and should it continue, they warned, "all means will be taken to avoid its consequences."(43) The NEC delegation decided to present the case to Attlee, Bevin and Hall and on the 22nd October they met for a two hour discussion. The meeting was certainly not hostile with Laski prefacing the discussion with the comment that "this is a 'family' discussion and it would be unfortunate if we were to give the impression that the Government was under examination by the Party..."(44) He later stressed that the meeting "implied no criticism of the Government," but was merely a fulfilment of "our obvious duty to consider the relation of the Government's proposals to our policy." Attlee, for his part, pledged

that the proposals would be built upon the party policy of abrogation of the White Paper and the fulfilment of the Mandate, and the meeting ended amicably.

However, two weeks' prior to this meeting Bevin had presented to Cabinet a memorandum proposing the establishment of an Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry to examine the Palestine issue.(45) This development arose not as a result of Party criticism of government policy but, more significantly, as a direct consequence of President Truman's much publicised statement that 100,000 Jewish refugees be permitted immediate entry into Palestine.(46) Truman, who had been subjected to much pressure by the Jewish lobby in America, had in fact, shortly after the Potsdam Conference, recommended to Attlee that Jewish refugees in Germany be granted immigration certificates to Palestine. Truman argued that the main solution of their problem appeared to lie in the "quick evacuation of as many as possible...to Palestine," and if it was to be effective, "such action should not be long delayed."(47)

On the 9th October Bevin outlined the aims of a Committee of Enquiry which would be firstly, to examine the political and economic conditions in Palestine and secondly, to examine the current position of European Jewry. It was the Foreign Secretary's intention that the Committee would inaugurate a new era of Anglo-American co-operation in the Middle East. He hoped that "future policy in Palestine would depend largely on the nature of the recommendations of the Committee and that the United States would thus be forced to bear a share of the responsibility for it." America would then no longer be able to play the part of, in Bevin's words "the irresponsible critic."(48) Sir Harold Beeley of the Foreign Office confirmed Bevin's objectives: "America's opinions could not be ignored and they were putting pressure on the British Government in the interests of the Zionists and I think the British Government, including Bevin, felt that if a way could be found of bringing in Americans face to face with the problem as we saw it, that this pressure would be relaxed...it would force them to look at the Middle East problem as a whole."(49) This goal seems most unlikely, if not actually ingenuous, for it completely overlooked both the nuances of American politics and the fact that the United States housed half the world's surviving Jews.(50) Its ambitions were also at variance with the memorandums received from Lord Halifax,

Britain's Ambassador in Washington, who relayed American pro-Zionist sentiments to the Foreign Office: "There is a feeling in influential liberal quarters that if HMG had admitted more Jews into Palestine before the war, more Jews would have escaped Nazi persecution; that more might have been done to get Jews out of Europe into Palestine during the war and that Palestine is the natural asylum for the many Jews who now wish to leave Europe."(51)

A more convincing explanation of the Government's behaviour can only be found in the context of Britain's decline as a world power, a fact which was readily acknowledged by Bevin and the Labour Administration. The recognition that America would have to be brought into the problem, one way or another, was evident in Labour's resolution on Palestine in 1944;(52) by 1945 it was seen as imperative.

On the 13th November 1945, following America's agreement to participate in the Committee of Enquiry, the Cabinet approved a statement of policy which Bevin, later that day, presented to the House of Commons.(53) Bevin, in announcing the establishment of the Committee, gave a fair and balanced appraisal of the difficulties facing the British government. He stated "The fact has to be faced that since the introduction of the Mandate it has been impossible to find common ground between the Arabs and the Jews.. Both communities lay claim to Palestine, one on the ground of a millenium of occupation, and the other on the ground of historic association coupled with the undertaking given in the First World War to establish a Jewish home. The problem of Palestine is itself a very difficult one. The Mandate requires the Mandatory to facilitate Jewish immigration and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced thereby. HMG have thus a dual obligation to the Jews on the one side and to the Arabs on the other. The lack of any clear definition of this dual obligation has been the main cause of the trouble which has been experienced in Palestine during the past 26 years... Any arrangement acceptable to one party has been rejected as unacceptable to the other. The whole history of Palestine since the Mandate has been one of continued friction between the two races, culminating at intervals in serious disturbances." Therefore, the task now facing the British

Government, he asserted was "to find some means to reconcile these divergences", and he proceeded to outline the Committee's terms of references:

"1. To examine the political, economic and social conditions of Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement and the wellbeing of the peoples now living therein.

2. To examine the position of the Jews in those countries in Europe where they have been the victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution and the practical measures taken or contemplated to be taken in those countries, to enable them to live free from discrimination and oppression and to make estimate of those who wish or will be impelled by their conditions to migrate to Palestine or other countries outside Europe.

3. To hear the views of competent witnesses and to consult representative Arabs and Jews on the problem of Palestine and to make recommendations to HMG and the government of the United States for an interim handling of these problems as well as for their permanent solution.

4. To make such other recommendations to HMG and the US Government as may be necessary to meet immediate needs by remedial action in the European countries in question or by the provision of facilities for emigration to and settlement in countries outside Europe."

Bevin's thrust of argument became clear when he asserted that "we cannot accept the view that the Jews should be driven out of Europe and should not be permitted to live again in these countries without discrimination and contribute their ability and their talent towards rebuilding the prosperity of Europe." He was convinced that "Palestine while it may make a contribution, does not by itself provide sufficient opportunity for grappling with the whole problem." On a more personal level Bevin assured the House that "I am struggling to the best of my ability as Foreign Secretary to solve this problem, not I hope on the basis of the passions involved in the immediate difficulties now facing us.... I will stake my political future on solving this problem, but not in the limited sphere presented to me now." Bevin appealed to Members to help him carry

out his task and Labour backbenchers voiced no criticism.

The response from the Opposition benches to Bevin's statement was surprising. Some care had apparently been taken to ensure that the policy received a friendly reception from Conservative quarters. Bevin's private secretary had explained the Government's proposal to Eden four days' earlier, but in the event Oliver Stanley, Shadow spokesman on Colonial Affairs, "instead of giving the statement general support, as AE asked him to do, reserved his position and asked for a debate."(54) Oliver Stanley's actions seem curious especially when viewed in the light of his comments at a meeting of the Conservative Imperial Affairs Committee during which he stated that "the policy of a National Government, had it been returned would have followed the lines of the present Government's policy."(55) It would appear that on this occasion Stanley's response should be seen within the context of traditional Parliamentary adversarial rhetoric.

On balance, however, Bevin's statement was well received and it was observed that during the following press conference: "Eighty experienced and, therefore, cynical newspapermen listened to him nearly all of them convinced that here was a man who meant business and would bring a new refreshing touch to the handling of the Palestine problem."(56)

(ii) The Committee's Investigation

It is interesting that Bevin's first choice of Labour MPs to be considered for membership of the Anglo-American Committee was Richard Crossman. During an interview in later years Crossman recalled Bevin's first interest in him. Crossman had entered "the Labour Party on the question of rearmament and this had brought him in on Bevin's side." From then on Bevin had had his eye on Crossman and when the appointment for the Committee came up, "Ernie included me because he hoped that I would make a good job of it and qualify for a position in the Foreign Office."(57) Crossman, who knew little of the area and held no partisan views, immediately accepted the offer and joined the other members of the Committee which comprised: Sir John Singleton, the Chairman and an ex-Conservative MP and a High Court Judge; Mr.Crick, economic

adviser to the Midland Bank; Sir Frederick Leggett, a former Ministry of Labour conciliator; Herbert Morrison, and Major Manningham-Buller, a Conservative MP, on the British side and Judge Joseph Hutcheson; Ambassador Phillips, Professor Aydelotte; Mr. Buxton, a journalist; Dr. MacDonald, onetime High Commissioner for Refugees for the League of Nations and a lawyer, Bartley Crum, on the American side. Sir Harold Beeley was appointed Secretary.

The Committee commenced its work without delay and the enquiry opened in Washington. Some members of the British team allegedly "felt annoyance and suspicion" that they were to be subjected from the outset to the "full blast of Zionist propaganda".(58) Yet Crossman recorded that even some of the American members of the Committee were shocked by the "totalitarian claims" advanced by the American Zionists.(59) The American Zionists, of course, outlined the sentiments contained in the Biltmore Programme in strong, unequivocal terms.(60) When the Committee arrived in Britain in January 1946 for the London hearings an early witness was Nathan Jackson of Poale Zion. He argued that Jewish needs demanded a Jewish State "whether you call it that or not." When he was pressed by Crossman on the question of Jewish 'double nationality', i.e. the double claim of some Zionists to demand the concession of Palestine to Jewry as a National Home whilst simultaneously requiring separate and exclusive rights within their own Gentile homelands, he replied that it was imperative that the Jews had a Jewish State. With regard to the question of the Arab population, Jackson made the hackneyed response: "There are wide dominions in which the Arabs can live in safety and happiness, not so the Jews."(61)

It was during the London hearings that Bevin entertained members of the Committee at the Dorchester Hotel. Several members of the Committee including Crossman were to claim that Bevin, in an impromptu speech, promised to do all he could to implement a unanimous report.(62) Crossman noted in his diary: "This cheered the Americans and will, when we come to drafting the Report, make unanimity seem worthwhile."(63) Yet according to Creech-Jones, "a doubt lingered in the minds of some of us present at the lunch whether EB had slipped into some polite pleasantries. Would he really accept a report which would further inflame the passions already aroused in the Middle East? Would he be party to opening

the gates of Palestine to solve the problem of European refugees?"(64)

However, Crossman took Bevin at his word and reported: "At Lausanne, there was a deadlock because the orthodox British, eg, Singleton and Leggett would not agree to grant concessions to the Jews until they curbed the terrorists." Apparently, Crossman managed to find a colleague to slip the word to Singleton that "Ernie wanted a unanimous report and the two sticklers, Singleton and Leggett, capitulated." When the truth came out Crossman "got into bad odour."(65)

The procedural arrangements of the Committee could be open to criticism particularly at times when the terms of reference appear to have been contravened. The terms of reference had mentioned the examination of the 'political, economic and social conditions in Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement' before the examination of the position of the Jewish refugees in Europe. However, the Committee decided that after the conclusion of the hearings in London it would immediately depart for Europe in order to study the refugee problem in advance of its visit to Palestine and the Middle East. By changing the sequence of their instructions the members of the Committee exposed themselves to the powerful impact of the plight of European Jewry which, Sir Harold Beeley reported made "...a deep impression on them."(66)

After viewing the assembly centres in Germany and Austria where Jewish survivors lived in hope that they would one day be able to start a new life in Eretz Israel (Palestine), Bartley Crum, the American lawyer, wanted to issue an interim report which would recommend the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine,(67) although his colleagues rejected this proposal as premature. Crum, however, felt so strongly about the issue that he threatened to resign from the Committee and maintains that he was ultimately only mollified by a message from President Truman requesting that no interim report or recommendations be produced.(68) Interestingly, Truman disputed this story when interviewed at a News Conference in March 1946. Upon being told that reports suggested he had personallly intervened to prevent Crum from resigning, the President replied:"That's the first I have heard of it.
No communication like that between Mr. Crum and me."(69) This

episode is certainly curious and clearly one or other party was not being truthful, the question of course is which. It is possible that Truman did intervene but did not want it to be publicly known for fear of being accused of meddling.

The Committee's next stop was Cairo where representatives of the Arab League were to present their views. They stated, predictably, that "the Zionists had no rights in Palestine beyond those of a minority within an independent Arab State,"(70) and these statements were re-affirmed by the evidence submitted by the Arab Office to the Committee when it moved on to Jerusalem. Jamal Husseini, Vice-Chairman of the re-established Arab Higher Committee presented the Arab case and stressed that "The whole Arab people is unalterably opposed to the attempt to impose Jewish immigration and settlement upon it, and ultimately to establish a Jewish state in Palestine." In outlining the Arab argument Husseini essentially reiterated the views which had been presented to the Peel Commission nearly ten years' previously. The Arabs feared that if "Zionism succeeds in its aim, the Arabs will become a minority in their own country, a minority which can hope for no more than a minor share in the government, for the state would be a Jewish state." Husseini recalled the investigations of the Woodhead Commission which had shown that there "..were grave practical difficulties in the way of partition;" in that "commerce would be strangled, communications dislocated and...it would be impossible to devise frontiers which did not leave a large Arab minority in the Jewish state. "This minority", he asserted, "would not willingly accept its subjection to the Zionists and would not allow itself to be transferred to the Arab State." In many ways the Arabs understood the aspirations of the Zionists, particularly under the leadership of Ben-Gurion: "It cannot be too often repeated that Zionism is a political movement aiming at the domination of the whole of Palestine, to give it a foothold in part of Palestine would be to encourage it to press for more and to provide it with a base for its activities."(71) Yet it was Sir Alan Cunningham's view, the newly appointed High Commissioner in Palestine, that even in his own short experience of the problem it was clear to him that "these Arabs we are dealing with will not give an independent view other than extremist, and the Jewish Agency have been completely uncooperative."(72)

The Committee finally interviewed members of the Jewish Agency in March 1946. Weizmann was excluded from the Hearings. He complained bitterly to Sir Alan Cunningham that the "Committee had made no attempt to contact him personally in spite of the fact that Oliver Stanley had written a special letter to Judge Singleton on this question."(73) The Committee took the legitimate opinion, and against the unwarranted views of Oliver Stanley, that Weizmann was no longer representative of the Jewish Agency and it, therefore, concentrated attention on David Ben-Gurion which, in the event, proved to be unsatisfactory. Ben-Gurion conducted several interviews with the Chairman of the Committee which resulted in Singleton commenting that the Zionist leader had displayed "an apparent lack of candour." During a long session of the topic of the Haganah, Ben-Gurion singularly refused to answer the questions directly. He played on the fact that in Hebrew the word Haganah meant defence and categorically stated that there "is no such organisation bearing that name, although there are many defence organisations..." When pressed about the role of the Jewish Agency in controlling these organisations he stated obtusely that the Agency "with defence we have to do, with an organisation called Haganah, no."(74) The interview continued in this confusing manner and it soon became apparent that Ben-Gurion's appearances before the Committee had proved to be less than auspicious. There is no account of this episode in Ben-Gurion's biography.

Before leaving the Middle East the Committee received a report from the Chiefs of Staff on the military implications of maintaining law and order in Palestine. It stated that "In the event of Arab antagonism to the solution adopted in Palestine the whole of the Middle East would be seriously affected and in consequence violent disorders might well occur. Furthermore, the alienation of the Arab states would have, for both the USA and GB far reaching economic and political consequences." The report's concluding points made clear the fact that "Either the Jews or the Arabs are capable of producing a serious situation in Palestine," and pondered upon the possible recommendations the Committee could make: "A solution which is acceptable to the Arabs but not acceptable to the Jews would produce a serious situation in Palestine, but the military problems involved would be largely confined to that country. A solution acceptable to the Jews but not to the Arabs would, in addition to creating serious disturbances in Palestine, spread the trouble to

other Arab countries. A compromise solution which gained the support of a majority of both Jews and Arabs would be the only one that could result in a reduced military commitment. "However," the report cautioned, "a compromise which failed to satisfy either Jews or Arabs might well result in a heavier and more protracted military commitment than any other solution."(75)

With this salutory reminder of the difficulties of their task in mind, the Committee members left Palestine on the 27th March for Lausanne where they attempted to draw up a compromise solution. Crossman remembered "After a good deal of wrangling we...reached our first agreement, namely, that both a Jewish State in the whole of Palestine and Arab state in the whole of Palestine were injustices which must be unequivocally ruled out."(76) The Report was unanimously signed on the 19th April and its recommendations were a clear compromise. The Report attempted to balance the views of the various parties to the dispute. It recommended the immediate issue of 100,000 immigration certificates for Jewish refugees, but rejected the idea of either a Jewish or an Arab state in favour of a trusteeship. Immigration, however, was not to prejudice the rights of other sections of the population and the ban on the employment of Arabs in Jewish enterprises should be abolished. The Report stressed that Arab economic and educational advancement should be encouraged to match that of the Jews and finally, it aimed to make it quite clear and "...beyond all doubt to both Jews and Arabs that any attempt from either side, by threats of violence, by terrorism, or by the organisation or use of illegal armies to prevent its execution, will be resolutely suppressed... The Jewish Agency should at once resume active co-operation with the Mandatory Power in the suppression of terrorism and of illegal immigration and in the maintenance of law and order throughout Palestine."(77)

Despite the apparent unanimity of the Report, barely a week after it had been issued, Wilfred Crick, a member of the Committee sent a letter to Ernest Bevin outlining his thoughts on the findings. He wrote somewhat revealingly: "...it will doubtless have occurred to you that in order to achieve unanimity, as well as to avoid inflaming an already delicate situation some things have been omitted." He went on to suggest that in his opinion the Jewish Agency should be more effectively controlled and should one day be disbanded, and that an 'independent' Advisory committee should be appointed to

supervise any immigration.(78) Doubts, perhaps understandably, have been raised as to the efficacy of the Committee. Baffy Dugdale certainly had reservations: "I do not believe this Committee are sufficiently heavyweight to cut much ice, whatever they report,"(79) she remarked at the beginning of their investigations, whilst Sir Harold Beeley considered the Committee to be "not totally objective because two of the American members were strongly and inpenetrably biased from the outset."(80) Zionists, on the other hand, thought that Judge Singleton and Sir Harold Beeley were biased against the Jews.(81)

Nevertheless, the Report was immediately perused by members of the Foreign Office who stated that "the adoption of the policy advocated in the Report would have disastrous effects on our position in the Middle East."(82) Whilst these deliberations had been taking place a renewed outburst of terrorist attacks occurred in Palestine. Violence had temporarily abated during the investigations of the Anglo-American Committee because of the "desire of both Jews and Arabs to avoid prejudicing their cases."(83) However, on the 25th April the Irgun gang attacked a military car park in Tel Aviv which resulted in the death of seven British soldiers,(84) and the climate of opinion in London began to turn against the recommendations of the Committee.

On the 26th April at the Peace Conference in Paris and four days before the Report was to be published, Bevin informed the American Secretary of State, James Byrnes, that "we are prepared to accept the figure of 100,000 Jewish refugees, but only on certain conditions. In the first place it must be clear that immigration must not start until disarmament of the Jews had taken place." Bevin confided to Byrnes that he "..must understand how distasteful Britain found it, having to keep four divisions in Palestine in order to carry out a thankless task."(85) However, Bevin was to suffer a sharp disappointment when a few days later President Truman issued a statement welcoming the Report's publication and placing every emphasis on the need to admit the 100,000 refugees: "The transference of these unfortunate people should now be accomplished with the greatest dispatch"; whilst the other recommendations he considered were "questions of long-range political policies and international law which require careful study and which I will take under advisement."(86)

According to Francis Williams, the President's statement "threw Bevin into one of the blackest rages I ever saw him in."(87) The Foreign Secretary had been under the impression that the United States had agreed to co-operate with Britain over Palestine, but now the President was making public demands, without conducting any discussions with the British Goverment. Bevin immediately wrote a letter to Byrnes: "I confess that the issue, without consultation, of the statement on Palestine of which you sent me the text last night, seems likely to give rise to grave difficulties. I must remind you that in Palestine British soldiers have been foully murdered by the armed forces of the Jews. It is a situation which the British people will no longer tolerate." Bevin went on to stress that the liquidation of these private armies was essential both to make possible the entry of the 100,000, "to which the US statement attaches such importance," and to prevent a collapse of security in the Middle East. The Foreign Secretary was sure, he stated, that the United States must "realise this necessity."(88)

Prior to President Truman's statement, Bevin had opted for a solution of the issue along the general lines of the Committee's Report, and declared as much in Cabinet: "...if the situation were skillfully handled in consultation with the US Government it might be possible to bring about a reasonable settlement on the basis of the Committee's recommendations."(89) However, the crucial factor in Bevin's objective was American co-operation and this consideration had been uppermost in his mind when he suggested the formation of an Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry. His plan, however, had badly misfired.

On lst May in the House of Commons, Clement Attlee articulated the Government's displeasure with the United States by deprecating the President's selective attitude towards the Committee's recommendations; Attlee asserted that he wished to know the extent to which America would share in the additional military and financial responsibilities of implementing them and he declared that the Government could not admit so large a body of immigrants as the 100,000 underwritten by President Truman, and adopted by the Committee "unless and until illegal armies in Palestine had been disbanded and their arms surrendered. Jews and Arabs in Palestine alike," the Prime Minister urged, "must disarm immediately and the Jewish Agency must take a positive part in the suppression of the

recent violent attacks on British installations and lives."(90)

The British Government fully acknowledged that if the recommendations of the Committee were to be implemented a substantial financial and military commitment would be required of the United States and in a long memorandum to the American Secretary of State, Bevin outlined Britain's case. The Foreign Secretary estimated the level of expenditure to be "around the level of L70,000,000 immediately, increasing to L125,000,000 over a period of 10 years." Apart from the question of finance was the necessary military burden, which according to the memorandum, "is more important," because "the implementation of the report would cause serious repercussions throughout the Arab world involving additional military commitments which the British Government could not undertake alone in present circumstances." It was, therefore, essential "...before any decision is taken as to whether the report should be put into force or not, the British Government knows what assistance they can count on obtaining from the US Government."(91)

The response from the United States again proved to be a bitter disappointment to the British Government. Whilst America acceded some financial backing it categorically refused to assist militarily, arguing that it was believed "the implementation of the report by force would prejudice British and US interests in much of the Middle East and British and US influence would consequently be curtailed." The Memorandum pointed to economic considerations: "Of greater significance is the control of oil in the Middle East. This is probably the one large undeveloped reserve in a world which may come to the limits of its oil resources within this generation...." Therefore, it was stated that the United States would not commit armed forces or "orient the people of the Middle East away from the Western Powers," as America had a vital security interest in the area.(92)

The American Government seemed to perversely ignore the realities of the situation in Palestine. It was clear that the Arabs would reject any large scale Jewish immigration and obviously by implication such a policy, if adopted, would have to be enforced. By pointing to the economic and strategic aspects of the Middle East, the memorandum only served to highlight the immense difficulties confronting the British Government.

A few weeks after the exchange of these memoranda, the British Ambassador in America informed Bevin: "I had a short talk with Byrnes about Palestine yesterday and it was quite apparent that, despite all we have said, he takes for granted the admission of 100,000 as an immediate step.... He was alive to our difficulties, but wants you to know that he was under very strong pressure from Congress and outside it."(93) Bevin in his eagerness to forge an association with the United States over the question of Palestine had underplayed the impact of the powerful Jewish lobby in American politics.

The general feeling among the British Chiefs of Staff was that the Report had been the result of a misjudgement. In a letter to the High Commissioner in Palestine it was stated: "None of us who know anything about the Middle East can understand the Anglo-American report. It must have been the last straw for you and seems fairly to have upset the applecart,"(94) and if one accepts the reports of Richard Crossman, these sentiments were shared by the Prime Minister. According to Crossman, Attlee severely reprimanded him: "I'm disappointed in you Dick. The Report is grossly unfair to Britain. You've let us down by giving way to the Jews and the Americans."(95)

That both the findings of the Anglo-American Committee and the British and American responses had exacerbated an already fraught situation in Palestine was evidenced in a letter from the High Commissioner to Sir John Martin, the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office. Cunningham reported that "Jamal Husseini with the backing of at least 13 of the Arab Higher Committee is being most active in trying to arouse the political ardour of the local Arabs and in enlisting the sympathies of not only the adjacent Arab States, but also of any other countries whom they think may be sympathetic to their cause. As for the Jews the Prime Minister's statement has plunged them into gloom and they are now suspicious and morose."(96)

The response of the Labour Party to the government's handling of the Report was critical and Tribune condemned Attlee's attitude as "equivocal and obscure" and voiced doubt as to whether British strategy in the Middle East would be threatened by the admission of 100,000 refugees.(97) However, criticism from this quarter was not

totally unexpected as Jon Kimche, a Zionist, was joint editor of the paper and contributed many articles on Palestine.

An aspect which was more worrying for the Government was the union between James Middleton, the former Party Secretary, David Grenfell and several former Conservative Ministers with the aim of urging the Government to accept the findings of the Report and to institute "swift action to relieve the sufferings of Jewish survivors."(98) On 8th June a large demonstration took place in Trafalgar Square to protest against Government policy and included the Labour MPs, Sidney Silverman, Ian Mikardo and Barbara Ayrton Gould.(99)

A House of Commons debate on the issue on lst July proved to be impassioned. Attlee and Bevin were criticised by backbenchers, Michael Foot, Crossman, Barnet Janner, Silverman and Ayrton Gould for their attempts to quell Jewish terrorism by a military operation. The Government was attacked for "seeking to reimpose the White Paper upon the Jewish community and in trying to disarm the Haganah which would only undermine the position of moderate Zionists." Silverman argued that "there is only one way of smashing the resistance movement (in Palestine) and that is to liberate it by smashing the conditions out of which it has grown."(100)

Although these declarations had no impact on the direction of Government policy and whilst fully recognising that it was not unnatural that Zionist supporting MPs would demur at a policy so clearly at odds with the sentiments contained in previous Labour Party resolutions, it soon becomes clear that the whole episode proved an unedifying and embarrassing one for the British Government in general and for Ernest Bevin in particular. If anything the problem of Palestine appeared more acute than it had when Laobur entered office: not only were there still the difficulties of European refugees, the intransigence of the Arab and Jewish positions and the renewed acts of violence within Palestine itself, but also, and more importantly, the Anglo-American Committee's findings had actually served to sour the relationship between the British and American Governments and was creating a divide within the Labour Party.

CHAPTER 7

FOOTNOTES

1. Minutes of NEC Meeting 25/4/45

2. LPACR 1945 p.103

3. J. Alderman The Jewish Community in British Politics London 1983 ppl29-30. See also A. Sargent Op Cit pl25. Sargent claims that Palestine was not an important issue in the 1945 General Election.

4. N. Rose.Baffy Op Cit p226

5. Interview Professor Coupland and Lewis Namier 30/8/42. Leonard Stein papers Box 123 Loc Cit

6. Francis Williams interview with E. Monroe. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

7. N. Rose Op Cit p224

8. Ibid

9. H. Wilson Chariot of Israel London 1981 pl26

10. C. Attlee As It Happened London 1954 p215

11. K. Harris Op Cit p.406

12. Ibid p408

13. Roy Jenkins Nine Men of Power London 1974 p75

14. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

15. Dalton Diaries Vol.35 5/2/47 Loc Cit

16. Sir Harold Beeley, Thames Papers Box 1. File Loc Cit

17. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

18. Ibid

19. Notes of meeting between Bevin and I Goldstein. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc Cit

20. R. Crossman Palestine Mission London 1960p68

21. Leonard Stein Box 123 Loc Cit

22. N. Rose Op Cit p225

23. CAB 95/14 6/9/45

24. J. Kimche Seven Fallen Pillars London 1950 pp156-7

25. LPACR 1945 p127

26. Dalton's Diary Vol.34 Loc Cit

27. Crossman Papers Loc Cit

28. Secret report of Conference 18/10/45. Cunningham Papers Box VI File 1. Loc Cit

29. Ibid

30. CAB 95/14 11/9/45

31. Zionist Review 28/9/45

32. The Times 10/10/45

33. Zionist Review 9/11/45

34. See Chapter 2 for details of Lord Passfield's policies in 1929. R. Crossman Op Cit p66

35. PRO 30/78 10/3/46

36. H. Wilson Op Cit p126

37. Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers Box 176/6/36 and 7. Rhodes House, Oxford

38. N. Rose Op Cit p225

39. Ibid

40. Ibid p227

41. Zionist Review 28/9/45

42. NEC Minutes 26/9/45

43. Ibid 5/10/45

44. Ibid 22/10/45

45. CAB 95/14 9/10/45

46. G. Kirk Survey of International Affairs. The Middle East 1945-50 Oxford 1954 p193

47. Ibid p194

48. CAB 95/14 9.10.45

49. Thames Papers Box 1. File 5 Loc Cit

50. N. Bethell Op Cit p205

51. FO 371/45378 29/9/45

52. International Post-War Settlement 1944

53. HC Deb Vol 415 c.1927-31 13/11/45

54. P. Dixon Double Diploma. The Life of Sir Pierson Dixon London 1968 p197-8

55. Minutes of Imperial Affairs Committee 4/2/46. Conservative Party Central Office

56. Jon Kimche Op Cit p158

57. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

58. G. Kirk Op Cit p206

59. Crossman Papers Loc Cit

60. See Chapter 6 for details of Biltmore Programme. Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry Hearings PRO 30/78.9

61. Ibid

62. Crossman Papers Loc Cit; J.G. MacDonald My Mission to Israel 1948-51 London 1951 p21; B.Crum Behind the Silken Curtain New York 1947 p127-8

63. Crossman Papers Ibid

64. Creech-Jones Papers CJ 33/2/59 Loc Cit

65. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

66. Thames Papers Box 1 File 5 Loc Cit

67. B. Crum Op Cit p.128

68. Ibid p128-9

69. Public Papers of the Presidents of the US, Harry Truman 1946. US Government Printing Office 1961 p163

70. Anglo-American Hearings Loc Cit

71. Ibid

72. Cunningham papers Box V File 1 Loc Cit

73. Ibid

74. Anglo-American Hearings Loc Cit

75. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc Cit

76. Crossman papers Loc Cit

77. Cmd 6808. Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the Problem of European Jewry and Palestine. London 1946

78. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc Cit

79. N. Rose Op Cit p230

80. Thames Papers Box 1 File 5 Loc Cit

81. N. Rose Op Cit p230

82. FO 371/52524 26/4/46

83. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc Cit

84. Ibid

85. FO 371/52524 26/4/46

86. FO 371/52519 30/4/46

87. Francis Williams Ernest Bevin Portrait of a Great Englishman London 1952 p260

88. FO 371/52519 1/5/46

89. CAB 128 27/4/46

90. HC Deb Vol 422 Col. 195-7 1/5/46

91. FO 371/52519 2/5/46

92. FO 371/52521 20/5/46

93. FO 371/52529 13/6/46

94. Cunningham Papers Box VI File 1 Loc Cit

95. Crossman Papers Loc Cit

96. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc Cit

97. Tribune 10/5/46

98. The Times 20/5/46

99. The Times 9/6/46

100. HC Deb Vol 422 c.1860 1/7/46

CHAPTER 8

THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

(i) The Attempt to 'Pick up the Pieces'

The uneasy relationship which had developed between the United States and Britain over the contentious issue of Palestine was to be exacerbated by the Labour Party Annual Conference. The Party met for its usual yearly gathering in June 1946 and on this occasion the question of Palestine was raised. Harold Laski in his capacity as Chairman, urged during his opening address, that Jewish refugees should not become "the victims of hesitancy or timidity in Downing Street", but should be immediately permitted to enter Palestine. He continued with a particularly barbed comment presumably aimed at Ernest Bevin, "A British Statesman who sacrifices the Jews who escaped from the tortures of Hitler to the Arab leaders does not understand the elementary principles of the socialism he professes."(1) Harold Laski's position had hardened in the eight month interval since informing Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin that his representations to them on behalf of Poale Zion "implied no criticism of the Government", (2) and the scene now appeared to be set for an acrimonious debate as the Party attempted to distance itself from the Government.

Two days later a composite resolution was moved by Nathan Jackson of Poale Zion which called for immediate action to remove barriers to immigration and land purchase, and which quoted once again the Party's war-time declaration. Jackson urged the Party to "stand by a 30 year tradition" and his seconder, Victor Mishcon, addressed himself to Ernest Bevin: "The Jewish people have looked to you. For years in the Trade Union Movement you championed the cause of the oppressed, and expediency was never your shield. You have risen to your exalted position upon a reputation in the movement of integrity and fairness. Do not hesitate to do what is right now..."(3)

Richard Crossman's contribution was curiously ambiguous. Whilst referring to his participation in the 'impartial' Committee of Enquiry

and stressing that its findings had confirmed the "Party line which has been held for 30 years," he then proceeded to outline in stark contrast to the Party Declaration of 1944 the reasons why a Jewish state in Palestine was unviable. He asked delegates to consider whether "a Jewish State is the right way to achieve the freedom, liberty and equality of the Arab and Jew in Palestine" and maintained that it "would not help a delicate situation."

Bevin's response was characteristically uncompromising and he confronted the assembly by asserting: "Now, do you want a settlement of this problem? If you do, then I would suggest to you that you leave the matter where it is after I have explained what has happened." Bevin went on to discuss the existence within Palestine of illegal armed forces and argued that "If we put 100,000 Jews into Palestine tomorrow, I would have to put another division of British troops out there. I am not prepared to do it." After outlining the financial costs involved in the problem he stated: "The famous Palestine Mandate leaves me with a feeling that it is so drawn that it can be argued both ways.... It is a promise to two people. While I agree with a Palestine state of some kind I do not believe in absolute exclusive racial states." He then turned to the role of the United States and made an aside which was to prove deeply embarrassing in his future negotiations with the American Government: "There has been agitation in the United States, and particularly in New York, for 100,000 Jews to be put into Palestine. I hope I will not be misunderstood in America if I say that this was proposed with the purest of motives. They did not want too many Jews in New York."(4) Bevins' speech was effective within the context of Conference and sensing that Poale Zion's resolution would face defeat, Nathan Jackson withdrew it "in view of the Foreign Secretary's appeal to us..."(5) However, Bevin's remark was not well received on the other side of the Atlantic.

According to a cable from Sir Archibald Inverchapel, Britain's Ambassador in the the United States, Bevin's comment had a "devastating effect throughout America," and he immediately informed the Foreign Secretary that "Your criticism of New York has, of course, not only hit the nail of the head but driven it woundingly deep."(6) It had also, the Ambassador explained, advertised "British-American discord". The Foreign Secretary, failing to be contrite, replied to Inverchapel "It seems that judgements have been

formed on a few sentences of my speech torn from their context," and offered to send the full text of his Conference address to Congress members.(7) In attempting to cool the situation, Inverchapel asked Bevin to reassure not only Washington but also President Truman, whom he considered had been personally slighted, by issuing a statement to the effect that "Britain had not prejudged the question of admitting the 100,000."(8) Bevin remained unconvinced "I am not sure that this is a wise thing to do. I am getting upset with this Jewish agitation. We have made out position clear."(9) The position, in fact, was that both the British and American Governments were committed to a joint study of the implications of the Anglo American Report.

It was during this period that a correspondence developed between President Truman and the King of Saudi Arabia. Ibn Saud expressed alarm at the President's statement regarding Jewish immigration into Palestine and asserted: "In my desire to safeguard and strengthen in every way possible the friendship which binds our two countries together...I reiterate my feelings when this friendship is endangered." He then explained how "the Jews are only aggressors seeking to perpetuate a monstrous injustice, at the beginning, speaking in the name of humanitarianism, but later openly proclaiming their aggressiveness by force and violence," and concluded by urging the President to reconsider his "announcement in support of the Jews in Palestine and its demand that floodgates of immigration be opened in such a way as to alter the basic situation in Palestine."(10)

Truman, in reply, stated that he was mindful of the Arab case but emphasised that the American Government had given "assurances that it would not take any action which might prove hostile to the Arab people" and that no decision would be reached with regard to the basic situation in Palestine "without prior consultation with both Arabs and Jews." However, somewhat incongruously, conceivably deliberately so, he argued that: "I do not consider that my urging of the admittance of a considerable number of displaced Jews into Palestine or my statements with regard to the solution of the problem in any sense represent an action hostile to the Arab people." He went on to stress his "anxiety to do all that I can to aid in the matter" and assured Ibn Saud that "the government and people of the United States are continuing to be solicitous of the interests and

welfare of the Arabs."(11)

Despite Truman's simplistic appraisal of the implications of his statements on Palestine it would clearly be unwise to consider him ignorant of the nuances of the affair. He was well briefed by his Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Co-Ordinating Committee of the strategic importance of maintaining a pro-Western bias in the Middle Eastern theatre. In a memorandum from the Chiefs of Staff it was argued that "...if the peoples of the Middle East turn to Russia, this would have the same impact in many respects as would a military conquest of this area by the Soviets."(12) It would not, therefore, be unreasonable to interpret Truman's response to Ibn Saud as a bid to placate an influential Arab leader and to project an image of the American Government as something akin to an honest broker. It could also be seen that in claiming to be a dispassionate observer the United States was distancing itself from the British Government who, in its Mandatory role, was so obviously and profoundly embroiled in the issue.

Towards the end of June Britain's attitude shifted even further against the question of immigration into Palestine. The renewed series of attacks on British soldiers by Zionist terrorists served to strengthen the Government's resolve to make Jewish immigration into Palestine conditional on the cessation of violence. The High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham stressed that all negotiations on the admission of 100,000 Jews be suspended until terrorism was curbed and that he be given authority to implement locally, at his discretion, action against the illegal Jewish organisations and the Jewish Agency.(13) Further deputations were made to the British Government on the question of Jewish violence by General Evelyn Barker, the Military Commander in Palestine who, in a letter to Ernest Bevin, outlined the urgency of controlling the Irgun and the Stern Gang. However, although Barker argued that "...it is essential that we get rid of the extremists now, whether more outbreaks occur or not," he reminded the Foreign Secretary that "....it is impossible perpetually to subjugate a country by force, especially a virile and intelligent people like the Jews. The ultimate solution must depend on a satisfactory political answer."(14) This was clearly sound advice yet Bevin still desired American co-operation in achieving some form of political settlement.

When the matter came to be discussed in Cabinet it was generally agreed that it would be unwise to break off negotiations with the United States on the question of Jewish immigration. Enrest Bevin persisted in the belief that although "strong action" was required to contain Jewish terrorism "the importance of securing the support of the United States for this" was paramount.(15) The Cabinet decided to take a determined stand by suppressing the illegal organisations. It was agreed that the offices of the Jewish Agency would be raided as there existed suspicions as to the relationship between the Agency and the Haganah. On 29th June 1946, military and police forces occupied buildings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, including the Jewish Agency, arrested 2000 people and seized large quantities of documents which revealed the close connection between the two organisations.(16) Interestingly, and certainly reflective of Britain's distrust of American reaction, it was agreed at the Cabinet meeting of the 20th June, to notify the United States Government, at the last minute, of Britain's intentions. As such, Truman was notified only hours before the raid took place.

Attlee sent a cable to Truman at 1.15 am on 29th June informing him that: "In view of the continuance of terrorist activities in Palestine, culminating in the recent kidnappings of six British officers, HMG have come to the conclusion that drastic action can no longer be postponed. It is proposed to raid the Jewish Agency and to occupy it for a period necessary to search for incriminating documents."(17)

Truman revealed publicly in a Press Release from the White House that he very much regretted these developments.(18) It is difficult to assess whether these were the President's own sentiments or whether, in fact, his views had been coloured by the conversation he conducted with representatives of the Jewish Agency just prior to the Press Release. In any event, it served to exacerbate the growing uncertainty as to the possibility of Britain acting in concert with the United States on the question of Palestine.

The worsening situation in Palestine convinced the British Government that a way would have to be found of circumventing the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee and, as such, on llth July the Cabinet considered yet another long-term policy for the area. The Colonial Secretary, George Hall, presented his Cabinet colleagues with a paper arguing that "the recommendations of the

Anglo-American Committee were unworkable", and pointed to the arguments of British representatives in the Middle East who advised that "the adoption of this policy would have a disastrous effect on Britain's policy in the region...whilst the Arab peoples would be made more easily accessible to Russian propaganda and influence."(19) Sir Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, the British Ambassador in Iraq had informed Ernest Bevin four months' previously that "there is strong evidence of an underground Communist party in this country...and it has now reached a level at which it can no longer be either ignored or suppressed. Evidence suggests that the Army has been affected by Communist ideas..."(20)

According to the Chiefs of Staff the implementation of the Report together with the suppression of the illegal armies in Palestine would "necessitate reinforcement by two infantry divisions, one on the spot and one at short call, an armoured brigade and three infantry battalions, together with some additions to naval and air forces." The necessary army reinforcements could not be found in Britain, "..save at the expense of withdrawing from other commitments from which, in fact, withdrawal is not possible."(21)

Hall's proposal that two semi-autonomous provinces should be created in Palestine, one Jewish the other Arab, operating under a central trustee government, with the way left open for partition into two independent states or towards partnership in a federal constitution was not a novel idea but rather..."a contingency plan which had existed in the Colonial Office for some time."(22) In Cabinet there was agreement that the report of the Anglo-American Committee offered no solution to the problems in Palestine and Lord Tedder, the Chief of Air Staff made a timely reminder to Cabinet members that "whatever constitutional solutions were found, Britain's strategic needs in the Middle East, particularly with regard to communications and oil supplies, depended on the good will of the Arabs." It was decided, therefore, that a team of senior American officials should be invited to attend a conference in London, headed by Sir Norman Brook, the Secretary to the Cabinet, in order to discuss the Anglo-American report. Although it was considered "unwise to reject the Report immediately in the forthcoming discussions with the United States," there was agreement that an "appropriate moment" should be found for bringing this alternative plan to their attention.(23)

The tactics agreed upon by the Cabinet proved successful at the London Conference which opened on 19th July and the American deputation headed by Henry F. Grady appeared to favour the proposals previously outlined by the Colonial Secretary. As such, the plan which was later to become known as the Morrison-Grady Plan, was a policy of provincial autonomy in which Palestine would be divided into two partially self-governing Arab and Jewish provinces with an overall central government. The Mandatory Power would maintain direct jurisdiction over Jerusalem and the Negev.(24) However, a dramatic event which occurred in Palestine two days after the London Conference emphasised the urgency of not only discussing a solution to the problem but, more importantly,of enacting one.

On 22nd July the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, a wing of which was used as British army headquarters, was blown up and ninety-one people were killed. The Irgun gang, under the leadership of Menachen Begin claimed responsibility. This action provoked a sense of outrage both within the Government in London and the British Administration in Palestine. Sir Alan Cunningham, the High Commissioner, advised that "..only two alternatives were now open to the British: either to institute widespread searches for arms with a view to breaking up the Jewish resistance movements, which would create conditions tantamount to a state of war; or the British government could announce a final solution to the political problems and impose it themselves."(25)

The Cabinet met on 23rd July to discuss the attack and to consider Cunningham's statement. Attlee argued that "It would be a mistake to rush into a widespread search for arms, which would be taken as a measure directed against all the Jews in Palestine and might have the effect of alienating all sections of Jewish opinion." On the other hand, he considered it would "....equally be a mistake for HMG to take a sudden decision on the political problem." In his opinion, the right course was to press on with "Anglo-American conversations and to seek an early agreement with the United States government on a long-term policy." If such an agreement could be reached, he maintained, "We should announce our joint policy and try to rally the support of world opinion in favour of its adoption."(26) Ernest Bevin, George Hall and other members of the Cabinet agreed with the views expressed by the Prime Minister. The meeting concluded

on a note of optimism as it was felt that the discussions at the London Conference had gone well and it seemed probable that conclusions on the principles of a settlement could be formulated very soon. The United States delegation hoped to be able to obtain approval of their Government to the proposals outlined at the Conference and there existed the collective belief that a solution to the problem was in sight.

When Attlee and Bevin met the American Secretary of State at the Peace Conference in Paris on 28th July there seemed further cause for optimism. James Byrnes agreed to recommend to the President public acceptance of the Morrison-Grady Plan as a basis for a solution.(27) Three days later the Plan was announced in the House of Commons by the Lord President of the Council, Herbert Morrison, as a viable alternative to the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry.

Whilst Morrison urged the assembly to accept that "His Majesty's Government believe that these recommendations represent the best line of advance towards a solution of the problem in that this plan provides as fair and reasonable a compromise between the claims of Arab and Jew as it is possible to devise and that it offers the best prospect of reconciling the conflicting interests of the two communities," he emphasised the need for American acquiescence of the proposal: "The full implentation of the expert's plan as a whole depends on United States co-operation. I hope that will be forthcoming." He went on to state that "we had hoped before the Debate to receive from President Truman his acceptance, but we understand that he has decided, in view of the complexity of the matter to discuss it in detail with the United States expert delegation who are returning to Washington for the purpose. The President is thus giving further consideration to the matter, and we hope to hear from him in due course."(28)

During the Debate, however, Morrison spoke of the King David Hotel bombing in harsh and emotive terms: "The curse of Hitler is not yet fully removed some of his victims fleeing from the ravaged ghettoes of Europe have carried with them the germs of those very plagues from which they sought escape - intolerance, racial pride, intimidation, terrorism and the worship of force... The world is weary of this senseless strife of Jew and Arab and sickened by its

barbarous incidents." This speech served as a salutory reminder to Zionist sympathisers on the backbenches that violence was taking a strong grip in Palestine and events were far more serious than had been realised.

Oliver Stanley, the Opposition's spokesman on Colonial Affairs, was scathing: "Today, for the first time for 12 months we have some idea of the Government's long term policy in Palestine. Who would have believed, after hearing some of the declarations given during the Election that we should have to wait 12 months for a declaration of policy... Anyone reading those declarations would have been justified in believing that they were made by people who had made up their minds, who knew what they were going to do. The fact that they were made by right hon Gentlemen who were not in Opposition but in Government who must have been presumed to know the difficulties and reactions and who must have been presumed to have discounted them in advance, must have strengthened the belief that the people who made those pledges in June 1945, would be in a position to announce a policy earlier than July 1946." Stanley was clearly striking a raw nerve and appositely continued with his attack on the Labour Administration: "I confess I had expected that we should spend most of our time during this Debate discussing the Report of the Anglo-American Palestine Committee. But as I understand from the Lord President's statement today, that Report is dead...The Committee members..came, they saw, and it appears now that they have vanished."(29)

Although Stanley's first line of attack was fully justified, his criticism of the handling of the Anglo-American report was subsequently revealed to be an attempt to belabour the Government. In the second half of his seemingly circular speech he admitted that he"..did not think that the proposals of the Committee did, in fact, offer any permanent solution to the Palestine problem. Their report was in the nature of a compromise. But frankly it struck me as not a very good compromise, a compromise in which one side got all the action and the other side just got the words," and in referring to the rejection of the Report he stated, "I am glad that the Government have taken that decision."

In a final attempt to square the circle, Stanley argued that he did not agree to a return to the White Paper policy of 1939 on the

grounds that "Jews and Arabs are further apart than they were in 1939" and that it was idle to believe "...one could look, in accordance with the White Paper, to the acquiescence of the Arabs in Jewish immigration into Palestine." Furthermore, he was not enamoured of the present proposal before Parliament. Admittedly, it was not "a novel idea" and Stanley was quite accurate when he argued that the plan "had been in the Colonial Office for some time." He asserted that he had always regarded the scheme as "second best...some step towards cantonisation, towards giving some separate life to Jews and Arab, but it is far from going the whole way."(30)

'Going the whole way' for Stanley meant partition but his views were not shared by members of his own party. In an Imperial Affairs Committee meeting held some days before the Palestine Debate in Parliament Stanley outlined the views which he was to reiterate in the House. He argued that under partition, sovereign states would be set up, the boundaries would be guaranteed by the UNO, which would have to step in if these boundaries were threatened, or if bloodshed broke out between Jewish and Arab States."

Recalling his days at the Colonial Office he maintained that "Each wave of Jewish immigration resulted in Arab resistance and British repression." This was unacceptable as was "the Arab demand for complete cessation of Jewish immigration." He doubted if there was any future for a bi-national State; "We have never ruled anywhere with such a lack of popular support, certainly not an advanced people such as the Jews, and even in recent years, the Arabs" partition, then "is the only line along which to proceed."(31) Other members of the Committee, however, were less enthusiastic about the idea. R. Manningham-Buller, who had been a member of the Anglo-American Committee, argued that "partition was no answer," whilst Major Legge-Bourke maintained that partition "would result in the Arabs turning to Russia, in which case we should be likely to support the Jews with the result that all hope of reconciliation with the Arabs would disappear." Lord Hinchingbrooke reaffirmed that he would "stand by the 1939 White Paper" and favoured "facilitating the migration of the Jews back to Europe, regardless of American opinion." Stanley eventually concluded the meeting by stating that with regard to the Palestine issue "the difficulty was that the Party was not unanimous."(32)

It must also be acknowledged that at this stage mounting concern was discernible among Labour MPs who were alarmed at the extent of Zionist violence and the casualties being inflicted on the British army. During the Debate in House on 3lst July, S.N. Evans warned members that "for the first time in my experience ordinary, decent working men are talking in their pubs and clubs, at the barber's and at work, about the lot to which our lads are being subjected in Palestine at this moment."(33) A resolution from Poale Zion condemning the arrest of Zionist leaders drew no response from the NEC and Harold Laski failed to persuade the National Council of Labour to register a protest at the direction of Government policy.(34) Nevertheless, in July 1946 Richard Crossman together with Michael Foot published a strong attack on the Government. Both Attlee and Bevin endeavoured to persuade Crossman to moderate his views but as Bevin later confessed: "nothing I can say will make (Crossman) alter his ideas about Palestine which derive from his lack of judgement and his intellectual arrogance."(35)

However, despite criticism of the Government at certain levels, Cabinet members, Dalton and Morrison, were beginning to realise that "fishing in Bevin's territorial waters was particularly inexpedient."(36) Outside the Cabinet Arthur Creech-Jones, despite earlier promises that he would concern himself with all consultations regarding Palestine, now found that "I was too preoccupied with the other major tasks of the Colonial Office..to follow as closely as I would have liked; and in any case questions of Palestine from the start of the Government were taken at top level."(37) Whether, in fact, one judges Creech-Jones' statement as a form of apology for his ineffectuality in the matter, one cannot dispute Bevin's grip on policy, as indeed, Creech-Jones was to discover. He recalled speaking "to Silkin..about helping us against the Bevin policy", and finding that "Bevin's hold on the Labour Party was too strong for him to do anything."(38)

In any case, as a result of Jewish terrorism in Palestine the general mood of the Laobur Party seemed to be shifing. In the words of Jon Kimche "a deep bitterness against all Palestinian Jews now prevailed even among the Ministers who had favoured Zionism. Anyone who was at that time in close touch with the Labour Movement and with its members in the Government could not fail to sense this transformation."(39) Certainly, the possibility of Palestine becoming

a Jewish State, as envisaged by Labour in 1944, was dismissed by Tribune as "such an extreme Jewish demand" which could no longer be justified.(40) Even G.D.H. Cole succumbed to pragmatism, arguing that "although British commitments cannot honourably be evaded it is equally outside our power to help the Jews make Palestine a predominantly Jewish country at the cost of a head on conflict with the League of Arab states."(41)

The Jewish political factionalism within Palestine also had an impact on Poale Zion, who found it was suffering attacks from 'Revisionists' and 'General Zionists' for being affiliated to the 'untrustworthy' Labour Party.(42) The Zionist Review stated "Let us be quite clear as to what is the 'crime' that Poale Zion are accused of having committed. They obtained a pledge from the Labour Party when they were in opposition and now they, Poale Zion, are being held responsible for the non-honouring of the pledge by the Labour government. This...misrepresentation would do credit to our enemies, not to our colleagues."(43)

Teddy Kollek, a member of Poale Zion raised doubts about the dependence of the organisation on the Labour Party's intentions and the trust it had placed in the Government to follow, as Labour Zionists saw it, the right course. Poale Zion he believed had "pinned its hopes on Creech-Jones and Labour...it was obvious who the real leaders were, Ernest Bevin was not our friend and he did not pretend to be.. I found myself in sharp conflict with all the naive supporters of the Labour Party."(44)

Sargent argues that the British Zionist Movement failed at this time to "influence either the Labour Government or the Party"(45), and there is truth in this assertion. However, if it failed to 'influence' it could undoubtedly embarrass the Government, particularly as the Left of the Labour Party had taken up the Zionist cudgel, and were prepared to pursue it for what it was worth.(46)

The second phase of the London Conference opened on 9th September 1946 and somewhat paradoxically was attended by no Palestinian delegates, neither Arab nor Jewish. The Jewish Agency had decided to reject the Morrison-Grady plan and not to take part in formal talks whilst their leaders continued to be detained. The

Palestinian Arabs, on the other hand, declined to attend because of Britain's refusal to receive Haj Amin al-Husseini, who had returned to Palestine from exile and was once again leader of the Arab Higher Committee of Palestine. Of the Arab States only three sent delegates: Hafez Ramadan of Egypt, Faris el-Khoury of Syria and Nuri es-Said of Iraq, whilst Azzam Pasha represented the Arab League. The Conference began in a rather desultory manner. Ernest Bevin presented the Morrison-Grady Plan but was unable to convince the Arab representatives of the viability of the proposal. They believed that a system of provincial autonomy would inevitably lead to partition and that once there was a Jewish state in Palestine, however small, it would become a bridgehead for Jewish political and economic penetration of the whole area. The Jews, they argued, would fill their state with immigrants from Europe until such time that it would be possible to issue a claim for greater living space which would inevitably lead to expansion of their territory by force.(47) The Arabs proposed, somewhat predictably, the maintenance of a unitary Palestinian state with a legislature elected by all citizens, with Jewish representation being limited to one third. Under this system all Jewish immigration would cease and land restrictions would remain intact. A treaty would be signed under which Britain would receive military facilities.(48)

Meanwhile, the Jewish Agency informed the British Government independently that whilst they would not participate in the Conference, they would be prepared to consider a solution which gave them a Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine.(49) Once again this renewed attempt at bi-partite negotiations seemed doomed to failure from the outset but on this occasion the precipitating factor in its demise was a statement made by President Truman and released to the Press on 4th October 1946. Truman mentioned the London Conference and the overtures being made by the British Government in an attempt to achieve some form of settlement. However, he went on to re-state Zionist demands: "..the Jewish Agency has proposed a solution of the Palestine problem by means of the creation of a viable Jewish state in control of its own immigration and economic policies.. It proposes furthermore the immediate issuance of certificates for 100,000 Jewish immigrants." At this juncture the thrust of his argument became apparent and rendered him vulnerable to charges of "playing political tactics for the New York vote" in the Democratic Congressional campaign.(50) He argued

that the Jewish Agency proposals had "..received wide-spread attention in the United States, both in the press and in public forums. From the discussion which has ensued it is my belief that a solution along these lines would command the support of public opinion in the United States.. To such a solution our Government could give its support." As such, he believed and urged that "substantial immigration into Palestine cannot await a solution to the Palestine problem and that it should begin at once."(51)

The Morrison-Grady Plan had effectively been discarded by the American President. Attlee was furious and accused Truman of frustrating the patient efforts "of a country which has the actual responsibility for the government of Palestine to achieve a settlement" and warned that the consequences of his pronouncement would be the "loss of still more lives in Palestine."(52) Bevin was incensed by Truman's statement and asserted in Cabinet that although he had "hoped for more satisfactory progress in the informal conversations with Jewish representatives," the prospects of persuading them to adopt a more reasonable attitude had been "impaired by the statement of Truman."(53) The British Government's indignation with President Truman was completely understandable and even Crossman conceded that "any British Foreign Secretary would have been annoyed at American pronouncements on Palestine,"(54) although Creech-Jones maintained, admittedly two decades later, that "..it would have been better if Bevin and Attlee had not lost their temper with Truman."(55)

By the end of October Britain's Palestine policy was in a state of suspension. Two weeks' previously Attlee appointed Arthur Creech-Jones, an avowed Zionist sympathiser, as Colonial Secretary in attempt to win the good faith of the Zionists, but by 18th October talks between Britain and the Jewish Agency ended without any definite undertakings on either side.(56) The hope was expressed that there might be some return to negotiations in the new year and as such the London Conference was adjourned until January 1947. In a Cabinet meeting on 25th October, Bevin outlined three possible options open to the British Government in the increasingly likely event of a negotiated settlement being unattainable. The first course was to impose a settlement acceptable to one or other of the two communities in Palestine; the Chiefs of Staff having advised the government that Britain did not have the means to impose a solution

that was resisted by both sides. The second alternative was to surrender the Mandate and withdraw from Palestine; an option which Bevin and the Foreign Office, at that time, did not favour because of the serious effect it would have on Britain's strategic position in the Middle East. The third possibility was to propose a scheme of partition which might provide for the Arab part of Palestine to be merged into Trans-Jordan.(57) It was agreed at this meeting that no decision would be taken until Bevin consulted with President Truman when the Foreign Secretary visited America in December.

Bevin purportedly was reluctant to go to America to discuss the situation with Truman and relations between the two men "began in a very chilly way."(58) However, an extract of a confidential note of the meeting between the Foreign Secretary and the American President at the White House on 8th December, reveal the discussions to be not only cordial but also surprisingly frank. Bevin told Truman that he thought the Morrison-Grady Plan a "very fair and practical proposal. One of its advantages was that it would not involve a referral to the UNO" which would essentially mean bringing in other powers, especially the Soviet Union. Truman evidently agreed that it would be wise to keep them out. Bevin admitted that the Jews were difficult: "They somehow expect one to fulfil all the prophecies of all the prophets.." but he confessed that "the Arabs are difficult too." At this point Truman made an admission which vindicated Bevin's criticism of him "..he (Truman) went out of his way to explain how difficult it had been with so many Jews in New York," and stated that "If the British Government reached an accord over Palestine the US Government would be very pleased to give any help they could, including finance." Bevin replied that "he did not expect to reach an 'accord', as it would never be possible to get Jews and Arabs to agree with each other. The trouble was," he confessed, "that HMG had given conflicting pledges," to which Truman answered, with disarming honesty, "So have we." The meeting ended amicably, if somewhat inconclusively, with Bevin explaining that it was "HMG's job to narrow the differences so that there would not be too much hostility from either side to whatever policy was pursued."(59)

However, if Bevin's interview with Truman failed to produce a definitive policy towards Palestine, it certainly affected the Foreign Secretary's perception of the issue and forged an acceptance of its

intractability. In a speech made shortly after his return from the United States, Bevin stated that "The question facing Great Britain now is whether an insoluble problem would be present for all time or whether this problem could be handed back to the United Nations with a confession that we could not solve it."(60)

(ii) Referral to the United Nations

On 1st January 1947 a minute of a meeting between Bevin and Creech-Jones was sent to the Prime Minister. The Foreign Secretary had outlined his views on the London Conference which was due to take place on 21st January, and the possible options open to the British Government if, as he firmly believed, agreement would not be reached. He stated "There are only two courses open to us; firstly, to impose a solution, thus overcoming the active resistance of Arab, Jew or both; secondly, to divest Brtain of all further responsibility for Palestine."(61) Bevin went on to argue the disadvantages of following the first alternative: "it would involve us in a continuing military commitment which would be a heavy one and last a long time. It is doubtful whether we have the resources to sustain a burden of this kind or whether public opinion would countenance the pursuit of a policy which did not seem to be leading to the pacification of Palestine and a substantial withdrawal of British troops from the country." If these assumptions were right, he continued, "we should admit our failure to deal with the intractable problem of Palestine and hand it over to others for solution...we would be fully jusitified in surrendering the Mandate to the UN." However, Bevin added revealingly, before surrendering the Mandate to the United Nations it should be offered to the United States; "Of course, they would almost certainly refuse. But I feel we should make the offer to them first, despite the resentment which this would cause among the Arabs because it would then be possible to say to them (the Americans) that, as they were not prepared to shoulder the burden which we have already carried far too long, we had no alternative but to lay it at the feet of the UN." The Foreign Secretary's views indicate that despite the confessional nature of his interview with President Truman and the apparent accord which superficially existed between America and Britain, relations were far from well between the two nations over the question of Palestine and, maybe more significantly, the British Government was not above

considering devious manoeuvres which would place the United States in a sensitive position.

Nevertheless, although Bevin was attracted by the idea of referring Palestine to the UN he was fully aware that "We could not commit ourselves to this policy without considering its effects on our strategic position in the Middle East as a whole. On this we should need the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff. The diplomatic and political implications of evacuating Palestine in this way would also be serious and would have to be weighed in the balance against the release from an embarrassing and thankless task in Palestine."

The Foreign Office was cautious on the question of American involvement as evidenced in a memorandum to Sir Harold Beeley, the Adviser to the Foreign Secretary on Palestine, from P. Mason of the Eastern Section: "Since the demise of the League of Nations, no Mandate technically exists merely a moral obligation to administer the territory in accordance with the terms of the original Mandate. Therefore, a transaction with the USA would seem to amount to a bilateral arrangement that on a given date we should move out and the US would from that moment take over the administration. I suppose that an arrangement on these lines would be technically feasible, the question of legality, perhaps, not strictly arising since there would be no Mandate to transfer. Whether it would be politically feasible is not for me to say though I should have thought that it might be open to a charge of power politics."(62)

During the discussion between Ernest Bevin and the Colonial Secretary it became clear that the notion of Britain surrendering the Mandate was an anathema to Creech-Jones. He maintained that if the British government were to announce its intention to do so, the administration of Palestine would immediately become untenable: "..intensified Zionist terrorist activities would follow" and such a proposal "would bring on our heads Arab hostility."(63) The Colonial Office feared the creation of a state of anarchy in Palestine, and in many ways, understandably so, for they had "...built up the administrative structure, the social services, etc and were naturally dismayed by the prospect that their work might be destroyed."(64)

However, another consideration concerned Creech-Jones and served to not only distance the objectives of the Colonial Office from those

of the Foreign Office, but also, to place a schism between himself and the Foreign Secretary. The minutes of the meeting indicate that Creech-Jones was aware of party political factors: "The Colonial Secretary lays stress on the fact that a considerable section of the Government's supporters, both in Parliament and in the country, would be severely critical of the policy proposed and liable to raise difficulties for the Government in view of the many declarations on the subject made by the Labour Party, and particularly that made immediately before the General Election. He also added that the Labour Party is deeply committed to the policy of the Jewish National Home." In essence, Creech-Jones favoured partition in the belief that "...it would be acceptable to opinion in this country and to important sections of the Zionist Movement."(65)

This line of argument was summarily dismissed by Ernest Bevin and the Foreign Office who accused the Colonial Office of pursuing a policy, the principle aim of which "was to reach an agreement with the Zionists." Bevin added that "desirable as such an agreement would be, it is from the Foreign Office point of view, far more important that we should avoid a quarrel with the Arab States over Palestine.." In a subsequent comment on the discussion a member of the Foreign Office staff stated: "It is not clear what is meant by the statement that the 'Labour Party is deeply committed to the policy of the Jewish National Home'. The policy of favouring the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine is embodied in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and has at no time been renounced by any British Government..The Colonial Secretary may, of course, mean that the Labour Party is committed to doing more for the Zionists than carrying out the previous engagements of HMG".(66)

This deliberately obtuse interpretation of Creech-Jones' statement clearly suited Foreign Office officialdom and Bevin refused to give his colleague's views greater countenance. Admittedly, Creech-Jones' stand was biased as he admitted some years later: "On becoming Secretary of State I immediately urged what my liberal and my Jewish friends had hoped might be the line of advance - partition,"(67) but of potentially greater significance was the fact that several senior Ministers, sensing maybe that this could be a last ditch attempt to influence Bevin, now hastened to follow his lead. At a Cabinet meeting on 16th January 1947 Creech-Jones circulated a memorandum in support of partition. Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of

the Exchequer, agreed with the Colonial Secretary arguing that it was now clear that "Arabs and Jews would not work together and that since Zionists insisted on an area under their control partition was the only solution." Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, endorsed this view. He feared that Zionist leadership would pass into the hands of extremists if Britain repressed by force the continuing disorder in Palestine. Emmanuel Shinwell, the Minister for Fuel and Power warned that Britain should not follow a course of action which would alienate the United States and he judged that "the US would support partition."(68)

Dalton summarised the meeting in his diary: "On Palestine a number of us have been shouting for partition - Creech-Jones is very good on this and much more decisive than his predecessor. EB and PM try to tangle up the merits of various solutions with hypothetical conclusions of who would vote for this or that solution at the UN. I have been trying to keep these distinguished and have been urging that partition is the least objectionable of all policies and that, if we decide on this, we should then go on to consider how the local and political obstacles can be overcome. The present state of things cannot be allowed to drag on. There must be a Jewish State - it is no good boggling at this - and even if it is quite small, at least they will be able to let lots of Jews into it - which is what they madly and murderously want!"(69) Dalton had once again adopted his arrogant and ignorant reading of the situation by completely underestimating, if not actually discounting, the implications of such a policy.

Herbert Morrison was reportedly "..coming over to a decent partition scheme"(70) and Shinwell had aroused Bevin's anger by publicly criticising his policy in the Middle East.(71) Clearly, opposition to the Foreign Secretary was mounting within the Cabinet but with such obviously ill-considered opinions which revealed a total lack of understanding among his colleagues as to the complexity of the issue, it is hardly surprising that Bevin stuck to his guns, rejected partition and effectively appeared unchallengeable. In a report on Palestine issued by the Foreign Office on 27th January 1947 it was forcefully argued that: "The adoption of partition would be regarded by all Arabs as a capitulation by HMG to Zionist pressure. Anglo-Arab relations would be affected not only by the initial enforcement of the policy but also by the continuing friction between

the Jewish state and its Arab neighbours. To how great an extent partition would result in an estrangement between GB and the Arab peoples it is not possible to estimate. But the consequences of such an estrangement would be so grave that the risk of it should be a major consideration in the examination of partition as a possible policy. The loss of Arab goodwill would mean the elimination of British influence from the Middle East to the great advantage of Russia.

At no time have HMG promised to establish a Jewish State. In the Balfour Declaration itself the undertaking to facilitate the establisment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people was qualified by the pledge that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. Any policy which would involve placing a large number of Arabs under the rule of an independent Jewish State would be liable to challenge as inconsistent with our past undertakings."(72)

The abortive last-bid attempt to reconvene the London Conference at the end of January effectively dispelled the opposition Bevin had encountered, particularly from the Colonial Secretary, who emerged from the unproductive, intransigent meetings with Arab and Jewish representatives somewhat less than enamoured of the prospect of partition. Brought face to face, for the first time, with the implacable rejection of partition by the Arab delegates; the difficulties of maintaining law and order and the expansionist aims of the Zionist Movement under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, Creech-Jones confessed that he had become increasingly "...impressed by its practical difficulties. It would be difficult to establish a viable Jewish State without prejudicing the vital interests of the Palestine Arabs; and where the frontiers were drawn, large numbers of Arabs must inevitably be left under Jewish rule." However, he was now convinced that the greatest problem in the enforcement of partition would be the extent of "rebellion and disorder in Palestine which might last for a considerable time.."(73)

There is evidence to suggest that Creech-Jones' disenchantment with the prospect of partition was the result of influence exerted by Bevin. Sir John Martin recalled that "it was difficult for Creech-Jones to stand up to such a formidable figure as Bevin.

They had been together in the Trade Union world and Creech-Jones was then in a position of subordination. Therefore, Creech-Jones was completely outgunned."(74) Creech-Jones argued, as he obviously would, that his change of heart and his subsequent participation with Bevin on a joint memorandum was not a consequence of "Bevin's work."(75) He explained that his support for partition was based on the views of the High Commissioner in Palestine and his advisers in the Colonial Office.(76)

It is clear from representations made to the Colonial Office by the Jewish Agency that moderate Zionists favoured partition, as, indeed, did the Colonial Office.(77) However, a Foreign Office memorandum maintains that Bevin's most persuasive argument which effectively convinced Creech-Jones was the conviction that "partition would never be approved by the UN because the Soviet bloc is bound to join with the Arabs in opposing it."(78) Creech-Jones may have fallen victim to his own political naivete in supporting a policy of partition, the ramifications of which he had not considered. He admitted himself that "the longer I examined the detailed implications of partition the more unrealistic it became."(79)

On 7th February 1947, the Cabinet met to discuss a final attempt to secure an agreed solution for Palestine, and it considered a joint memorandum by the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The memorandum outlined a plan which had "as its objective the establishment of self-government in Palestine leading to independence after a transition period of five years under Trusteeship." It provided for a substantial measure of local autonomy in Arab and Jewish areas, which would enable Arabs and Jews to collaborate together at the centre. It also contained special safeguards for the 'human rights' of both communities and provided for the admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants over two years and for continued immigration thereafter by agreement between the two communities, or failing that, by arbitration under the United Nations. Bevin explained to Cabinet that "he sought authority to put the plan before the Arabs and the Jews," and if it commanded a measure of acquiescence, "the Cabinet would be asked to decide whether HMG should go ahead with it." If on the other hand, there was no prospect of acceptance, "it would be necessary to submit the whole problem to the United Nations, explaining the various efforts which had been made to find a solution but making no

recommendations."(80)

Creech-Jones stated that he was in "full agreement with the proposals which were based on the hope that Jews and Arabs would collaborate in a unitary state. "The general views of the Cabinet Ministers supported the presentation of the Plan to "both parties as a basis for negotiation," but emphasised the urgency of negotiating quickly, "within the next week or so." If the plan was rejected then "reference to the United Nations would be necessary."(81)

It is not too difficult to see this attempt to bring together Arabs and Jews as window-dressing. Bevin obviously knew the plan would be rejected by both parties and ultimately the problem would be referred to the United Nations. He was simply engaging in tactics, and to give Dalton credit, he was the only one to recognise it: "EB goes doddering round and round with the Arabs and Jews and nothing ever happens except a long and rising series of outrages in Palestine....yet the Cabinet is all behind Bevin now."(82)

Predictably, both the Arabs and the Jews rejected the proposal. Ben-Gurion saw them as a retreat from the Morrison-Grady plans in the direction of the White Paper of 1939. He argued that the British conception of an independent state of Palestine meant one with an Arab majority: it would be "a State composed of Palestinian nationals of Arab and Jewish race. This was unacceptable. They were first and foremost Jews and they wanted a Jewish state in Palestine in which the Jews would be a majority."(83) By contrast, the Arabs interpreted the plan differently, arguing that these proposals would lead to partition.

On 13th February, Bevin and Creech-Jones, in another joint memorandum stated that they had concluded that it was impossible to arrive at a peaceful settlement in Palestine on any basis whatsoever, except with the backing of the United Nations. Britain had to shoulder its present responsibilities until the matter could be referred to the General Assembly.(84) The following day Bevin explained the situation to the Cabinet, and asserted that it was his and the Colonial Secretary's recommendation that "HMG should give immediate notice of their intention to refer the problem of Palestine to the judgement of the General Assembly of the United Nations and whilst not making any recommendations, should invite the Assembly

to find a solution to the problem."(85) It was Bevin's belief that "both the Jews and Arabs were anxious to avoid discussion of the problem in that forum and it might be that if we now announce our firm intention to take the matter to the UN Assembly this might bring them to a more reasonable frame of mind." Attlee added that once it was announced that the question was to be submitted to the UN "there was some reason to hope that both communities in Palestine would exercise restraint so as to avoid prejudicing the case which they would have to present at the General Assembly."

Opposition to this proposal was voiced, but it was effectively silenced by Bevin. The Chief of Air Staff, Lord Tedder expressed alarm that if the "future of Palestine were left to the decision of the UN Britain could not be sure that it would be able to secure there the military facilities it required." The most forthright critic was John Strachey, who argued that for strategic and moral reasons the "just claims" of the Zionists should be supported. This view was quickly defeated by Bevin's counter-argument that in view of the recent activities of the Jewish terrorists in Palestine it was not to be assumed that a "policy of full support for the Jewish claim would be acceptable either to public opinion in this country or to the British troops in Palestine."(86) Bevin was correct in his assertion; only two weeks' previously The Times had reported of the "uneasiness now felt in the country at the failure of the Government to maintain public security in Palestine in the face of the deliberate challenge of the terrorists to the authority of the Mandatory Power."(87) Attlee concluded the Cabinet discussion by stating that in his view the right course for HMG would be to make every effort to maintain the status quo during the interim period until the General Assembly met in September and it was agreed that the Government should give notice of their intention to refer the problem to the United Nations.

The impression gained of the mood of this meeting is that of an air of desperation and an eagerness to be rid of an intractable problem which was diverting ever more attention from the Government's growing domestic difficulties. Yet the advantages of being freed from a task which not only brought Britain international censure but was also being increasingly resented at home had to be balanced against the strategic interests in the Middle East. There was clearly no easy solution.

Britain kept the United States informed of developments but interestingly there is no evidence to suggest that the British Government actually offered America the Mandate. The whole idea, of course, may well have been a bluff. Truman's response to Bevin on learning of the proposed referral to the United Nations was that "it would be wise to lay the matter before the Trustee Council rather than wait for the General Assembly."(88) Bevin ignored the suggestion and announced in Parliament on 17th February 1947 that the Palestine issue would be referred to the United Nations.(89) The proposal was well received on all sides of the House. Stanley supported the policy as did Churchill. Churchill had, in fact, first recommended referral in the July of 1946: "The Government should say that if the United States will not come and share the burden of the Zionist cause, we should now give notice that we will return the Mandate to the UNO and that we will evacuate Palestine within a specific period."(90)

One week later, the Foreign Secretary, with a comprehensive brief drafted by the Foreign Office, spoke again to the Commons on the subject of Palestine. Bevin was in belligerent mood and a good deal of his speech was devoted to the charge that America's 'intervention' in Palestine had "set the whole thing back...in international affairs I cannot settle things if my problem is made the subject of local elections."(91) His bitterness with American and Zionist pressure was more than evident but one pointed comment aroused backbench Zionist sympathisers. He remarked that the Mandate "had provided for what was virtually an invasion of the country by thousands of immigrants."(92) Harold Lever attacked Bevin and Benn Levy congratulated the Foreign Secretary on "the best exposition of the Arab case that I have ever heard." Crossman continued to argue in favour of partition whilst Barbara Ayrton Gould urged the impossible: "A unitary State should still be attempted, in which Jews and Arabs could very well solve their differences in the future, as they have in the past."(93)

These attacks, many of which were ill-considered, were, of course, only to be expected and Bevin emerged in control of the situation. He was no doubt by this time accustomed to carrying the chief burden and opprobrium of Britain's policy towards Palestine. Yet in many ways he could rest in the comfort that by referring the issue to the UN he had gone some way in the direction of resolving the

problem, even, indeed, if this was the only rational option open to him.

In his defence he could always argue that as Foreign Secretary he was obliged to take a non-sectarian stance, adopt the broader view and assess national interests above party resolutions. However, the issue was not as simple as this, the Labour Party including Ernest Bevin, had raised Jewish expectations, had courted the Zionist cause, had promised the moon then in the cold reality of office had been seen to negate its stated policy intentions. If this policy reversal indicted Bevin, then it surely condemned the whole policy-making machinery of the Labour Party who, in Opposition, unwisely, if not tragically, espoused imprudent sentiments which were doomed to be inoperable in Government and would lead to unnecessary rancour with the Party.

FOOTNOTES

1. LPACR 1946 p107

2. See Chapter 7. NEC Minutes 5/10/45

3. LPACR 1946 pp154-155

4. Ibid p164

5. Ibid p169

6. FO 371/52529 13/6/46

7. Ibid

8. Ibid 14/6/46

9. Ibid 15/6/46

10. Ed. R. Dennet, R. Turner Documents on American Foreign Relations Vol.III. New York 1948. pp905-906

11. Ibid p908

12. Memorandum from the American Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Co-Ordinating Committee 21/6/46 cited in T.G. Fraser Documents on the Midle East 1914-1979 London 1980 p117

13. Cunningham Papers Box VI file 1 Loc Cit

14. Ibid Box V file 4

15. CAB 128/5 20/6/46

16. CAB 128/5 1/7/46

17. FO 371/52535 29/6/46

18. Public Papers of the Presidents of the US Op Cit p215

19. CAB 128/6 11/7/46

20. Cunningham Papers Box VI File 1 Loc Cit

21. CAB 128/6 11/7/46

22. Ibid. Sir Harold Beeley, Thames Papers Box 1 File 5. Loc cit

23. Ibid

24. FO 371/52538 19/7/46. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc Cit

25. CO 537/1726 23/7/46 CAB 128/6 23/7/46

26. Ibid

27. CAB 128/8 29/7/46

28. HC Deb Vol 426 c.969-971 31/7/46

29. Ibid c.978-979

30. Ibid c.984-985

31. Conservative Party Imperial Affairs Committee Minutes 23/7/46, 18/7/46

32. Ibid

33. HC Deb Vol 426 c.1056 31/7/46

34. NCL Minutes 25/7/46

35. PREM 8/302 27/9/46

36. B. Donoughue & G.W. Jones Herbert Morrison, Portrait of a Politician London 1975 p434

37. Creech-Jones Papers CJ 33/2//52 Loc cit

38. Ibid

39. J. Kimche Op cit p160

40. Tribune 10/5/46

41. G.D.H. Cole G.D.H. Cole on Labour's Foreign Policy London 1946 p41

42. Jewish Chronicle 7/12/45

43. Zionist Review 8/2/46

44. T. Kolleck For Jerusalem a Life London 1978 p62-3

45. A.Sargent Op Cit p329

46. This development will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 9.

47. CAB 129/13 11/9/46

48. Ibid

49. CO 537/2317 15/9/46

50. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

51. Documents on American Foreign Relations Op Cit p905

52. CAB 128/6 25/10/46

53. Ibid

54. Crossman Papers Loc cit

55. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

56. CAB 128/6 25/10/46

57. Ibid. FO 371/52567 23/10/46

58. Monroe Papers Loc cit

59. FO 371/61762 8/12/46

60. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2 Loc cit

61. FO 371/61761 1/1/47

62. Ibid

63. Ibid

64. Sir Harold Beeley. Thames Papers Loc cit

65. FO 371/61761 1/1/47

66. Ibid

67. Creech-Jones Papers Box 32, File 3 Loc Cit

68. CAB 129/9 16/1/47

69. Dalton Diaries Vol 35 Loc Cit

70. N. Rose. Baffy Op Cit p248

71. cf. F. Williams A Prime Minister Remembers London 1961 p.179-180 and E. Shinwell I've Lived Through it All London 1973 pp185-186

72. FO 371/61858 27/1/47

73. CAB 128/9 7/2/47

74. Thames Papers Loc Cit

75. Monroe Papers Loc Cit

76. CAB 128/9 7/2/47 and Cunningham Papers Box V File 4 Loc cit

77. CO 537/2280 5/8/46

78. FO 371/61763 31/1/47

79. CAB 128 7/2/47

80. CAB 128/9 7/2/4

81. Ibid

82. Dalton Diaries Vol.35 Loc cit

83. CAB 129/15 10/2/47

84. CAB 129/17 13/2/47

85. CAB 128/9 14/2/47

86. Ibid

87. The Times 1/2/47

88. FO 371/61890 17/2/47

89. HC Deb Vol 433 c.985 18/2/47

90. HC Deb Vol 426 c.984 31/7/46

91. HC Deb Vol 433 c.1919 25/2/47

92. Ibid c.1901

93. Ibid c.1985

CHAPTER 9

THE END OF THE ROAD

(i) The United Nations Decision

On the 2nd April 1947 the British delegation to the United Nations requested the Secretary General to summon a special session of the General Assembly with the intention of setting up a committee which would investigate the Palestine question and report to the regular meeting of the Assembly in September. As such, on 15th May 1947 a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was instituted, comprising representatives from eleven neutral states. The Committee was invested with the "widest powers to ascertain and record facts, and to investigate all questions and issues relevant to the problem of Palestine"; to "conduct investigations in Palestine and wherever it may deem useful", and to report to the Secretary General not later than lst September 1947.(1)

The Times had welcomed Britain's referral of the problem to the UN on the grounds of the "unsuitability of the Mandate", yet it condemned the Government's refusal to present any guidelines to the Assembly: "They (the Government) have been slow to recognise that a solution by consent of the contending parties is impracticable..their efforts would have been better directed to framing a clear cut plan to present to the UN."(2) The Times completely misunderstood Bevin's intentions. At a Cabinet meeting on 29th April 1947 the Foreign Secretary had stressed that not only should Britain not offer any suggestions to the UN but also that the Government should not commit itself in advance to accept any recommendations of the UN concerning the future of Palestine. He argued that "The Assembly's recommendations might prove to be wholly impracticable for political or other reasons and HMG would then be placed in a most difficult position if they had committed themselves in advance to accept them."(3)

This line of argument was prudent, after all Britain was attempting to extricate itself from a troublesome affair and in order to do so it would obviously attempt to distance itself from the problem, even if

this action did occasion criticism from other quarters. Hector McNeil, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs kept Clement Attlee informed of events in the United States: "There is already adverse comment in the American press and in Zionist circles at the unwillingness of HMG to declare in advance that they will accept the Assembly's recommendations."(4) Bevin, cognisant of this criticism suggested to Attlee that in order for the British Government to avoid accusations of obstructiveness, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the British representative at the UN, should present a more or less non-commital statement to the Assembly on the lines of: "HMG have invited the Assembly to consider this problem and the Assembly must itself be the sole judge of its own recommendations. HMG would, therefore, regard it as quite inappropriate that they should themselves make any suggestion to the Assembly as to the form which its recommendations should take, and they do not propose to do so. They will confine themselves to placing at the disposal of the Assembly all the information which it requires and facilitating its consideration of the problem to the fullest possible extent. HMG have brought this problem before the Assembly in the confident hope that the Assembly will succeed in recommending a practicable and just solution, which will be accepted by all the parties concerned and will thus provide a basis for the final settlement of this difficult problem."(5) Both Attlee and Arthur Creech-Jones agreed with this statement(6) and by the time UNSCOP representatives were arriving in Palestine and the Labour Party Conference opened in Margate, the Government's position was set.

However, if the Labour Government was becoming more adept at outmanoeuvring its critics overseas there seemed, at first sight, to be little chance of its avoiding sharp criticism over its handling of the Palestine affair, at the Annual Conference. Harold Laski predicted there could be dissension at Conference and wrote to Creech-Jones asking him to take any discussion on Palestine: "...as I thought you would produce an atmosphere of conciliation and good feeling that might very easily be lacking in a reply such as Ernest Bevin would make. If you could do it I think the whole Conference would avoid a difficult and nasty corner." Laski then went on to put pressure on Creech-Jones: "I write to you about this frankly because I myself feel that if EB is to deal with Palestine along the lines of past and really quite indefensible utterances, even as you know, without any full grasp of the problems involved, it would be

very difficult for me as a matter of conviction to stay on the Executive of the Party. If you were in full charge of the whole policy I should feel quite differently since I know that you understand its elements sympathetically. I cannot feel that, however hard I try, about EB and I, therefore, put this suggestion before you as a way of coming out of a difficulty, in part at least of the Government's creation, however much it has been exacerbated by terrorism, which would redound to the credit of the Government and greatly strengthen the position of the Party."(7)

Laski clearly not only overestimated Creech-Jones' political influence and his own standing but also the mood of the majority of the delegates at Conference. The Daily Herald, which was essentially the voice of the traditional industrial wing of the Party, had always supported Bevin and had only three months' previously, at the time of the referral to the UN, proclaimed in a leader article that: "We think the Foreign Secretary is right...Efforts have been steadfastly continued despite outbreaks of terrorism in Palestine and despite a violent anti-British campaign by remote and financially powerful propagandists for Zionism in the United States."(8)

In fact, the General Council of the TUC had been most dismissive of the Histadrut (the Zionist Labour Organisation) when it requested an intervention on behalf of Jewish refugees. The council took the view that "the onus of responsibility for the situation should be thrown on the Palestine Jews", and the Zionists were told they should work for a peaceful settlement with the Arab population.(9)

The Conference did not go as Laski had hoped and Bevin addressed the Assembly. Maurice Rosette of Poale Zion moved a resolution which requested action in line with the Party's war-time promises, several of which were actually included in the resolution. In an impassioned speech to Conference Rosette condemned the "scandalous position of refugees after two and a half years of a Labour Government," and urged a message of hope to be made in an attempt to rally moderate Jewish opinion.(10)

However, by a curious twist of fate, Rosette's position was undermined by a fellow Jew, Henry Solomons of Hammersmith South, who rose to speak on behalf of his Divisional Labour Party. Although he deeply regretted publicly disagreeing with a

co-religionist, he felt that Rosette's resolution was steeped in the past and had failed to take account of recent developments: "Those of us who during the last few months have been perturbed by events in Palestine and have investigated the position...have come to this Conference, not as pressure groups, but with some change in our views...There cannot be peace and tranquility in Palestine unless there is co-operation between the Arab, the Jewish and the Christian inhabitants of the country."(11) He recommended further attempts at Jewish-Arab co-operation, and called for the withdrawal of the resolution on the grounds that at this stage it would embarrass the United Nations and the Jewish Agency in Palestine.

Bevin, intuitively, seized Solomons' statement with both hands: "My advice is the advice which was given by Mr. Solomons. Let the thing go. Let the UN deal with it...The thing is so bitter, feelings are so high between Arab and Jew, and it is so difficult all over the world that I will say nothing."(12)

Rosette declined to withdraw his resolution but this time was defeated by Richard Crossman, who successfully managed to prevent a vote taking place by using the procedural device of moving the 'previous question'. This was a strange move for Crossman to make, as he had established himself at the Zionists' 'friend' and he later attempted to explain his behaviour as being the result of the fact that there was to be no separate debate on the issue.(13) He may simply have followed Solomons' cue but he effectively stifled any possible dissension. On the other hand, and maybe more convincingly, he probably sensed that the delegates would not support the resolution and was attempting to save the Zionists embarrassment. If this was indeed his objective he acutely displayed that he was more the 'Party man' than the 'Zionists' man', wherever his personal sympathies lay, for a vote against this resolution, containing as it did all past Labour Party statements and promises to the Jews, would have been deeply humiliating for the party as a whole, even if it had vindicated Bevin and the Labour Government.

The whole episode and especially Crossman's action implies a great deal about how the Palestine problem was being perceived by members of the party. It was becoming clear that although Zionists within the party often spoke of profound disappointment and bitter suspicion of the Government's intentions(14), Poale Zion, despite

protest and lobbying did not receive the sympathetic concern of previous years. Instead of the widespread support the Zionist cause had received in the past from party members the Palestine problem was now becoming increasingly linked with the demands of a vocal group of left-wing critics who opposed the Government's whole approach to foreign policy.

In October 1946, twenty MPs, in an 'Open Letter' to the Prime Minister, complained that "in Palestine and the Middle East the pledged policy of the Labour Party has been sacrificed to the needs of Imperial defence."(15) Among the signatories were many who had not hitherto expressed strong opinions on the subject of Palestine, but were beginning to view the Palestine issue in the context of a Labour Government squandering resources in a misguided attempt to assert British presence in the Middle East, which was, they claimed "a negation of the advocated Socialist foreign policy."

In May 1947 a pamphlet entitled 'Keep Left' signed by Richard Crossman, Michael Foot, Ian Mikardo and nine other MPs, demanded a time-table from the Government for the withdrawal of British troops from Palestine in order that it could become self-governing. Crossman may have had this idea in the back of his mind when he engaged in his tactics at Conference. He may have thought it foolish to upset the negotiations of the UN when they may have been considering the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

However, it is ironic that the Left, in their attempt to link the Palestine issue with a 'Socialist' foreign policy, so obviously overlooked the inconsistency, indeed incompatibility, of traditional Labour policies towards Palestine and the Party's 'socialist' tendency. The question of national self-determination, a basic tenet of the 'socialist' foreign policy school of thought, had long been at variance with Labour's pro-Zionist leanings.

As early as 1917, a number of critics had begun to question the compatibility of a commitment to Zionism with an overall policy of support for self-determination.(16) The argument at that time had, predictably, been fudged, as it was to be again during the post-war Labour Administration. If self-determination could not be accorded to Palestine before the War, and it must be remembered that the Left

of the Labour Party continued to support the Mandate during the 1930s, then the question remains, why was Britain's presence in Palestine so unacceptable to the Left after 1945? One historian has observed that "much of the heat generated against Ernest Bevin on the Left stemmed, directly or indirectly, from Britain's policy in Palestine."(17) It is conceivable that the converse was the case, in that Palestine was used as a weapon with which to attack the Government. In other words, Palestine was a sensitive yet arguably not crucial issue, and therefore, could be adopted by the Left as a cause, irrespective of the profound difficulties inherent in the Arab/Israeli conflict.

In the leading journals of the Left, Tribune and the New Statesman and Nation, the Government's policies provoked incessant criticism. Tribune, under the editorship of Jon Kimche, a Zionist supporter, continually attacked the Labour Government in general and Ernest Bevin in particular. If there was one theme which did not lose its central position in the late 1940s it was that the mess in the Middle East was all directly due to the wrongheaded decisions of Ernest Bevin. On 25th April 1947 two months after the announcement that the issue was to be referred to the UN, the Editorial in Tribune read: "What's the use of mincing words or resorting to polite formula when the British Government has embarked on a course which may not only recoil on its own head but even more so upon the great hopes of the British Labour Movement and its high aspirations. The Labour Government - our Labour Government - has set out on a road of ..terror..Can the Government produce nothing better than another bout of words in New York - accompanied by bombs, hangings, curfews and reprisals in Jerusalem."(18)

Richard Rose observed that "one of the few things upon which Kingsley Martin and Ernest Bevin would have agreed was that the periodical had no influence whatsoever on the Government's foreign policy."(19) This is a rather ingenuous statement for it would have been most surprising, not to say unusual, if any article appearing in either the Tribune or the New Statesman would have had any impact upon the policy direction of the Government, or indeed, should have. Statements in either publication could at best only serve to embarrass the Government and to reveal a factionalism which, to any seasoned observer of the Labour Party, would have been already known. Ernest Bevin had in fact foreseen possible opposition from

Kingsley Martin in 1945, whom he had greeted at the victory rally after the General Election with the words: "I give you about three weeks before you stab us all in the back."(20)

Ironically, criticism of the Government by the Left seemed to incline a rallying around the Government by other Labour members and to a large extent the Palestine issue was caught up in this dissension. Lord Boothby, a Conservative pro-Zionist, and also a fellow maverick within his own Party, remembers an occasion in the midst of the Palestine crisis, sitting with Crossman in the Smoking Room of the House of Commons and the pair "being cut, left, right and centre."(21)

A few years later, admittedly when the Palestine issue had cooled and arguably not only due to the manner in which Crossman had condemned the Government over its handling of that particular problem, Richard Crossman was severely criticised by a fellow MP, John Mallalieu: "Dick sometimes seems about as much at home in a Labour Party meeting as a chronic inebriate would be at a Methodist Conference...One moment he will argue for. The next moment he will argue against. At best, that gives him a reputation of being clever. At worst, it gives him a reputation for insincerity. Either way he has become 'untrustworthy' and, when he rises to speak, the bristles of the party meeting rise with him. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if it comes to choice between Bevin and Crossman, their colleagues will thumb down on Crossman without raising their eyes from the local paper."(22) Admittedly, there may have been a measure of personal animosity in this statement but the fact that Crossman had associated himself with the Zionist cause brought him into discredit, particularly, in light of the fact that two British sergeants had been hanged by Zionist terrorists in Palestine, the culmination of a series of terrorist atrocities which had been continuing for months.(23) For Hugh Dalton, his somewhat loose support of the Zionist cause finally evaporated: "After that", he wrote,"I went absolutely cold towards the Jews in Palestine and I didn't care what happened to them in their fight with the Arabs."(24)

The news of the murders of the British soldiers and the way in which their bodies had been boobytrapped was lept on by certain sections of the British press. The Daily Express published a front

page picture of the dead men, hanging from a tree and a wave of anti-Jewish riots took place in a number of cities.(25) The Express newspapers had always struck an anti-Zionist pose dating from the time in 1923 when Beaverbrook visited Palestine, met an Arab deputation and promised them the co-operation of the Express newspapers: "In a common hostility to Zionism."(26) However, The Times feared the possible ramifications of such levels of violence: "It is difficult to estimate the damage that will be done to the Jewish cause not only in this country but throughout the world by the cold-blooded murder of the two British soldiers,"(27) and letters to the newspaper reflecting the sense of public outrage, attacked the Government "for not avenging the murders of British citizens in Palestine."(28) For the first time since the Labour Party had assumed ofice and responsibility for the direction of policy in Palestine, public opinion became of significant importance in the Government's thinking.

As a result of the murders, the Conservative Party demanded a debate in Parliament and during the discussion it became clear that speakers from all sides of the House were now stressing the urgent need for the Government to withdraw from Palestine. Conservative MP, Brigadier Mackeson and Shadow spokesman on Colonial Affairs, Oliver Stanley, both attacked the Government for "weakness and vacillation." Stanley asserted that "there was only one alternative - evacuation. This country cannot continue to carry the burden of blood and treasure on anything like the same lines as it had in the past. Let the UN do something towards carrying the burden." Stanley's speech was met with cheers throughout the House.(29) However, the severest critics of the Government came from the Left of their own Party. The Government was accused of allowing the situation to deteriorate in Palestine and it was held responsible for the deaths of British citizens. Michael Foot shouted "It is not right to keep British soldiers in Palestine. The British Government should declare now that whatever decision is made at the UN we are coming out of Palestine." Harold Lever, a Jewish MP, delivered the most vitriolic and telling speech: "I confess to a measure of surprise that the House is allowing the government on this issue to get away so lightly with two years of planless, gutless and witless behaviour which has not only cost us treasure in terms of money, but uncountable treasure in manpower and loss of life, all in order to prove that we are master of a situation of which we obviously are

not a master, and all for some obscure reason made plain not to our troops, not to the people of Palestine and certainly not to us."(30)

Michael Cohen's verdict on this Parliamentary debate was that it displayed "a unique all party consensus which was a clear manifestation of the national will."(31) There is no doubt that Ministers were sickened by the violence in Palestine and both Labour and Conservative Members argued in favour of one line of action, even if their analyses and motives differed. However, in many ways this rhetorical consensus played into the hands of the government. For the first time, the Cabinet was offered a policy option which would not face censure in the House from the Conservative benches or, indeed, from Leftwing members of their own Party. Termination of the Mandate and British withdrawal from Palestine was the course to be followed - all opposition had effectively been silenced, not of course, by the strength of the Government's argument, but by events in volatile Palestine which clearly precipitated this outbreak of all-party unity. The question for Attlee and Bevin now was how to negotiate such a policy with the United States and the United Nations.

The Government had already established an escape clause in its decision not to be bound by the recommendations of UNSCOP. In the event, the UNSCOP report, which was signed on 31st August, presented two possible solutions to the Palestine problem. Firstly, it produced a majority plan which suggested the partition of Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state and the city of Jerusalem. This plan advised a transitional period towards independence which would commence from the 1st September 1947, during which time Britain would continue to administer the Mandate, under the auspices of the United Nations, and would admit into the proposed Jewish State, 150,000 immigrants. Jerusalem would be under an international trusteeship. Secondly, the Minority plan, which was proposed by India, Persia and Yugoslavia, recommended an independent federal state after a transitional period not exceeding three years, during which time the responsibility for administering Palestine would be entrusted to an authority designated by the General Assembly.(32)

Three days before the Cabinet was due to discuss UNSCOP's proposals, Attlee penned a personal note to Bevin suggesting that the forthcoming statement on Palestine should be as follows: "If the

Assembly should fail to come to any conclusion or if it were to propose a settlement for which HMG could not accept responsibility, the only remaining course would be for us to notify the UNO that we cannot continue to be the Mandatory power, and that it is for the UNO to decide in what way and by what other power or powers its proposals are to be implemented. We should also state that we will withdraw our administrative offices and troops from Palestine by a definite date which could not be longer than 6 months..even if no agreement has been come to between the Arabs and the Jews."(33) The Foreign Secretary reported that he was in agreement with this suggestion.

Kenneth Morgan, in his recent study of the Attlee government implies that it was only Bevin who objected to UNSCOP's recommendations(34), and Creech-Jones always maintained that Bevin made it his job to "square Clem" before Cabinet meetings.(35) However, on this occasion the position seems to have been reversed. Certainly, Attlee was beginning to take more interest in the Palestine affair, prompted possibly by what he considered to be "the close parallel between the position in Palestine and the recent situation in India." He believed that "salutory results would be produced by a clear announcement that HMG intended to reliquish the Mandate."(36) Sir Harold Beeley explained Attlee's participation in the Palestine policy: "This was the year in which we left India, by rather a similar procedure. Attlee was responsible for the Indian decision. I think this was the way his mind was working in general and he applied the same thoughts to Palestine."(37) Nevertheless, by likening Palestine to India, Attlee displayed a remarkable lack of perception as to the difficulties of the Palestine problem.

The Cabinet meeting took place on 20th September and Bevin presented the agreed line to his colleagues. He maintained that he feared when UNSCOP's proposals were presented to the UN General Assembly "other countries might be tempted to put forward unworkable plans relying on the fact that it would be for HMG to implement them." To obviate this, he suggested, Britain must make its position clear from the start. He maintained "there would be grave disadvantages in any decision by HMG to undertake the task of carrying out either the recommendations of the Majority report or any alternative plan of partition which might be proposed on the recommendations of the Minority report." He concluded that "the

right course for HMG was to announce their intention to surrender the Mandate and to plan for a an early withdrawal of British forces and Administration from Palestine." Bevin did not wish to express any opposition to the recommendations of either report but he was satisfied that "unless HMG announced its intention of abandoning the Mandate and of withdrawing from Palestine there was no prospect of any agreed settlement" and he was "not willing that British forces should be used to enforce a settlement which was unacceptable to either the Jews or Arabs."(38)

Clearly, Bevin was defining Britain's escape clause, i.e. that the British Government could not be a party to a settlement which would be 'unacceptable to either the Jews or Arabs.' He, of all people, knew after so many abortive attempts to gain agreement between the Jews and Arabs, that no proposed solution to the problem would be acceptable to both communities in Palestine. Nevertheless, it was a useful tactic to employ against potential pressure from the United Nations and the United States and it could, for the first time, place Britain in the desired position of a well-meaning onlooker.

The Cabinet meeting went as expected with Creech-Jones, Alexander, the Minister for Defence, Hugh Dalton and even Aneurin Bevan agreeing that the Government should relinquish the Mandate and withdraw from Palestine. If anyone doubted the efficacy of Britain's decision a report from Baghdad received by the Foreign Office seemed set to dispel such misgivings. Sir Hugh Stonehewer-Bird, Britain's Ambassador in Iraq, related to Ernest Bevin the warnings he had received from members of the Iraqi government to the effect that "if the UN decided to partition Palestine the Iraqi Government and nation will fight for the full independence and security of Palestine. Iraq was unable to stand by without giving the utmost help to defend the just rights of the Palestinian Arabs and would help them with money, arms and armies."(39)

Three days' later Creech-Jones announced to the United Nations ad hoc Committee on Palestine Britain's intention to withdraw from Palestine; "I desire on behalf of the British government to state that they endorse without reservation the view that the Mandate should now be terminated..and we shall willingly lay down the obligations so that the goal of independence may be brought within realisation.

"His Government", stated the Colonial Secretary, "must plan for an early withdrawal of all British forces and British administrators from Palestine."(40) America was alarmed. The Times correspondent in Washington reported: "The British decision over Palestine leaves the United States without a policy and with little hope of finding one. A headline in today's Washington Daily News stated 'US in dither over Palestine' and that is an exact description of the position. American foreign policy has been able to get along for so long without committing itself on this question that it comes as an unpleasant shock to find that the moment has come when one is needed. With next year's election there is no certainty for either party that the Jewish vote in New York can be decisive. The Zionists will bring all possible pressure to bear on President Truman as they have done so often before. The most noticeable development during the recent past has been an increasing tendency to take Arab threats seriously. The absence of any Arab vote in the US has meant that policy-makers have under-rated the importance of the opinions of the Arab states. They do not do so now."(41)

Britain had played her trump card and Bevin informed Attlee sardonically: "It appears that the United States Government have not fully appreciated our determination to withdraw our Administration as well as our forces from Palestine."(42) The British press was most supportive of the government. The Times spoke of the "malignant misrepresentations made against Britain by both Arabs and Jews" and defended the government's position on the grounds that "this country is not disposed indefinitely to shoulder unaided a burden of responsibility which rightly belongs to the United Nations."(43) The Daily Herald, predictably, of course, welcomed British withdrawal from Palestine and appealed to both Jews and Arabs to exercise moderation and forestall catastrophe.(44) Only The New Statesman and the Tribune added a note of censure. The New Statesman urged the Government to "refrain from hasty withdrawal and take part in imposing a political solution",(45) as did the Tribune: "There are two ways of getting out. One is to pack up, to wipe one's boots on the mat and to march out, leaving the locals to clear up the mess. The other is to take the opportunity...to lay the foundation that may save the Middle East from chaos and collapse."(46) Yet both publications readily accepted that withdrawal was to take place even if they disputed the exact timing of the exercise.

There was one voice of foreboding, which in essence represented a cry in the wilderness, and that emanated from the poor beleagured man on the spot, Sir Alan Cunningham, the High Commissioner. He feared that "if the Jews and Arabs did not reach some form of agreement the aftermath of Britain's withdrawal would be economic chaos and bloodshed, in so far as both sides are drifting fast into an acceptance of a preparation for war."(47) Although, there was some sympathy for Cunningham within the Colonial Office: Sir John Martin, the Deputy Under-Secretary stated that "Our pressures were nothing compared to our man in Palestine"(48) the impact on the Government was negligible. The Labour Government was riding on the crest of a wave. At last their policies on Palestine were seemingly successful. They had managed to pull the rug from under the American government; they were supported in the Press and in Parliament; they had stemmed the tide of criticism within their own Party; British public opinion was behind them; in short, all was going very well. The question surfacing, however, was how long would it last?

On 29th November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly voted to approve the UNSCOP Majority Plan of Partition. The United States and the Soviet Union supported the resolution; Britain abstained.(49) It was agreed that the Mandate would be terminated and that all Britain's armed forces would be withdrawn "not later than lst August 1948". The resolution looked forward to a progressive transfer of power from the British Mandatory authorities to a Palestine Commission. However, this was not to be the case as Britain refused the Commission entry into Palestine until the lst May on the grounds that it "would be intolerable to have to share responsibility".(50) Sir Harold Beeley of the Foreign Office, summed up Britain's apparently obstructive position: "We were unhelpful. The military said they were having enough difficulty attempting to keep order under extremely trying conditions without a roving body of international officials doing things that would upset one community or the other; the task of looking after their security added to the existing security problems would have been impossible."(51)

Bevin and the Foreign Office may not have realised it at the time but these last few months of Britain's involvement in Palestine and its subsequent response to the State of Israel was to prove to be a most debilitating period for the Attlee government.

(ii) Withdrawal and the Aftermath

On the 11th December 1947 Palestine was once again discussed in Parliament but on this occasion The Times reorted: "No cheers or comments broke the profound silence which descended on the House of Commons"(52) as the Colonial Secretary announced that "the Mandate in Palestine would be terminated before the completion by the 1st August 1948 of the withdrawal of our troops and the date the Government had in mind was the 15th May 1948."(53) The Times was not strictly accurate for comments were made which were a clear indication of the unease felt, if not from the Opposition then certainly on the Government's own backbenches.

The Conservatives were openly supportive of the government. Oliver Stanley stated that he "could see no alternative but for HMG to lay down the Mandate and evacuate Palestine at the earliest possible moment," and other Conservative speakers paid tribute to "the friendship felt by this country both for Jews and Arabs."(54) Anthony Eden, the shadow Foreign Secretary asserted that "The Mandate had proved unworkable and we have to admit that our endeavour has failed." He added, in line with the Government that although "we must do our best to facilitate the transfer of the burden, we should do no more than our share. That we could continue to carry the burden of transfer until it suited the convenience of others is neither just nor reasonable."

The Conservative reaction may at first sight seem unusual yet Harold MacMillan explained it in these terms: "There was one painful and hideous problem which faced the British Government after the war. It was that of Palestine...The target date for withdrawal was 15th May. Although the decision was unpalatable, it was accepted as unavoidable."(55) This explanation seems reasonable after all the Conservatives had been calling for withdrawal. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the Opposition benches did not engage in the rhetoric they had used so often on previous occasions when the Labour government pursued policies which their party would have followed had they been in Office.(56) One reason for the Conservatives' behaviour may lie in the fact that Churchill who had fervently supported the Zionists' cause had apparently lost interest in their aims and there is little doubt that other prominent members of the Party favoured the Arabs. Bearing in mind that this

Parliamentary debate followed closely on the UN decision to partition Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State, and that this decision was not accepted by the Palestinian Arabs or their neighbours, one can see why the Conservatives chose to be supportive of the Government. Anthony Eden, although allegedly "never an anti-semite, was personally less sympathetic to the Jews than Churchill." According to his biographer, Eden commented to a colleague: "Let me whisper in your ear that I prefer Arabs to Jews."(57) Lord Boothby, who was a close friend of Chaim Weizmann and a Zionist supporter claimed that he was alone within his party during this period: "Churchill did not play an active part in the House. It was not an easy thing to do when the King David Hotel was blown up and British sergeants were being killed by Irgun terrorists; for a while the going was very rough."(58) Boothby found a soul-mate in Richard Crossman and they would often meet to discuss the Palestine affair. One evening Boothby recalls confronting Crossman: "Look here, I don't want office and if I did I would not get it; but you are putting your whole political career in jeopardy." Crossman replied: "I know I shalln't get office from this lot, and probably never will. But I am going on, because I know that we are right." Boothby was impressed by Crossman's commitment to Zionism: "On many subjects a mercurial and erratic politician, on this one he was not."(59) This association reflects the low status with which the Zionist cause was regarded, certainly within the Conservative Party and largely within the Labour Party during that period. Here were two essentially undisciplined members of both parties, meeting secretly to discuss an issue which only a few years earlier had been openly supported by high ranking ministers within the Conservative Party and overtly embraced by the Labour Party.

The Parliamentary debate on Palestine continued the following day by which time the Government gained a clear indication of the nature of the disagreements within its own backbenches. The main concern of pro-Zionist speakers, including Crossman, Silverman, Janner and Mikardo, was that the Government should do all in its power to assist the United Nations and to facilitate the work of the Commission appointed to co-operate in the implementation of the decision in the transitional period. For William Warbey, the MP for Luton, the issue was "a test case for the world, and for this country in particular of whether or not the UN is going forward to be a genuine and effective world organisation or whether it is going the same way as

the League." The Government, he asserted, "now have a great opportunity to help to make the UN organisation begin to become something of a reality - an organ of genuine world authority, capable of introducing an era of law and order and eventually justice."(60) On the other hand, Stokes, Reid and Philips Price considered the UN decision to be violently partisan and Reid argued that "purely on legal grounds, we are not in the least bound to carry out the advice of the UNO".(61)

The argument had shifted, no longer were there heated discussions on the relative merits of the Arab/Jewish cases, now the focus of attention was the authority and future of the United Nations; an argument which the Government could not be seen to ignore. The difficulties centred on the refusal of the government to allow the international UN Commission entry into Palestine during the transitional period. It all pointed to ostensible British disregard for a UN decision. Bevin was clearly alarmed and in a memorandum to Attlee stated: "The situation in Palestine is so delicate that I feel it essential if we are to keep our policy straight, that any public pronouncements, including the answers to any questions in the House, should be cleared personally by the Minister of Defence; the Secretary of State for the Colonies and myself (or in my absence, by you). If this is not done I feel that we may find ourselves in serious trouble."(62)

On the 5th February 1948 the Cabinet met and Aneurin Bevan argued that "the failure to contribute to any international force and to baulk at a gradual transfer of authority to the United Nations Commission would be inconsistent with our professed support for the United Nations."(63) However, the weight of opinion within the Cabinet went against this view. Bevin and Creech-Jones warned that if the Government changed its policy the "main burden of responsibility for events in Palestine would necessarily fall on Britain." This, of course, was true but it left the Government open to charges of partiality. Creech-Jones reported to Bevin from New York that "The Jews are worried and gloomy. The Jewish Agency who are concerned primarily that the Security Council should provide the means of enforcement of the General Assembly's policy urge that we shall adopt a more generous attitude towards the UN Commission in the task of implementation, to be less partial as they see it, to the Arabs in Palestine and to the Arab States."(64) Elizabeth Monroe

maintains that Britain's attempt at neutrality stemmed from the belief that it could only help execute a solution "if it was agreeable to both parties, and partition was not so," although she agrees that "to be passive about the execution of partition was to impede it, and ipso facto to take the side of the party that did not want it."(65) However, Monroe seems rather too willing to take Bevin's statements at face value, as there were, not surprisingly, financial considerations at play.

Bevin and Creech-Jones had prepared a joint memorandum for Cabinet discussion on 5th February which outlined the financial imperatives of Britain's supposedly impartial position. It asserted: "It is possible that the intervention of any international force in Palestine would have the effect of prolonging and extending the conflict which is now inevitable in that country and would be exceedingly dangerous from the point of view of HMG...Any extension of the conflagration would furthermore have grave economic repercussions in Western Europe. The Marshall Plan is to a considerable extent dependent on the uninterrupted flow of Middle Eastern oil to Western Europe. Already there is a serious prospect that the flow of Iraqi oil through Haifa may be interrupted for some time. If either Syria or Iraq were drawn into the conflict in Palestine, Iraqi oil would also cease to flow through the pipeline to Tripoli and in addition all projects for piping Arabian and Persian Gulf oil to the Mediterranean would be indefinitely suspended. HMG are not prepared to participate in action to enforce the Assembly's resolution on Palestine. If, on the other hand, they were to oppose it, HMG would be accused of wrecking a plan, which they assured the Assembly they would not obstruct. It thus appears that the only logical attitude is to refrain from expressing an opinion."(66)

Meanwhile, the Foreign Affairs Group of the PLP were anxious that the Government continually refused to be drawn in the House on the question of Palestine and as a result held a number of meetings on the subject. The Group passed a resolution which was in turn forwarded to Bevin, expressing "concern at the Government's refusal to allow the UN Commission to enter Palestine any earlier than a fortnight before the end of the Mandate."(67) According to Herbert Morrison's biographers, Bevin "resented any interference from the Group and was never on good terms with it."(68) The first Chairman, Seymour Cocks, an ardent pro-Zionist, had resigned in

disgust at the futility of his job. His successor, was John Hynds who, "unlike Cocks was an inconspicuous chairman, like Cocks was politically impotent."(69) However, there was now developing what the Manchester Guardian termed "a cold war" among Labour members.(70) Forty of the government's critics sent a telegram to Tryge Lie, the Secretary General of the United Nations, expressing the view that Palestine was a test case for the organisation: "We on our part are urging the British Government to carry out the obligation laid upon it by the General Assembly."(71)

However, the list of those who signed the telegram and who opposed the Government on the second reading of the Palestine Bill(72) which terminated the Mandate, reveals the revolt to be the result of an alliance between Jewish and Leftwing backbench MPs. Hugh Berrington calculates that of the 30 who entered the opposition lobby twelve were drawn from what he terms the 'Left or Ultra left' and twelve from the 'Central Left'(73) Nevertheless, although Poale Zion continued to speak of the "striking betrayal of our friends," and paid tribute to "those members of the PLP and Labour Movement..who have remained firm to their socialist principles and to the pledges of the Party on the Palestine question despite the government's breach of faith with the Jewish people", Tribune reported that "most party members were now heaving a sigh of relief that the party's difficulties on this question seemed to be nearing an end."(75) It is clear that although Britain's response to the UN decision and its general handling of the Palestine affair was generating some ill will within the PLP, nothing Bevin's critics could say or do had any impact on the Government's policy.

One month before Britain's official withdrawal date from Palestine, Sir Alan Cunningham, the High Commissioner, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, outlining the position in Palestine: "Our authority has progressively weakened to an even greater extent than I had foreseen. Jewish settlements and Arab villages are raiding one another with impunity. All that is happening is most damaging to British prestige. I fear that as we withdraw the country will be left to warring tribes."(76) Once again Cunningham was accurate in his prediction. With the departure of the High Commissioner on 14th May 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed and the following day witnessed the commencement of the first Arab/Israeli war. The General Assembly of the UN in an attempt to resolve the crisis,

appointed as its Mediator, the Swedish diplomat, Count Folke Bernadotte. Three months later he was assassinated by the Stern Gang in Jerusalem and the fighting continued until early January 1949.(77)

This period marked the Labour Government's most difficult phase. On the 14th May the United States had seized the initiative, up-staging Britain by extending de facto recognition of the State of Israel. Britain failed to do likewise. At a Cabinet meeting on 27th May, Aneurin Bevan argued that it might cause considerable embarrassment to Britain if, as seemed likely, many Commonwealth Governments granted recognition. Bevin, however, was adamant: "HMG does not intend to recognise Israel, at any rate not until the picture has become more settled."(78)

If the Left of the Labour Party and certain pro-Zionist constituency parties(79) urged recognition, the Conservatives, for the time being anyway, supported the Government. The Times reported: "The Opposition will not press for a debate over Palestine. Mr. Churchill discussed the matter fully with Conservative MPs and at a Special meeting earlier this week the general attitude of the Opposition appears to be to exercise the greatest restraint so that the Foreign Secretary's efforts may be in no way impeded."(80)

The Times itself, in a leader article reviewing the events in Palestine, levied no criticism at the Government: "Confronted with a clash of world forces which they could not contain and with a schism between Arab and Jew which they could not close, the British might well have gone from Palestine sooner. The present Government, however, were confident that they could find a solution. They hoped that the US might at last support the constant flow of American advice and censure on British policy by sharing the responsibility. When this hope was rudely dashed, they looked finally to the UN. The UN too has been baffled. The scheme of political partition and economic union recommended last November, now only serves to provide the Zionists with a pretext for applying those portions of the scheme which confirm their determination to create a secular state in the face of Arab resistance. The peoples of Palestine will now make good their independence with violence and bloodshed."(81)

Whilst the Government was supported by the Conservatives and the Press it could withstand criticism in Parliament from its own ranks. Throughout the summer and early autumn, Bevin was urged to recognise Israel. Harold Lever argued in the House "recognition of the State of Israel is necessary both in the interests of this country and in the interests of peace. It is perfectly clear that peace in Palestine..is possible only on the basis of recognition...Since the State of Israel has been recognised by half the world. How much longer has Britain to lag behind."(82) However, by December the situation changed drastically. During that month Israeli troops advanced deep into Egyptian territory. On 29th December, the Security Council ordered an immediate cease fire; Britain now issued an ultimatum to the Israeli government and threatened to employ her forces in accordance with the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the Defence Committee of the Cabinet agreed to send British troops to the Transjordanian port of Akaba.(83) On 7th January an event occurred which radically altered the climate of opinion towards Bevin's policy. On the day the Egyptians had accepted a cease fire, four British spitfires were allegedly shot down on the Israeli side of the frontier. Neither the United States nor any Commonwealth countries were prepared to support the British government and Cudlip in a full page spread in The Mirror sharply attacked Bevin.(84) This resulted in serious disquiet within the Cabinet, although Bevin denied the incident: "at least three of the aircraft have been found well inside Egyptian territory; one has been found inside Palestine, having apparently crossed the frontier in the course of the air-fighting or perhaps even after control of the aircraft had been lost."(85) Stafford Cripps was, nevertheless, convinced of the need for a change of course, and Aneurin Bevan contemplated resignation.(86) Hugh Dalton informed Attlee that he would press in Cabinet for a change in policy without which he was convinced, correctly as it turned out, that "we shall run into very heavy trouble soon in Parliament and outside."(87)

Stafford Cripps spoke to Crossman of a revolt within the Cabinet on 17th January(88). Dalton noted in his diary "we greatly pushed EB towards recognition,"(89) although Creech-Jones, admittedly some years later, asserted that he "had no recollection of a row in Cabinet."(90)

However, if there was not a stand up fight in Cabinet, certainly harsh words were spoken. Aneurin Bevan dominated the meeting.

In the course of a long and indignant outburst he reminded his colleagues of his long held doubts about relying on the "unstable and reactionary Governments of Arab States. Furthermore," he argued, "the Government's policy had been inconsistent with the spirit of traditional party policy. De facto recognition could no longer be withheld."(91) Despite the strength of Bevan's argument the Cabinet's agreement to accord de facto recognition of Israel was prompted by the fear that the Conservative Party was becoming restive and that a statement had to be made to the House in order to avoid a vote of censure, "otherwise the impression might be created that the Government had changed their policy in response to Parliamentary pressure."(92) The following day in answer to a Private Notice Question from Churchill, Bevin was most conciliatory and requested that the House agreed to a one week delay before debating the subject.(93) His request was granted and all might have gone well if Bevin, at a Cabinet meeting on 24th January, only two days before Parliament was due to discuss Palestine, had not shifted his position. During this Cabinet meeting it was Bevin rather than Bevan who held sway. He reported that his initiative designed to secure the recognition of Transjordan by the United States which he had hoped would enable him to announce that "a common understanding on Middle Eastern policy had been reached," had failed. "In the circumstances", he argued "it would be a serious mistake..to proceed forthwith to accord recognition to the Government of Israel."(94) He proposed, therefore, to simply announce in Parliament that consultations were taking place. Attlee strongly recommended this line and amid a muted response, this action was accepted.

Whether the Cabinet was simply bowing to the authority of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary or whether their acknowledgement of the extent of Parliamentary opposition had been misjudged because of the relative silence on the Opposition benches in the House six days' previously, it is difficult to judge. Certainly one Minister was outraged. Gaitskell recorded Aneurin Bevan's fury that the Foreign Secretary was seemingly seeking to evade the decision of the Cabinet to recognise Israel. At a dinner held by Cripps,"Nye came out quite strongly against Bevin and seemed to be anxious to start an intrigue to get rid of him. While nobody else joined in, I think most of us felt fairly critical (of Bevin)."(95) According to the Zionist Review, not of course, noted for its objectivity, there may have

existed a sense of loyalty amongst Cabinet Ministers towards Bevin because "his resignation might lead to an even less agreeable Foreign Secretary being appointed."(96) Exactly who the Zionist Review had in mind was left open to conjecture. Hugh Gaitskell's assessment of the situation appears convincing: "Nye Bevan in a private talk with me was strongly anti-Bevin and anti-the PM. Part of this, of course, is just ambition and jealousy, but it really is impossible to defend the situation we have got ourselves into in the Middle East now and if Bevin were not so powerful I would expect changes to be made. In practice I do not think they will be made because the PM would never sack him and he certainly will not go of his own accord."(97) Notwithstanding Gaitskell's slight on Bevan his statement rings true. The Foreign Secretary was enormously powerful. It also seems clear that Bevin, who only with the greatest reluctance agreed to accede to the demand to recognise Israel(98), essentially had little intention of doing so.

In the event, the Parliamentary debate on Palestine on 26th January 1949 turned into what Bevin had purportedly sought to avoid: a vote of censure on the Government. Churchill led the Opposition in a most vitriolic attack on the Government and especially Ernest Bevin. Churchill not only accused Bevin of "making public blunders and obvious misjudgements" but also of ignorance: "There has never been the slightest comprehension of the Palestine problem by the right hon. Gentleman. Every word that he says is known by those of us who have lived our lives with this great problem for many years, to be subject to wrong emphasis. Nor will he take advice." The leader of the Opposition then made a remarkable and in many ways truthful assertion: "No one has done more to build up a Jewish National Home in Palestine than the Conservative Party, and many of us have always had in mind that this might some day develop into a Jewish State." Although he admitted that he was speaking for himself, he continued: "The Conservative party has done a great task over twenty-five years, with Parliaments which had a Conservative majority, in trying to build a Jewish National Home in Palestine and now that it has come into being it is England that refuses to recognise it and by our actions, we find ourselves regarded as its most bitter enemy. All this is due, not only to mental inertia on the part of the Ministers concerned but also to the very strong and direct streak of bias and prejudice on the part of the Foreign Secretary." He concluded by stating that it was the

duty of his party to oppose the government in the division lobbies.(99) It is difficult to understand why Churchill should at this stage have levied such a brutal attack on the Government and have chosen to reaffirm his Zionist sympathies. His colleagues, of course, rallied to his support sensing that the time had come to severely embarrass the Government, and perhaps even to defeat it. Oliver Stanley's speech, although less accusatorial contained a cutting edge: "At the Colonial Office, I came to the conclusion that the only practical solution for this problem would be that of partition but I was not blind to its obvious dangers. Maybe I should have acted differently myself and I am not blaming Mr. Bevin that when he first came to power he did not keep his Election pledges. My complaint comes later. My complaint is that from then on he has remained obstinately and deliberately blind to the facts of the situation as they have developed and the realities as they have become more and more apparent. The real point is that there has now been for several years a Jewish State in Palestine. We may like it or not. We may think it a good thing or a bad thing, but it has been there and we must now recognise it."(100)

If this was simply an opportunistic manoeuvre by the Conservative Party there can be no doubt that Churchill was concerned at Britain's declining reputation resulting from its handling of the Palestine problem: "Tonight we must make our protest against the Government's course of action which has deprived Britain of the credit she had earned..and made her the mockery and scapegoat of so many States."(101)

Richard Crossman made it clear during the debate that he could not support the government when the House divided. In the event only 283 Labour MPs supported the government, 50 backbenchers abstained and the Government's majority of 90 was one of the lowest it had secured on a major issue of policy. Gaitskell believed that the fall of the Government had been at serious risk,(102) and The Times reported that "most of those who backed Mr. Bevin in the lobby seemed relieved to know that the majority had not been even smaller."(103)

For the Government the whole episode had been one of major humiliation. It was clear that Bevin's policy had reached its nadir and only four days' later Britain granted de facto recognition to

Israel. According to Creech-Jones "recognition was a natural step to take and was deliberately timed to follow the Jewish elections."(104) However, this had not been stated in Parliament and it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that the government had fallen into the very trap it had sought to avoid,i.e. of seemingly giving way to Parliamentary pressure. The Times reported that the division had been "chastening to the Government" and recorded that this was the "first occasion in this Parliament on which the Opposition has voted against the Government on any issue of foreign policy."(105)

MacMillan remembered the debate as a troubled affair: "For the moment the concern of the House of Commons was relieved even if its anxieties were by no means resolved. This protracted crisis naturally fell most heavily upon the government of the day for upon them lay the full responsibility. But the Opposition was also unhappy. My sympathies were with Churchill."(106) Certainly, the Conservative Party was not pleased with the Government's direction of policy towards Palestine as evidenced in a speech made by Anthony Eden to the Annual Conference in Llandudno in October 1948; "When we contrast the promises made by the Labour Party at the General Election of 1945 with the performance achieved since we deplore and condemn the weakness, the hesitation and delays which have led to so much bloodshed and human misery."(107) The question which poses difficulties is why the Conservative Party chose to support the Government for so long. It is clear that Bevin's refusal to recognise Israel was short-sighted and leading to international criticism and it is conceivable that the Conservative opposition may have resulted from a prudent acknowledgement that Britain could no longer stand on the sidelines with regard to the Middle East. Maybe Eden's statement provides a clue to the answer: "The Palestine problem of recent years has gravely complicated our relations with many of our old friends and allies. The whole of the Middle East with the support of Britain and the United States could be built up into a great area of security and economic prosperity."(108)

Bevin was held in high regard by Anthony Eden who, although admitting that his handling of some events would have differed from that of the Foreign Secretary, maintained that "Bevin was a man of stature and sincere conviction. I was in agreement with the aims of his foreign policy and with most of what he did."(109) Eden,

however, was to quick forget the humiliation his Party had imposed on Bevin over Palestine. Only one year after that devastating Parliamentary debate, Eden announced: "So far as foreign affairs are concerned it would be true to say that throughout his period at the Foreign Office, Mr. Bevin has had more criticism to bear from the Leftwing of his own Party than he has had from us."(110) This of course was quite correct but it was also true that Bevin could sustain criticism from the Left; votes of censure from the Conservatives and resultant humiliation he could not.

As regards the Labour Party, recriminations were to continue for some time, not only against Bevin but also those who were believed to be guilty by association. In January 1950, Harold Laski wrote to Creech-Jones: "You are the one man who might have prevented, from the period of your appointment as Colonial Secretary, the terrible tragedy of Bevin's policy in Palestine. By choosing to accept and indeed to be responsible for some of its terrible consequences was a big disappointment. As Secretary of State for the Colonies you were the main co-operator of the Foreign Secretary in imposing a policy that was both a denial of specific pledges given by the Party and an outrage upon our good name as a country all over the world."(111) Creech-Jones replied "Bevin undoubtedly influenced the Cabinet along his line of policy and in the broad it was the inevitable one."(112)

Bevin, himself, was deeply troubled at the criticism levelled at him both within the Party and internationally. Sir Knox Helm, the first British Ambassador to Israel recalled Bevin's attitude towards Israel: "He was hurt by Jewish attacks on him personally", and apparently told Helm to "pay no heed to the past,your job is to build up relations for the future. The Jews will have nothing good to say about me, but you must not attempt to justify the past."(113) According to Creech-Jones, after the Palestine debacle "a gloom descended on Bevin for he had laboured without tools, his health was dwindling and his critics in the Labour Party were unsparing."(114) Cynically, one might say, Bevin 'had it coming' but then so did the Labour Party, whose wounds one might argue, were self-inflicted. The High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, when departing Palestine stated: "We have left, I hope with the flag flying. I am convinced that in the future the method of our going and the conduct of the British throughout the 25 years will be

looked on as something to be admired."(115) Both the Labour and Conservative Parties would be well advised to study these sadly misjudged sentiments and to ponder their own roles in the sorry affair of Palestine.

FOOTNOTES

1. UNSCOP's representatives were from Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Persia, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. United Nations General Assembly. Document A/309. 23/5/47

2. The Times 19/2/47

3. CAB 128/9 29/4/47

4. Bevin's Papers. FO 800/487. 27/4/47

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

7. Creech-Jones Papers Box 32 File 3. Loc cit 27/4/47

8. Daily Herald 19/2/47 and 26/2/47

9. General Council 18/12/46 TUC Report 1947 p.205

10. LPACR 1947 p.170

11. Ibid p.171

12. Ibid p.177

13. Zionist Review 6/6/47

14. Ibid 28/8/47

15. A. Gould and others. 'Private and Confidential' London 1946

16. See Chapter 2

17. E.J. Meehan The British Leftwing and Foreign Policy New Jersey 1960. pii

18. Tribune 25/4/47

19. Kingsley Martin was the Editor of New Statesman and Nation. Richard Rose Op cit p.440

20. C.H. Rolph The Life, Letters and Diaries of Kingsley Martin London 1978 p.333

21. Lord Boothby Recollections of a Rebel London 1978 p.208

22. Tribune 4/2/49

23. The Times 1/8/47

24. H. Dalton. High Tide Op cit p.190

25. Manchester, Newcastle, Gateshead, Salford Leeds, London. see D. Leith. Explosian at the King David Hotel in M. Sissons and P.French (Eds) Age of Austerity 1945-51 London 1964. for reports of an anti-semitic editorial in a local newspaper. See also The Times 5/8/47

26. A.J.P. Taylor Beaverbrook London 1972 p.277. Although in 1962 Beaverbrook was to become sympathetic to the Jews and Israel.

27. The Times 1/8/47

28. Ibid 6/8/47 and 8/8/47

29. HC Deb. Vol 441 c.2340-3 12/8/47 and The Times 13/8/47

30. Ibid

31. M. Cohen Op Cit p.80

32. UNSCOP Report 31/8/47 cited in J. Moore (ed) The Arab-Israeli Conflict. Volume III Documents New Jersey 1974.

pp.259-313

33. Bevin's Papers FO 800/487 17/9/47

34. K. Morgan Labour in Power 1945-51 London 1984 p.215

35. Monroe Papers loc cit

36. CAB 128/10 20/9/47

37. Thames Papers Box 1 File 5 Loc cit

38. CAB 128/10 20/9/47

39. FO 371/61858 23/9/47

40. Reported in The Times 27/9/47

41. Ibid

42. Bevin's Papers FO 800/487 4/10/47

43. The Times 27/9/47

44. The Herald 27/9/47

45. New Statesman and Nation 15/10/47

46. Tribune 18/10/47

47. Cunningham Papers Box V File 2loc cit

48. Thames Papers File 2 Box 1 Loc cit

49. The vote was 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions. General Assembly Resolution 181 (ii) Concerning the Future Government of Palestine. 29 November 1947. cited in Moore Op cit

50. Bevin's Papers FO 800/487 5/12/47

51. Thames Papers Box 1 File 5 Loc cit

52. The Times 12/12/47

53. HC Deb 445 c.1250-63 11/12/47

54. Ibid

55. H. Macmillan Tides of Fortune 1945-1955 London 1969 p147

56. See Chapters 7 and 8

57. David Carlton Anthony Eden London 1981 p.213

58. Lord Boothby Op cit p.208. Boothby gave the Memorial Address to Chaim Weizmann in 1960.

59. Ibid. In gratitude for Crossman's support the Jews planted a forest in his name in Israel.

60. HC Deb Vol 445 c.1252-7 11.12.47

61. Ibid c1305

62. Bevin's Papers FO 800/487 21/1/48

63. CAB 129 5/2/48

64. Bevin's Papers FO 800/487 21/2/48

65. E. Monroe. Mr. Bevin's Arab Policy. St Antony's Papers No 11. Middle Eastern Affairs No. 2. 1961 p.38

66. CAB 129 5/2/48

67. FO 371/68535 24/2/48

68. Donoughue and Jones Op Cit pp358-9

69. R. Rose Op Cit p.465

70. Manchester Guardian 11/3/48

71. The Times 23/2/48

72. HC Deb Vol 448 c.1363-6 10/3/48. The vote was 240-30

73. Hugh Berrington Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1945-55 Oxford 1973 pp70-1

74. Zionist Review 12/3/48

75. Tribune 15/3/48

76. Cunningham Papers Box V File 4

77. For the trials and tribulations of Bernadotte's mission see J. Heller Failure of a Mission Journal of Contemporary History Vol 14 no.3 July 1979

78. CAB 128 27/5/48

79. Resolution from Hackney North urging recognition was received by the Foreign Secretary FO 371/68666 28/5/48

80. The Times 28/5/48

81. Ibid 15/5/48

82. HC Deb Vol 451 c2660 10/6/48

83. CAB 129 30/12/48

84. Monroe Papers loc cit

85. CAB 129 15/1/49. Contention still surrounds this issue. Roger Owen of St. Antony's College, Oxford, in a recent article in The Guardian of the 2/8/84 states, after gaining access to Israeli material, that the "Israelis shot down RAF reconnaissance planes and then dragged at least one of them across their own border to make it look as though it had violated their air-space."

86. M. Foot Aneurin Bevan Vol ll 1945-1960 London 1973 p.90

87. Dalton's Papers 9/7 Loc cit 13/1/49

88. Crossman Papers Loc cit

89. Dalton's Diaries. 17/1/49Loc cit

90. Monroe Papers Loc cit

91. CAB 128 17/1/49

92. Ibid

93. HC Deb Vol 460 c.35 18/1/49

94. CAB 128 24/1/49

95. P. Williams Hugh Gaitskell, A Political Biography London 1979 p.165

96. Zionist Review 25/1/49

97. P. Williams The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956 London 1983 p.97

98. CAB 128 17/1/49

99. HC Deb Vol 460 c.1000-1004 26/1/49

100. Ibid c.1014

101. Ibid cl004

102. P. Williams, London 1979 Op cit p.54

103. The Times 27/1/49

104. Monroe Papers Loc cit

105. The Times 27/1/49

106. H. MacMillan Op cit p 149

107. NUCUA Annual conference 1948 p.90

108. Ibid p.91

109. A.Eden First Circle London 1960 p.5

110. NUCUA Annual Conference 1950 p.29

111. Creech-Jones Papers Box 32 File 3 Loc cit

112. Ibid

113. Monroe Papers Loc cit

114. Ibid Bevin died in April 1951

115. Cunningham Papers Box VI File 5 Loc cit

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CONCLUSION

"Differences in Office between one party and another are less likely to arise from contrasting intentions than from the exigencies of Government."

Richard Rose.1980

(i) British Government Policy Towards Palestine

The Palestine issue was undoubtedly one of the more difficult problems to confront successive British Governments in the pre- and post-war years. It is possible to argue, of course, that Britain had only herself to blame. Rash and conflicting promises made, as a result of wartime calculation, to two potentially hostile communities in a narrowly defined territory were imprudent at their inception. Yet politicians are wont to accept short-term expediency in the pursuit of national interest as the rationale underpinning policy direction.

It has been the intention of this thesis to illustrate the complexities and limitations imposed on three differing Administrations in their handling of the Palestine affair. In doing so, it has rejected the Cohen, Sheffer and Rose(1) indictments of British policy. Michael Cohen's study of Britain's Mandatory period in Palestine although thorough and fully cognisant of the 'insoluble dilemma' of the episode, maintains that British policy towards Palestine had "to be determined strictly, and if necessary callously, according to the goals of Britain's grand policy in the Middle East as a whole."(2) Both Rose and Sheffer whose works on Palestine centre on the 1930s, albeit from differing perspectives, point to Britain's "Imperial ambition" and "profound self-interest" as the reasons behind policy direction.(3)

We consider the argument that foreign policy based on economic and strategic objectives is somehow reprehensible and provides reasonable grounds for an attack on British Government policy making to be unrealistic. Foreign policy is invariably governed by nationalistic instincts.

The term 'national interest', of course, is open to a number of interpretations. In fact, David Vital argues that it "is beyond precise definition both by those intimately concerned with its pursuit and by the historian in retrospect."(4) The potency of this statement is readily recognised and the thesis accepts, indeed argues, that the perception of Britain's national interest varied according to the internal and external exigencies imposed upon Governments in the period under examination. It also acknowledges Vital's argument that observers of foreign policy "..make the common error of ascribing consistency and rationality to a pattern of administration which owes more to chance, emotion and intuition."(5)

Certainly, emotion was to affect both Winston Churchill's and Ernest Bevin's attitude to the Palestine problem, but the important point of departure is that Britain's policy towards Palestine was never altruistic and always determined by an assessment of her interests as circumstances dictated. Sometimes there was a clash of interests particularly after the Second World War, when Britain's Palestine policy threatened to sour her relations with America. However Britain appreciated that the crude oil produced by the Iraq Petroleum Company, and fed to Consolidated Refineries Limited, which was 100% British owned, was crucially necessary "because of the shortage of refining capacity throughout the sterling area." Any upset in Britain's relations with the Arab world would, it was reported, have "a most serious effect on the oil situation in the sterling area."(6) The risk of losing this economic link with the Arab world was considered to be more important than momentarily disturbing Britain's association with America, especially in light of the fact that the Soviet Union was beginning to consolidate its influence and potential power as a threat to Western interests in the Middle East.

It is argued then, that it is possible to define national interest in a case study on Palestine in terms of what was considered best for Britain at any given time, be they economic or strategic benefits. The fact that Cohen argues that "a conflict of policy-goals existed between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office"(7), although accepted as a correct interpretation of the relative Departmental attitudes towards Palestine in 1937, in the later period can be explained as a difference which was often more apparent than real. The Colonial Office, despite its often pious statements that it "was

concerned for its wards" was not above assessing Britain's economic and strategic needs as important, as was the case with Churchill, Amery, Malcolm MacDonald, George Hall and to a certain degree, Arthur Creech-Jones. If it sometimes adopted an administrative, colonialist emphasis on maintaining law and order within Palestine it was only because, as a Department it, was concerned with such matters and shouldered that responsibility.

Britain's policy towards the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular was guided by successive Governments' perception of national interests. In fact, the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate itself were dictated by such concerns. It was Churchill's belief in 1922, the year in which the League of Nations sanctioned the Mandate inclusive of the Balfour Declaration, that Jews should be encouraged to establish a homeland in Palestine in order for the area to flourish under British protection, and Leo Amery, the Colonial Secretary in 1925 readily admitted that at first his interest in Palestine was "largely strategical".(8)

Nevertheless, no-one could deny that these two Conservative politicians were sympathetic to the Jewish cause even if national interest was their primary concern. Jewish historians have sought to condemn pro-Zionist British politicians for somehow failing to meet Jewish aspirations and for placing British interests above Jewish ambitions. Cohen states "Churchill was most liberal with promises of a Jewish State made in confidence to the Zionist leader, Weizmann, but for all that he never in fact compromised generally accepted British interests for the sake of Zionism."(9) Certainly, it would have been most unlikely for Britain to have forsaken her own interests in favour of the Jews or, indeed, the Arabs. Clearly, this is an unreasonable criticism of Britain's foreign policy direction and whilst not denying that intentions to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine were propounded, we accept as a basic premise that Britain's national interests were paramount. Within this ambit it has been our objective to analyse why certain Governments between 1937 and 1950 chose to pursue specific policies. Elizabeth Monroe's argument that Britain 'muddled through'(10) in her responses to the Palestine problem is acknowledged yet not accepted. Britain may have given that impression because of apparent vacillations in her policy towards Palestine but appearances were deceptive.

In 1937, a British, essentially Conservative Government instituted a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the Arab revolt against Jewish settlement in Palestine. The Commission found in favour of partition and thereby a termination of the Mandate. The British Government were fully prepared to accept this solution, notwithstanding certain reservations expressed by pro-Arabists within the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, the Government failed to seize this initiative, which might have provided Britain with a positive, though difficult resolution of the problem before international events, and therefore strategic considerations, circumscribed Britain's options. The Government could have referred the matter to the League of Nations and in the event of a reaction from the Arab States, which were not united at that time, any ensuing conflict would probably have been localised. Of course, it is difficult to ponder the possible outcomes of an untested policy and judgements relying on hindsight are always in doubt. However, a crucial factor in the Government's response to partition was the attitude of Chaim Weizmann, the influential spokesman for the Jewish Agency, who refused to accept the recommendation, arguing that "if it was unacceptable to the Jews they would do everything possible to oppose it."(11) Unacceptable in Zionist terms meant that the land apportioned to the Jews was insufficient. Ben-Gurion would have accepted the Report but only with the ulterior motive that it would provide Israel with a vantage point to extend its boundaries: "A partial Jewish State is not the end but only the beginning...We shall organise a modern defence force, a select army..and then I am certain that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country, either by mutual agreement with our Arab neighbours or by some other means. Our ability to penetrate the country will increase if there is a state. Our strength vis-a-vis the Arabs will increase...if the Arabs behave in keeping their barren nationalist feelings..then we will have to speak to them in another language. But we shall only have that language if we have a state."(12) At that time, however, Ben-Gurion was only just consolidating his position within the Jewish Agency and had yet to challenge the authority of Weizmann's moderation. The fact that moderate Zionists initially rejected the Commission's recommendation, only to be followed by an equivocal line within the Jewish Agency prompted Zionist sympathisers within the Government and Parliament to oppose the whole concept of partition per se. Churchill, Creech-Jones, Attlee, Sinclair, Lloyd George and Dalton all roundly condemned partition on the grounds that if the Jews

rejected the proposal there seemed little point in supporting it. Also the rather vague statement by Creech-Jones suggests that pro-Zionists were unclear in their own minds as to what a Jewish National Home should be: "I do not know whether it would be wise for those who have supported the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine to support a proposal which is a considerable limitation and might prove to be a big modification in the conception of the Balfour Declaration."(13) The unquestionable ambiguities enshrined within the Mandate as to whether a National Home implied Jewish minorityhood; Jewish statehood in a small portion of Palestine or Jewish supremacy within the whole of Palestine were to prove increasingly problematic as they so clearly were open to a number of varying interpretations and more importantly gave rise to expectations, disappointment and resulting criticism of the British Government.

Although Cohen acknowledges, quite correctly, that the Zionists at that time possessed insufficient vision "to press unreservedly for partition", we disagree with his accusation that "various Opposition groups close to the Zionists" operating "on their own narrow party interests"(14) were responsible for this missed opportunity. Why these Opposition groups behaved as they did will a theme to which we shall return.

The Arabs, of course, had rejected partition immediately and the Foreign Office followed this cue. Sheffer points to the Foreign Office as being the chief force behind the Government's rejection of the Peel Commission's recommendations. Certainly, the Foreign Office was not enamoured of the plan, but more crucially neither were the Zionists. The Zionists' and their sympathisers' initial rejection of partition should not be understated for it played a major role in the government's eventual decision. It must also be remembered that the Colonial Office, under the direction of Ormsby-Gore, strongly favoured the proposal but found it difficult to defend given the mounting hostility to it from both Arab and Jewish quarters. To the Colonial Office, partition offered Britain the only honourable exit from an ignominious episode or as they put it "a means of escape"(15). If Britain's interests were narrowly defined in terms of colonial responsibility and British prestige, it was because Palestine at that time was perceived as a colonial responsibility and was fully under the aegis of the Colonial Office.

This responsibility was to shift decisively in 1938 to the Foreign Office. Henceforth, the Colonial Office, in practice, would follow in step with the Foreign Office's interpretation of Britain's wider interests.

In the meantime, however, the Foreign Office could take the view that as the government's recommendation to implement partition had not been endorsed by Parliament largely on account of Zionist opposition and as there had been negative reaction to the policy from the Arab nations there was little reason to support a scheme which clearly antagonised the two communities it sought to appease. Pro-Arabists within the Foreign Office were, in any case, not in favour of a Jewish National Home, but other members of less conviction acknowledged the polarity of views and political rivalry between the Arab States and fully realised that this could "provoke an artificial and inconvenient interest in the Arab cause in Palestine."(16)

At this point the Government fell foul of the constraints of office as defined by: the volatile nature of the issue itself; the rejection of the proposal by both communities in Palestine and Parliamentary opposition expressed by Zionists and their supporters. By the time the Zionists began to favour the scheme in 1938 other considerations were narrowing the Government's policy options. As has been illustrated the deteriorating European scene now obliged Britain to view the Middle Eastern situation, in general, and Palestine, in particular, in a rather different perspective. With the background of Munich in Europe the British Government could no longer see the problems of Palestine in isolation and strategic considerations came into play. The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain and significantly, the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, readily acknowledged that if Britain were to insist upon the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish States, in the event of a war, the friendship of the Arab world would be forfeited. Not wishing to alienate the Arabs and recognising that the Jews would of necessity align themselves with those fighting against Germany, the Government adopted the only viable option open to it and published a White Paper in 1939 which drastically curbed Jewish immigration into Palestine and anticipated the abrogation of the Mandate within 10 years. This action has been widely condemned as calculatingly inhumane to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe. It

also lends itself to the interpretation of 'muddling through', as Government policy seemingly shifted within a couple of years from a pro-Zionist to a pro-Arab direction. However, given the profound external exigencies and given the Government's primary pursuit of national interest, this policy option was the only rational one open to Chamberlain and his Cabinet.

Although, policy towards Palestine was put into abeyance during the war years, there can be no doubt that the change in the complexion of the British Government in 1940 reflected a sense of unease about the 1939 White Paper. With Churchill in the role of Prime Minister and members of the Labour Party embraced within the War Cabinet, all of whom pronounced some sympathy with the Jewish cause, there appeared the probability, indeed almost inevitability, that Britain would pursue a different policy after the war. Churchill was beginning to favour partition, realising that as a result of the Jewish holocaust there existed an abiding need for Jewish people to have a nation state and recognising that with the continuation of the White Paper policy, Britain could lose the powerful support of American Jewry. It was generally expected that some form of partition policy would be advanced after the war. This was not to be the case. The change from Zionist moderation to Zionist militancy under the direction of Ben-Gurion and the violent outbursts of the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi precipitated an alteration in the climate of opinion, at least as far as Churchill was concerned. On hearing of the murder in 1944 of his close friend, Lord Moyne, by the Jewish terrorist organisation, the Stern Gang, Churchill ordered all Cabinet discussion of partition to be postponed. This was the main reason why the White Paper of 1939 remained the government's policy when the General Election was called in July 1945.

The Labour government assumed office in 1945 with a strongly pro-Zionist commitment, the development of which will be discussed below. The point of importance at this moment, irrespective of the political persuasion of any Government, was the recognition of Britain's decline and America's potential dominance as a world power. Bevin unquestionably accepted this fact and attempted to elicit American support in pursuance of a policy towards Palestine. Britain in her restricted financial position could no longer afford to undertake policies a propos Palestine alone. The Government was,

therefore, obliged to seek American co-operation, which culminated in the Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry. When this line of policy failed, Attlee and Bevin were left in the untenable position of being unable to forge an agreement between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine and unable to act in concert with the United States. Britain did not have the economic or military resources to impose a solution on Palestine without the assistance of America, which, of course, was not forthcoming. In this context the only viable policy for the British government was to refer the matter to the United Nations, in the hope that it could then extricate itself from what was rapidly becoming a debilitating affair. However, Britain could not be seen to recommend a solution or indeed even be a party to a UN decision for fear of upsetting its crucial economic relationship with the Arab world. This essentially was the underlying rationale behind Bevin's refusal to recognise Israel. Britain was unquestionably sensitive about its position internationally yet felt its primary concern should be to attempt some sort of understanding with the Arab nations. As such, within this narrow interpretation, the British government felt they were vindicated in their policy of non-recognition. Cabinet reported on the attitude of the Arab states towards Britain in January 1949: "they (the Arab states) are thoroughly disillusioned about the prospects of international collaboration through the UN and have been bitterly disappointed by American de facto recognition of the State of Israel. In spite of this, however, the position of the UK in the Arab world is still good....and all our efforts have been respected."(17) The fact that Parliamentary opposition obliged the British Government to confer de facto recognition of Israel against its better judgement is a clear illustration of the impact of contradictory constraints on Government policy.

It also gives support to William Wallace's assertion, in his analysis of British foreign policy in the 1970s, that "the pressures of Britain's international objectives and obligations must be weighed against domestic demands."(18) The government could sustain opposition from its own ranks only as long as the Conservatives were supportive. However, given the extent and virulence of the Conservative revolt coupled in that which can only be expressed as an uneasy alliance with left-wing backbenchers, the Government was caught between Left and Right-wing opposition to a policy which was seeming to be less than creditable. It was not so much the votes in the division

lobbies which mattered, the Government with its large majority was unlikely to fall over the issue, despite rhetoric to the contrary, but the humiliation and opprobrium of the entire episode. Bevin, in any case, was operating outside the Foreign Office line, in his reluctance to recognise Israel; an attitude which distinctly contradicts the widely held view that Bevin was a captive of his administration. Before the Cabinet meeting of 24th January 1949, a Foreign Office minute to Bevin recommended that an "announcement should be made immediately after the Cabinet meeting to the effect that recognition would be granted in the very near future" and that HMG had "various questions to discuss with the Jewish Government arising from our former position as Mandatory."(19) This, as has been shown, was not to be the case.

In essence, then, between 1937 and 1950 successive Administrations, in their responses towards Palestine, operated on the principle of preserving Britain's economic and strategic interests, as a result of which, policy options were restricted. There are certain instances when rationality gave way to emotion, e.g. Churchill's attitude in 1944 and Bevin's insistence on non-recognition in January 1949, but on neither occasion were British interests disregarded, there was simply a different point of emphasis. It was apparent by 1938 that some form of mutual concord between Arabs and Jews would never be reached and although the Peel partition plan was by far the best solution it was most unlikely that the government of the day would seek to impose such a policy on a Jewish community which was quibbling over territorial dimensions and an Arab population who were profoundly hostile to the entire concept. Whilst Zionists desired the control of the whole of Palestine and Palestinian Arabs became increasingly threatened by the number of Jewish immigrants entering the country it was clear that animosities could only worsen.

Despite the fact that the Second World War provided a brief hiatus in the pursuit of policy towards Palestine it was quite obvious that the situation in the post-war years would demand a resolution of the problem based on international agreement. Bevin's attempts at a negotiated settlement between the two communities in 1946 and 1947 should be viewed rather more in the light of domestic party politics and efforts to maintain national interests than in the context of a Foreign Secretary blindly ignoring the realities of the issue. With America's unwillingness to participate with Britain in a possible

solution and with the weight of press and public opinion against the government, Bevin had no alternative but to look to the United Nations.

The following section will now assess the second theme within the thesis: the relationship between Government policy and party policy.

(ii) Party Policy Towards Palestine

The Labour Party's initial sympathy for Jewish people was a consequence of the wave of anti-semitic pogroms in Poland and elsewhere at the close of the First World War. The subsequent development of its sympathy for the Zionist cause resulted from its affinity with the socialist leanings of the Workers of Zion Movement, Poale Zion, and this group's later affiliation to the Party. There can be little doubt that before the Second World War, Poale Zion acted as an influential pressure group within the Party, but there certainly exist doubts as to whether this was the case during the post 2nd World War years. Andrew Sargent, in his doctoral study of the organisational impact Poale Zion had on the Labour Party suggests that the party was unduly influenced by this group. The reason for Labour's so called 'betrayal' of the Jews after 1945, he argues, was the result of the declining influence of Poale Zion "whose interventions to the NEC and at Party conferences were now to little effect".(20) We disagree with Sargent's analysis and argue that the Party's disenchantment with the Zionist cause after the Second World War was partly a result of extemist Jewish violence within Palestine itself and partly due to the fact that the Left of the Party began to espouse pro-Zionist sympathies, which led to a factionalism within the Party and to a certain extent a re-grouping around the Labour government. Indeed, it is true that some Jewish MPs were waning in their support of Zionism and were beginning to look favourably upon Ernest Bevin's attempts to find a solution.

However, during the 1930s there was unquestionable support for the Zionist cause amongst the majority of Labour MPs and in 1937 when the Peel Commission recommended partition, the general mood of the party was against the proposal. To return to Michael Cohen's criticism of Zionist sympathisers as being responsible for the rejection of partition at that time, the question must be asked: what prompted the party to respond as it did? The accusation that

Opposition groups were reacting only in order to embarrass the Government seems insubstantial. Of course, there are always aspects of Parliamentary tactics at play but this alone cannot explain Labour's action. Attlee clearly revealed that the lead for the party's reaction came from Zionists themselves: "I assure our comrades that this matter is one of continuing anxiety to us..we shall keep in close touch with our Labour friends in Palestine and take whatever action is necessary in Parliament."(21) The fact that David Ben-Gurion attended a meeting with PLP members and that the NEC subsequently issued a statement proclaiming that "any suggested plan for a Jewish State should be examined from the standpoint of its practicability as a unit of Government, its security, and the possibility of its growth"(22) indicates a certain congruity of opinion between the British Labour Party and the Jewish Socialist Party in Palestine. Implicit in this statement was the belief that if there were to be a Jewish State, it could presumably be extended as the needs of Jews dictated. In fact, Stafford Cripps quite favoured partition: "as a temporary expedient which would enable immediate help to be given to Jewish refugees" and could be "reconsidered at a future date."(23)

Of course, and understandably so, there was much sympathy for Jewish refugees escaping the excesses of Nazism in Europe. In Zionist eyes the Peel plan had not allocated sufficient land for there to be a viable Jewish State and, therefore, of necessity should be opposed. The Labour Party, duly sympathetic, opposed the recommendation in Parliament. Ben-Gurion had his sights set on the whole of Palestine if not through agreement, then through conquest. Whether the Labour Party accepted the logical conclusion of his argument is debateable. Certainly the policy they considered to be the best solution was termed as the continuation of "a properly administered Mandate."(24) What exactly was meant by this is unclear but it possibly implied a policy which would allow Palestine to eventually achieve a Jewish numerical majority. How this meshed with the party's policy of encouraging national 'self-determination' reveals an instance of Labour's Janus-like quality.

Labour's participation in Government during the war years sheds a new light on its commitment to Zionism, for whilst Attlee remained equivocal and Morrison argued against any increase in Jewish immigration into Britain, Bevin was negotiating on behalf of the Jews

and Dalton was pondering over Labour's prospective post-war foreign policy and its clear pro-Zionist commitment. Of course, the plight of European Jewry received the greatest sympathy from the Labour Party and the 1944 revelations of the appalling massacres of Jews in Europe only further confirmed the belief of most party members that in the development of Palestine lay the main hope for the Jewish people in the post-war world. It was essentially within this emotional context that Labour's document, 'The International Postwar Settlement', which contained the memorable phrase "Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in"(25) was framed. This statement was not the result of Poale Zion's influence within the party but more a consequence of Dalton's attack of megalomania and the inability of Conference to provide an arena for careful study, deliberation and consideration of prospective policy. John Grantham argues that the party's 'International Postwar Settlement' was "the last foreign affairs policy statement to be formulated by a Labour Party which did not anticipate being in a position to implement its proposals in the foreseeable future."(26) Grantham's view is a stark condemnation of the Labour Party's unrealistic sentiments and he goes on to state: "The experience of the 1945-51 Government under Attlee's premiership would lead to an increased awareness throughout the movement of the limits within which foreign policy formulation by the party must be viewed."(27) This point is debateable. Either the party did not realise the implications of its policy proposal, particularly, on Palestine, even though it had participated in Government for a number of years; or it was ready and willing to produce ideological or sentimental gobbledegook in the expectation that it would never be put to the test.

Certainly, Attlee, as Kenneth Morgan states, was "an almost obscure figure"(28) and his wartime experience in Government had been overshadowed by Churchill, but even the Labour Party at its most simplistic could not reasonably have produced a six page document in the expectation that it would not gain office. They may have doubted the achievement of a landslide victory in 1945 but to have consciously anticipated downright defeat and to have acted accordingly seems less than feasible. On the other hand, J. Alderman maintains that the party, in its statement, deliberately courted the Jewish community in Britain for purposes of electoral gain.(29) The argument that Labour studiously and calculatingly captured Jewish voters in the electoral process only then to

deliberately renege on its policies, although compatible with contemporary leftist criticism of subsequent Labour Party tactics, suggests a naked cunning at which, at least on this particular issue, we would demur. If the Labour Party had electoral designs on the Jews in Britain it would only have had to produce a document which fudged policy intention, for example, on the vague lines of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. The fact that its extreme statement on Palestine alarmed members of the Jewish Agency as well as Jewish members of its own party hardly supports Alderman's analysis. Although we do not consider it impossible to contemplate that Labour could 'overpromise' on certain issues in order to gain votes, on this specific issue, the party, probably well-meaning in its intention, misjudged the difficulties of the Palestine situation, underestimated the animosities between Arab and Jew and generally were incompetent in their assessment of the potential hazards of pursuing such a policy.

In the event the party fell into a trap of its own making for when it gained office in 1945 not only did it have to contend with the acute problem of Palestine but also with rancour and opposition within its own ranks. The fact that the party had overtly committed itself to an untenable policy and that it lacked the prudence to foresee Britain's declining influence in the post-war world indicates a most profound naivete. It also provides a clear illustration of R.M. Punnett's analysis of Opposition behaviour: "Where commitments are made in Opposition these can prove awkward for the party leadership when the party returns to office, when policies turn out to be impracticable or unpalatable."(30)

The government and Bevin especially were castigated for their alleged indifference to the Zionist cause and their rejection of a party commitment. The fact that Bevin attempted to pursue the only viable option open to the Government, i.e. that of seeking to gain American co-operation in finding a solution to the Palestine problem clearly left the Government open to charges of 'betrayal' and 'imperialistic ambition' from factions within the Party. Bevin's own intemperate remarks and general exasperation with America's non-involvement and the recourse to violence within Palestine itself served, at least in the early period of the Attlee Administration, to exacerbate the growing divide between party and government. Bevin's belief that he was doing all he could under increasingly

trying conditions was never appreciated by Zionist sympathisers within the party, who saw in his attempts to gain some form of agreement between Arabs and Jews, and his refusal to bow to pro-Jewish American pressure, evidence that he in someway harboured anti-semitic sentiments. The two factors which mitigated the extent of opposition to the government within the Labour Party were, firstly, the appalling levels of violence and crucially the murders of British citizens in Palestine, and secondly, the growing identification of the Left with the Zionist cause.

There can be little doubt that the violent outbursts within Palestine changed opinion within the Party into one which was less sympathetic to Zionism, less willing to attack the Government for reneging on its electoral promises, more critical of America's lack of co-operation and more willing to accept the inherent difficulties of the Palestine issue. However, maybe more crucial to the resultant rallying around the Government particularly after Britain had withdrawn from Palestine, was the Left's adoption of pro-Zionist sympathies.

The Left's espousal of the Zionist cause raises a number of questions. Was it indeed genuine or was it adopted as a tool with which to attack the Government? Left wing publications had certainly changed their line regarding Palestine within fifteen years and although that does not provide conclusive evidence of opportunism it is nevertheless interesting to note. The New Statesman and Nation in 1929 stated: "We shall have to abandon both the appearance and the reality of that pro-Zionist bias which inspired our original acceptance of the Mandate...the Balfour Declaration was a dangerous leap in the dark. Moreover, it cut across other pledges which we had previously given to the Arabs. It was a blunder..In short the historical case of Jewish rights in Palestine with all its religious, political, financial and sentimental backing is, in truth, no case at all."(31) Of course, the position of Jews in Europe and Palestine had altered drastically by 1945 and it is possible to appreciate the Left's concern for Jewish refugees and the the Jewish community in Palestine as a legitimate and understandable sympathy for the beleagured underdog.

However, it is the Left's defence of 'socialist' foreign policy and national self-determination during Labour's period of Office, which although not difficult to understand in itself, is curious when

applied to Palestine and the Jewish question. National self-determination in the context of Labour Party views implied the relinquishment of imperial control in favour of the indigenous community. As far as it is possible to see Palestine in this light, self-determination would mean handing over power to some form of legitimate assembly which would comprise of Arabs and Jews sharing power in a ratio which reflected respective population figures. It certainly did not suggest, as members of the Left favoured in the 1930s, that Britain should remain as the Mandatory power until such time there was a Jewish numerical majority in Palestine, achieved through European Jewish immigration.

The fact that by 1947 the Left were advocating Britain's withdrawal from the Middle East because they rejected what they termed 'the needs of Imperial defence' is quite logical in the context of adhering to a socialist foreign policy. However, the Left's vocal sympathy for the Jews and their numerous attacks on the government both in the Press and in Parliament essentially meant that pro-Zionism was being 'tainted' by appearing to be a left-wing cause, and losing support as a result. Certainly, Richard Crossman's espousal of the Zionist cause and his identification as a Left-winger, albeit not a militant one, did little to endear other party members to Zionism. In fact, the Trade Union sponsored MP for Wembley North wrote to Attlee conveying "the deep resentment of many of my Trade Union colleagues" against the Government's critics, whom he felt "had put Zionism before Socialism" and had revealed a contemptuous disregard for party loyalty in an attempt to enforce a minority viewpoint."(32) Of course, it could be argued that Trade Union associates would, almost as a reflex action, support Bevin and, therefore, would be less than enamoured of the arguments presented by the so-called 'intellectual' Left. However, for many Labour members 'party loyalty' was an emotive term and definitely not something to be dismissed lightly, which on occasions the Left appeared to do rather too willingly.

The Left's criticism of the Government's handling of the United Nations decision and its subsequent refusal to grant de facto recognition of the State of Israel seemed to stem less from its commitment to Zionism than from a belief that Britain was contravening the authority and threatening the future of the United Nations. Whether in fact the Left were deeply attached to Zionism at

that time or simply adopted it as a rod with which to beat the back of the government can only be left open to conjecture. If the Left were sincerely attracted to Zionism, and in many ways no one can doubt that notions of a kibbutzim way of life were attractive to those on the Left, it must also be acknowledged that the Palestinian Arab case was not even perceived let alone considered, and within such a cloistered perception, sympathy for Zionism may be understandable. The irony of the situation, of course, is that if Zionism was identified as a left-wing cause in the 1940s, then some thirty years later the Palestinian Arabs were to arouse left-wing sympathies.

There is no doubt that despite leftwing carping at the direction of Government policy in the post-war years, Ernest Bevin had little opposition from the Conservative Party. It is a paradox that the Conservative Party, who had never as a whole, espoused pro-Zionist sympathies had, as Churchill put it: "..done more to build up a Jewish National Home in Palestine than anyone."(33) What, then was the reason for this? Clearly, the Party's structure must play an important part. The historic Conservative Party was not notably policy oriented, and certainly annual conferences were never to assume the significance of those of the Labour Party. It can be seen, therefore, that in the absence of a decision-making body within the party greater importance was attached to the views of individual leaders and influential party members. Certain members of the Party were unquestionably sympathetic, albeit with a certain amount of pragmatism, to Zionism: Winston Churchill, Leo Amery, Malcolm MacDonald, who although aware of the economic service the Jews could render Palestine, were attracted by the urbane and cosmopolitan qualities of Jewish people, especially when encapsulated in the charismatic figure of Dr. Chaim Weizmann.

It was Winston Churchill who was responsible for the 1922 White Paper on Palestine which essentially prepared the way for the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Mandate. This White Paper set out the conditions of establishing a Jewish National Homeland within Palestine on the understanding that Jews were to be in Palestine 'as of right and not on sufferance'. It also set out the notion of Britain's 'dual obligation' to both Arabs and Jews and looked forward to the time when both communities would participate in a full measure of self-government. Of course, as events developed in Palestine this objective could be dismissed as wishful

thinking but Churchill's sympathies remained with Zionism until 1944. Churchill's change of heart, only eight months before the General Election of 1945 which was to place him as Leader of the Opposition, is crucial when analysing the behaviour of the Conservative Party during the Attlee Government. It is conceivable that had Churchill not been so disenchanted with Zionism he, as leader of the Party and therefore enormously influential, might have mobilised opposition to Bevin's seemingly unsympathetic policies towards the Jews. In the event, Churchill assumed a low profile and as a result the Shadow Cabinet was generally supportive of the Government. With Churchill's pro-Zionism waning, debates in the House were often conducted by Oliver Stanley or Anthony Eden, who had never disguised his preference for the Arabs. Of course, as minutes of the Imperial Affairs Committee reveal the Conservative Party had no alternative policy on Palestine. Stanley always asserted that he favoured partition but invariably added that in his experience as Colonial Secretary, he was more than aware of the dangers of pursuing such a policy. Other members of the Committee were genuinely at a loss to know what to do about the problem and until January 1949 it is quite possible that the attitude 'there but for the Grace of God go I' prevailed.

The interesting, but nevertheless difficult point is why the Conservative Party chose to oppose the Government over the question of granting de facto recognition of Israel. It may, of course, have been, as Attlee suspected, a party manoeuvre designed "with a General Election not so far away, to snatch a victory for the Conservative Party,"(34) although, realistically the Palestine issue could never be viewed as a potential vote-catcher. On the other hand, the Conservatives may have been alarmed at the degree of international censure on Britain and sought to place the issue in the wider context of national prestige. Another possibility, and probably a more convincing one, is that the Party simply engaged in its traditional pragmatism. The State of Israel existed, albeit with undefined boundaries; it had been recognised by the United States, the Soviet Union and a number of other countries, and as Oliver Stanley said 'like it or not' it had to be recognised. Britain could not distance itself from the international arena; it had to come to some form of agreement with Israel as it was quite clear that, with American backing, the State was here to stay. Also and maybe more significantly, important oil pipe-lines now crossed Israeli territory

and it was apparent that some form of arrangement would have to be reached with the Jewish Government. Certainly, Palestine itself, was not of central concern to the Conservatives and many biographies dismiss the whole affair with just one line of narrative. With such circumstantial evidence it is not easy to arrive at a definitive conclusion. All that can be said of the Conservative Party and its attitude to the Arabs and Jews in Palestine is that its responses to the affair in general were flexible and based on a assessment of Britain's national interests. Malcolm MacDonald, the pro-Zionist Conservative Colonial Secretary in 1939 admitted that policies towards Palestine 'had been a little bit cynical' and perhaps this is a fitting judgement of Conservative reactions to the Palestine problem.

What then are the final conclusions to be drawn? Clearly, in order to gain a realistic understanding of the direction of Government policies during the period 1937 to 1950, Palestine must be viewed in the context of Britain's perception of her own national interests. When placed within this ambit it becomes apparent that policy choices were severely restricted. As regards Britain's party politics it is evident that the Conservative Party's pragmatic realisation of the limits of their policies towards Palestine coupled with their basic recognition of the realities of office placed them in a far more comfortable position than that of the Labour Party. The Labour Party, through its own failure to perceive the profound difficulties of the issue, which is in some respects an inherent feature of its organisation, or to appreciate that a Labour Government could not act in a vacuum but had to respond to the restrictions of Government, succeeded in inflicting the greatest possible damage on itself. The policies of the Attlee Government were not reprehensible when viewed in the light of the unquestionable constraints imposed on any Administration of that period, they just simply appeared to be when judged against the party's previous pronouncements. The party presented itself as a hostage to fortune and regrettably was obliged to pay an exceedingly high price, in terms, at least, of moral censure within its own ranks; jibes at its inconsistency from the Conservative Party and, to this day, the judgement that this was the one issue on which Ernest Bevin, a representative of the Labour Movement, failed.

If there are any lessons in Government/Opposition tendencies to be learnt from the Palestine affair, they are undoubtedly succinctly encapsulated in Richard Rose's statement: "Without the ability to act promptly upon a statement of intent, the Opposition may find that circumstances have changed greatly when it is next in Office and earlier commitments can become embarrassingly inappropriate."(35)

FOOTNOTES

1. M. Cohen, Op cit; G. Sheffer Op cit; N. Rose Op cit

2. Ibid p.ix

3. G. Sheffer Op cit p.489; N. Rose Op cit p.384

4. David Vital. The Making of British Foreign Policy London 1968 p.20

5. Ibid p.19

6. CAB 129/24 27/1/48

7. M. Cohen Op cit p.ix

8. L.S. Amery Op cit p.116

9. M. Cohen Op cit p.xi

10. E.Monroe Op cit p.168

11. Leonard Stein Papers Box 123 Loc cit

12. M. Bar-Zohar Op cit pp.91-92

13. Creech-Jones Papers CJ/30/3/1 Loc cit

14. M. Cohen Op cit p.189

15. CO 733/354 6/12/37

16. M. Gilbert Op cit p.189

17. CAB 129 15/1/49

18. William Wallace. The Foreign Policy Process in Britain London 1975 p.4

19. FO 371/75368 22/1/49

20. A. Sargent. Op cit p.388

21. LPACR 1937 p.95

22. NEC Minutes 7/1/38

23. Tribune 21/10/38

24. LPACR 1937 p.95

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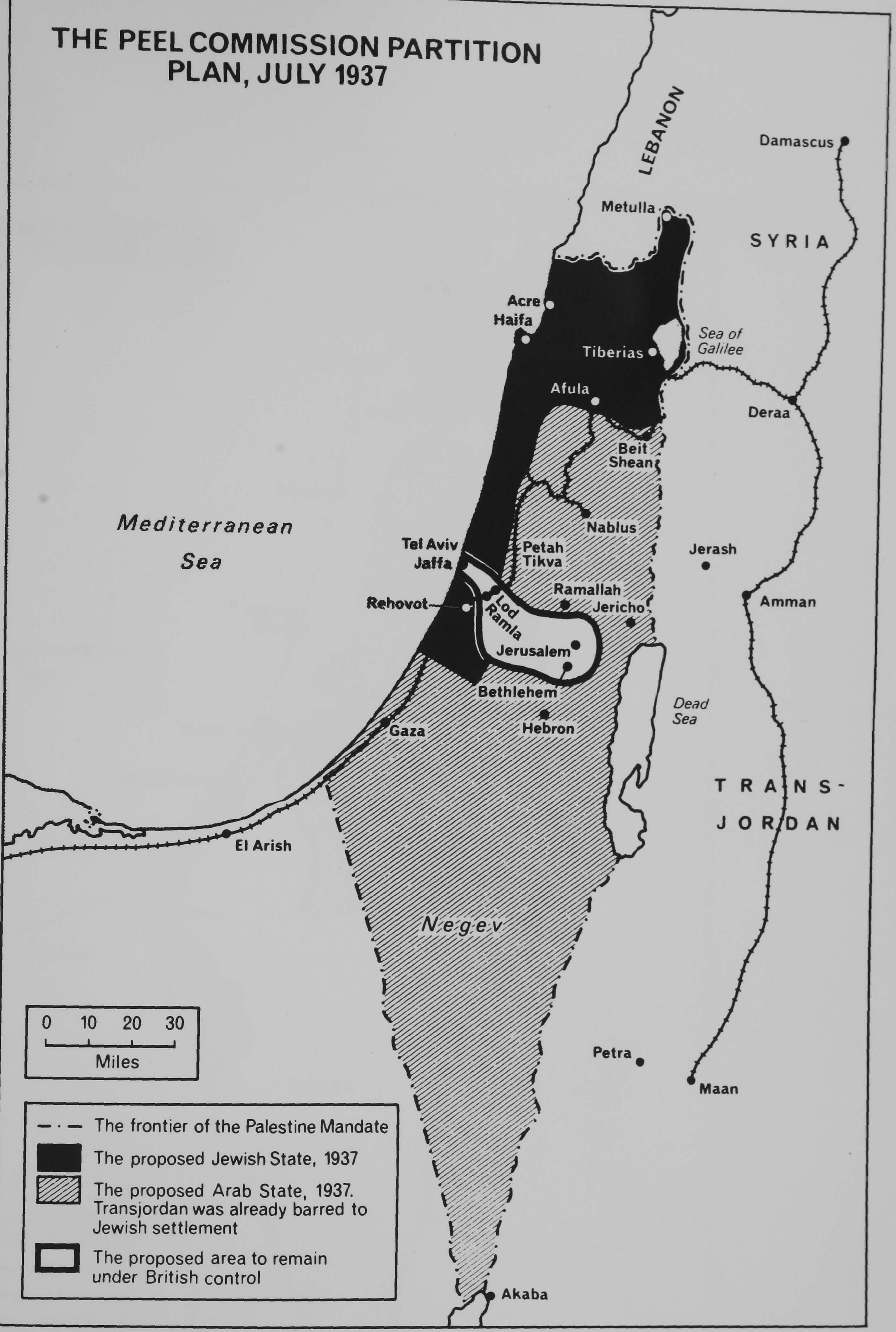

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