The BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT and ZIONISM 1917-1948

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To my wife

One of the most difficult questions was Palestine. To most problems one can apply general principles, but to Palestine – no. By no other question have I been so puzzled.

Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left*

Contents

Foreword

Considering the small size of Palestine, and the many other problems which beset the British Empire between 1917 and 1948, the amount of research done and the number of published works on this little corner of Britain's vast patrimony is considerable. It is an area on which myriad researchers and writers have focussed their attention, so much so that one might well imagine every corner had been examined and the 'last word' said on matters grave and minor.

Anyone reading this book will see that this is not so. For here is a facet of Britain's Palestine policy and attitudes which has been previously overlooked. Nor is it an issue of minor concern; the reader will quickly discover both the fascination and the significance of the British Labour Movement's attitudes and policies towards Zionism during these thirty-one crowded and controversial years.

Through his researches, Professor Gorny has uncovered a strange, at times disheartening, but always fascinating story which seldom accords with one's preconceptions, or with what has been written hitherto.

This book will surely become, as it deserves to be, one of the standard and much-consulted works on a subject not only absorbing in itself, but of continuing relevance today.

MARTIN GILBERT

Merton College,
Oxford.
August 1982

Preface

The history of Zionism is the history of Jewish people's desire for complete transformation of their national existence. The Zionists wanted self-determination for the Jewish people, their return to the historical homeland, and political independence. They also believed in the vital need to transform the economic and vocational structure of the Jewish masses, and dreamed of a cultural renaissance. At the same time, they hoped to establish a new kind of relationship with the nations of the world, thereby drastically altering the international status of the Jewish people.

This latter aspiration can best be defined as a desire to abolish the dependence on other peoples which stemmed from the anomaly of Jewish existence in the Diaspora, and to establish interdependent ties with other nations, based on identity of political interests, shared cultural and religious traditions and ideological affinity. The cornerstones of this interdependence theory were: the interests of the Powers in Palestine; the wish of various countries to solve their own Jewish minority problems; a common cultural background rooted in the Bible, and its values; and the close ideological and organizational association of Palestine labour with the international labour movement.

On its tortuous road from dependence to interdependence, Zionism won singular victories but also experienced bitter failures. It would have been well-nigh impossible for the major political achievements of Zionism to be gained without the assistance of other nations, yet these same achievements were often won in the teeth of those very nations' resistance.

The relationship between Britain and the Zionist movement in the inter-war period can serve as a striking example of the historiçal fate of the interdependence principle, on which the Zionist movement hoped to base its relations with the rest of the world.

For the Zionists a new era was ushered in, with great hopes, towards the end of the First World War, when the Balfour Declaration was bestowed on them by the British Government. This achievement appeared to demonstrate the validity of Zionist theory, since the motives behind the Declaration included political interests, shared cultural tradition and ideological affinity. The era ended thirty years later, with profound bitterness and resentment on both sides, culminating in political and military confrontation. The shared traditions and mutual ideals were swept aside by the force of events; interests held sway and these, needless to say, were fluid.

Moreover, as if to make matters worse, the painful confrontation between the two peoples came at a time when the Zionist and British leaderships shared certain social beliefs and maintained long-standing personal and organizational contacts. The ties between Attlee, Bevin and Ben-Gurion, all socialists, might have been expected to be much stronger than those linking Lloyd George, Balfour and Weizmann. Yet history proved the reverse to be true. How did the rift between the two socialist movements occur? And why was it the British labour movement which dealt Zionism one of its most bitter blows? This question serves as the main theme of our study.

From the early days of Zionism, socialism's attitude towards it had been complex and problematic. Sympathy with Jewish suffering and condemnation of antisemitism went hand in

hand with reluctance to acknowledge Jewish nationhood, and with a negative view of Zionism as the product of a bourgeois ideology and class interests. It was this attitude which prevented the admittance of Poalei Zion, the left-wing Marxists' party, to the Second International, since as a Zionist party it postulated the existence of a national Jewish working class. Although this viewpoint began to change towards the end of the First World War, it was still only the social-democratic parties which, albeit hesitantly, recognized the national status of the Jewish people and agreed to see Zionism as one of the solutions to the problem of Jewish existence among the nations. They never, however, regarded it as the exclusive and comprehensive solution.

Hence, British labour's relationship with Zionism was founded not on general socialist principles, but on the special and unique bond between this movement and Zionism in general, and the Jewish labour movement in particular. It was born out of sympathy on the part of the British and faith on the part of the Jews, and was grounded in belief in the advantage of establishing a Jewish socialist society in Palestine. This same society, however, was later abandoned by a Labour Government to attack by Arab armies equipped with British arms and trained by British officers.

The development of relations between British Labour and Zionism can be viewed from several angles. From the purely moralistic aspect, which deplores the divorce of political interests from moral values, the policy of the Labour Government appears to be a clear example of deliberately heartless Machiavellian politics. The more cynical view is that Labour's constantly shifting policy towards Zionism stemmed neither from moral hypocrisy nor from political malice, but rather from the essential nature of politics as such, and parliamentary politics in particular. According to this view, interests and values should be kept apart, and interests should always prevail. In parliamentary regimes it is customary for the opposition to object to government policy, and to proclaim the importance of values. Yet when the opposition party comes to power, it is not expected to keep all its former promises, and interests dictate policies. The policy of the Labour Government on Zionism from 1929 to 1931, and from 1945 to 1948, can be cited in support of this viewpoint. Hence, it could be said, that policy should not be regarded as a betrayal of values and commitments, but as part of the 'game' of democratic parliamentarianism and of the power struggle between conflicting national interests, which are of the essence of politics.

We shall attempt to adopt a more balanced approach, recognizing both the Machiavellian element and the importance of the parliamentary 'game', while also attempting to illuminate developments by analysing the ideological principles and political concepts which shaped Labour's outlook before it attained national leadership. An attempt will be made to trace the development of these principles and concepts through changing historical situations, and to distinguish between the immutable and the changing elements.

In studying the relations of British Labour with Zionism, one must recall the paradoxical fact that, of all the social-democratic movements in Europe, the British movement was historically the least conscious of the Jewish problem. It had never been confronted with the phenomenon of the mass concentration of Jews within a 'Pale of Settlement', as the socialist movement in Russia had been, and hence had never been obliged to seek a solution to such a problem. Labour had never been obliged to adopt a specific stand in the face of antisemitic movements and ideologies, as was German social democracy from the middle of the nineteenth century. It was never confronted with the need to contemplate a fundamental political solution to the problem of national minorities, as was its counterpart in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nor was it actively

involved in a political conflict on antisemitic issues, as the French socialists were during the Dreyfuss Affair. But the circumstances which forced the above-mentioned parties to adopt a stand on the Jewish problem, did not move them to acknowledge the fact of Jewish nationality or to support the Zionist movement. On the contrary, with few exceptions, their opposition to Zionism was total and consistent. They were, however, forced into a 'Jewish awareness' much more profound than that of British Labour. Hence, it seems that the movement which was least involved in Jewish problems was the most deeply embroiled in the 'Zionist problem'. And since Labour was thus almost entirely innocent of prejudgement on the Jewish question, Zionism stood to benefit.

Although the British labour movement displayed scant interest in Jewish questions before the First World War, the increased flow of Jewish migration to Britain in the late nineteenth century encountered differing attitudes on the part of the trade unions and the Social-Democratic Federation. The unions were vehemently opposed to the influx of aliens and supported the Aliens Bill in 1904–5 restricting their entry. Although they opposed absorption of aliens in general, it was clear from the statements of their leaders and from their propaganda that they were referring mainly to the Jews who were then flooding East London and 'unfairly' competing with local workers and artisans. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, denounced the proposed bill and strongly criticized the stand of the trade unions.

The socialist press (the *Justice* and the *Clarion*, for example), which had often shown sympathy for the plight of the Jews in Eastern Europe, wrote in strong terms with antisemitic connotations of the avaricious nature of greedy Jewish capitalists. These articles often aroused reader reaction and debate.

The Jewish national question was not widely discussed by this press, but its stand on the subject was wholly negative. It was even hinted that there were similarities between antisemitism and Zionism. The issue was not, however, in the forefront of British socialist consciousness at this time. Any study of the 'Zionist involvement' of Labour should, therefore, commence at the end of the First World War or, to be more exact, in 1917. Three events occurred at this time which had both a direct and an indirect impact on the subject of our study.

The first was the transformation of Labour from a tenuous confederation of trade unions and socialist associations into a political party with its own social-democratic political platform. It subsequently began to contemplate various socio-political problems, Zionism included, in a new fashion, coloured by its new role as a party with political interests and considerations. The evolution from workers' movement into socialist party is an important factor in evaluation of the changing attitude towards Zionism. In this study we attempt to answer the question of whether there was any connection between the socialist *Weltanschauung* of Labour and its standpoint on Zionism.

Apart from these developments, which were of indirect significance to Zionism, there were two events which directly affected it, the first on the party level and the second on a national scale. The former was the clause in the 1917 Labour platform dealing with the rights of Jews in the Diaspora and in Palestine. This clause, which is the starting point for our study, recognized the right of the Jews to *return* to Palestine, and constituted a kind of public Labour commitment to the Jewish people. The second event was, of course, the Balfour Declaration. Even though Labour leaders played no role in it, it confronted them, as contenders for political leadership of the country, with a political challenge they could not ignore. As the official commitment of the British Government, on behalf of the Britsh people, it involved Labour in the issue willy-nilly,

particularly since it had been a party to the wartime Coalition Government, and might lead the country itself in days to come.

We can discern four distinct periods in the annals of the relations between the British and Palestinian-Jewish labour movements. Labour's basic stand on Zionism was formulated in the first period (1916–29), and it was then that the links between the two movements were established. In the second period (1929–31) the relationship was put to the practical political test. From 1931 to 1945, Labour was faced with certain problems which were intensified by the realization of Zionism in Palestine, and the plight of European Jewry. The fourth period, from the end of the Second World War to the establishment of Israel, was a time of intense political crisis between the two movements. We will attempt to examine whether there was any continuity between these periods and to what extent they were shaped solely by the vicissitudes of history.

Joseph Gorny

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And finally, my deepest gratitude to my wife Geula, without whom this work might never have been completed.

J.G.

List of Abbreviations

Institutions

I.L.P.	Independent Labour Party
N.E.C.	National Executive Committee
S.L.	Socialist League
T.U.C.	Trade Union Congress

Archives

B.G.A.	Ben-Gurion Archives
H.H.A.	Hashomer Hatzair Archives
L.A.	Labour Archives
L.M.H.A.	Labour Movement and Histadrut Archives
M.A.	Mapai Archives
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
W.A.	Weizmann Archives
Z.A.	Central Zionist Archives

PART ONE

LABOUR CONSOLIDATES ITS STAND ON ZIONISM 1917–1929

Introduction

The international, political and social framework within which the Zionist movement was to operate until the eve of the Second World War was determined after the First World War and in the early twenties.

From the international political aspect, the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917) bestowed on Zionism the open and public support of a world power. And when the Declaration was ratified by the Allied Powers at the Paris Peace Conference in early 1919, the national rights of the Jewish people and its historical links with Palestine won recognition for the first time. As a result of British acceptance of the Mandate over Palestine (San Remo Conference, April 1920), the appointment of the pro-Zionist Herbert Samuel as High Commissioner in June 1920, and the final ratification of the Mandate by the League of Nations in June 1922, the Jewish national movement enjoyed official British patronage and wide international support.

But in contrast to its new status in the international sphere, the internal political situation was very troubled. The opposition of the Arabs, expressed both in political action and in violence which erupted in April 1920 and in May 1921, led the British Government and the High Commissioner to recognize the need to publish an official and authorized interpretation of the Balfour Declaration. The resulting document, the 1922 Churchill White Paper, named after the then Colonial Secretary, provided the basic tenets for British policy towards Zionism. It established the following principles:

(a) It had not been the intention of the Balfour Declaration to hand over Palestine in entirety to the Jewish people, but rather to recognize the historic right of this people to build a national home within it.

(b) The ‘national home’ was envisaged as an autonomous Jewish national and spiritual centre from the cultural, social and economic point of view.

(c) In order to conciliate the Arabs and allay their fears, the scope of Jewish immigration would be adapted to the economic absorptive ability of the country. (It should be noted that this term was interpreted very flexibly in the twenties and did not prevent immigration.)

(d) The British Government proclaimed its intention to establish an advisory council to aid the Commissioner, composed of officials appointed by the Government and elected public representatives (ten officials, three public appointees, twelve elected representatives: eight Moslems, two Jews, two Christians). This plan, which aroused considerable apprehension among Zionist leaders, was never implemented because of Arab opposition.

(e) The Government also decided to separate Western and Eastern Palestine and to exclude Transjordan from the territorial sphere of the Jewish national home. This was, in effect, the first partition of Palestine and was to have a considerable impact on future negotiations on the possibility of absorbing mass Jewish immigration.

To sum up, the White Paper was grounded on Herbert Samuel's conviction that the Jewish national home should develop in gradual and moderate fashion, and should serve as the centre for the Jewish national elite rather than the solution for the Jewish masses.

From the social point of view, this was the formative period in Zionist history. The Zionist movement was reorganized under the leadership of Chaim Weizmann. Institutions of national autonomy were set up for the Yishuv (Palestinian Jewish community), and the foundations were laid for various forms of communal agricultural settlement. The network of Hebrew education was expanded and the urban community grew, particularly in Tel-Aviv. During the decade the Yishuv expanded threefold from 60,000 to close to 180,000.

It was in this period that the Jewish labour movement became the leading social organization and political force in Palestine. It had been born in 1905 in the period known in Zionist history as the Second Aliyah (*aliyah* – going up or immigration). At first it was composed of young Jewish intellectuals of petty-bourgeois origin who made their way to Palestine for ideological motives. It was dominated by a constructive socialist outlook with utopian rather than materialistic Marxist predilections. From its inception it was involved in the endeavour to construct a Jewish national society in Palestine. It took up the fight for 'Hebrew labour' as a means of absorbing new immigrants, a way of productivizing the Jewish masses and as an ideal. To this end it initiated the communal settlement movement. It also organized an armed force in order to defend the status of Jews in Palestine.

In 1920 this movement set up the General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine (Histadrut), a workers' association whose functions extended far beyond the accepted roles of European trade unions. The Histadrut set itself up from the first as the alternative to existing bourgeois society, and therefore, in addition to its traditional trade union aims, it set up cooperative industry, communal settlement projects, building companies, a marketing network and independent consumers' system, and separate educational systems.

The social force and political power of the labour movement in Palestine derived from its activist and constructive ideology and from the organizational skills revealed by its leaders and active members.

The leaders produced by this movement eventually became the national leaders of the Yishuv and of the world Zionist movement. The most prominent among them mentioned in our study were:

David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) – the movement's dynamic leader, Secretary of the Histadrut in the twenties and Israel's first Prime Minister.

Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1884–1963) – a moderate man and a scholar, one of the fathers of Jewish national autonomy, and Israel's second President.

Moshe Sharett (Shertok) (1894–1965) – a sensitive intellectual, Director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, Israel's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

Hayim Arlozorov (1899–1933) – young and brilliant leader of the movement, Director of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, murdered in mysterious circumstances at the height of his career.

Eliyahu Golomb (1893–1945) – a man of courage, head of the Hagana, the underground movement established by the Histadrut.

Dov Hoz (1894–1940) – the brilliant emissary, who won the hearts of the British Labour leaders.

Shlomo Kaplansky (1884–1950) – veteran leader of the World Alliance of Poalei Zion (Zionist-socialist parties in the Diaspora). Became President of the Haifa Technion (Institute of Technology).

Berl Locker (1887–1971) – likeable and sharp-witted leader of Poalei Zion in Eastern Europe, and link between Labour and the Zionist movement in the thirties.

Yosef Sprinzak (1885–1959) – distinguished by his moderation and thoughtfulness, and close associate of Chaim Weizmann. First Speaker of the Knesset.

Golda Meir (Meirson) (1898–1978) – forceful woman of strong convictions. Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Israel.

To conclude, in the 1920s the Zionist movement attained revolutionary achievements in the political and social spheres, but also forfeited a historic opportunity to create a Jewish majority in Palestine. The mass Jewish immigration which commenced in 1925 (more than thirty thousand Jews came in that year alone) ended in severe economic crisis which created a grave state of psychological and ideological scepticism. If the Jews had succeeded in approaching demographic balance with the Arab community the future fate of Zionism, of the Jewish people and of Palestine would have been very different.

CHAPTER ONE

The Henderson-Webb Declaration

In early August 1917, the British Labour Party published the guidelines of its new platform for the post-war period, written by Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb, entitled *War Aims Memorandum*. The clause pertaining to the status of the Jewish people and to the future of Palestine read as follows:

> The British Labour Movement demands for the Jews in all countries the same elementary rights of tolerance, freedom of residence and trade, and equal citizenship that ought to be extended to all the inhabitants of every nation.
>
> It furthermore expresses the opinion that Palestine should be set free from the harsh and oppressive government of the Turk, in order that this country may form a Free State, under international guarantee, to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return, and may work out their salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion.[1]

Since this document, which preceded the Balfour Declaration by three months, was the first public expression of Labour's attitude to Zionism, the motives behind it, as well as its public impact, deserve investigation. The specific reasons why Labour felt it necessary to include this clause in its platform are unknown. Shlomo Kaplansky, the dominant figure in Poalei Zion at the time, attributed the achievement to the propaganda efforts of Poalei Zion in Britain and to his own influence, but could not point to any decisive factor which brought it about. He concluded that 'the peace plan of the British Movement, like all documents of its kind, was the fruit of collective effort'.[2] It would in fact appear to have resulted from a combination of effective Zionist action and congenial circumstances within Labour at the time. Poalei Zion had conducted an enterprising information campaign in Britain from the beginning of the War. Led by the energetic local Secretary, J. Pomeranz, and the editor of the *Jewish Times*, Morris Meyer, it did much to bring Zionist ideas to the knowledge of the British Labour movement, and to establish personal contact with some of its leaders. In 1916 Poalei Zion published an English translation of Kaplansky's book *The Jews and the War*,[3] and his description of the plight of the Jews, and proposals for solution of the problems of the Jewish proletariat through settlement in Palestine, found an echo in the *War Aims Memorandum*.

For their successful activities Poalei Zion won the admiration of Chaim Weizmann. In a political report which he addressed to the Zionist Executive in 1919, he wrote, inter alia: 'I would like to mention here the good work that has been carried out by Poalei Zion among the workers; they have managed to obtain a statement from the large unions.' Weizmann was sceptical as to the importance of this statement (and indeed all such statements), but there was no doubt in his mind as to Poalei Zion's success.[4]

Pressure on the Labour leadership was exerted from another direction by a group of young

Manchester Zionists, who were associated with Chaim Weizmann. After publication of the Balfour Declaration, one of the prominent members of this group, Harry Sacher, wrote to his friend, Leon Simon: 'This declaration is the biggest score of a diplomatic kind we have made during the war, and without arrogance, it isn't Chaim and Sokolow who have won it but our group.'[5]

Labour circles were also influenced by the pro-Zionist articles which appeared in the *New Statesman* (which wrote on Jewish and Zionist matters from 1913 on). Zionist leaders attributed considerable importance to this journal, since it was read by leading British politicians (see following chapter).

The personal factor undoubtedly played a part in bringing the Jewish-Zionist question to Labour's attention. It is hard to determine what moved the two architects of the new Labour Party, Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb, to express sympathy with Zionist aspirations. Henderson served in Lloyd George's War Cabinet from the end of 1916 until his resignation in July 1917, a period during which intensive negotiations were being conducted with the Zionists, culminating in the Balfour Declaration. Henderson's support for Zionism was temperate, but he maintained it constantly throughout his life.

Webb, who later became an opponent of Zionism, did not then apparently interpret Zionist ideals as conflicting with his own outlook. Though it seems unlikely that he was one of the initiators of the Zionist clause, he obviously did not object to it, since otherwise he would not have agreed to affix his signature to the platform.[6]

Lastly, the particular psychological atmosphere of wartime should be taken into consideration. The trauma of war generates noble aspirations, desire for reform and belief in the possibility of creating a new and better society. The desire to make amends to suffering Jews was also nurtured by the humanistic and religious traditions of the labour movement.

Analysis of the declaration casts some light on the intentions and reservations of its authors. The first section, which demands equal civil rights for the Jews wherever they reside, appears straightforward. This was a general Jewish demand which had always been supported by the socialist parties of Europe. Poalei Zion, however, in a memorandum to the Labour Party, and in letters from Kaplansky to Henderson in late 1917 and early 1918, had demanded recognition of Jewish rights to national autonomy rather than to mere civil equality.[7] Kaplansky's first letter, sent before the Labour Party Conference, went unanswered, nor did his second appeal succeed in obtaining support for the demand for autonomy.

The recognition of Jewish civil rights and failure to support national autonomy, expressed in the first part of the declaration, help explain the cautious reference to the rights of the Jews in Palestine to free themselves from oppressive Turkish rule. This statement stemmed, not from recognition of the national rights of the Jews to Palestine, but first and foremost from belief in their right to equal civil status and to personal freedom. This assumption is borne out by the fact that Labour disregarded Kaplansky's implied request that they include in their declaration the phrase later used in the Balfour Declaration referring to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Further proof is supplied by the memoirs of G.S. Barnes, Labour representative in the War Cabinet (after Henderson's resignation, and at the time of the formulation of the Balfour Declaration). Barnes supported the declaration but interpreted its intention as the desire to give the Jews 'only a right of asylum and citizenship in a country which

to them had a peculiar interest as a cradle of their race'.[8]

And yet it would be wrong to claim that the War Aims Memorandum totally disregarded the national rights of the Jews in Palestine, and their desire to renew national existence therein. The declaration refers not to immigration, but to the 'right to return', and the use of the word 'return' is not accidental. It implies acknowledgement of the right of the Jews to return to a place which was once theirs.

The second paragraph refers to the 'salvation' of the Jews and their liberation from the interference of other peoples and religions. This can be interpreted in two complementary ways: interference can mean physical oppression as well as spiritual and cultural persecution, leading to assimilation. The Jews, according to the Memo, should be allowed to rebuild their national society and maintain their national and religious identity in Palestine. This being so, why did Labour in 1918 fail to follow the example of the Balfour Declaration and specifically recognize the right of the Jews to national autonomy or a 'national home' in Palestine? This was a question of principle for the labour movement, since 'national autonomy' would have violated the concept of equality of citizenship which they advocated. We will return to this question further on in this study. Furthermore, support for a 'Jewish national home' would have implied recognition of historical rights. This was a basically irrational concept, and hence unacceptable to a socialist thinker such as Sidney Webb. The nebulous term 'national home' was suspect in the eyes of many Labourites, who felt that it implied Jewish control of Palestine, contrary to the wishes of its other inhabitants. They preferred the idea of a 'free state' under international supervision. The term will be further clarified, but it can be stated at this stage that it fitted in with the democratic and internationalist views of Labour.

The Labour declaration had considerable public impact. According to Kaplansky, it was of great assistance to the Poalei Zion delegation to the Stockholm Convention (organized by the Dutch-Scandinavian Socialist Committee) in September-October 1917. He claimed on several occasions that it was thanks to Labour that the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee issued a similar statement, thus paving the way for Poalei Zion's admission to the Second International.[9]

NOTES

1. 'Labour Peace Aims', *The Times*, 11 August 1917. S. Levenberg, *Jews in Palestine*, pp. 204–5.
2. S. Kaplansky, *Vision and Realization*, p. 224.
3. S. Kaplansky, *The Jews and the War, Memorandum of the Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation Poalei Zion*, Hague 1916.
4. *Minute of the Zionist General Council*, 1919–29, Vol. 1, p. 113.
5. J. Friedman, *The Question of Palestine 1914–1918*, pp. 254–5.
6. It was reported at the N.E.C. meeting on 22 August 1917: 'The Memorandum on War Aims, corrected by Mr Sidney Webb, who had embodied a number of amendments …' N.E.C., Vol. 10, 22 August 1917.
7. Kaplansky to Henderson, 24 December 1917; 7 February 1918. Labour Archives, Kaplansky Files, 104/IV/10.
8. L. Stein, p. 476. Quoted from G. Barnes, *From Workshop to War Cabinet*, London 1923,

autobiography.

9. See Kaplansky's letters to his fiancée from the Stockholm Convention in M. Zinger, *S. Kaplansky, His Life and Work*, pp. 386–92. From the memoirs of another member of the Poalei Zion delegation to Stockholm we learn of the difficulties they faced. See J. Zerubavel, *In Times of War and Revolution*, p. 224 on.

CHAPTER TWO

The Labour Press and Zionism

The New Statesman

In the introduction we noted that until the First World War, the socialist press was hostile towards Zionism. The sole exception was the *New Statesman*, the Fabian weekly founded in 1913.

On the eve of the war, and in the wake of the notorious Beilis trial in Russia, the *New Statesman* published the first series of articles on the Jewish problem by A.M. Hyamson.[1] The articles, strongly pro-Zionist in tone, were aimed at presenting the facts of the Jewish and Zionist case to non-Jewish intellectuals of progressive liberal or socialist outlook. Emphasis was placed on the intolerable economic and legal status of Eastern European Jewry, and the social and humanitarian interpretation of Zionism.

It is reasonable to assume that, since Hyamson's articles appeared at a time when the Webbs chaired the editorial board of the journal, the articles had their approval. Beatrice Webb's own positive attitude to Zionist aspirations can be learned from the survey of Jewish immigrant life in East London which she wrote in the 1880s.[2] The succinct (almost poetic) analysis was not far removed from the Zionist interpretation of the ills of Jewish society in the Diaspora. Motivated by the religious romanticism of her youth, which she never wholly abandoned, she affirmed the bond between the miserable Jewish masses in London's East End and their historical homeland in Palestine. As a positivist and disciple of Herbert Spencer, she clearly perceived how the legal and social status of Eastern European Jews had led to mass Jewish immigration to the West. As a humanitarian and moralist, she criticized – in sharp, even antisemitic terms – the uninhibitedly competitive methods employed by Jewish tradesmen and craftsmen which she regarded as unfair. As a fastidious person, she was appalled by the squalor and noisiness of the Jewish quarter of the East End. Her impressions, as previously noted, were not far removed from the image of the Diaspora delineated by Zionist ideology.

Shortly before Hyamson's series commenced in the *New Statesman*, the Webbs wrote an article in it expressing their paternalistic views on the 'non-adult' races, namely the colonial nations.[3] They argued that the affluent countries should assist these races in achieving autonomy, social relief and progress. They may well have regarded the Jews of Eastern Europe as one of these non-adult races, in need of the patronage of the Western nations. Furthermore, as advocates of social engineering, the Webbs were in favour of planned immigration from heavily populated countries to sparsely settled ones, on condition that the latter offered natural conditions for the absorption of mass immigration, and that the local population would not suffer thereby. Consequently, the concept of Jewish immigration to Palestine did not contradict their general views, as long as they remained unaware of the existence of Arab opposition.

Hence Hyamson's theories on the plight of Russian Jewry accorded with the views of the

Webbs.[4] He tried to present Zionism as a partial solution to the Jewish problem and as emanating from the desire to perpetuate the Jewish people.[5] When war broke out, Hyamson called on the British Government to take the initiative in order to renew Jewish national existence in Palestine[6] (in an article written under the guidance of Chaim Weizmann[7]). These views were not alien to the *New Statesman* editor, Clifford Sharp, who advocated a blend of conservatism and collectivism, socialism and imperialism.[8]

Two months later, Hyamson published a second article in which he described the achievements of the Zionist venture in Palestine.[9] He concluded with the hint that when the war ended there was a good chance that, with the assistance of a 'sympathetic regime' and through the undeterred efforts of the Jewish people, the Jewish Judea might be re-established.

The editorial published on 17 November 1917 in response to the Balfour Declaration provided conclusive proof that Hyamson's theories were approved by the *New Statesman*. It expressed unreserved, even enthusiastic support for the Declaration,[10] as 'one of the best pieces of statesmanship that we can show in these latter days'. It recalled that, on the outbreak of the war, the journal had published an article enumerating the reasons why Britain should undertake responsibility for Palestine, and emphasized that its stand remained unchanged. The editorial went on to discuss the strategic issues and principles of the Balfour Declaration, asserting that it was in the British strategic interest, as the best way of safeguarding the Suez Canal, to support the Zionist cause in Palestine and the establishment of a friendly and grateful Jewish society.

As a socialist, and editor of a socialist journal, Sharp could not disregard the implications of support for the Declaration as far as recognition of Jewish nationhood was concerned. He argued that, despite the assimilation of some Western Jews and the view of certain Jews and non-Jews that Judaism was a religion rather than a nationality, most Jews tended to segregate themselves, this being reflected inter alia in objecting to mixed marriages. Consequently, the wisest solution would be to grant a national home to those Jews who desired it.

Until the second half of 1919[11] the journal maintained its unqualified pro-Zionist stand, and unsigned articles presented the official Zionist viewpoint to *New Statesman* readers. The first indication of a certain change in policy was in an editorial on 2 October 1919,[12] taking issue with vehement criticism of Weizmann's moderate policy by Israel Zangwill, the Anglo-Jewish writer. The writer agreed with Zangwill that the Balfour Declaration had raised high hopes among the Jewish masses for immediate establishment of a Jewish state. But he went on to state that Balfour and his colleagues might not have been aware of the feelings of the non-Jewish population of Palestine at that time. The Jews accounted for only ten per cent of the population. It was an easy matter for Zangwill to preach in London the need for a state with a European population and culture to be located on the border between Asia and Africa. From Jerusalem the situation looked completely different and the real problem was how to turn hundreds of thousands of hostile Arabs, Moslems and Christians into citizens of this Jewish state. The extremist Zionists must understand that 'a National Home for the Jewish people and a Jewish State are very different things'. The former, if ruled by a clever administration, held out great hopes for Jews, while 'the other means disaster for them and for all Western Asia'.

This reconsideration of support for the establishment of a Jewish state, which resulted from growing awareness of Arab opposition, was compounded by the knowledge that the British were

entangled in a web of conflicting promises to Jews and Arabs. An article published nine days later stated explicitly that the same things had been promised simultaneously to Jews and Arabs.[13] The anonymous writer stated his opinion that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine would be utter madness, but said that he had no objection to large-scale Jewish immigration. The Jews might not become the decisive quantitative factor in Palestine, but he had no doubt that they would dominate qualitatively speaking. Since Jewish immigration might overflow into neighbouring states, the country's borders should be decided upon, and should encompass all that was required for dynamic national existence. The northern border should be the Litani River, for example, since its waters were needed for the development of intensive agriculture in Galilee.

In December of the same year, the *New Statesman*[14] published a letter to the editor from an anonymous British officer serving in Palestine. The intention of the letter, which was anti-Zionist and even antisemitic in tone, was to warn against the Zionist wish to establish a Jewish state in Palestine where a Jewish minority would rule an Arab majority. In a brief comment the editor explained that, although the letter contained interesting information and came from a first-hand source, the writer had made one mistake. The Balfour Declaration had never intended to hand over rule of Palestine to a Jewish minority, nor had the Jewish delegation to the Paris Peace Conference made such a demand. All they had requested had been a protectorate regime for Palestine, enabling Jewish immigration and settlement. They had also requested a regime which would safeguard the interests of all inhabitants 'on equal terms'.

The journal's new sensitivity to the question of Arab hostility to Zionism soon led it to demand of the Government a clear and unequivocal statement on the true significance of the Balfour Declaration. It believed that the April 1920 riots in Palestine resulted from the Arabs' erroneous interpretation of the document and consequent fears that Palestine was destined to be a Jewish state, as publicly stated by Zionist extremists. An official statement was needed, the *New Statesman* urged on 10 April 1920, to allay these fears.[15]

But despite its understanding of Arab apprehensions and decided exception to extremist statements by certain Zionists, the journal remained essentially pro-Zionist. In an editorial on the first Zionist Conference after the war, in London in June 1920, it urged the Zionist movement to continue its fruitful endeavours in Palestine despite difficulties unforeseen at the time of the Balfour Declaration. Arab hostility, it wrote, could be overcome by a moderate policy and determined efforts, on condition, needless to say, that Zionism ceased demanding a Jewish state and concentrated on building a national home. It envisaged annual Jewish immigration of 25,000 to 60,000, depending on the scope, capabilities and growth rate of Jewish society in Palestine.[16] Since this society was to be based on farming, not every ghetto Jew would be a suitable potential settler, and the practical conclusion was that candidates for immigration should undergo qualitative selection. (The journal, in its support for moderate Zionism and its qualitative-constructive approach to Jewish settlement, was anticipating the policies of the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, as expressed in the 1922 White Paper.)

In December 1920, some months after the Mandate had been formally entrusted to Britain at San Remo, an unsigned article appeared in the journal,[17] attempting to sum up the development of the editorial stand on Zionism since the Balfour Declaration. The writer expressed his apprehension at the burden imposed on Britain because of the complexity of the problems there.

Arab opposition to Jewish immigration was not only felt by intellectuals, but was widespread among the Arab population. Britain had never promised the Jews that it would establish a state for them, as extremist Zionist leaders claimed, nor would it be able to do so in the future. Fulfilment of the Zionist demand for 50,000 immigrants annually would disrupt the calm of Palestine. It was the prerogative of the Arabs to oppose this immigration, just as the Australians had the right to oppose Japanese immigration to their country, although objectively speaking both countries had room to absorb newcomers. This comparison, and the disregard for the claim of historical rights to Palestine, illustrate the change in the *New Statesman*'s attitude to Zionism. The author went on to state that the Zionists should do their best to allay Arab fears, and should, in their own national interest, create cooperation with the Arabs since 'if they cannot do that, the Zionist experiment will indeed be a mirage'. Zionists should not envisage mass immigration, since Palestine could never offer refuge to all persecuted Jews. It was not made for 'a mass of petty traders and exploiters' but for people capable of building a new, working society based on sound productive foundations.

The conclusion was that the main responsibility for the fate of Zionism and Palestine was in the hands of the Jews rather than the British. Britain, as provisional ruler, could assist them but 'Zionists alone can make Palestine a nation'. This phrase hinted at a new concept – the Palestinian nation, and it is interesting to note that, despite his logical conclusion that Jews and Arabs alike should share in the making of this nation, the writer laid the responsibility at Zionism's door.

One month later, the *New Statesman*[18] published a detailed explanation of this ambiguous phrase. 'What sort of state will this Jewish national home be?' the author asked, and replied: 'We hope that it may be a Palestinian nation, whether it calls itself the Republic of Palestine, or by some other title.' He envisaged the Palestinian nation as identical with the concepts of Palestinian state and Palestinian citizenship, which were basically different from Jewish aspirations. What he termed 'the Jewish world' wanted to establish in Palestine a state whose inhabitants would be 'not Palestinian citizens but Jewish citizens'. The implication is clear. The article was establishing a distinction between Jews residing in Palestine then and in the future, and those Jews outside its borders. Hence, Zionism's objective was not to create Jewish national unity but rather to bring about national disunity through creating a new Palestinian nation. The underlying assumption was probably that Jews wishing to live in a national environment would go to Palestine, while the remainder would assimilate.

An editorial published a year later seemed to bear out the view that the two articles cited above reflected the views of the editors.[19] We have already suggested that, by its demand for clear interpretation of the Balfour Declaration in the face of Arab opposition, and by advocating the 'national home' rather than the 'Jewish State', the journal was anticipating the Government's proclaimed policy as expressed in the White Paper. And indeed, the editor welcomed the publication of the Churchill White Paper, which he regarded as aimed at persuading the Arabs that their fears were groundless. He added that if the guarantee of a Jewish national home in Palestine was taken seriously, the outcome would eventually be a Jewish majority in Palestine. Even then the Arabs would have nothing to fear since, by then, a Palestinian nation would have been created where Arabs and Jews would enjoy equal rights.

> If that cannot be achieved, the whole experiment will have failed; we sincerely trust that it

> will not fail, for we regard what is being done in Palestine as something more than the re-establishment of Israel. It is an attempt to develop a new civilization in which Western and Oriental culture will be blended, and which may have a profound influence far beyond the Middle East.

This was but part of a worldwide experiment in internationalism,[20] and therein lay the importance of the Palestine Mandate.

Were the editors of the *New Statesman*, who preached the establishment of a binational utopia of international significance, fully aware of the intensity of the national confrontation already existing in that country? The answer, as they themselves clarified, is positive. 'We need not disguise from ourselves the fact that it is a dangerous as well as an interesting experiment.' The dangers were twofold: on the one hand fierce opposition from the Arabs, deceived by the hypocrisy of the British, who had promised them what had already been promised to the Zionists; and on the other, the maximalist interpretation by extremist Zionists that a Jewish state had been promised. The writers of the articles were also aware of the impact of such external forces as the pan-Arab aspirations of the Hashemites, and the imperialistic intrigues of France. Yet the editors still believed that a clash could be averted by a Zionist declaration of intent, by efforts to cooperate with the Arabs and by British measures to allay Arab fears.

As to Jewish immigration, and the opposition and fears it aroused, the editors were again firm in their view that no great problems loomed. 'There certainly must be a large immigration, and we do not see, if it is wisely handled, that it need cause serious trouble.'[21] The Arabs' thirteen hundred years of residence in the country did not qualify them to prevent Jewish immigration, from which they could only benefit. Furthermore, the implementation of an experiment of universal significance depended on Jewish immigration – to evolve a binational society, and on Jewish capital – to develop it and to bring it as close as possible to the utopian vision of H. G. Wells.

What role did the editors envisage for the Jewish national home in this utopia? They do not appear to have negated the concept of the national home in the cultural sense, though this was not explicitly stated. Their support for Churchill's White Paper implied support for the national home in the cultural sense. Furthermore, they regarded efforts to create a 'Palestinian state' as a precondition for realization of the Jewish national home. Certain issues remained unresolved in their minds: how could two separate national cultures be fostered, and at the same time be expected to blend together? How could the original concept of a national home belonging in entirety to the Jewish people be reconciled with a Palestinian nation or state? They may have believed that time would solve the problem of Jewish national existence. A binational society would evolve in Palestine, while Diaspora Jews who preferred to remain there would assimilate.

It would be unjust to denote the *New Statesman* stand as naïve utopianism. This vision was tempered by doubt, stemming from a realistic awareness of what forces were involved. The article, which summed up the evolvement of the journal's view from the War to the 1922 White Paper, concluded with the following words:

> We are not wildly optimistic. Gentile obstinacy or Jewish pride may wreck the experiment, military or political forces may blast it from the outside. But it is at any rate worth trying and it will not be expensive at the price, which Mr. Churchill promises us, of a million or so a

year. And if it succeeds, it will more than pay for itself.[22]

Other Labour Papers

Whereas the *New Statesman*[23] responded swiftly and enthusiastically to the Balfour Declaration, other Labour journals, representing different aspects of Labour thought, appear to have disregarded it for some time after its publication. The first indirect reference to it in Labour's daily newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, was an article by the political journalist, H.N. Brailsford, on 28 January 1918. Writing on the political future of the Ottoman Empire, he mentioned in passing the issue of Palestine and advocated the rights of the Jews to that country.

The failure to comment on the Declaration suggests the confusion and bewilderment within Labour ranks on this matter. We have already pointed out the essential difference between the Henderson-Webb Declaration and the Balfour Declaration. The former referred to the right for Jewish immigration to Palestine and the need for an international protectorate, while the latter contained a British commitment to assist in the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The official commitment aroused suspicions in Labour that the British Government had imperlialistic designs on Palestine and was trying to achieve its ends by creating a Jewish majority in Palestine. The reasons why these suspicions were not immediately voiced would appear to be that Labour had been party to the Declaration through its representation in the War Cabinet, and that there was general sympathy within Labour for the national aspirations of the Jews in Palestine.

Some reflection of the confusion is evident in Brailsford's article, in which he discussed desirable British policy in the Middle East and Far East. He condemned the plans to dismantle the Ottoman Empire into separate national states, since he felt that even the corruption of the administration and the oppression of national minorities under Ottoman rule did not justify the abolition of that multinational entity. He proposed that a federative state, consisting of national autonomies, replace the Empire. This view, favoured by the European socialist movement and expressed in the Stockholm Declaration, also encompassed the national aspirations of the Jews.

> We might get Home Rule for the Armenians and for the Hedjaz Arabs, recover it for the Lebanon, and create in Palestine, under the Turkish flag, a 'national home' for the Jews. Even German diplomacy is now beginning to patronise Zionism; it need not mean the cession of territory.[24]

Brailsford recognized the right of the Jews to national determination in Palestine, within the framework of a multinational Turkish state.[25] This political view stemmed from his clear anti-imperialist leanings and from strong opposition to the policy of the British Government, which was seeking a foothold in the Middle East in order to safeguard maritime passage to India. Though his views were shared by various trends and personalities in the labour movement, there was no unanimity regarding the political future of Palestine.

Several weeks later, the same paper published a decidedly pro-Zionist article by Charles Roden Buxton.[26] The conference of Entente Socialist Parties, then being held in London, had just adopted the Labour Declaration on Palestine and the Jewish people, and this probably prompted the article.

Unlike Brailsford's article, which barely touched on the question of the national aspirations of the Jews in Palestine, the Buxton article was wholly devoted to Zionist aspirations, which it attempted to examine from the ideological and practical political aspects. It opened with the axiomatic statement that, under prevailing conditions, there was an inevitable link between the spiritual and political-territorial aspects of nationality.

> It may be that in some imaginary world a *nationality* might dispense with all the outward accompaniments of *nationhood*. But things being what they are, and human nature being what it is, it is hard for any people to retain its individuality and develop itself to the full without a local and visible home somewhere in the world.

Buxton's logical conclusion was that 'this is the argument for a Jewish national home in Palestine'.

Buxton's conclusion implied that recognition of the existence of a Jewish nation must logically dictate support for a Jewish national home. By 'national home' he understood the strengthening of Jewish unity, the establishment of a national focal point to serve as a centre of national cultural renaissance. Buxton went on to discuss the fundamental and practical political issues relating to Zionist aspirations in Palestine.

The Balfour Declaration, which Buxton defined as the greatest Zionist achievement so far, opened up in his view three possibilities as to the political future of Palestine: British rule, an international protectorate, or continued links with the Turkish state. Although Buxton was uncertain as to the political future of the country, he had clear views as to the status of the Jews there. 'That it [Palestine] cannot at first be purely Jewish is obvious since the Jews form at present only a fraction of the population.'

Just as it was against democratic principles for a minority to rule a majority, he wrote, so it was against the principles of social progress to prevent the immigration of Jews to Palestine, since they were the only people who could develop the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants. Buxton's stress on the temporary nature of the situation ('at first', 'at present') seems to hold out a solution to the moral and ideological dilemma faced by those in the Labour Party, namely the conflict between democratic and social principles. These would be reconciled when the Jews became the national majority in Palestine.

Buxton went on to consider possible short-term political solutions, and was firm in his opposition to the annexation of Palestine by Britain. 'I am not a believer in British annexation of Palestine, even though it might be intended to lead up to the formation of a genuinely Jewish State.' Such a state, under British protection, would have to base its existence on military might, and would be an instrument in the hands of imperialism, involved in power struggles. This would violate the principles of justice and would preclude any possibility of peaceful settlement. The plan should be rejected 'both in the interests of this country and the interests of Jewry itself'.

Unlike Brailsford, Buxton believed in the need for an international Mandate over Palestine, and proposed that the United States be made responsible for its implementation. This would, however, be only a transitional stage until mass Jewish immigration and settlement created a Jewish majority in Palestine. 'As colonization proceeded, Jewish influence in the Government would increase, until ultimately it became supreme, and the Jewish people in Palestine would then establish a Jewish commonwealth.'

In rejecting the annexation of Palestine, Buxton used the words 'Jewish state', whereas, in discussing future development, he wrote of a 'commonwealth', and there may be a reason for

this. This latter term could be interpreted as a kind of autonomy within a larger political framework. In view of the dangers he envisaged from establishment of a Jewish state by the wrong means, it seems reasonable to assume that he advocated a Jewish Palestine as part of a larger political confederation. He was, however, clearly referring to the future Jewish national hegemony in Palestine.

A similar opinion was voiced three months later by the Labour leader, George Lansbury.[27] He distinguished between the egotistical rich Jews who were against 'the re-establishment of a Jewish kingdom', and the poor masses, who yearned for deliverance and expected 'the new Messiah who shall lead them forth'. Like Buxton, he recognized the difficulties stemming from the fact that the Jews were a minority in Palestine. They had no desire to harm others, he wrote: 'they do want, however, real self-government'.

Lansbury favoured entrusting the Mandate over Palestine to Britain. However, he considered the Mandate a temporary measure until the Jews became equal members of the League of Nations, having made Palestine their independent national home.

While Labour Brailsford, Buxton and Lansbury were contemplating the question of the political future of Palestine and trying to explain the essentials of Zionism to the rank-and-file, the leaders of British Poalei Zion and of the Palestinian labour movement were trying to disseminate their views to the general public. They presented Zionism as a socialist attempt to establish a model society offering a solution to the plight of the Jewish people, and serving as an example to the world as a whole. Articles by Zionist leaders, published in the *Daily Herald* and the *Labour Leader*, and written for non-Jewish consumption, underlined the desire of Zionism to respect fully the rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine and to ensure their economic wellbeing and social advancement.[28]

In summary, the Labour press supported the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration, greeted enthusiastically by the *New Statesman* and hesitantly by the *Daily Herald*, was regarded as binding on the British Government, despite unforeseen obstacles which arose after its publication. The line taken by the press was that as long as they were a minority in Palestine the Jews should not make extreme demands, but that when mass immigration turned them into the majority, they could demand preferential status. There was a difference in approach between the *New Statesman* and other papers on this issue. The former concluded, in the face of intensifying Arab opposition, that it was fundamentally wrong and politically impossible for Palestine to become a Jewish state, and advocated a 'Palestinian nation' instead. At the same time, it did not deny the rights of Jews to mass immigration or to gaining majority status. The other papers, closer to the official party line, made no mention of the 'Palestinian nation' and, though they usually envisaged the country as the future national state of the Jews, were not always clearly resolved on its future.

The Labour press was united in its praise for Herbert Samuel's careful, steadying policy in Palestine. This view was stated unequivocally by Ramsay MacDonald on his return from Palestine[29] (see below). It should be noted that this approval of Samuel's policies was in sharp contrast to Labour's vehement criticism of Churchill's overall Middle Eastern policy, which was denoted imperialistic, hypocritical and exploitive.[30]

The political caution advocated by the Labour press resulted from its growing awareness of Arab opposition to Zionist settlement. It was hoped that long-term moderation, the experience of

day-to-day coexistence and the application of goodwill, particularly on the part of the Jews, would prevent strife in Palestine.

NOTES

1. Albert M. Hyamson (1875–1954), English Jew active in Jewish life, and a long-standing member of the Zionist movement. In 1921 he was appointed Director of the Immigration Department of the Mandatory Government in Palestine.
2. Yosef Gorni, 'On Judaism and Zionism', *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. XL, No. 2, Spring 1978.
3. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, 'What is Socialism?', *New Statesman*, 2 August 1913.
4. 'Jewish Land of Refuge', *ibid*.
5. 'The Jews in Russia', *ibid*., 18 October 1913.
6. 'The Future of Palestine', *ibid*., 21 November 1915.
7. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. VII, 1914–1917, No. 46:53.
8. Kingsley Martin, *Father Figures*, 1897–1931, pp. 192–3.
9. 'The Regeneration of Palestine', *New Statesman*, 23 January 1915.
10. *New Statesman*, 17 November 1917.
11. 'Progress of the Zionist Idea', *ibid*., 29 June 1918; 'Jew, Arab and Armenian', *ibid*., 21 December 1918.
12. *Ibid*., 2 October 1919.
13. 'The Future of Syria', *ibid*., 11 October 1919.
14. 'Anti-Jewish Feeling in Palestine', *ibid*., 13 December 1919.
15. *Ibid*., 10 April 1920.
16. *Ibid*., 5 June 1920.
17. 'The Problem of Zionism', *ibid*., 25 December 1920.
18. 'The Palestine Mandate', *ibid*., 12 January 1921.
19. *Ibid*., 18 June 1921; also 9 April, 14 May 1921.
20. 'The Jews and Gentiles', *ibid*., 8 July 1922 (written in response to the 1922 White Paper).
21. *Ibid*., also 23 April and 12 November 1921.
22. *Ibid*.
23. *Ibid*.
24. H.N. Brailsford, 'Great Britain Obtains', *Daily Herald*, 26 January 1918.
25. Brailsford first expressed his support for the concept of a Jewish national home in a book published before the Balfour Declaration in which he discussed the ideal post-war order. H.N. Brailsford, *A League of Nations*, London 1917, p. 159.
26. C.R. Buxton, 'The Jew and Palestine', *Daily Herald*, 19 February 1918.
27. 'The Jews and the War', *ibid*., 23 May 1918.
28. (a) Mary Fels, 'Zionism and Social Justice', *ibid*., 21 December 1918; (b) B. Locker, 'Poalei Zionism: The Dream of Jewish Labour,' *The Labour Leader*, 5 December 1918; (c) 'Making Palestine a Socialist State'. An Interview with Berl Katznelson, *ibid*., 20 December 1920.
29. Ramsay MacDonald, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', *Forward*, 18 March 1922.
30. *Daily Herald*, 15 June 1921.

CHAPTER THREE

Contacts with Party Leaders

For Labour as a political party, national interests and practical political calculations were no less, and sometimes even more, important than questions of principle. Its relationship with the Palestinian labour movement in the early twenties should be assessed in the context of such considerations. Despite their fundamental support for Zionism, British Labour leaders were doubtful about the chances of implementing Zionist goals and lacked basic information on the nature of Zionism. They were afraid of becoming involved in what they regarded as an imperialist adventure, and of committing themselves too deeply.

The leaders of the Palestinian labour movement were aware of these doubts and reservations, and hence sceptical as to the practical results of Labour support. With the memory of protracted and fruitless efforts to win over the social-democratic representatives at the Second International still fresh in their minds, they took a realistic view of the situation. Nothing, they felt, should be taken for granted; there were no guarantees as to the future. The good relations between the Palestinian and British movements should be carefully fostered by propaganda efforts, and Labour representatives should be invited to visit Palestine to see for themselves what was being achieved there. Various information activities were undertaken which, though restricted by lack of funds and by objective difficulties, often met with success and produced encouraging results.

In the summer of 1920 Poalei Zion despatched Ben-Gurion from Palestine and Kaplansky from the continent to London with the task of conducting propaganda in the British labour movement. The English branch of Poalei Zion had helped to disseminate Zionist ideas during the war, but after its affiliation to Labour in 1920 it ceased, in effect, to function as an independent party. According to Moshe Shertok (Sharett), then studying in London, the Poalei Zion comrades continued to display concern for the future of their party and its standing with British Labour, but actual political effort was reduced to a bare minimum.[1] Consequently, the links between Zionist socialism and British Labour were now nurtured by emissaries from abroad, and particularly from Palestine.

In 1919 the revered Poalei Zion leader, Nahman Syrkin, at a meeting with Arthur Henderson[2] put two requests to him. The first was that the Labour Party support the idea of despatching an investigation mission to Poland, under the sponsorship of the Socialist International, to study the causes of the wave of pogroms there. Syrkin also asked Henderson to intercede with the heads of the Palestine Military Administration, who were, he said, obstructing Jewish immigration to that country.

Henderson agreed to the first request (as might have been anticipated, since the issue was a humanitarian one), but emphasized that Poalei Zion would be responsible for financing the mission. On the second matter, he was much more cautious and unwilling to commit himself.[3] Henderson also asked Syrkin to submit a memorandum to the parliamentary faction of the Labour Party on two questions: the pogroms in Poland and the rights of the Jews to Palestine.

Henderson also suggested to Syrkin that it might be worthwhile for the Zionists to approach rich British Jews for aid on all matters relating to Palestine, since the latter exerted considerable influence over the Government. This comment, though well meant, reflected the strong prejudice of the Labour leadership against Jewish capital.

Syrkin also met members of the Labour Party Advisory Council on International Affairs. They too asked him to submit a memorandum, and, in addition, they promised to examine the question of the restrictions imposed on immigration to Palestine.

Despite the somewhat evasive approach which he encountered in his talks with Labour leaders, Syrkin's general impression was highly favourable, and he was pleasantly surprised, having apparently expected a much cooler reception. His conclusion was that the Zionist labour movement was being offered a golden opportunity to win sincere friends, who would also be influential, since Labour had good prospects of augmenting their parliamentary strength at the next election.[4]

Other reports from London during that year were less optimistic. A letter to Berl Katznelson from an unknown correspondent described the talks which the British Zionist, David Eder, had held with prominent Labour Party figures. In the opinion of the writer, many of the Labour leaders were sympathetic to the Zionist cause but, practically speaking, no parliamentary support should be anticipated. This was because the Labour Party had publicly committed itself to an anti-imperialistic policy which it could not betray. If, however, Britain decided to pull out of Palestine, the Labour Party would unreservedly support this move.

The lack of regular contact between labour Zionism and the various components of British Labour troubled Ben-Gurion and Kaplansky. They sent numerous memoranda to Labour leaders, and tried to collaborate with the Independent Labour Party (the I.L.P.) in establishing the 'Second and a Half International (intended to serve as a bridge between the Second and Third Internationals). They also asked British trade unions to help provide vocational training for young Jews from Eastern Europe staying in Britain while en route to Palestine.[5] They were successful, however, only in those circles which had already demonstrated their readiness to support Zionism.

The political leadership of the Labour Party, sympathetic towards Zionism since 1917, gave it their unqualified backing in 1920, in the form of a letter to Lloyd George on the eve of the San Remo Conference resolution on Palestine. In it they expressed support for the Balfour Declaration and appealed to the Government to accept the Mandate over Palestine. Signed by prominent figures in the Party, the parliamentary faction and the trade unions (though not I.L.P. leaders), this letter may be regarded as an official proclamation on Zionism.[6] It explicitly stated that the Balfour Declaration was compatible with the Zionist clause in the 1917 Labour platform. In fact, the signatories committed themselves even further than did the Balfour Declaration. Whereas the latter had promised 'the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine' (implying recognition of partial rights of the Jews to Palestine), Labour now urged acceptance of the Mandate over Palestine 'with a view of its being reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people'. Finally, by affirming support for the Mandate, they rendered null and void the attempts of left-wing groups in the movement to identify Zionist with British imperialistic interests.

The San Remo Letter, however limited its practical value, undoubtedly reflected the increasingly pro-Zionist viewpoint of Labour. Its significance was enhanced by the fact that this

viewpoint was consolidated at a time of anti-Jewish riots in Jerusalem (in April 1920), and despite repeated warnings by senior staff of the British Military Administration in Palestine regarding the dangers inherent in attempts to implement the Balfour Declaration.

Even so measured and cautious a man as Berl Katznelson welcomed the Labour statement enthusiastically (despite his known scepticism as to the value of public statements), and extolled it in highflown and emotional terms. 'In this grave hour for the movement of our redemption', he wrote, 'when alien hands have been stretched forth to rip at the fabric of our work, the English Labour Party has come to our aid.'[7]

In autumn 1921, a deputation of M.P.s visited Egypt to hold discussions with representatives of the Egyptian nationalist movement. Ben-Gurion went to Cairo to meet them, and was impressed by the warm sympathy of the Labour members of the delegation and by their profound interest in the Palestinian labour movement and in relations between Jews and Arabs. He invited them to Palestine, but they turned down the invitation, claiming that, as members of an all-party mission, they could not accept the invitation of the secretary of a labour organization. In a letter to his party Ben-Gurion wrote how one of the Labour M.P.s told him that Labour was faced with a serious problem vis-à-vis Zionism. On the one hand it supported the cause wholeheartedly but, at the same time, it was aware that the maintenance of a British Mandate over Palestine was a very costly enterprise. Britain was in the grip of a severe economic crisis and, in the light of public pressure to reduce Government expenditure, the Party felt that Britain should evacuate its military forces from all Middle Eastern countries, including Palestine. Yet Labour, according to Ben-Gurion's confidant, 'doesn't want to do anything which could harm the Jews of Palestine'.[8]

It should be recalled that Britain's acceptance of the Mandate was not ratified by the League of Nations' Council until July 1922. In the interim there was a possibility, albeit slight, that under pressure of public opinion or as a consequence of change of government policy Britain might opt out of her obligations. However slim the chances, Labour was undoubtedly faced with a dilemma in adopting a stand on the Middle East. These facts should be borne in mind when we come to discuss Ramsay MacDonald's visit to Palestine.

In the early twenties, MacDonald, who had been defeated both in the 1918 election and at a subsequent by-election, was occupied in lecturing, writing and travelling. His Middle East tour in late 1921 was undertaken as a survey of British administration in countries which had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, and he displayed particular interest in Palestine, the Zionist endeavour in general and the Jewish labour movement in particular. Kaplansky held several discussions with MacDonald before the latter's departure and, according to Shertok, in a letter written to Katznelson MacDonald declared his interest in 'three issues: (a) are the Jews as a race capable of constructive economic work? (b) are Jewish workers capable of socialist creativity? (c) the Jewish Arab question'.[9] This suggested that MacDonald knew something of what was going on in Palestine.

In Egypt, on the eve of his journey to Palestine, MacDonald was welcomed by an advance deputation from Ahdut Haavoda, the largest party within the Palestinian labour movement. In Palestine he was the official guest of the Labour Federation, touring the country under its auspices and visiting its institutions. His guide was Dov Hoz, and the two men became friends, corresponding after the visit.

The archival sources on MacDonald's visit are scant, and include reports by his guides and brief summaries of his meetings with members of the Histadrut Executive. The visit is also

mentioned in the memoirs of people who met him at the time. The most important sources, however, are his own travel notes and comments, published in the form of a booklet entitled *A Socialist in Palestine*. This document is of threefold significance. Firstly, it is a record of a socialist's impressions of the infancy of the Zionist endeavour and the Palestinian labour movement. Secondly, it is a reflection of the ideological attitude of British Labour, and of one of its prominent personalities, to the phenomenon. And, last but not least, Mac-Donald's views and impressions were to have an impact on future events. He became leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party only a year later, and the first crisis in the relations between the British Government and Zionism erupted during his second premiership, in 1929–31. Hence, it is interesting to examine to what extent the views MacDonald expressed during his visit can help elucidate his political stand at the end of the decade.

MacDonald's booklet also illuminates the complex personality of the man himself. His was a contradictory nature, combining religious tendencies and sober rationalism, idealistic zeal and calculated political opportunism, humanism and snobbish arrogance. Some of these traits, and others, find expression in *A Socialist in Palestine*.

On one level, MacDonald's impressions are reminiscent of the writings of English travellers in Palestine in the nineteenth century. In the introduction, he recalled his religious upbringing and wrote of the joy he felt at still being capable of emotion when visiting the historic sites where the biblical heroes of his childhood had lived.[10] Jerusalem and the Judean Hills, Galilee and Nazareth, Lake Galilee and the Jordan were his spiritual homeland, just as Scotland was his geographical home. And he wrote emotionally:

> After far wanderings I seem to have come home, for I feel as familiar with this place as I do with the benty hillocks of Lossiemouth. I write in a room at Nazareth, and for days I have been in places where I have lived without setting foot in them before. Places which I have now seen as though I had in dream dwelt in them for as long as I can remember.[11]

In his eyes, Palestine was above all of profound religious significance for the three monotheistic religions, and hence of universal importance. Furthermore, MacDonald believed that only Palestine could have produced the faith which had moulded the spiritual image of Western society. He now realized that the simplicity and sincerity of which he had read in the Bible, and which still existed in Palestine, were the source of the noble ideas and exalted aspirations which the country had generated.

This view of metaphysical, spiritual singularity of Palestine also accounts for his views on the nature of the Jewish nationalist movement (i.e. Zionism). He felt that as a national concept and a social movement, Zionism could not be comprehended without recognition of the romantic spiritual ties between the Jewish people and Palestine. It was impossible to comprehend history without the Judean Hills and the ruined Temple on Mount Moriah. The persecuted Jews undoubtedly needed a home of their own, where they could feel safe, and the fact that this home was Palestine was demonstrated by the Jews praying at the Wailing Wall, lamenting simultaneously the destruction of the Temple and the pogroms in Eastern Europe. Past and future were inextricably linked in Palestine – in mourning, in grief, in prayer and in yearning.

'The Jew seeks a national home in Palestine not only because he is denied a home elsewhere, but because Palestine has always been calling to him from his heart and he must go.'[12] Hence, the Jewish people who had wandered for centuries, who, more than any other people, deserved to

be called cosmopolitan, had never ceased to be exiles, had never found a home and never forgotten Jerusalem.

MacDonald approved of Zionism not only because of its spiritual significance, reflecting the historical ties of a nation to its homeland, but also because what he regarded as the positive forces in the Jewish people, such as the Palestinian labour movement, supported it, while negative forces opposed it. Among the latter he enumerated religious zealots and the Jewish plutocracy. For MacDonald, the Jewish plutocrat was the embodiment of materialism, and he wrote:

> He is the person whose views upon life make one antisemitic. He has no country, no kindred. Whether as a sweater or a financier, he is an exploiter of everything he can squeeze. He is behind every evil that governments do, and his political authority, always exercised in the dark, is greater than that of parliamentary majorities. He has the keenest of brains and the bluntest of consciences. He detests Zionism because it revives the idealism of his race, and has political implications which threaten his economic interests.[13]

Why did MacDonald write so viciously about the Jewish plutocracy? Even if he wanted to contrast it with the positive elements of Zionism, he need not have employed such characteristically antisemitic phrases. These remarks suggest that he credited the theory of the conspiracy of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', which was quite widely accepted at the time by British administrators and senior officers in Palestine. MacDonald implicated only a small section of the Jewish people, but the accusations he levelled against them appear to have been inspired by more than mere class hatred.

The booklet also reflects MacDonald's socialist-utopian outlook. At the end of the third chapter, which describes his tour of Galilee and meetings with young Jews in communal settlements, he writes: 'Many of the Palestinian voices seemed to me to call for a return to our old Independent Labour Party appeal.' These young Jews, building roads and settlements in a unique utopian atmosphere, evoked in him the spirit of his youth and the radical socialism of the I.L.P. The young settlers, building a home at the foot of Mount Gilboa, where Gideon reviewed his troops, were the embodiment of 'the new thought nestling amidst the old tradition'. He denoted them 'believers', 'faithful men and women'. Of the young people he saw breaking stones for new roads, rejoicing in their lot although they had not previously been accustomed to strenuous physical work, he wrote: 'Truly this is an immigration of the longing ones.' He also describes a night he and his party spent with such a group on the shores of the Jordan, and it is as if he were describing a group of monks or Essenes.

In conclusion, MacDonald felt that an exciting utopian experiment was under way in Palestine and that the existence of the new Jew had been demonstrated beyond a doubt. 'Such is the Jew who is going to Palestine. He is an idealist and a worker. He has a vision of Palestine which is to be the home of his people, and love enters much into his labour.'[14]

MacDonald's admiration for the Jewish pioneers he encountered cannot be attributed solely to the revival of childhood emotions, inspired by their social idealism. The achievements he witnessed were a realization of the socialist theories which he had summarized in book form – *Socialism Critical and Constructive* – on the eve of his trip to Palestine.[15] The two basic assumptions on his book – the value judgement that 'socialism can only move men by education and more idealism', and the reformist-utopian conviction that 'the socialist state is already

appearing within the capitalist state' – had taken on flesh in Palestine. It should be noted that the book combines certain elements of parliamentary social democracy with the centralist democratic principles of 'guild socialism', popular in certain circles in the British labour movement. MacDonald rejected the anarco-syndicalist elements in guild socialism, as propounded by the labour movement historian, G.D.H. Cole. He did not favour the idea of disbanding the traditional parliamentary political structure of the state and replacing it by the centralist structure of the trade unions. On the other hand, he wholeheartedly supported such ideas as entrusting responsibility for production, marketing and distribution to the working classes; giving priority in production to the needs of society over the needs of the individual; regarding contribution to society as the main criterion for evaluation of the individual, etc. In the sphere of practical action, Mac-Donald advocated giving the workers a share in management, and encouraging cooperative production and marketing in industry and agriculture. The structure of the Histadrut and the social idealism of the young pioneer workers were therefore compatible with MacDonald's own views.

It is interesting to note that in the same year Moshe Shertok had found ideological substantiation for the achievements of Palestinian labour in Cole's theories. 'The prophet of guild socialism', he wrote to Katznelson in March 1921, having attended Cole's lectures,

> is so close to us in spirit, in his freedom from barren academism for its own sake … They were both age-old and new, his remarks on the problem which is beginning to trouble the working masses: for whom do we labour? … The sole solution is to hand over industry to its workers … mainly in order to entrust responsibility for carrying out tasks, as a social function, to the people on whom all depends.[16]

So far we have dealt with MacDonald's thoughts about principles, but when he considered such practical questions as the relations between Labour and Zionism, the Arab-Jewish conflict, and the controversy over the restrictions on Jewish immigration, Mac-Donald ceased to be the Christian pilgrim enthralled with the landscapes of the Holy Land, or the idealistic socialist. He wrote as a politician, cautiously weighing his words, preaching moderation and evading commitments.

MacDonald discussed these issues with members of the Histadrut Executive, asking that his remarks be considered confidential.[17] He admitted frankly that he doubted whether Labour sufficiently understood the nature and objectives of Zionism; to the extent that understanding existed, it was only in limited circles. MacDonald also doubted whether it was possible to win over the working masses in the labour movement to Zionism by employing historical arguments: 'Do not come to us with the historical rights of an ancient people to Palestine', he told the Executive. 'You must say that you have come to solve the problem of labour and socialism. If the English workers know what you are doing in this field, this will have a greater impact than the argument of historical rights.' (In *A Socialist in Palestine* he amended this view, and emphasized the historic ties between the Jews and Palestine, with the clear intention of persuading his readers of their practical implications.) Mac-Donald went on to explain that British labour was a fundamentally parochial movement. British workers were not interested in foreign affairs or in the international labour movement, and were not concerned with colonial problems. On the other hand, they were involved in social issues and were attracted to new social systems. 'Approach the English worker and say to him: we have found a new method of

combining intellectual effort with manual labour. We have implemented guild socialism in this or that place etc. etc., and then he will listen to you and help you.' He implied that since this type of propaganda demanded protracted effort, no dramatic results should be anticipated. As to political questions, he explained that he saw the problems of the character of the Mandatory regime and the relations between Zionism and Palestinian Arabs as interrelated.

MacDonald dwelt at length on these problems in his booklet, in talks with his hosts and in subsequent articles in the Labour press. He strongly criticized Great Britain's imperialist tendencies in the Middle East, and though he did not demand immediate British withdrawal from the region, he advocated a gradualist policy, aimed at eventual granting of independence to the peoples of the region.

How does Palestine fit in to MacDonald's conception of the Middle Eastern situation? He himself emphasized that he excluded Palestine from his forecast of the region's future, since it was an exception as regards both political status and social processes. The roots of the Palestinian problem, he thought, lay in the clash between the middle ages and the twentieth century, which was caused not by the burgeoning of revolutionary social forces within a traditional society, but by the infiltration of external revolutionary forces. He thus regarded Jewish immigration as a catalytic revolutionary factor which, by altering social reality, was creating Jewish-Arab confrontation. MacDonald was aware that the Balfour Declaration had granted the Jews of Palestine special political standing. He also understood that for the Jews there was only one meaning to the Declaration – the renewal of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and a subsequent change in their international status. But he was by no means sure that Balfour himself had clearly comprehended the implications of his act: 'Probably Mr. Balfour did not know what he was talking about.'[18]

Elsewhere in the same booklet, MacDonald wrote that the Christian world saw the return of the Jews to Palestine as the fulfilment of the vision of the Prophets and, in their enthusiasm and 'without thinking very much what they meant, they spoke of the "national home" thus provided for the scattered and persecuted tribes'[19]

MacDonald went on to concur with the Arabs and their English sympathizers in their criticism of British Middle Eastern policy. In practice, he accepted their view that Palestine had been promised to the Hashemites in the MacMahon Letters, and it is obvious that he regarded British policy as twofaced. Self-rule, he wrote, had been promised to both Arabs and Jews, while the Anglo-French Sykes-Picot Agreement had divided up the Middle East into protectorates of the two powers.[20] This policy, he maintained, could prove disastrous both to the region and to Britain's interests, and he agreed with the conclusion of the Haycroft Commission on the 1921 anti-Jewish riots, namely that the main cause had been Arab fears that the Balfour Declaration intended to transform Palestine into a Jewish state.

> The flood of Jewish immigration which immediately began to flow roused the fears of the Arabs (who had also been promised all the badges and laurel wreaths of nationality), and the masterful attitude of some Jews roused Arab anger. The result was the beginning of an awkward and dangerous racial feud.[21]

Yet MacDonald was confident that the Balfour Declaration could be implemented, and was justified by the national right of the Jews to return to their homeland. They would, however, have to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian Arabs to continue residing there. He put his faith in the

efficacy of moderate Zionist policy, and in Jewish desire to establish practical cooperation with the Arabs.

MacDonald thus identified with the moderate stand of the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, and felt that time was on the side of the latter's policy of consistent tolerance, adherence to the letter of the law, and sincere desire to foster Jewish-Arab unity. He also approved of Samuel's immigration policy, which recognized the right of the Jews to 'return' to Palestine and the right of the Arabs to reside there, claiming that the High Commissioner had been right to restrict Jewish immigration to prevent the country being flooded with revolutionary elements or poverty-stricken masses which it could not absorb.

He also defended these policies to the members of the Histadrut Executive who had complained to him about the restrictions on immigration. The Mandatory Government's policy, he explained, resulted from its sense of insecurity, because the Mandate had not yet been finally ratified. Furthermore, he said, the visit to London of an Arab delegation had aroused widespread political and press support for the Arab cause. Therefore the Government was not likely to take the risk of facing a vote of no-confidence on Palestine if it carried out a unilateral policy favouring Zionism. He believed that this situation would be altered by the ratification of the Mandate.

Meanwhile he advised the Executive to

> progress slowly and to miss no opportunity for advancement. When I heard yesterday that the Government *is delaying immigration I was not surprised. The Government must act thus as long as it is not confident, but you must understand the value and the power of your economic institutions*. [Italics in the original. J.G.] If you succeed in consolidating your economic standing, in developing your communal settlements and co-operatives, no government will hinder you.

He went on to emphasize that the most important factor was work in Palestine itself, on the success of which depended the attitude of the Government to the Zionist endeavour. The response to restrictions on immigration should be development of the Palestinian economy by the Jews, which would justify the demands for increased Jewish immigration to Palestine. It was pointless for the Labour Party to demand free immigration to Palestine when the Government could prove that there was unemployment in the country. MacDonald also expressed his conviction that the Mandatory Government 'is on your side and not that of the Arabs', and that its ostensibly anti-Jewish actions were a political subterfuge aimed at conciliating the Arabs. Finally, he appealed to his hosts: 'demand and demand, and do not be content, but be ready for (harsh) eventualities and overcome them until your standing in Palestine is self-evident, and immigration of Jews to Palestine becomes automatic and unquestionable.'[22] The formula, therefore was moderation, patience and incessant hard work.

MacDonald advocated the selfsame approach in the sphere of the Jewish-Arab relations. The question of the confrontation between the two peoples had troubled him even prior to his trip to Palestine, and the possibility of coexistence was one of the subjects he had intended to study during his stay. The question he posed to his hosts and to other people he met during his travels in Palestine always revolved around this issue. His remarks on the relations between Jews and Arabs reveal the influence of his Jewish hosts. He accepted the essence of the Ahdut Haavoda stand on this question. The root of the dispute was the clash between the modern society and

culture which the Jews had brought with them and the backward society of the Arabs. The immediate cause of the anti-Jewish riots was the propaganda of nationalist associations set up in Arab towns to disseminate slander and lies against the Jews. Another cause was the apprehension of Arab landowners in the face of the agrarian reforms which might be carried out in Palestine in the wake of partly socialist Jewish immigration.

He also accepted his hosts' explanation that the campaign for 'Hebrew labour' did not imply racial discrimination, but was rather an attempt to find employment for Jewish workers. As long as the Arab economy was closed to Jewish workers, the latter had no alternative but to insist on priority rights in their own national economy. MacDonald also concurred with the view that to countenance the exploitation of cheap, uncontrolled Arab labour in the Jewish economy would lead to a drop in the wages of Jewish workers as well. He was gratified to learn that in the public and government sectors the Jews advocated joint Jewish-Arab labour, since he felt that only day-to-day cooperation could lead to solution of the conflict between the two peoples. He believed, as did many of the leaders of the Palestinian Jewish labour movement, that as industry developed in Palestine, absorbing masses of Jewish workers, Arabs would also move into this field.

So far MacDonald had concurred with his Jewish hosts, but in confidential discussions he expressed views of his own, and changed from disciple to preacher. 'The question of your relations with the Arabs is a difficult one', he said, 'but if you play the cards properly, many problems will be solved'. However, 'if you take Palestine by storm and do not recognize the rights of the Arabs, if you do not concern yourselves with the Arab proletariat, the entire Arab people will oppose you'. The Jews should learn the wisdom of political tactics. 'If you conceal the big cards at first, and play the low ones, I am sure that you have hopes of winning the game. The support of the Labour Party depends on you.'[23] Was he implying that, in the distant future, Palestine would become a Jewish state? Or did he perhaps contemplate the possibility of establishing a Jewish-Arab 'community' in Palestine, as proposed in his booklet? His remarks, as recorded, do not make this clear. He may even have believed in a Palestine with a Jewish majority, which would also be a joint binational community. These questions were to remain open for the time being.

To what extent did the impressions and opinions which MacDonald brought back from Palestine influence future official proclamations of the Labour Party on Zionism? Before examining this question, it is worth surveying Labour Party views on foreign affairs. In the twenties, Labour favoured transforming the League of Nations into an international institution, wielding extensive and real authority. The Party advocated disarmament, the safeguarding of the rights of national minorities and the advancement of colonial peoples towards self-rule under the supervision of the League and within the framework of Mandatory rule.[24] Hence, MacDonald's advocacy of the continuation of the Mandate over Palestine was anchored in his party's international outlook. At the same time, it seems feasible to assume that his descriptions of his experiences in Palestine had some impact on Party policymakers. As we have noted, MacDonald's enthusiasm for the achievements of Zionist socialism was tempered with caution, particularly as regards relations between Jews and Arabs, and this approach was echoed in a written statement to the press by Arthur Henderson in November 1922. The statement affirmed the Party's support for the Balfour Declaration in the face of the criticism levelled at that document by Conservative M.P.s and peers, many of them influenced by the London visit of a Palestinian Arab deputation. After declaring that the Labour Party did not back the demand that

Great Britain withdraw from the obligations she had freely undertaken in accepting the Mandate over Palestine, Henderson's press release continued:

> The Labour Party believes that the responsibilities of the British people in Palestine should be fulfilled to the utmost of their power. It believes that these responsibilities may be fulfilled so as to ensure the economic prosperity, political autonomy and spiritual freedom of both the Jews and Arabs in Palestine.[25]

By proclaiming the obligations of the 'British people', Henderson offered a strong and valid argument for continued British administration of the Mandate, implying that the obligation was carried over from government to government and from party to party. But the exhortation was qualified by the phrase 'to the utmost of their power'. This cautious phrasing was natural to a political movement which wished to avoid a long-term commitment, but was also anxious to leave room for changes in policy. At the same time the Labour Party was, in fact, stating its equal commitment to both Jews and Arabs in Palestine, since Henderson made it clear that his Party saw itself as responsible for ensuring economic prosperity, political autonomy and intellectual freedom for *both* peoples. In this respect the proclamation differed from the 1920 San Remo Letter, where Palestine was denoted the 'national home' of the Jewish people. It is possible that the phrase 'political autonomy' in Henderson's statement was intended to replace the term 'national home', which applied only to the Jews. In other words, Henderson was expressing the balanced approach formulated by the Party leadership on the Palestinian question, an approach which was not necessarily anti-Zionist.

Evidence in favour of this interpretation is provided by a statement in the House of Commons in 1924 by J.H. Thomas, Colonial Secretary in the first Labour Government. He stated that, after 'careful consideration' and examination of all the circumstances, the Government wished to proclaim its continued adherence to the Balfour Declaration, the objective of which was 'to promote the establishment, in Palestine, of a national home for the Jewish people'.[26]

Although the Labour leadership had expressed its support in principle for the establishment of 'national autonomies' in Palestine, the phrase was not generally clear. At the British Commonwealth Labour Conference, held in London in 1925, Jewish delegates from Palestine found that there was basic misunderstanding on this point. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi wrote: 'The most difficult issue to explain was that of "national autonomy" – a concept remote from the comprehension of the English, in whose home country and colonies there is no parallel: The Irish are slightly more capable of understanding the terms "national" and "territorial".'[27] An example of someone who failed to comprehend the concept was Josiah Wedgwood.

Wedgwood (an unusual figure in the labour movement and Liberal past) was an avowed supporter of Zionism even before he published his pro-Zionist book, *The Seventh Dominion*,[28] in 1927. He was therefore invited as guest of honour to the fifth conference of Ahdut Haavoda in Palestine at the end of October 1926. But when he rose to greet the conference on behalf of the labour movement, his audience was somewhat taken aback by what he had to say.

Wedgwood started out by declaring that, to his mind, there were no grounds for the complaint of the Arabs and their supporters that the Jews intended to dispossess them from their lands: 'If I thought that Jewish settlement in Palestine meant dispossession of the Arabs, I would support the Arabs',[29] he declared frankly. But he went on to express harsh criticism of the Mandatory

Government's intention to base elections to the municipalities on national-religious criteria. He regarded this policy, which had won the support of all the Zionist parties, including Ahdut Haavoda, as a basic error, founded on transparently imperialistic intentions. To illustrate this claim, he cited the political system introduced by the British in India, which bestowed on the population limited formal democratic rights, while real political power remained in the hands of the British rulers. Wedgwood cautioned his comrades in Ahdut Haavoda that, by agreeing to such an electoral system out of national and class calculations, they were setting a trap for themselves, since what appeared to them to serve their short-term national needs while the Jews were a minority in Palestine, could become a stumbling block when they became the majority. By then the system might have become entrenched to the point where it would be impossible to alter it except by violent means, which would mean war between the two peoples. He appealed to the socialist conscience and class interests of his hosts.

> I do not know why you want this method, *which betrays those who use it*. You now wish to insure the workers of a certain number of seats in the municipality. The labour movement does not want a few secure seats but rather a majority in government. *Among socialists you, more than others, should be internationalists*. You cannot support a system which distinguishes between Jewish worker and Arab worker, prevents them from voting for the socialist candidate and perpetuates petty religious differences. No European country could accept this kind of democracy – the bastard child of European autocracy and the Asiatic caste system.[30]

This system, he felt, was fraught with danger for the future of Palestinian society, which would thus never evolve into an open liberal society like England. It would stir up national tension and even lead to war, as a result of which both peoples would be dominated by extreme nationalist elements in the style of Italian fascism. In the end Jewish national interests would also be affected, since Jewish-Arab cooperation was a sine qua non for 'the establishment of a Jewish state as an independent dominion within the British Empire, like Ireland, Canada and South Africa'.[31]

That Wedgwood, the ardent supporter of Zionism, should speak thus astounded his audience, and Ben-Gurion responded immediately and unequivocally. He claimed that the Palestine situation was unparalleled in history. The Jewish people were not yet residing in their homeland, and another nation was living in the country to which they aspired to return. As he put it: '*these relations are more tragic than between two permanent and stable peoples* living in one country'. The international labour movement should understand that '*the accepted democratic principles for which we fought in the autocratic countries do not suit our situation*'. To grant a share in government to the inhabitants of the country, according to the accepted democratic rules of the Western world, would mean handing over power to the Arab majority. The result would be the closing of the gates of Palestine to immigration, the banning of the sale of land, and the undermining of the status of the Jewish workers in Palestine. Ben-Gurion therefore went on to tell Wedgwood: '*When we are faced with a democratic formula on the one hand and the interests of the working masses on the other, we give priority to concrete issues*.'[32]

Ben-Gurion did not enter into public debate with Wedgwood on the practical question of the system of municipal elections. He preferred to thrash out this problem in a private conversation (believing that he could convince Wedgwood that only through national autonomies could

cooperation between the two peoples endure). He concluded his speech by appealing to the labour movement, which had always rejected dogmatic principles, to understand that 'one cannot fit all peoples into the same Procrustean bed'.

Wedgwood himself was speedily won over to the view that elected democratic institutions should not be established in Palestine as long as the Jews constituted a minority there,[33] but the two movements as a whole continued to differ on this question.

The political journalist Moshe Beilinson was well aware of this fact when he wrote that although Wedgwood's visit and the statements he had made bore witness to the sympathy of the British labour movement towards Zionist socialism, the debate offered convincing proof of the profound misunderstanding between the two movements on the Arab question. Even though the Zionist movement was still in its infancy, he wrote, the Arab question was arousing the attention of the world. Tomorrow, when we march forward implementing our goal, the outside world will pose that question even more emphatically.'[34] It was not long before such questions were in fact faced at the Second Commonwealth Labour Conference, held in London in 1928, where Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and Dov Hoz took part in a debate on the granting of self-determination to the colonial peoples.

Ben-Zvi and Hoz objected to the inclusion of Palestine among the countries earmarked for independence, on the grounds that such a move held out a threat to Zionism and to the Jewish labour movement, and advocated national autonomy instead, winning the reserved approval of the delegates. Ben-Zvi summed up his impressions of the conference on a note of cautious optimism: 'The English do not hasten to take decisions and particularly binding ones. But neither do they tend to ignore evolving situations. And this is true in our case as well. The seed we sow will not be lost, and … will germinate some day.'[35] He concluded that in future it was vital to foster ties with Labour through information and personal contact.

The task of maintaining personal ties with Labour leaders and conducting Zionist socialist propaganda in Britain was entrusted to Dov Hoz. On arrival in London (and before the opening of the Second Commonwealth Labour Conference) he requested a meeting with his old acquaintance, Ramsay MacDonald, and reported their conversation in a letter (marked 'Secret') to the Histadrut Executive.[36] MacDonald greeted Hoz with great warmth, reminiscing about his trip to Palestine and asking after old friends and the places he had visited. He went on to discuss with Hoz what he saw as the undermining of the Zionist movement's standing in Great Britain, claiming that the number of supporters of Zionism was decreasing while support for the Arabs was growing. For British politicians, he said,

> it is more important to win the friendship of the various Arab countries than that of the Jews and their money. There is therefore a danger that because of Great Power interests, Britain will be willing to abandon her obligations towards the Jews, just as once, during the War, for the very same motives she was ready to aid them.

Hoz was left with the impression

> that both he and the Labour Party are unwilling today to go through fire and water, and to swim against the current, against public opinion, against a democratic legislative institution. They are all greatly occupied. Palestine is only a minute part of the concerns of the British Empire.

Increasingly depressed as the talk continued, despite MacDonald's warm friendliness, Hoz asked his host a frank question. The comrades in Palestine, he said, were wondering whether it would be advantageous for Zionism if Labour came to power in Britain? The time had come for Labour to display greater interest and involvement in the problems of the Palestinian labour movement. He condemned, in particular, Labour's indifference to such issues as the restrictions on immigration; the lack of Government aid for Jewish settlement in Palestine; the need for labour legislation; and the persecution of Russian Jews. Hoz gained the impression that MacDonald was touched by his remarks. MacDonald said that he could answer on some of the issues unequivocally but that others called for further perusal. Concerning the restrictions on immigration, he said that 'the doors of Palestine must be opened wide', and he also expressed his support for the settlement of workers. He promised that if Labour came to power, his Colonial Secretary would act within the framework of the policy determined by the Party. MacDonald did not succeed in persuading Hoz that the latter's suspicions of Labour's future intentions were groundless. Hoz wrote to Eliyahu Golomb two days later: 'The conversation with MacDonald made a very gloomy impression on me. I sensed, mostly from his expression and other external signs, that he regards our present situation as less than splendid.'[37]

It is at this point at the end of the decade – before the second wave of Arab violence against the Yishuv and on the eve of the crisis between the newly elected Labour Goverment and the Zionist movement – that we end this chapter. We have seen how, during this decade, Britain formulated her policy on the status and framework of the Jewish national home in Palestine. This policy, which envisaged the slow and gradual development of the national home, found official expression in the 1922 Churchill White Paper, which recognized the historical rights of the Jews to Palestine but imposed limitations on their national status there. Though the British advocated continued Jewish immigration, they sought to adapt it to the absorptive capacity of the economy. In practice, the British administration encouraged independent Jewish efforts to establish cultural autonomy in Palestine, in the hope that, in the final analysis, the Jews would settle for this achievement and the Arabs would come to accept it.

The Zionist movement, for its part, gradually came to accept the fact that the national home would develop at a slow pace. In this it was influenced by the views of its leader, Chaim Weizmann, who realized that it was impossible to act against British interests, and clearly recognized the weakness of Zionism's status within the Jewish people. The movement was incapable of financing large-scale settlement projects in Palestine alone. Moreover, there was no cause for great urgency, since the threat of destruction was not yet hovering over European Jewry. In the social sphere, however, circumstances did not rule out activity of a revolutionary nature, and in this formative era the foundations for the unique social structure of the Yishuv were laid. The institutions of Jewish self-government were built up, the urban sector expanded rapidly, the patterns of communal agricultural settlement were evolved, a co-hesive and organized labour movement was established, a Hebrew educational network was developed, and the Hagana military organization was founded. These manifold achievements, which were to enable the Yishuv to face future tests, won the attention and respect of British Labour.

Also, in the third decade of this century, both British and Palestinian labour became significant political forces on a national scale in their respective countries. Although the relationship between them was not highly significant, they had decisive voices in national policy formulation.

Did Labour formulate an ideological and political stand on Zionism in this period? Study of

the attitude of the movement's various components as reflected in its press, public pronouncements, official documents and parliamentary debates, as well as in archival material of other kinds, points to a positive answer to this question. A kind of general consensus appears to have been evolved, based on sympathy with the principles of the utopian Zionist-socialist endeavour, and on realistic awareness of the difficulties posed by intransigent Arab opposition. The basic components of Labour's 'Zionist outlook' can be summed up as follows:

(a) The Jews are a nation who, by force of the right to self-determination, and as a result of social and economic pressures, are entitled to a national home of their own for those of their people who wish to live there.

(b) Palestine is the historic homeland of the Jewish people, a fact which grants them the right of *return*. But it is also the homeland of the Arab people, who have been living there for centuries and hence have the right to *reside* there, and to enjoy national autonomy.

(c) The Jewish-Arab confrontation, whatever its motives, is very dangerous for both peoples and for the future of Palestinian society. Therefore, implementation of Zionist goals depends on the cooperation between the two peoples and their co-existence in the economic, social and parliamentary spheres.

(d) Jewish settlement in Palestine is justified by the ideals of socialist progress which it advocates. This endeavour, which is revolutionizing the lives of the Jewish people, also promises benefits to the Arab people and mankind as a whole.

(e) The obligations of the British people towards the Jewish people, as expressed in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate over Palestine, are not the outcome of transient political calculations but are, rather, anchored in the basic outlook of the labour movement on international affairs.

In the practical political sphere, those in the Labour Party who thought about Zionism concurred with the views of the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, as reflected in the 1922 White Paper, namely that the Jewish national home in Palestine should be built up gradually and by selective immigration.

The final conclusion is that the end of the decade witnessed the first indications of the formulation of the Labour policy of 'equal obligations', which was to become a bone of contention between this movement and Zionist socialism in the thirties.

NOTES

1. M. Shertok to B. Katznelson, 5 October 1921, Katznelson Archives, M.A.
2. Syrkin to Kaplansky, Paris, 4 October 1919, Syrkin Archives, M.A.
3. Correspondence between Arthur Henderson and Kaplansky, June 1919. Kaplansky, 104/IV, File 27, L.A.
4. The same views are reiterated in two other letters: Stone to Hyamson, 1 July 1920, Z.A. 24/25018; Katharine Bruce to J. Pomerantz, 1 October 1920, 103/111, L.A.
5. Ben-Gurion, 23 November 1920. *Letters*, Vol 2, pp. 36–7.
6. The letter is signed by: J.R. Clynes, H.S. Lindsay, W.H. Hutchinson, A. Henderson, G.H.

Thomas, C.W. Bowerman. It was preceded by an N.E.C. resolution referring to 'Palestine becoming a Jewish Homeland'. N.E.C. 20 April 1920, Vol. 18.

7. B. Katznelson, *Tzedek Leumim*, Writings, Vol. 1, pp. 214–23.
8. D. Ben-Gurion, 26 September 1921, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 86.
9. Shertok to Katznelson, 20 December 1921, Katznelson Archives, M.A. See also letter of 23 January 1922.
10. *A Socialist in Palestine*, ed. Poalei Zion, London 1922, p. 1.
11. *Ibid*., p. 9.
12. *Ibid*., p. 5.
13. *Ibid*., p. 7.
14. *Ibid*., p. 17.
15. See J.R. MacDonald, *Socialism Critical and Constructive*, London 1921.
16. M. Shertok to Katznelson, 7 March 1921, M.A.
17. Meeting of Histadrut Executive, February 1922. Katznelson Archives, File 15/6, M.A.
18. *A Socialist in Palestine*, pp. 12–13 and J.R. MacDonald, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', *Forward*, 18 March 1922.
19. *Ibid*., p. 15.
20. *Ibid*., p. 16.
21. *Ibid*., p. 13.
22. Executive Meeting 48.
23. *Ibid*.
24. A. Henderson, *Labour and Foreign Affairs*, L.P. London 1922.
25. Mr Arthur Henderson, M.P., *Statement on Behalf of the Labour Party*, November 1922. See S. Levenberg, *The Jews and Palestine*, London 1945, p. 207. See also speech of Morgan Jones in the House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates*, 4 July 1922, Vol. 156, No. 20, pp. 320–7.
26. Rt. Hon. J.H. *Thomas, Statement in Parliament*, 25 February 1924, Levenberg, p. 207.
27. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 'The Commonwealth Labour Conference' (Hebrew), *Davar*, 23 August 1925.
28. J.C. Wedgwood, *The Seventh Dominion*, The Labour Party, London 1922.
29. *Ahdut Haavoda Conference Proceedings*, 26 October-3 November 1926, p. 133.
30. *Ibid*., p. 135.
31. *Ibid*., p. 136.
32. *Ibid*., pp. 136–8.
33. *The Seventh Dominion, op. cit*.
34. 'Wedgwood's Visit', *Davar*, 12 November 1926.
35. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 'The Second Commonwealth Labour Conference', *Davar*, 15 August 1928.
36. Dov Hoz to the Histadrut Executive (confidential), 16 June 1928, P/8 Poalei Zion, M.A.
37. Dov Hoz to E. Golomb, 18 June 1928, Ben-Gurion Archives. MacDonald erred in his prediction; in the international sphere Labour supported socialist Zionism. George Lansbury, Susan Lawrence and Josiah Wedgwood joined the International Socialist Committee for the Organized Jewish Workers in Palestine founded by the Socialist International in Brussels in August 1938. Other members of the committee were: E. Berenstein, L. Blum, Camille

Hjusmans and E. Vandervelde.

PART TWO

THE FIRST POLITICAL CRISIS 1929–1931

Introduction

The period between mid-1929 and mid-1931 was important for both Labour and the Zionist movement. For Labour it was marked by an unsuccessful attempt to tackle the grave economic crisis which ended not only in the fall of the second Labour Government but also in a split within the Party. And where Zionism was concerned, this period witnessed the first manifestations of certain historical trends which were to determine the future of the movement as a whole. The economic growth and demographic expansion of the Yishuv were resumed, as it recovered from the grave economic crisis of 1926–29 which had caused widespread emigration and aroused doubts in certain Jewish circles as to the future of Zionism. The renewed flow of immigration into Palestine (which reached its peak in 1935 with 65,000 immigrants), and the extensive capital investments in the economy, were laying the foundations for the Jewish national entity. This two-year period also witnessed the exacerbation of the Jewish-Arab conflict. The immediate cause of the August 1929 riots was a dispute concerning the Wailing Wall, but the true reason was Arab opposition to Jewish national existence in Palestine. The extent of the riots and the brutal savagery displayed by the Arab masses towards their Jewish victims in Hebron presaged the intensity of the future confrontation. Another portent concerned relations between the British authorities in Palestine and the Zionist movement. The crisis in these relations, which erupted in 1930 after publication of the White Paper, was ended by a mutual agreement (reflected in the 1931 MacDonald Letter) but contained the seeds of the future political rift, because the Labour Government tried to give its own interpretation of British policy towards Palestine as expressed in the White Paper of 1922. On the surface the political events were as follows.

The riots erupted in Jerusalem on 23 August 1929 and spread over the entire country. Some 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were killed, most of them by the Mandatory police (Palestine Police Force). The Government responded by sending to Palestine a Commission of Enquiry led by Sir Walter Shaw to investigate the cause of the riots. Its conclusions were published on 30 March 1930. It confirmed that the Arabs were the direct instigators but claimed that the true cause was Arab apprehension in the face of Jewish immigration. The Commission also stated that there was no room in Palestine for widescale Jewish immigration. Only one member, the Labourite Harry Snell, abstained from the majority opinion and submitted his own minority conclusions.

After the publication of the Shaw Commission report, John Hope-Simpson retired from the Colonial Office and, as an expert on mass settlement on behalf of the League of Nations, was sent to Palestine to examine the conclusions of the Shaw Commission. In August 1930 he submitted a report which essentially bore out these conclusions. He asserted that there was insufficient agricultural land in Palestine for mass settlement, cast doubt on the possibility of industrial development, and recommended a special settlement project of twenty thousand families, both Jews and Arabs, in the next few years.

On the basis of the recommendations of these two Commissions the Passfield White Paper was published, on 21 October 1930. It stated that:

(a) The British Government had a dual and equal commitment to both peoples;

(b) the obligation towards the Jews related to the Jews of Palestine alone and not to the entire Jewish people, as the 1922 White Paper had stipulated;

(c) the scope of Jewish immigration would depend on the employment situation of the population as a whole, i.e. Arabs as well;

(d) there was no room for mass Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The document also cast aspersions on Zionist communal settlement, stating that, unlike private settlement sponsored by the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, it had brought no benefit to the Arab population.

The publication of the White Paper aroused a political furore. Weizmann announced his resignation from the presidency of the Zionist movement in protest against British policy. As a result of the general reaction a special Cabinet Committee was appointed, chaired by the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson. It invited representatives of the Jewish Agency, led by Chaim Weizmann, to attend sessions In the wake of its deliberations the MacDonald Letter was published on 13 February 1931, effectively revoking the Passfield White Paper and restoring the status quo ante, i.e. the 1922 White Paper policy.

In the period covered by our previous section, Labour had gained awareness of the Zionist problem and had formulated its ideological and political principles on this question. Now these principles faced the test of political crisis. Hence, such issues as the relations between Party, parliamentary faction and Government; the status of the Prime Minister and the authority of his Ministers;[1] the personal relations between those dealing with the question, in particular the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Colonial Secretary; and the personal attitudes of party political leaders towards Zionism, are all of vital significance for an understanding of the subject.

Where the Zionist movement is concerned a new element enters the picture in this period, and that is the intensive political involvement of the labour movement in Zionist politics. This followed on the amalgamation of the majority of the labour parties into one party – Mapai – which subsequently became the central political force in the Yishuv and the Zionist movement.[2] This obliges us to examine the political conceptions of Jewish labour towards British labour in general and British Palestinian policies in particular.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Crisis Approaches August 1929 – February 1930

Dov Hoz's activity in London

It will be recalled that Dov Hoz, the Histadrut and Poalei Zion emissary in London, had gained a negative impression from his meeting with Ramsay MacDonald in late 1928. It seemed to him that there had been an erosion of Labour's attitude towards Zionism and in MacDonald's own views on the subject. His reaction was to conduct a vigorous information campaign within British Labour and to attempt to reorganize the British Poalei Zion movement. His natural political instincts and his extensive experience of party activity in Palestine led him to the conclusion that, in order to acquire status and influence within British Labour, it was necessary to constitute a political force. He reasoned that the first step was to revive the activity of Poalei Zion in Britain after several years of dormancy. He 'rolled up his sleeves', in his own words, set to work to revive the Party in London, Leeds and Manchester, and began to plan renewed operations in Glasgow, extracting promises of financial support from the local Zionist Federation. Immediately after his arrival in London, Hoz had assessed the situation and concluded that it was not too good 'because we are always making demands of the Labour Party, but take almost no part in its work and do not help them at all'.[3] He went on to propose the establishment of a Poalei Zion Fund to aid the Labour Party in the coming elections. Hoz also envisaged mobilizing Jewish students in London, Leeds and Manchester, through their associations, for election campaigning on behalf of the Labour Party.[4] He reported on his plan to set up a council of Jewish labour organizations, headed by Poalei Zion[5] (this council was in fact established and he was elected its secretary). He also arranged for Poalei Zion members to be actively involved in local election campaigns.

Hoz also tried to establish direct contact with Labour leaders. Conscious of his talent for winning friends, he hoped to establish friendly ties with them and thus win support for his cause. He tried to organize a Labour delegation to Palestine, and to this end contacted several trade union leaders and the Webbs (who replied through their secretary that their time was restricted and their short-term plans already made). 'I shall make another attempt to meet them', Hoz wrote to Palestine, 'and with the help of Mrs. Russell and of the Almighty hope to do so soon'.[6]

Hoz was persistent in his efforts to make personal contact with the Labour leaders. Hearing a rumour that J.H. Thomas, the railway workers' leader, might be the next Colonial Secretary rather than MacDonald, he arranged a meeting with the former 'in order to hear from him unequivocally what his attitude is to Zionism and Palestine'. Thomas told him that he was candidate for the post of Colonial Secretary and as such refused to commit himself on policy towards Zionism beyond the statement that he would observe the letter of the Balfour Declaration.[7]

Hoz also approached Emmanuel Shinwell, citing his Jewishness as reason for recruiting his

aid for the Zionist cause. He wrote of Shinwell to Eliyahu Golomb:

> Generally speaking he makes a very good impression, but Jewish affairs are unknown to him and do not interest him greatly. He represents a mining constituency, where there may not be even one Jew, and our affairs do not, unfortunately, come within his sphere of interest. He is also very busy and cannot devote time to additional matters … I also told him that the fact that he was not an expert on Jewish affairs and did not deal with them was a great tragedy. Non-Jews help us devotedly, with interest and love. How can I accept the fact that the few Jews among the Labour leaders turn their backs on us?

Shinwell, he wrote, was touched and apologized, saying that 'his education over twenty years had made him remote. He agreed with me but said he had no time'.[8] He even promised to visit Palestine.[9]

Passfield's attitude

In the crisis which erupted between the new Labour Government and the Zionist movement in June 1929, the chief Labour protagonists were Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), and the relations between these three men were a significant factor in the development and nature of the dispute. The ties between them were marked by tension and mistrust. Henderson and MacDonald clashed frequently during their lengthy collaboration (MacDonald even tried to prevent Henderson from becoming Foreign Secretary).[10] The Webbs did not hold MacDonald in esteem, Beatrice Webb describing him in her diary as a snob with aristocratic tendencies,[11] while MacDonald, for his part, had little regard for Passfield as a politician.[12]

Of the three men, the most intriguing in the context of our study (though not necessarily the most important) was Passfield. As we have noted, when he assumed the position of Colonial Secretary he was considered a friend of the Zionist cause. To what extent was this view accurate? He did in fact sympathize with the idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine. Not only was he formally responsible for the clause in the 1917 Labour platform recognizing the right of the Jews to return to their homeland, but he was also known to sympathize with the agricultural settlement efforts of the Jews in Palestine. Hoz reported in late 1929 that G. D. H. Cole had told him that Passfield 'devotes considerable time and thought to Palestinian questions. He says that Passfield greatly admires our efforts and that we can regard him as a loyal friend. Passfield praised the English edition of *Davar*, which he apparently reads regularly.'[13] This favourable impression was borne out by Chaim Weizmann, who met Passfield after the Palestinian riots commenced. Hoz's wife wrote to Berl Katznelson that Weizmann had been received by Passfield, 'spoke forcefully and bluntly and the response was very favourable. The tone of the conversation was very good, that moderate … man was moved by Chaim's emotional remarks.'[14] Weizmann too told a journalist that Passfield had been moved to tears by his description of the horrors of the riots. So convinced was he of Passfield's sympathetic approach that he declared: 'After 1921 we won the White Paper, now we have won a Blue and White Paper.'[15] It is true that Weizmann sometimes displayed a tendency to over-optimism, which could account for his hopes of a 'Blue

and White Paper', but Passfield was undoubtedly shocked by the manifestations of Arab cruelty towards Jewish victims. In a letter to Weizmann after he had perused the first reports of the Hebron slaughter, he defined the attacks on Jews as 'bloodthirsty and ruthless'.[16]

Six months later, Hoz was still convinced of Passfield's fundamental sympathy for the Zionist cause. When it was rumoured that Passfield was about to resign, Hoz warned Zionist leaders against rejoicing at this step, and claimed that the Colonial Secretary was a friend to Zionism and would not give in to Arab pressures.[17] By May, however, he had changed his mind, and wrote to Katznelson that Passfield was unable to withstand the demands of the Arab delegation to London and was coming under the influence of the anti-Zionist, hostile officialdom and the Colonial Office, so that 'we are slowly sliding into the abyss which yawns before us'.[18] (The view that Passfield was enfeebled by age and hence tended to accept the advice of officials was subsequently refuted by Ben-Gurion, who met him in June of the same year and reported on his cordiality and responsiveness, adding: 'he still has his full strength … spoke with emphasis, energy and animation. It would be difficult to define him as disposed towards our cause.'[19])

Passfield did not need to modify his views as a result of the advice of his officials and the reports which reached him from the High Commissioner, Sir John Chancellor.[20] His policy was the logical outcome of his political outlook. Passfield held clearly defined views on policy towards the colonies, including Palestine. He adhered to these views with his customary restrained but dogmatic tenacity.

On 13 August 1929,[21] ten days before the 1929 Palestinian unrest began, Beatrice Webb recorded in her diary a conversation between her husband and Lord Lugard, the well-known colonial administrator, whom she described as basically conservative but sympathetic towards Labour policies. Passfield revealed his progressive-conservative and cautious outlook on British colonies. He advocated intervention of the central government in the colonies in order to contain the acquisitive tendencies of the white settlers, but preferred to do this with moderation to prevent political protest. He favoured gradual handover of authority to natives in the colonies, but only in those which were nationally or racially homogeneous. In multinational colonies, like Cyprus, Kenya and Palestine, he thought that government should still be appointed by the metropolis.

It may be deduced from these remarks that Passfield held preconceived views on the desirable form of government for Palestine, and was cognizant of the complexity of the situation there. On the one hand, this was a multinational and religious colony like Cyprus, and on the other, a settlement endeavour by white people of European origin was evolving there, as in Kenya. Ben-Gurion grasped this very clearly, and wrote in 1930 that 'Passfield apparently regards us and the Arabs as he does the whites and blacks in the African colonies – he sees it as his duty to defend the natives against the threat of the settlers'.[22]

Passfield's conception – despite his non-recognition of the historic rights of the Jews to Palestine and the unique nature of the Zionist settlement endeavour – was not, at this stage, necessarily in conflict with the interests of the Zionist movement. His view that it was impossible to grant immediate self-government to heterogeneous colonies, because of the profound differences between the nations or races living there, was in accord with the outlook of the Zionist movement (on condition, of course, that the British Government continued to observe its

international obligations towards the Jewish national home). But these two viewpoints, ostensibly similar, were destined to clash. Passfield advocated British rule in Palestine in similar fashion to other such colonies, meaning mainly maintenance of law and order and prevention of exploitation of the natives by white settlers. The Zionist movement, on the other hand, demanded of the Government political assistance in implementation of its national aspirations. As long as the national dispute in Palestine was subterranean the clash was averted, but as soon as unrest erupted, a confrontation was inevitable.

The conflict between Passfield and the Zionist leadership focused on four issues: the status or rights of the Jews in Palestine; the possibilities for immigration and the right of the Jews to purchase land from the Arabs; the legislative council; and the socialist nature of the Jewish labour movement in Palestine.

Immediately after the 1929 riots Passfield was confronted by Weizmann's demand for immediate steps to strengthen the Yishuv by granting legal and official status to Jewish defence forces, arming these units and dismissing Harry Charles Luke, the acting High Commissioner in the beginning of the riots. Weizmann also called for bolstering of the political status of the Zionist movement by the expansion of immigration and a public pronouncement of British Government support for the Balfour Declaration.[23] Passfield responded with caution, refraining from adopting a stand or admitting obligations. In other words, he was rejecting Weizmann's demands until the Palestinian situation was clarified.[24]

Several days later, in a letter to Lord Melchett describing the objectives, constitution and nature of the Commission of Enquiry he was sending to Palestine, Passfield emphasized a political principle which he regarded as vitally important:

> Another Commission may possibly be required, or some other form of enquiry, at a later date, but it seemed desirable at first only to have a commission which would get to work at once on the very urgent investigation that is called for, and also one of which the composition will give no encouragement to the idea that there could be any reconsideration of the acceptance by His Majesty's Government of the mandate for Palestine or any weakening of policy with regard to the Jewish national home in accordance with the mandate. Whether or not the obtaining of such reconsideration or such a weakening was the object of the Moslem upheaval, that upheaval is, as you will be aware, now being made the ground for it in certain quarters.[25]

In other words, despite Weizmann's request for a new political pronouncement, the Commission appointed was essentially of a legal nature, and its members were not first-rank personalities. The intention was to preclude the possibility that the Arabs might make political claims aimed at annulling the Balfour Declaration, i.e. to emphasize in negative fashion the Government's adherence to the Declaration.

Passfield's essential fairness was demonstrated in a talk with Chaim Weizmann in September 1929.[26] He told Weizmann unequivocally that in the light of the British Government's budgetary problems, the Zionist movement should not expect financial aid for Jewish settlement in Palestine. He also said that although he recognized the fact that under the terms of the Mandate the British were obliged to aid in establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine, 'they had to be fair to both sides'. Passfield was not anticipating his future statement of equal obligations towards Jews and Arabs, but rather attempting to differentiate between the task of the

Government and Zionist activity. It was the Government's function to maintain law and order in Palestine, and to act fairly and decently towards all the inhabitants of the country. Full responsibility for the economic and social construction of the Jewish national home rested with the Zionist movement alone. At the same time he cautioned Weizmann against the dangers inherent in widescale Jewish immigration, reminding him of the gloom which had prevailed in the Yishuv during the 1926 economic crisis, at the time of the Fourth Aliyah. He added, however, 'that if the Jews desired to have a large immigration, they must guarantee the Government against the recurrence of such a crisis and take upon themselves the responsibility for any unemployment that may be caused thereby'.

This idea was not basically in conflict with the aims of the Zionist movement, which aspired to maximum autonomy in the conduct of Jewish affairs in Palestine. It also fitted in with the practical interpretation of the clause on the economic absorptive capacity of the country. Passfield also promised that if arable unoccupied land was located, it would be placed at the disposal of Jewish settlement. In the course of the conversation he reiterated his sympathy for Zionist goals, hinting that he was restricted by his colleagues in the Cabinet. 'Lord Passfield said (that) … he had the Cabinet behind him, and he had to satisfy them with regard to any policy which he adopted.' He concluded the conversation by 'again expressing great sympathy for the Jewish national home'.

Was Passfield merely trying to conciliate the Zionist leaders and prevent political protest, or was he expressing his sincere views? The latter would seem to be the case, since there was nothing in his remarks which contradicted his fundamental outlook. As long as Jewish immigration could not be proved to be causing harm to the local population, he adhered to the principles formulated in the Labour pronouncement of 1917, wherein the Party pledged itself to support the return of the Jews to Palestine in order to build a better future for themselves. Although Weizmann was perhaps exaggerating in attributing to Passfield ardent sympathy for Zionism, the Colonial Secretary was certainly far from hostile. In fact, he was awaiting the conclusion of the Commission of Enquiry he had despatched to Palestine in order to determine future policy. Meanwhile, he maintained neutrality and approved the policy laid on in the 1922 White Paper, thereby expressing his sympathy for Zionism.

Passfield's basic attitude was well defined by his wife in her diary, when she described a conversation between Passfield and Josiah Wedgwood, who demanded his unqualified support for the Jews of Palestine on the one hand, and opposition to the Kenyan settlers on the other. 'Sidney', she wrote,

> seems to have no likes or dislikes for a particular person, or particular communities; about every project he asks 'how will it work, what state of affairs will it actually bring about? How will all the persons concerned – for after all they are all God's creatures – like it or benefit or lose by it?'[27]

This analysis should be borne in mind when we examine the change in Passfield's standpoint after he received the report of the Shaw Commission and the Hope-Simpson Report.

It is also interesting to examine whether Passfield was alone in what may be described as his neutral but sympathetic attitude, or whether his views were shared by colleagues in the Cabinet or the Party.

Party Leadership

In December 1929, reports reached London that the Shaw Commission of Enquiry was exceeding its authority, studying basic questions relating to the existence of the Mandate over Palestine rather than confining itself to clarifying the direct causes of the unrest. This news aroused the concern of the Zionist Executive, and Chaim Weizmann requested a meeting with the Foreign Secretary. According to Shlomo Kaplansky, who arranged the meeting (he had been friendly with Henderson for a number of years), the Foreign Secretary was very cool in his attitude for most of the interview, and flatly refused to intervene in any way whatsoever in the running of the Commission, which was under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Colonial Office. He did, however, promise to express his opinion on the subject when the Colonial Secretary brought the Commission's report before the Cabinet. Weizmann commented that he was appealing to him not only as Foreign Secretary but as one of the leaders of a party known for its sympathy towards Zionism. Henderson responded that he would not disappoint Weizmann and his associates, who could rely on his sympathy. To bear out his promise, he cited his friendship with Kaplansky, with whom he had worked in close cooperation in the International and the Labour Party, and who could attest to his friendship for the Zionist cause. He also reminded the two Zionist leaders of his political statement at the Labour Party Conference,[28] in which he had expressed unequivocal support for the Balfour Declaration and rather less emphatically had affirmed British obligations towards the inhabitants of Palestine.* (The Deputy Party Secretary, J.S. Middleton, had refused Kaplansky's request for a resolution on Palestine, arguing that this would lead to a series on other colonial countries, including India and Egypt.[29])

The official party statement on the issue, delivered by the Conference Chairman, Herbert Morrison (regarded as a personal friend of Zionism), had been much more ambiguous than Henderson's statement. It had reaffirmed policy with regard to the Mandate and its obligations towards 'the Jewish people, the inhabitants of Palestine, whether Jewish or Arab, and the League of Nations' and had noted that 'the just claims and grivances of both communities must be met'. The contradiction inherent in this last statement was mitigated by the declaration that 'no enduring divergence of interests exists between the Jewish and Arab working populations in Palestine. There is room for both.'[31]

Press Reaction

The Labour press reacted to the events in Palestine with marked lack of sympathy and sometimes hostility towards the Jews. The Scottish *Forward*, a left-wing paper, denounced the unrest as an expression of both Jewish and Arab religious fanaticism, and went on to state:

> When we get down to the rock-bottom facts of this sorry outbreak of religious fanaticism in Palestine, we shall probably find that there is an economic nigger somewhere; and we should not be at all surprised to learn that money from foreign Jewry has been buying out the ancestral homes of the penurious Moslems. At any rate, our readers will do well to remember that all the news coming to our press is Jewish – the Moslem side, so far, has hardly had a show.[32]

A week later the same paper published an article by John Clark, M.P., in which he tried to explain the causes for the Palestinian riots. He blamed Jewish settlement in Palestine for creating religious and nationalist hostility in that country, and accused the Jews of religious fanaticism and of arrogance.[33]

A more significant reaction appeared in an editorial in the *Daily Herald*, which adopted an objective and neutral tone. 'Palestine, with its mixed population, with its deeply-seated religious differences, with its age-long struggle between Judaism and Islam, modernized as it is, in the present tug-of-war between the Zionists and the Arabs, is always dry tinder that any stray match may set alight.'[34]

Therefore, according to the paper, all those claiming that there was a war for Jerusalem (i.e. the Arabs), or that slaughters were being conducted (i.e. the Jews), were assuming a grave responsibility. The urgent task was to calm ruffled spirits and restore life in Jerusalem to normal. As for the future, the *Daily Herald* called for 'an examination of the terms of the British Mandate',[35] thus going further than the Government, which had not authorized the Shaw Commission to consider the basic issues of the nature of the Mandate.

The editorial concluded with the conventional view that the solution to Jewish-Arab hostility lay in an agreement between the two peoples based on justice and religious freedom.

The most controversial and far-reaching view was expressed by the *New Statesman*, in an editorial. It expressed surprise at the 'paradoxical fact' that, of all peoples, the Jews were willing to spark off a national-religious dispute for the sake of 'sticks and stones'. The main problem, it went on, was that 'there exists a very strong and probably incurable hostility between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine'.[36]

As far as Britain was concerned the solution, according to the *New Statesman* editorial, was to abandon Palestine and leave the two peoples to their own responsibility, but she could not do this since she had accepted the task of maintaining order and simultaneously setting up a Jewish national home in a country where Arabs had lived for generations. Though the English did not tend to favour either side, the editorial continued, many people were coming to the conclusion that in the face of mass Jewish immigration from Poland, and possibly also from the United States[37], there was a great deal of justice in the claims of the veteran inhabitants of the country. 'They hate the Jews and their hate will inevitably burst out from time to time.' Hence the conclusion:

> Undoubtedly it is our duty to preserve order, but whether our mandate implies a permanent obligation to take sides with the Jews against the Arabs is a question which demands a good deal of consideration. Our best course might be to resign our mandate into the hands of the League of Nations.[38]

The next issue included an ideological and practical-political explanation of this far-reaching proposal (probably from the same pen). The article, which was unsigned, began with savage criticism of the Balfour Declaration. The act which the paper had denoted in 1917 the best political step of the year was now regarded as 'perhaps the worst blunder that Lord Balfour ever made in the course of his political life … We cannot eternally support a minority against a majority in Palestine merely because one of our Cabinet Ministers once, without consulting us, pledged us to a peculiar policy.'[39]

The author did not advocate immediate abandonment of Palestine, but claimed that within ten or twenty years the Jews of Palestine would be ready to take their destiny in their own hands. The situation there was without precedent: on the one hand, Palestine was ruled by an imperialist power without military justification or economic benefit; on the other, two peoples were fighting over it, the one endowed with historical rights and the other with the rights of one thousand years' residence. Arab opposition to Jewish settlement was justified and it was only Jewish financial control of the world press which kept this fact from world public opinion. Nonetheless, 'we are all of course inclined to be "Zionists", that is to say to favour a policy which tends to induce Jews to migrate to some country of their own', but the situation in Palestine was so complicated that it was doubtful whether Zionism could be implemented in that country. 'We have neither the money nor the inclination to embark upon further idealistic adventures in the East.'

In the short term, the article proposed that Britain cease supporting the Jews, since 'active pro-Semitism is as tiresome and impossible as anti-Semitism'. In other words, 'we must have obviously impartial administration or else surrender the Mandate'.

In the long term, the country should be prepared for British departure. 'The Jews are perfecly capable of looking after themselves as soon as they understand that they must do it … If they really want their "National Home" they must win it without the aid of British troops.'

This was the frankest evaluation from within the labour movement of the Palestinian situation, and it contained an accurate prediction of what was to occur twenty years later. At the same time, it appeared to advocate a certain degree of evasion of responsibility, advising Britain to abandon the country and refrain from intervening in the dispute until exhaustion brought the two parties to the negotiating table.

The belief that Britain would be forced to leave Palestine within fifteen to twenty years was held by others, particularly Labour intellectuals. In January 1930 Berl Katznelson met H.N. Brailsford, and recorded the following impressions:

> Brailsford made a great impression on me. He is a true friend, convinced of our justice but doubts our ability. I think he has almost despaired of the slow pace of our growth. He is ready to learn but there is nobody to instruct him. To Kaplansky's question of how long we still had, in his opinion, he answered: 'you can hold on for another 10 – 15 years without a parliamentary regime. By then you must gain strength'![40]

In January 1930, *Davar* published a translation of an article[41] in which Brailsford stated his belief that the right of the Jews to immigrate to Palestine and set up a national home there was anchored in international law and morality. The right to self-determination claimed by the Arabs could not negate the rights of the Jews. At the same time he recognized the justification of Arab fears of a Jewish majority in Palestine, and proposed the restriction of Jewish immigration, so that the Jews would never exceed 35 per cent to 45 per cent of the population. In the long term, he went on, there could be no escape from implementing the principle of self-determination in Palestine, above all through the establishment of elected democratic parliamentary institutions. But unless these ideas served as the basis for Jewish-Arab agreement, the Jewish national home could not develop, since Arab opposition would increase and the British could not for long maintain the Mandate through military force.[42]

We thus see that, even before the conclusions of the Shaw Commission were published,

doubts were voiced in Labour circles as to the possibility of realizing Zionism in Palestine in accordance with the vision of the Zionist leaders.

The events in Palestine confronted the Government with a political problem demanding immediate solution, and posed certain questions to socialist public opinion. Such issues as the right of the Arabs of Palestine to self-determination, the justice of the Jewish demand to return to Palestine, and the validity of past political obligations, troubled the conscience of the labour movement. And after publication of the Commission's report the Palestine issue was transformed from an abstract subject of discussion to a very concrete problem.

NOTES

1. Robert McKenzie, *British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power within the Conservative and Labour Parties*, Mercury, London 1955.
2. The official amalgamation conference was convened only in January 1930, but joint meetings of the secretariats of the two parties were held from 1929.
3. D. Hoz to A. Reis, 29 February 1929, London, P/8, M.A.
4. D. Hoz to E. Golomb, 6 June 1929, Hoz Files, B.G.A.
5. D. Hoz to B. Locker, 4 April 1929, P/8, M.A. D. Hoz to A. Reis, 17 April 1929, *ibid*.
6. D. Hoz to E. Golomb, 18 March 1929, Hoz Files, B.G.A.
7. D. Hoz to E. Golomb, 6 June 1929, *ibid*.
8. Hoz to Golomb, 21 March 1929, M.A.
9. *Ibid*.
10. David Carlton, *MacDonald versus Henderson*, Macmillan, London, 1979, pp. 15–16; David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, pp. 129, 491.
11. B. Webb, *Diaries*, p. 65.
12. In the past, in the Fabian Society, the relations between MacDonald and the Webbs were also very complicated. See Margaret Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism*, pp. 73–77; David Marquand, pp. 41–4.
13. Hoz to Poalei Zion Alliance Office, Warsaw, 7 November 1928, P/8, M.A.
14. Rivka Hoz to B. Katznelson, 3 October 1929, Katznelson Papers, M.A. Passfield was undoubtedly impressed by Weizmann. In the unpublished section of her diary, in which she severely criticized Weizmann, Beatrice Webb added 'Weizmann Sidney admires as a remarkable and, in a way, attractive personality'. Webb Papers, L.S.E., October 1930.
15. W. Zuckerman, 'Labour Rule in England and the Palestine riots' (Hebrew), *Davar*, 7 October 1929, Kaplansky and Ben-Gurion were also of the opinion that time that Passfield was sympathetic towards Zionism. See M. Neustadt to Berl Locker, October 1929, 1/8, Poalei Zion Alliance Office, M.A.
16. In addition to expressing his outrage at the slaughter, Passfield partially acceded to Weizmann's request and ordered the High Commissioner to supply arms to Jewish settlers in isolated villages on condition that the arsenals were under police supervision. CAB. 20/53 – 5 November 1929, P.R.O.
17. Hoz to Reis, 7 February 1930, P/8, M.A.
18. Hoz to Katznelson, 26 May 1930, *ibid*.
19. D. Ben-Gurion, *Igrot* (Letters), Vol. 5, p. 100.

20. On Chancellor's attitude to Zionism and his influence over Passfield, see G. Sheffer, 'Intentions and Results of British Policy in Palestine – Passfield's White Paper', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, January 1973, pp. 43–60 (Frank Cass).
21. B. Webb, *Diaries*, p. 236.
22. D. Ben-Gurion, *op. cit*., Vol. 3, pp. 150–1.
23. Weizmann to Passfield, 29 September 1929, W.A.
24. Passfield to Weizmann, 30 August 1929, W.A.
25. Passfield to Melchett, 2 September 1929, W.A.
26. Conversation between Weizmann, Brodetzky and Passfield, 27 September 1929. See also: Weizmann to Passfield, 1 September 1929; Passfield to Weizmann, 4 September 1929; Weizmann to Passfield, 10 September 1929; Passfield to Weizmann 11 September 1929; all in W.A.
27. *Diary*, p. 230.
28. Report of meeting between Henderson, Weizmann and Kaplansky, 17 December 1929, Kaplansky Papers 104, File 44, L.A. Henderson's coolness surprised Kaplansky since a year previously, at the 1929 Socialist International, Henderson had courageously defended the Zionist stand.
29. Neustadt to Locker (Yiddish), P/8, P.Z. Alliance Office, M.A.
30. The Labour Party Conference Reports, Brighton 30 September – 4 October 1929.
31. *Ibid*.
32. *Forward*, 31 August 1929.
33. John S. Clark, M.P., 'Clash of Creed and Lure of Loot', *Forward*, 7 September 1929.
34. 'The Palestine Disturbances', *Daily Herald*, 27 August 1929.
35. The paper's stand aroused the concern of Zionist leaders. Ben-Gurion and Kaplansky met the editor at the 1929 Labour Party Conference and, after a lengthy conversation, he promised that his paper would adopt a more friendly stand on Zionism. See Neustadt to Locker, October 1929, P/8, P.Z. Alliance Office, M.A. Katznelson also met the foreign affairs editor of the paper, W.N. Ewer.
36. *New Statesman*, 31 August 1929.
37. The editor apparently referred to U.S. Jewry because of the establishment of the Jewish Agency. In the same issue there appeared an article by W. Zuckerman, 'The New Zionism', depicting the political struggle which had led to the establishment of the Agency.
38. See talk between Passfield and Lugard, 3 August 1929, *Diaries*, pp. 214–5.
39. 'The Jews and the Arabs', *New Statesman*, 7 September 1929.
40. Katznelson, *Letters*, 1921–1930, p. 310.
41. The article was translated into Hebrew and appeared in *Davar*, 2 January 1930.
42. S. Lavi responded heatedly to Brailsford's articles. See Lavi, *Ketavim* (Hebrew), Vol. 2, pp. 123–8.

* His statement read: 'His Majesty's Government have no intention of reconsidering the British tenure of the Mandate for Palestine. There is no question of altering the position of this country in regard to the Mandate. The policy laid down in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and embodied in the Mandate, of supporting the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jews; this policy is still, as it always has been, subject to the condition that the civil and religious rights

of all inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion, must at all times be safeguarded.’[30]

CHAPTER FIVE

The Crisis Gathers Momentum March – December 1930

The first indications of a change for the worse in the attitude of the Labour Government and various Labour circles towards Zionism appeared in early 1930. The direct causes were the report of the Shaw Commission, published in March, and the London visit of a delegation from the Supreme National Committee of Palestinian Arabs.[1]

Weizmann was received by Passfield on the eve of the Report's publication, and the Colonial Secretary, apparently under the impact of the Report, suggested for the first time that there might be a connection between Jewish settlement in Palestine and the danger of dispossession of Arab *fellaheen*. He agreed with Weizmann that the Jews were not engaging in robbery but were buying the land legitimately, and praised Jewish success in cultivating barren land, but emphasized that he feared the cumulative effect of Jewish settlement. In the long run it would inevitably lead to the creation of a stratum of landless *fellaheen* which would become the source of unrest in Palestine. He thought the problem could be tackled in two ways: first, stabilization of the situation without undermining the principles of the Mandate, and second, a search for an alternative solution to the problem of dispossession. 'Possibly,' he said, 'Transjordan might be a way out.'[2]

Passfield went so far as to propose to Weizmann that he examine the possibility of setting up a company to purchase one million *dunams* (quarter of a million acres) of land for the landless farmers, to ease political and economic pressures in Western Palestine. Weizmann welcomed the idea enthusiastically. It was, however, no more than an idea, lacking any practical political significance, though it throws interesting light on Passfield's constructive approach and basically positive attitude towards the Jewish settlement endeavour.

On the question of a representative legislative council (later to become a controversial issue), Passfield told Weizmann that, in contrast to his former views, he was now opposed to the idea. He feared that such elected bodies might become focuses of legal resistance to the proclaimed policy of the Government and the obligations it had undertaken. There was no conflict between this view and the basic stand and immediate interests of the Zionist movement. Passfield did, however, indicate that he would seek ways of allowing the indigenous population to share in the running of the country, though this was not an easy task, and expressed the hope that the Zionist movement would not hamper his efforts. The conversation ended on a friendly note, Passfield confiding in Weizmann that an Arab delegation was due in London and that he and his colleagues would have to deal with it with caution, tolerance and tact in the hope of preventing further unrest in Palestine.

Publication of the Commission's report revealed that it had in fact overstepped its authority. It pinpointed the cause of the riots as Arab fears of dispossession as a result of Jewish immigration, and went on to submit proposals aimed at amending Government policy. The majority report recommended clear and explicit reformulation of the Government's obligations towards non-

Jewish communities, increased control of Jewish immigration, restriction of the possibilities of transferring land from Arabs to Jews, and a survey of the arable land in Palestine. The Government responded by appointing John Hope-Simpson, the expert on settlement affairs, to conduct a survey on the possibilities for settlement in Palestine.

It is illuminating to examine the attitude of the central Party and movement personalities during this interval between Hope-Simpson's departure for Palestine in May 1930 and publication of the White Paper, when the Government had not yet formulated its final stand on Zionism, and the Zionists still hoped that the Shaw Commission recommendations would be rejected.

Aware of the concern which the Commission's recommendations had aroused among Zionists, Passfield promised Weizmann that he could meet Hope-Simpson before the latter's departure for Palestine, but for some reason failed to arrange for such a meeting. This enraged Weizmann, who believed he had been deceived, and created tension between the two men. Nor were matters improved when the Colonial Office decided in May 1930 to freeze the allocation of immigration permits until Hope-Simpson completed his survey. This was not merely a tactical error but an almost meaningless step as well, since it applied only to immigration under the auspices of Zionist institutions; there were no restrictions, in any case, on persons who owned capital of at least five hundred pounds sterling. The only outcome was a storm of protest by Zionist leaders and the Zionist press, aimed against the Colonial Office and Pass-field himself.

Passfield reacted with uncharacteristic heat, and publicly complained that Weizmann had slandered him. There appears to be room for belief that the combined impact of the Shaw Commission recommendations, his encounter with the Arab delegation, and his grudge against Weizmann, changed his attitude on Zionism from neutral sympathy to fundamental opposition. This is borne out by several incidents which occurred at the time. Passfield encountered Dov Hoz (when the latter visited Passfield Corner with a Labour Party Group) and, according to Hoz, burst out furiously: 'What's all this commotion you are raising, what's this storm of protest? Haven't we announced that we intend to honour our commitments under the Mandate? … Please leave the decisions to us.' He went on to claim that 'these incessant interventions only hinder us in doing our job. We have guaranteed – and you must believe us …' And he added angrily:

> You don't know what caution means. At this very time some Zionists are still talking about a Jewish state. Your immigration barely covers the Arab natural increase and you talk about a Jewish state. What hope have you of a Jewish majority in Palestine? That country will stay Arab for eternity and those ridiculous statements are annoying and disturbing.

He brushed aside Hoz's attempts at conciliation and suggestions that he meet with Palestinian labour leaders.

> You not only want to set up a Jewish state but a socialist one to boot. You are putting the cart before the horses. The laws of development are fixed and you can't change them artificially. By adding to the Palestine problem through artificial imposition of socialism on that backward country, you won't improve matters.[3]

Shortly after this meeting with Hoz, Passfield received Ben-Gurion[4] and, though cordial towards him personally, he criticized Zionist policy. Passfield began by declaring that there was room in Palestine for only a few hundred more Jewish immigrants, so that the dream of a Jewish

majority there was a false one. When Ben-Gurion claimed that Hope-Simpson, though a decent man and an expert in his field, knew nothing about the capacities of the Jewish people and the historical forces moving it, Passfield interrupted him: 'Historical forces, don't talk to me about historical forces. This is a question of capital and economic possibilities.'

Four months later Passfield told two journalists from the New York Jewish journal *Forward* that he objected on principle to the synthesis between socialism and nationalism.[5] He criticized Zionism for its adherence to the principle of Jewish labour. When they pointed out the socialist nature of Jewish settlement, he replied that he had no objections to the socialism of the settlers: 'What he objects to is that they are Zionists, that they don't get on with Arabs', i.e. Jewish trade unions were not solely class institutions but were Zionist by nature and hence rejected Arabs. And, as no non-Jewish socialist could refrain from doing, he asked them: 'How would you like it if we said that no Jews can be employed in certain sections of England?'

These incidents indicate growing opposition on Passfield's part towards Zionism as a concept and as a settlement endeavour. As a rationalist, he rejected the argument of historic right to a country settled by another people. As a 'social engineer' assessing economic potential, he saw no possibility of Palestine absorbing large numbers of immigrants without violent resistance on the part of the Arabs. As a socialist, he rejected the socialism-cum-Zionism of the Palestinian labour movement as an artificial marriage. His negative attitude did not, therefore, derive from his opposition to exploitation of the natives by Jewish capitalists (as Sykes claims[6]), but rather from fundamental objections to Zionism as a nationalist movement attempting to construct a socialist society.

While Hope-Simpson was conducting his survey of settlement possibilities in Palestine, Passfield informed Weizmann and Brodetzky that he no longer contemplated widescale Jewish and Arab settlement in Transjordan[7] because of economic cost and because it would arouse Arab suspicions of mass dispossession plans. He also claimed that mass immigration should not be permitted as long as the economic crisis and consequent unemployment endured. He then expressed a view which cast doubt on one of the basic concepts of Zionism. 'In his view', wrote Brodetzky, 'the Jewish National Home was only a voluntary organization of Jews living in Palestine. It had no special political significance. He did not recognize a separate Jewish political body in Palestine as distinct from Palestine as a whole.' This suggested an intention to isolate the Palestinian Jewish question from the general range of problems of the Jewish people.[8]

Six weeks later Passfield went on to say that he had changed his mind on the establishment of a legislative council.[9] Having formerly opposed self-rule in heterogeneous colonies, he now sought to revive the Herbert Samuel plan for an advisory representative council. Though he did not intend to grant the council wide-ranging powers, the fact that he contemplated proportional representation based on the relative size of each community appeared to reflect his view of Palestine as a single political entity. He dismissed the counter-argument that such a council would soon become the official platform for anti-Zionist incitement.[10]

In the same period the Zionist representatives held talks with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, Dr Drummond Shiels, which provide an additional angle on the shifting attitudes of the Colonial Office towards Palestine.

In April (during the visit of the Arab delegation) Shiels had declared his strong opposition to the establishment of self-rule institutions in Palestine as long as the Jews were a minority in the

population. He also explained Hope-Simpson's mission as an attempt to examine the possibilities for settlement of Arab *fellaheen* in Transjordan and Jews in Western Palestine. Three months later, however, in a conversation with Kaplansky, he justified the decision to suspend immigration not as a temporary expedient step but as a guiding political principle.[11] The establishment of the Jewish national home would be a protracted process, he said, and from time to time there might be temporary suspensions of immigration. In the same conversation he said that very heavy pressure was being exerted on the Government on the question of self-rule in Palestine. The Mandate over Palestine was of A-type, i.e. the mandatory power was obliged to guide the population towards self-government; hence, on principle, he justified the demand of Palestinian Arabs for self-rule. However, he agreed with Kaplansky that Palestine's constitutional status differed from that of other A-type mandatory countries because of the explicit commitment on the part of Britain to a Jewish national home. Hence he did not reject Kaplansky's proposal for federative national rule in Palestine. Kaplansky was left with the clear impression that the Government was leaning towards a policy of neutrality between Jews and Arabs.

Kaplansky's evaluation was borne out by a heated exchange between Golda Meirson and Drummond Shiels at the Commonwealth Labour Conference in London on July 21–22, 1930.[12] All the members of the Palestinian delegation attacked the Labour Government's policies, but Mrs Meirson's speech was particularly vehement, and Shiels responded by accusing the critics of ingratitude. Without the British Mandate, the Jewish population of Palestine could never have reached the two hundred thousand mark, he said. 'But', he went on, 'the Mandate was two-sided, and Britain had obligations towards the Arabs as well. They did not possess the same talent and ability and precisely for that reason they needed greater assistance.'[13] He complained of unfair Zionist pressure on the Government, echoing his previous claim that American Jewish capitalists were bringing pressure to bear. He concluded by stating that no success could be achieved without an agreement between Jews and Arabs, and attacked the labour Zionist policy of 'Hebrew labour' as an obstacle to rapprochement. The Government was resolved to permit further development of the national home but 'desires to be in a position to do it in the best interest of both peoples'.

These frank remarks by Passfield and Shiels suggest that the principles advocated in the October 1930 White Paper had already been formulated, and consequently that Hope-Simpson's report (submitted in August) served only to confirm these principles. Perhaps apprehensive of Zionist reactions to the White Paper, Passfield met Weizmann and Namier shortly before its publication, and promised that the Government would assist both Jews and Arabs in a widescale settlement project.[14] (Hope-Simpson had recommended settlement of 20,000 Jewish families on the land.) Passfield told Weizmann frankly that several of the recommendations, e.g. the proposal for the establishment of a council of local inhabitants, would disappoint the Zionists, but assured him that the Government would not discriminate against Jews or do anything which would encourage the revisionists to attack the incumbent Zionist leadership. According to Lewis Namier, who was present, Passfield showed 'a certain empressement … to soften things and put sugar-coating on the very bitter pill'.

As further 'sugar-coating', Passfield sent Weizmann a copy of the report with a handwritten note in which he assured him that Weizmann's comments would be taken into consideration by

the Government, and concluded: ‘I do not hide from myself that the position is grave in some respects, but I am not without hope that you may find on careful reading that I have, in my talks with you, concentrated rather on what seem the adverse elements. We can at least try to make the best of the situation.’

Passfield received Weizmann and Namier again a week before publication, and tried to persuade him that the controversial issues they had discussed were still open, such as enabling the Jewish National Fund to be able to purchase land in certain areas of Palestine. Passfield himself was opposed to the establishment of an advisory council, he said. He no longer objected to consecutive Jewish settlement in certain areas and had abandoned the plan to disperse this settlement among the Arab areas in order to create a mixed society. He rnade his intentions plain by asking Weizmann not to resign from the presidency of the Zionist movement and by requesting that the movement dissuade its extremist elements from launching a protest campaign. According to Namier, ‘the general impression the interview made on us was that Lord Passfield tried to do and say everything he could to prevent any kind of unpleasantness or difficulties and was playing for time’. Weizmann and Namier, however, emphasized that their fears had not been dispelled and that they were unable to serve as advocates for the new policy.[15]

The tactics which Passfield employed in order to placate the Zionist leaders and avoid confrontation reveal, paradoxically enough, his naïvety. Despite his involvement in the previous year in the Palestinian problem and his frequent talks with Zionist leaders, he still believed in the efficacy of such measures. His tactics also indicate his honest belief that his policy with regard to Zionism was the correct and just one, and would not endanger the future existence of the Jewish national home. In a letter to his wife, written at this time, he explained that the Government had no intention of restricting Jewish settlement, that there were no changes in the immigration regulations, particularly where non-rural immigration was concerned, and that the Government was committed to observing the Mandate in the teeth of Arab objections. ‘The Jews have, therefore, no ground of complaint against us. But we do negate the idea of a Jewish State, which the British Government has consistently done – and this (rather than a National Home in Palestine) is what so many of them want.’[16]

Passfield’s active role in formulating policy on Palestine ended with the 1930 White Paper. It appears clear from the evidence to hand that within a period of one year his attitude had changed from sympathy towards Zionism to resolute anti-Zionism. There were several reasons for this transformation.

Passfield’s friendly feelings towards the Zionist endeavour when he assumed office as Colonial Secretary did not result from sympathy towards its nationalist aspirations but rather from esteem for the constructive settlement efforts in Palestine. Furthermore, as a conservative Fabian, he had no moral objections to the existence of white settler groups in Asian and African countries, but was concerned with the maintenance of law and order there and the gradual guidance of these colonies towards self-rule.

Passfield’s immediate response to the 1929 riots was commensurate with these views. He sent military reinforcements to maintain law and order, and reaffirmed the policy of observance of international commitments and responsibility for the local population. Desirous of preserving full British authority, he rejected Zionist demands that certain Mandatory officials be replaced and that arms be allocated to Jewish settlers. At the same time, he opposed the establishment of a legislative council which would grant extensive powers to the Arab majority. He also

contemplated various constructive schemes for Jewish and Arab settlement. In other words, he advocated the slow and gradual growth of the Yishuv in Palestine as a cultural and national entity, though he could not accept the basic nationalist principles of Zionism, i.e. the evolvement of a Jewish majority in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state there.

The 1929 riots, the arguments broached by the Arab delegation and their substantiation by the Shaw Commission recommendations persuaded him that the Jews were conducting a deliberate policy aimed at dispossessing Arab *fellaheen*. Hope-Simpson's conclusion that there was insufficient arable land in Palestine strengthened Passfield's view that continued widescale Jewish immigration would lead to Arab dispossession. Hence his support for the decision to restrict immigration, his proposal that it be adapted to the general economic situation in Palestine (and not merely in the Jewish sector), and his reappraisal of the need for an advisory council. The objective of these steps was clear: to restrict, in so far as possible within the framework of Mandatory commitments, the growth of the Jewish national home.

In the ideological sphere, Passfield's public opposition to the idea of establishing a Jewish state and his vehement objections to the socialist aspirations of the settlement movement were influenced by two factors. The first was apparently his growing inclination to the Left, which led him in the early thirties to express strong admiration for the Soviet Communist regime. The second was his wife's outlook on Zionism.

In 1929 Beatrice Webb's attitude towards Zionism changed from a passive and even perhaps positive approach during the first world war to deep ideological antagonism and personal hostility. From her diaries we learn of her basic disapproval of Zionism at that time. It may be assumed that the Webbs, who worked and wrote in close partnership for so many years, were more or less in accord on the Zionist question as well, although Beatrice tended to be more extreme in her views. But, setting aside the question of the extent of her influence on her husband in this sphere (which cannot be resolved within the framework of this study), her opinion is of intrinsic interest. Though she played no official part in the political developments on the Palestine question, she was one of the outstanding personalities of the British labour movement and her ideological outlook, unlike that of her husband, was divorced from practical political considerations. In her case, furthermore, it is possible to trace the connection between her views on Jews in general and the Zionist movement in particular. As we noted in the previous section, she encountered Jews directly in the East End of London in the 1880s and her descriptions of them contain explicitly antisemitic pronouncements. It is our view that she never renounced certain of her prejudices and that they coloured her attitude towards Zionist leaders, and particularly Chaim Weizmann.[17] Her views, as reflected in her diary, are a combination of ideological arguments and personal resentment, nurtured to some extent by what she regarded as personal attacks on her husband.[18]

On 2 September 1929, when relations between Passfield and Weizmann were still relatively harmonious, she commented that in the wake of the Palestine events the Jews were harassing Sidney, whereas there was no one to plead the Arab cause. And she continued:

> Is there any principle relating to the rights of peoples to the territory in which they happen to live? I admire Jews and dislike Arabs. But the Zionist movement seems to me a gross violation of the right of the native to remain where he was born – if there is such a right. To talk about the return of the Jew to the land of his inheritance after an absence of 2,000 years

seems to me sheer nonsense and hypocritical nonsense.[19]

As the political furore on the Palestine question intensified and the attacks on her husband increased, Beatrice cited additional arguments against Zionism. After the publication of the Hope-Simpson Report, she wrote that the Jews had no claim to Palestine on racial grounds. 'The Jewish immigrants are Slavs or Mongols and not Semites.'[20] A proclaimed atheist, she was still emotionally bound to the religion of her childhood, and declared that by handing over Palestine to the Jews, Christianity would be renouncing that country and expediting 'the rapid decay of Christendom'.[21] Furthermore, she argued that the concept of the Return to Zion lacked religious significance,[22] since the Jewish immigrants believed not in the teachings of Moses but in Karl Marx.

The socialist ideology of the Jewish settlers provided her with a further argument against them. She warned the Western powers against establishing a political outpost of the Communist world in Palestine, though this did not prevent her from claiming that Jewish capitalism was using its wealth to dispossess Arab *fellaheen*. 'What seems to be probable', she wrote in conclusion, 'is that when the Jewish authorities realize the anti-God and communist character of the new settlers they will gradually give up the idea of a Palestine Jewish state and possibly even of a Jewish Cultural Home'.[23] As for the present situation, she felt that the riots in Palestine might serve a useful purpose and added, with a touch of malice: 'Probably future Governments will be only too glad to have had the ice broken, and the Jews to be more considerate and reasonable.'[24]

Until the publication of the October 1930 White Paper, political policy on Palestine was conducted mainly by the Colonial Office, and Zionist leaders were unsuccessful in their efforts to involve other factors. The reasons lay not only in the distribution of authority among the Ministries, but also in the unwillingness of various politicians to become involved in the issue. The Foreign Secretary remained firm in his resolve, as expressed to Kaplansky, not to intervene unless the matter was brought before the Cabinet. To a letter from Kaplansky on the suspension of immigration, he replied: 'I must say that you do not seem fully to appreciate the difficulties of the Government, and at the same time you tend to exaggerate the significance and consequence of what has been done.'[25]

MacDonald, unlike Henderson, was unable to avoid involvement in the crisis. Perusal of the recommendations of the Shaw Commission immediately convinced him that the body had overstepped its authority and was proposing amendment of the Mandate with strong anti-Zionist implications. The Report was 'far too pro-Arab for the P.M.'s taste',[26] according to Beatrice Webb, and he was uncertain as to what the next Government step should be. After consultation with Opposition leaders, he proposed that General Smuts, an old friend of the Zionist movement, be asked to visit Palestine on behalf of the Government, accompanied by the Colonial official and financial expert, Sir John Campbell. Smuts' task – re-evaluation of the Palestine situation in the light of the far-reaching recommendations of the Commission – could hence be interpreted as a pro-Zionist move. This may be why MacDonald changed his mind, although Passfield did not object to the appointment and decided to send Hope-Simpson instead.[27]

The Prime Minister's statement in the House on 3 April 1930, immediately after the decision

to despatch Hope-Simpson, also revealed his desire to appear neutral. He reaffirmed Britain's resolve to respect her international obligations towards both Jews and the non-Jewish population in Palestine.

> It is the resolve of His Majesty's Government to give effect, in equal measure, to both parts of the Declaration and to do equal justice to all sections of the population of Palestine. That is a duty from which they will not shrink and to the discharge of which they will apply all the resources at their command.[28]

This statement appears to strike an even note between the 'even-handed justice' which MacDonald demanded for Jews and Arabs in the wake of his 1922 visit to Palestine,[29] and the 'equal obligations' promised as one of the basic principles of the October 1930 White Paper.[30] MacDonald was not directly responsible for the phrasing of the latter document, but he concurred with its content and never reneged on its principles. It should, of course, be noted that statements can have different semantic significance at different times and under varying circumstances. In 1922 MacDonald was only one of the leaders of an opposition party, without a seat in the House, and his pronouncements did not arouse great attention on the part of the Zionists. His statement as Prime Minister, against the back-ground of events in Palestine and the hostile Shaw Commission report, was positively received by the Zionists, and talk of equal justice was not criticized as long as the Government refrained from action which could be interpreted as anti-Zionist. But the phrase 'equal obligations' sounded ominous to Zionist ears after the suspension of immigration and after the Hope-Simpson Report. It should be noted, however, that the same principle was affirmed in all three statements, attesting to the continuity of MacDonald's beliefs on this issue.

In May 1930 MacDonald received a Jewish delegation headed by Chaim Weizmann, and assured them that the Government was standing firm in the face of heavy pressure from the Arab delegation, which was demanding the cessation of immigration, a ban on Jewish purchase of land, and the establishment of a legislative council. However, he expressed his resentment at what he termed incitement by American Jews against the British Government.[31]

On the question of pressures by the American and British Jewish communities, MacDonald proved as sensitive as Passfield. Less than a month later, he responded angrily to an appeal by Weizmann on the question of immigration:

> I do not want to lose my patience with the Zionists but really they try it greatly. They have already gone very near to destroying any influence they have by their policy. They know perfectly well what we are trying to do in face of great difficulty, *much of which they have created*, and they know that the form in which this matter of immigration certificates was stated is not true. As I told Dr. Weizmann in the presence of others a week or two ago, I should expect fair play, and could not overlook the fact that whilst everything, even when false and prejudicial to us, is in possession of Zionist bodies all over the world in a day or two, official contradictions of the weightiest kind, if not suppressed, are not used. Friend after friend is being alienated, and I have had reports from Geneva which are anything but encouraging regarding their conduct there.[32] [*Emphasis in original*]

Harold Laski reported to Felix Frankfurter that MacDonald was angry with the Zionist leaders

for exerting pressure on him through American Jewry.[33] There were several reasons for MacDonald's resentment of this pressure. He feared that it would have a negative effect on U.S.–British relations (particularly at a time when Britain was hoping for a loan). Secondly, the criticism of British policy in Palestine, voiced at the Mandate Committee of the League of Nations, could damage Britain's international image. This image was very important to MacDonald, since international affairs were very close to his heart and his Government's most considerable achievements were in this sphere. In addition, the criticism levelled at him in his own country exposed him to pressure from the Opposition, particularly the Liberal Party, on which the Government depended. What is more, the Zionist mistrust of his Government's pronouncements seemed to him to reflect on him personally. Since the outbreak of the crisis, he had declared several times that his Government would not deviate from the principles of the Mandate and would observe all its obligations,[34] and he felt that the Zionists were not being fair towards him. And lastly, in 1922, on his return from Palestine, MacDonald had attacked what he saw as the vast political power of Jewish capitalists, contrasting them unfavourably with popular Zionism and the pioneering Zionists in particular. (In his private life he did not avoid capitalists, and was friendly with several rich Jews, and in particular Felix Warburg, the American Jewish millionaire.) The international pressure brought to bear on his Government by Zionist leaders, aided by Jewish capital and influence, undoubtedly reawakened his prejudice.

MacDonald's resentment coloured his attitude towards his comrades in the Palestinian labour movement and he avoided them, refusing to receive Dov Hoz at the latter's request. In July he encountered several of the Palestinian socialists who were among a delegation from the Commonwealth Labour Conference invited to Chequers. He managed to exchange only a few words with Dov Hoz, because of the pressure of guests, and said that he had heard that the Jewish Agency had introduced a clause into its contract with settlers, prohibiting them from employing Arab workers, and that this might be publicized throughout India.[35] He said he had asked for the contract. It had been received by Passfield, who apparently wanted to discredit the Jewish Agency in the eyes of his fellow-Cabinet members.

In parting, MacDonald said to Hoz and Kaplansky, half laughingly: 'You are causing us problems. Unfortunately I can't see you in London. Whenever someone sees me, it is immediately reported to the press and other people come and complain that I should have received them instead.' And he added wistfully: 'I shall never forget the good times I had when I was your guest in Palestine'.[36]

One of the Labour Party personalities who was closely involved in the Palestinian issue was Harry Snell, M.P. Snell, a member of the Shaw Commission, dissented from the majority on several basic questions, and although he signed the majority report, he submitted his own reservations in writing.[37]

Snell disagreed with the Commission's conclusion that each side bore equal responsibility for the events, and accused the Arab leadership of inciting the mob to violence. He also claimed that they were deliberately inflating Arab fears of dispossession by the Jews, though the truth was that the development of Palestine's economy by Jewish initiative and capital had proved a blessing to the Arabs. He also disagreed with the conclusion that there was a lack of land in Palestine, and countered that with land improvement and intensive cultivation enough land would be available without need to dispossess Arab *fellaheen*.

So far Snell's views corresponded to those of the Zionist leaders, but he went on to express opinions which were scarcely acceptable to the latter. He was opposed to uncontrolled immigration and thought that it should be adapted to the economic absorptive capacity of the country. This principle, he believed, 'is accepted by all responsible Jews'.[38] The Arabs, he felt, had no right to argue against the immigration of people capable of contributing to the country's economy. The Zionists could not accept this view, since Snell spoke of the Palestinian economy rather than the Jewish sector and absorptive capacity they felt existed only in the latter. Furthermore, qualitative selection of immigrants would have been in violation of the principle of mass immigration as a rescue operation. In addition, Snell believed that 'the desire of the Arab leaders for self-government is keen and entirely honourable', though he disapproved of their methods. He concurred with the majority in sympathizing with the fears of the Arab masses, who 'undoubtedly resented the policy of the Jewish National Home and … were anxious and troubled about the future ownership and occupation of their land'.

But the greatest bone of contention was Snell's last point, namely that the strongest threat to Palestine was that Arab opposition to Zionism might become a constant factor. In the long term 'the main principles of settlement of the racial dispute … are that the whole population should be made to realize that the Mandatory Power has been charged by the League of Nations with obligations which it intends to fulfil, and that a Jewish-Arab nation is a fact which must be accepted'. Each of the nations in Palestine must accept the existence of the other and work for 'a bi racial Palestinian Nation'.

Another Labour figure who faced a similar dilemma, i.e. basic sympathy with Zionism but disagreement with several of its basic fundamental principles, was H.N. Brailsford, who was considered a sincere friend of Zionism and of the Jewish people. His first response to the riots in Palestine was the proposal that Jewish immigration be restricted in order to allay Arab fears of Jewish domination. During 1930 Brailsford met Palestinian labour leaders, and held several long conversations with Berl Katznelson on the Palestine problem. In the summer he published an article whole-heartedly supporting Snell's conclusions and the view of Ahdut Haavoda that cultural and civil autonomy should be granted to both nations in Palestine. He also accepted the Zionist movement's stand that to grant self-rule in Palestine 'while the Arabs persist in their objections to the Jewish National Home would mean in practice total abandonment of that ideal'.[39]

In December 1930 Brailsford visited Palestine, and as a result of his meetings with both Jews and Arabs, he again modified his views. At a workers' meeting in his honour in Tel-Aviv, he said that Passfield had failed as Colonial Secretary because his generation lacked experience in applying socialist principles in the political field. But the root of the problem lay neither in Passfield's actions nor in the antisemitic predilections of some of the Mandatory officials. The true problem was how to adhere to the policies of the Mandate in the light of Arab opposition. Brailsford dismissed the idea that the national home could be imposed on Palestine by the rifle-barrels of the British Army. The immediate need, he felt, was to find the shortest and swiftest way 'to grant self-rule in Palestine'. The hardest task facing the Jews was to find a modus vivendi with the Arabs, and the Zionist movement must now dedicate itself to 'the development of a common Palestinian nationality'.[40]

In an earlier article, Brailsford had called on the Labour Government to assist both Jews and

Arabs, in order to create a 'Palestinian civilization',[41] but he allotted the main responsibility for this to the Jewish socialist movement in Palestine. Although he sympathized with the concept of 'Hebrew labour', he called for greater cooperation between the two peoples, and reiterated the demand for an advisory legislative council. The future of Zionism, he thought, depended on the social advancement of the Arab *fellaheen* and workers.[42]

These remarks aroused the concern of Brailsford's Jewish friends in Palestine.[43] The editor of Mapai's weekly, *Hapoel Hatzair*, responded to Brailsford's speech in an article with the self-explanatory title, *A Stranger Cannot Understand*.[44] He made it plain that, despite Brailsford's sincere friendship towards Zionist socialism, there were essential differences between them, resulting from the inability of European democratic socialism in general and British Labour in particular to truly comprehend the unique problem of Jewish national existence. Socialism, he wrote, understood the Jewish economic predicament, roundly condemned antisemitism and was ready to support the demand for a small-scale national cultural centre in Palestine, but could not grasp the aspiration of the Jewish people for a homeland in Palestine. Essentially, this was because socialism still believed in the universal nature of the Jewish people. This was why Brailsford advocated a binational state in Palestine and was willing to impose the burden of socialist liberation of the Arab nation on the Jewish labour movement. He did not appreciate the full tragic scope of the problem faced by the Jews, who clutched at Palestine in order to maintain their national existence by returning to their land and to labour. The Jewish people, the article concluded, 'must first of all be a light to ourselves before we become a light to others'.

Perhaps the only Labour figure who publicly proclaimed straightforward, unqualified sympathy for Zionism was Norman Angell,[45] the editor of *Foreign Affairs*. He regarded the Jewish national question as a universal moral issue. Since the 'Jewish problem' had been created by the nations among whom the Jews resided, the world owed them moral reparation for their protracted suffering and should help them build up their national home in their historic homeland – Palestine. Therefore, he claimed, paradoxically enough the demand of the Arabs for majority rights was in conflict with the principles of universal morality, and there was nothing morally objectionable in the desire of the Jews to become the majority in Palestine. He merely expressed the hope that some day the country would have an independent government which was neither Jewish nor Arab but international in nature, though he did not elaborate.

To sum up, in the period between the publication of the Shaw Commission Report and the October 1930 White Paper, the Government and the Labour movement became less sympathetic towards Zionist aspirations on several issues: the nature of the national home, immigration, land purchase and the establishment of a legislative council.

Various opinions were voiced on the need to separate the problem of Jewish exile from the question of Jewish settlement in Palestine. For the first time the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine was publicly and officially rejected. Furthermore, the view was crystallizing that the Jews of Palestine were destined to remain an eternal minority and that the building of a national home would be a protracted process, dependent on the attainment of an agreement between Jews and Arabs. At this stage it was mainly the Jews who would be required to make concessions. If the Arabs agreed to the conditions of the Mandate, this would be concession enough on their part since they constituted the majority in Palestine. The precedent was also accepted in this period that the scope of immigration should be a function of the political and

economic situation. Consequently, immigration was suspended in May until Hope-Simpson completed his survey, and Shiels explicitly stated that temporary suspensions would occur in the course of the development of the Jewish national home.

As regards land purchase by Jews, the Labour Party accepted the view that there was real danger of dispossession of Arab *fellaheen*. Even Snell, a supporter of Zionism, held the Arab apprehensions to be sincere and well-founded. The plan for settling *fellaheen* in Transjordan with the aid of Jewish and Government capital, so as to vacate land for Jewish settlement, was shelved for fear of Arab objections. Furthermore, in Labour circles it was increasingly accepted that there was a connection between immigration and the dispossession of Arabs.[46]

And finally, on the question of the legislative council there was considerable erosion of the initial view that self-rule should not be bestowed as long as the Arabs remained intransigently opposed to the principles of the Mandate.

On the personal and emotional plane, the Labour politicians dealing with Palestinian affairs felt themselves slighted by the Zionist attacks on them, while the Palestinian labour leaders, in their turn, felt that they had been betrayed by their British colleagues. At the same time, no rift occurred between them. The Zionist leaders adopted an outward policy of vociferous protest, but internally advocated moderation. They emphasized the strong ideological links between the two movements and their conviction that labour, as distinct from the Labour Government, would never betray Zionism. They even displayed a certain degree of sympathy for the problems of the socialist Government, which was friendly towards Zionism and committed to it on the one hand, but unable to remain indifferent to Arab opposition, on the other. And they stressed that in no other political group in Britain did the Zionist cause have so many friends and supporters. Hence, despite the crisis, they remained optimistic as to the eventual outcome.[47]

NOTES

1. The arguments of the Arab delegation met with a considerable response within the parliamentary faction of the Labour Party, and the delegation's leader, Jamal Husseini, was invited to lecture to the faction. Charles Baxton, an old friend of Zionism, reported to Kaplansky with typical British understatement that Husseini's arguments had proved not without influence on many of his audience. Politisher Commitet fon Poalei Zion. 20 May 1930, P/8 P.Z. World Alliance, M.A.
2. Conversation between Passfield and Weizmann, 6 March 1930, W.A.
3. Hoz to Katznelson, 1 July 1930.
4. Conversation between Passfield and Ben-Gurion, 27 June 1930, 525/3638, CZA (Hebrew).
5. 7 November 1930, W.A.
6. Christopher Sykes, *From Balfour to Bevin* (Hebrew), Maarakhot 1966, pp. 111–2.
7. Meeting between Passfield and Weizmann, 7 July 1930, W.A.
8. See also meeting between Passfield and Brodetzky, 18 July 1930, W.A.
9. Meeting of Namier, Brodetzky and Passfield, 5 September 1930, W.A.
10. See also Weizmann's letter to Passfield after aforementioned meeting with Namier and Brodetzky. Weizmann to Passfield, 19 September 1930, W.A.
11. Conversation between Drummond Shiels and Kaplansky, 9 July 1930. Kaplan-sky Archives

104/IV, File 7, L.A.

12. At the Commonwealth Labour Conference, Ben-Gurion, Hoz, Golda Meirson and Kaplansky represented the Palestine labour movement. The proceedings were recorded by Kaplansky and Hoz. Kaplansky Archives 104/1V, File 7, L.A.
13. This was a reversal of the doctrine laid down by Churchill in 1921.
14. Meeting between Weizmann, Namier and Passfield, 1 October 1930, W.A.
15. Meeting between Weizmann, Namier and Passfield, 15 October 1930, W.A.
16. *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, ed. Norman MacKenzie, Vol. Ill, p. 334.
17. For a more detailed discussion of this point, see the present author's article: 'Beatrice Webb's Views on Judaism and Zionism', *Jewish Social Studies*, Spring 1978.
18. An example of this malice is her somewhat macabre remark to Weizmann: 'I can't understand why the Jews make such a fuss over a few dozen of their people killed in Palestine. As many are killed every week in London in traffic accidents and no one pays any attention.' Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 411.
19. Diaries, pp. 217–8. Col. Richard Meinertzhagen had a similar opinion. He wrote in his diary on 4 October 1929, after his meeting with Webb, 'He seemed rather tired of Zionism.' *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956*, p. 144.
20. *Ibid*., 26 October 1930, p. 257. She probably derived this theory from Renan, whom she mentions in one of her early essays dealing with Jews.
21. *Ibid., p. 256.*
22. In her diary she wrote: 'What interests me about all this ferment over Palestine is the absence from first to last of any consideration of Palestine as the cradle of the Christian creed – as the Holy Land of Christendom.' *Diaries*, p. 256.
23. *Ibid*., p. 257.
24. In an interview Passfield granted to two journalists from the New *York Forward*, and in a conversation with a young research student in 1932, Passfield reiterated the main points made by Beatrice Webb. He said that since the Jews of Europe were descendants of Mongols and Slavs, they had no right to demand Palestine on racial grounds, and since most of them held secular beliefs, they had forfeited their religious rights to the country. (27 July 1932) 101/30 M.A.
25. Henderson to Kaplansky, 26 May 1930. Kaplansky Archives 104/IV, File 45, L.A.
26. *Diary*, 30 March 1930, p. 240.
27. *Ibid*.
28. Levenberg, p. 206.
29. See his article 'New Wine in Old Bottles', *Forward*, 18 March 1922.
30. Palestine Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. October 1930, p. 11. 'Equal weight shall at all times be given to the obligations laid down with regard to the two sections of the population.'
31. Reported at a meeting of the Mapai Secretariat, 24 May 1930 on the basis of a letter from Weizmann, 23/80, M.A.
32. MacDonald to Marcus, 10 June 1930, W.A.
33. See letters from Harold Laski to Felix Frankfurter, 10th February 1930; 13 January 1930; 6 July 1930; 20 July 1930; 26 October 1930. *F. Frankfurter's Private Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington.
34. See MacDonald's statement to the press upon arrival in the United States, *Davar*, 7 October

1929; conversation with a deputation of U.S. Jewish leaders, headed by Felix Warburg, *Davar*, 15 October 1929, 16 October 1929; and his statements in the House, 24 February 1930 and 3 April 1930.

35. Kaplansky, Report from the Commonwealth Labour Conference, 21–25 June 1930, 104/IV, L.A. A round-table conference with representative of Indian Moslems was taking place at the very same time in London.
36. *Ibid*.
37. In his memoirs, *Men, Movements and Myself*, Snell explained that he had affixed his signature to the Report because he concurred with the majority view on several points. The commission had accepted several of his reservations and hence he would have found it embarrassing not to sign, but he appended a letter to the Foreign Secretary asking him to regard these reservations as a kind of informal minority report. P. 240. See also Snell's letter to Hoz, 8 April 1930; 104/IV, File 645, Kaplansky, L.A.
38. Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929. Cmd. 3530, 1930, p. 172.
39. H.N. Brailsford, 'Bloodshed; a means of influencing the Emperor', *Davar*, 7 July 1930. See also *Davar*, 25 August 1930.
40. *Davar*, 14 December 1930.
41. *Davar*, 12 September 1930.
42. H.N. Brailsford, 'Blood on the Wailing Wall', *New Leader*, 30 August 1929; 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader*, 4 April 1930; 'The Problems of Palestine', *New Leader*, 22 August 1930; 'Today in the Holy Land', *New Leader*, 26 December 1930; 'Can the Jews and Arabs Live Together', *New Leader*, 2 January 1931.
43. Haim Shorer to Yosef Sprinzak 18 December 1930. 101/30, M.A.
44. *Hapoel Hatzair*, 30 December 1930.
45. Norman Angell, 'Anti-Imperialism and Zionism' (Hebrew), *Davar*, 1 May 1930.
46. See Report of a conversation with Giles, the Party Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 17 June 1930.
47. See Yosef Sprinzak to Party Secretariat, London, 1930, 101/30, M.A.

CHAPTER SIX

The Height of the Crisis October 1930 – February 1931

The White Paper

The publication on 21 October 1930 of the document known as the Passfield White Paper led to the first open political confrontation between the Zionist movement and the British Government, and the first crisis of confidence between the labour movements of the two countries. We have chosen to analyse this White Paper, not from the point of view of its practical historical value or the pressures underlying its formulation, but as the expression of Labour's basic stand vis-à-vis Zionism. Of the three White Papers on Palestine, Passfield's was the least significant politically. Churchill's 1922 White Paper was a landmark in the annals of the British Palestinian policy, determining the pace of the Jewish national home until the mid-thirties. The 1939 White Paper was also of great importance, reflecting a change in British policy and a withdrawal from the commitment to foster the national home and ensure that the Jews constituted a majority in Palestine. The Passfield White Paper, on the other hand, had no practical impact and was never implemented. Ramsay MacDonald's letter to Weizmann abrogated it for all practical purposes. British policy in Palestine in the thirties did not follow the guidelines laid down in this document and the rapid development of the Yishuv contravened the intentions of its authors. The document is of interest, however, in the context of the continuity of Labour's attitude towards Zionism. And we will attempt to assess to what extent it was in line with the outlook of the Labour Party and whether it constituted a continuation of the principles formulated in the early twenties.

The motive for publication of the White Paper, and its central theme, was the Arab problem; it was the violent Arab opposition to the Zionist movement which impelled the British Government to attempt to restrict the demographic expansion and economic growth of the Yishuv. It hoped to do this without betraying its commitments as laid down by the Mandate towards a Jewish national home in Palestine and without denying the moral obligation of British Labour towards Zionism. The shock experienced by many Labourites in the face of Arab antagonism, and their subsequent doubts as to the justice of Jewish demands, were not new. The view had already been expressed in 1920/1 that the success of the Zionist enterprise depended on coexistence with the Arabs. And it was then that the basic principles of Palestinian policy were formulated, namely: support for the gradual growth of the national home through selective immigration, the creation of a kind of binational society, and criticism of the separatist policy of the Zionist organization.

Hence the Passfield White Paper, with the exception of several unfeasible political proposals and certain slighting phrases, seemed to reflect a continuous trend in Labour policy. This is, of course, a conclusion aided by hindsight and based on study of the evolvement of Labour's attitude to Zionism in the twenties.

The Reaction of Labour Zionism

Zionist socialist leaders were profoundly shaken and angered by the White Paper. In public and among themselves, at meetings and in personal correspondence, they denoted British policy a cynical betrayal. Ben-Gurion called the White Paper 'a document permeated with antisemitism from beginning to end'.[1] Berl Katznelson wrote to Harry Snell that the argument broached in the White Paper that the Jews might dispossess the Arabs was a new version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[2]

In contrast to professional politicians, who usually play down their defeats, the Zionist leaders fully and frankly admitted the failure of their moderate policy and confessed that their illusions as to the intentions of the Labour Party had been shattered. 'I must admit', said Ben-Gurion, 'that although I feared a very heavy blow, I did not anticipate *this*, even in the most difficult and depressing moments we have throughout this terrible period of trial'.[3]

Ben-Gurion's remarks appear to hold the key to the general sense of outrage. There was a basic difference between the vaguely phrased statement by MacDonald on the 'equal obligations' of Britain towards the two peoples in Palestine (House of Commons, 3 April 1930) and the attempt to apply this principle in practice. The meaning of the phrase was brought home dramatically to the Zionists by the avowed British intention to differentiate between obligations towards the Jewish people and towards the Yishuv in Palestine; to make Jewish immigration dependent on the employment situation among Arabs as well as Jews; and to ban transfer of land from Arabs to Jews.[4] There was also a considerable difference in impact between privately voiced doubts of Labour leaders as to the social justice of the principle of 'Hebrew labour' and the public and official condemnation of this principle. Furthermore, the White Paper deplored Jewish communal settlement, while bestowing its approval on the private settlement undertaken before the First World War, and thereby severed the strongest link between the two socialist movements. If the communal settlement project, which had captured the imagination and admiration of Labour leaders and intellectuals, was now to be condemned, and in an official document to boot, there could be no escape from a rift between the two movements.

There were differences of opinion among Zionist socialist leaders as to the desirable reaction and future policy. On the question of future relations with Britain, Ben-Gurion adopted the most extreme stand, and went so far as to speak at a debate of a possible revolt against Britain or joint struggle with the Arabs against that country. His young colleague, Chaim Arlozorov, a rising star in the labour Zionist firmament, was much more restrained, and dismissed the notion as spurious because of the Yishuv's total dependence on Britain. He was less pessimistic than Ben-Gurion and believed that the Labour Party would persuade its Government to change its policy.[5]

Other speakers supported the view that the British labour movement should be regarded as separate from the Government. The moderate Yosef Sprinzak[6] urged labour Zionism to avoid, at all costs, a rift with the British working class.

In the ideological sphere, several labour Zionist leaders came to the conclusion that the link between socialism and nationalism was an artificial one, since every socialist party concerned itself, first and foremost, with its own national interests. But this view was vehemently rejected by most of the participants[7] for reasons of principle, and because of their recollections of British Labour support for Zionism at the Socialist International.

The general consensus was that a balanced approach should be maintained and that everything

possible should be done to further Zionist interests without severing ties with British Labour. The optimists believed that good relations could be maintained with the British working class; shortly afterwards, the Whitechapel byelection seemed to confirm this belief.

The Whitechapel Byelection

In late 1930, a miniature political drama took place in Whitechapel, the East London district where many Jewish immigrants were clustered, which was to have important consequences for relations between Labour and Zionism. Since more than one-third of the voters in the constituency were Jewish, and Poalei Zion had a strong hold over them, the element of power politics entered into relations between the two movements for the first time. The situation must have gratified Dov Hoz, who believed strongly that the ties between the movements should be based on mutual political advantage rather than on ideological affinity and personal links.

The byelection (resulting from the death of the Labour Member, Harry Gosling) was an important one for Labour, as a minority Government. The campaign was marked by a power struggle between Ernest Bevin (whose name was to become anathema to Zionists) and Ramsay MacDonald over possible candidates. Interestingly enough, Bevin established friendly relations with Dov Hoz during the campaign, and the latter gave him several 'lessons in Zionism'. Bevin was to speak of his liking for Hoz many years later.[8]

The question was whether British Poalei Zion should support the Labour candidate or the Liberal candidate, Barnett Janner, who was a Jew. Public opinion in Palestine and within the Party considered that support for Labour would be an act of submission and 'Diaspora morality'.[9] On the other hand Kaplansky, Hoz, Sprinzak and Arlozorov, who were then in London, decided after lengthy negotiations with Bevin to support Hall, the Labour candidate. Their heated discussions are described vividly in their letters, and particularly those of Hoz. His first meeting with Bevin took place some two weeks before the debate in Parliament. The direct pretext was the rumour that Labour intended to adopt Stafford Cripps as its candidate. The fact that Cripps was a junior member of the Government (Solicitor-General) rendered him undesirable to Poalei Zion as a representative of the authors of the White Paper. (There were other more personal reasons why he was persona non grata: he was Beatrice Webb's nephew and it was rumoured in Zionist circles that he held antisemitic views.) Hoz informed Bevin that Poalei Zion would not support Cripps and would support any other candidate only if certain conditions were fulfilled.

At their second meeting, the two men discussed the White Paper at length. An interesting fact which emerges from Hoz's report of the meeting is that Bevin had interpreted the clause condemning the Histadrut as praise. As a trade union leader, he had taken description of the strong trade union defending the national interests of Jewish workers against the competition of cheap Arab labour to be complimentary, and he was persuaded of its negative connotations only after a resounding and lengthy argument.[10] Having been convinced on other points as well, relating to the scope of immigration, settlement in Transjordan, land purchase etc., he promised to intercede with the Prime Minister. He explained to Hoz that he would mobilize all the M.P.s from his trade union, twenty-six in all, and threaten the Government with rebellion. He added, however, that it was impossible to persuade the Government to revoke the White Paper. It was too weak to face the test of political defeat and Bevin was unwilling to try it too far. He therefore

proposed that he press for an agreement with Passfield and Henderson, whereby the Government would announce that because of certain misunderstandings as to the phrasing of the document, it was freezing practical implementation until the controversial issues were clarified. Bevin did, in fact, make this suggestion to Henderson and Passfield, who rejected his proposal but agreed to a compromise whereby a Cabinet Committee would be established to clarify these issues (see following chapter). Furthermore, in answer to a specific question from Bevin, they affirmed that the Government did not object to Hebrew labour in the Jewish economy and did not intend to stop immigration to Palestine. As proof of the sincerity of his intentions Passfield cited the fact that immigration of workers – 'The Labour Schedule' – which had been temporarily suspended some six months before, had now been renewed.

Bevin's effective behind-the-scenes intervention, and a public letter from the Labour candidate, promising to fight the White Paper, induced Poalei Zion to support Hall at the polls.[11] This decision aroused a storm among Whitechapel Jews, and there was a danger of violent clashes between Poalei Zion supporters and their opponents, particularly the Revisionists. An election meeting, organized by Poalei Zion and attended by Bevin and Snell, was held under police protection and was nearly dispersed because of noisy rioters. Only Bevin, by force of his personality, succeeded in controlling the audience.

Those responsible for the decision found themselves obliged to placate their critical comrades in Palestine. Dov Hoz accused the Revisionists of conducting noisy propaganda against him, and Barnett Janner of trying to build up his political career on the White Paper predicament. He warned his comrades against accepting the view, prevalent in various Jewish circles, that the entire British labour movement was anti-Zionist and antisemitic. 'It was our duty to do all we could to distinguish between the movement and the Minister of Cabinet in order to be able to exploit the pressure of the movement on the Cabinet to get what he wanted.'Any other path would have been interpreted as an attempt 'to lash out in revenge at the Government and thereby at the entire labour movement. This would be a pointless and stupid tactic.' He advised his colleagues to reconsider calmly the decision he had taken, unpopular as it was. The candidate had declared his support for criticism of the White Paper; Bevin and his trade union had publicly guaranteed to support the Zionist cause in the House of Commons; Bevin had wielded pressure against the Government; and lastly, the campaign for the Labour candidate had become a campaign of protest against the White Paper. As to the outcome, Hoz reported Snell as saying:

> From our point of view it is good that he (Hall) has won, and good that he did so with a majority of only 1,000. The warning has been delivered. He won to a large degree thanks to the confidence of Poalei Zion that the British Labour movement would not betray them. If he had lost, this might have created eternal enmity between British Labour and the Jews. Negotiations between two labour movements cannot be conducted in a vengeful spirit and by the exploitation of opportunities which arise.[12]

Yosef Sprinzak also defended the decision against the criticism voiced in Palestine. 'My loyalty to the Labour Party', he wrote,

> was not class loyalty but loyalty to commonsense and to Zionist obligations. It derives from the desire not to sever the ties which link the British worker to the obligation towards the Jewish people. If the Labour candidate had lost, this would have robbed them of one of their majority. This would have been exploited against us – and would not have resulted in

> pressure on the workers government but rather meant a declaration of severance of relations, in contradictions of what we now need.[13]

Arlozorov agreed with his colleagues in London, and after a meeting with Labour M.P.s, he wrote to Palestine: 'It would be madness to cast away all those dear friends in the Labour Party, and to follow the Conservatives or Liberals.'[14] Speaking shortly afterwards at a meeting in Tel-Aviv, he said that the Palestine labour movement should not allow Zionism to become identified with conservative political forces. He described vividly the poverty he had seen in Whitechapel and said that no Jewish socialist party could have voted against the Labour candidate under those circumstances. In addition, it was essential to guarantee Labour support for Zionism at the Socialist International.[15]

Politically speaking, the choice the Poalei Zion representatives made, however unpopular at home, was correct, and their differentiation between their attitude towards the Government and towards the movement bore fruit. Bevin's intervention, though perhaps less vitally important than Hoz believed, certainly helped to empty the White Paper of its negative connotations. Bevin kept his promise on the repealing of the anti-Zionist clauses and remained active after the successful outcome of the election. His intercession was also requested when the Cabinet Committee held its deliberations.

According to Hoz, the Jewish Agency representatives on the Cabinet Committee feared that no amendment would be made in the White Paper clause on Hebrew labour and the status of the Histadrut. Since they could not enter into debate on this question, Hoz (on Ben-Gurion's advice) approached Bevin. He told him that he was turning to him and not to the Zionist Executive 'since I believe that if this grave flaw is not corrected, the document will be a blot on the British Labour movement and the workers Government'.[16] Bevin acceded to the request and talked to Henderson, and the offending clause was amended. (Weizmann knew nothing of the negotiations with Bevin, and later expressed his astonishment at the fact that the British had changed the clause, apparently unprompted.)

Bevin's views on the Whitechapel affair and subsequent events are unknown, since he apparently attributed little importance to them. The only evidence on his attitude to Zionism at the time is contained in an interview he gave in 1932 to a young woman called Elsie Gluck, who worked in the Poalei Zion office in London and was engaged in research on trade unions in England and the United States. When asked if he had any specific views on Zionism as a national movement, or was interested merely in the Zionist labour movement, Bevin confessed that until the Whitechapel elections he had known nothing about Zionism. Thanks to Dov Hoz, whom he greatly liked and admired, he now knew something about it, but could not distinguish it from Zionist socialism. He knew that 'the labour people were nationalist first'. As to his opinion of Zionism as such:

> English Labour knows little of it – absorbed in its own affairs – we do not interfere in religious matters – we of course know that the Mandate was given, and we take that for granted, although we are pretty aware that England was playing a dishonest game in giving those two promises, and that she is continuing to play such a game right along. It is the same game she played when she planted Scotchmen in Ireland and created a situation that can never be solved. He does not see any way out of the mess in Palestine.

It transpired that his views had been affected by his Party's heavy defeat at the 1931 elections after the split, and that he resented the fact that the Jews of Whitechapel had this time refrained from voting for the Labour candidate, who had consequently been defeated.

As to the Histadrut demand to two wage levels in the Government economy in Palestine, for Jewish and Arab workers, he answered emphatically: 'No. We would be absolutely against two wages.'[17]

This interview suggests that Hoz was wrong in claiming that he had succeeded in explaining to Bevin the nature of the synthesis between Zionism and socialism. Bevin (who said of MacDonald during the interview: 'We are pretty well through with the intelligentsia and will never rely on them again') probably regarded Hoz's explanations as an intellectual exercise of no practical value. He regarded the Arab-Jewish conflict as insoluble, and, with his natural political instinct, grasped certain aspects of the situation. He was right, for example, in his evaluation of the importance of the nationalist factor in the Palestine labour movement, and the nature of the confrontation in that country. But his simplistic way of thinking and inability or unwillingness to delve into the depths of more complex situations led him to take a superficial stand, to the point of distorting the truth and the historical realities.

Without going into the question of whether Bevin displayed antisemitic tendencies, it seems feasible to assume that this interview reflected his intolerance of opposition. This time it was the Jews of Whitechapel who aroused his anger, and fifteen years later it was to be the Jews of Palestine who enraged him to the point where his clear political vision was clouded.

From the Passfield White Paper to the MacDonald Letter

The public uproar which followed on the publication of the White Paper was embarrassing to the Labour Government and in particular to the Premier and the Colonial Secretary. Passfield reacted by attempting to absolve himself of responsibility for the document. According to his wife, he said that 'the statement of policy is badly drafted, a tactless document – he ought to have done it himself'.[18] And he told the press: 'It is not my document, it is Cabinet's document. I am only technically responsible.'[19] At the same time, he remained convinced that the basic policy reflected in the White Paper was correct and did not constitute a deviation from the Mandate. Weizmann, he thought, reacted so strongly to the White Paper (resigning from the Presidency of the Zionist Organization in protest) because he was

> in the difficult position of a company promoter confronted with an adverse report (i.e. the Hope-Simpson Report), damaging to his prospective enterprise. So he turns the attention away from the Report on to the Statement of Policy, to an assumed breach of the Balfour promise and the terms of the Mandate in order to excite indignation of the Jews and to make them forget the adverse Report.[20]

(The Hope-Simpson Report, it will be recalled, started from the premise that Palestine could not offer a solution to the Jewish problem and that the situation of Palestinian Jews should be distinguished from that of Eastern European Jewry.)

As for MacDonald, his situation was more complicated than that of his Colonial Secretary because of his past public commitment to Zionism in general and the Palestine labour movement

in particular. His first reaction to the storm of protest was to play down the gravity of the White Paper's implications and to depict it as a document which, in the long term, would prove advantageous to Zionism. In reply to a letter from Chaim Weizmann, informing him of the latter's resignation from the Presidency of the Zionist Organization, he wrote that he understood the difficulties which Weizmann faced. 'I think, however', he went on,

> a closer study of what is laid down in the statement of policy will show you that whatever you may object to in it, is a very reasonable price to pay if we can secure closer co-operation in Palestine. To go on the verge of trouble and Arab agitation is not only thankless but hopeless. The end will be far worse than the very worst that could happen under a more cautious policy of development.[21]

This statement was reminiscent of his remarks to the Histadrut Executive in 1922 that it was essential to establish close cooperation with the Arabs even at the price of slower development of the Jewish national home.

In an exchange of telegrams with General Smuts, an old friend of Zionism, MacDonald repeated his arguments and expanded them. The Hope-Simpson Report, it transpired, had convinced the Government that continued uncontrolled Jewish settlement would prove detrimental to the status of non-Jewish communities, and the White Paper was intended to prove beneficial to both peoples.[22]

Although this was MacDonald's official stand, he adopted a less conciliatory attitude in private, when he met Harold Laski. This was the first time that Laski, one of the outstanding Jews among leftwing intellectuals, had agreed to involve himself in Zionist affairs. His early years had been marked by a desire to detach himself from his Jewish origins (and his marriage to a non-Jewess had cut him off from his family for a time). However, despite his remoteness from Jewish and Zionist matters, he was on close terms with several prominent American Zionists, such as Frankfurter and Brandeis. In the early twenties Shertok, who attended his lectures at L.S.E., described him as 'young, lean and dark as a Yeshiva student … The archetype of the brilliant Jew, negating and criticising, merciless and accepting nothing as sacred. No socialist, no nationalist Jew, just a Jew whose Jewish bitterness has been poured out.'[23] Ten years later, however, Katznelson, writing from London, described the encouraging Jewish renaissance. 'Even a man like Laski, who boasted of his anti-Zionism, is now eager to speak for us.'[24]

The motives for Laski's change of attitude have been discussed at length by the present author elsewhere. Let it suffice here to note that he had always displayed hypersensitivity to antisemitic manifestations, and that despite his criticism of the separatist elements in Judaism, he had never denied its right to national existence. He may have regarded Zionism as an attempt to break down the separatist barriers by normalizing Jewish existence. His intervention in the White Paper affair came at the request of his colleagues in the United States and the strong pressure of Louis Brandeis in particular. Finally, Laski by nature enjoyed involvement in political affairs, liked to be in close contact with influential circles, and was fond of relating anecdotes of his acquaintance with prominent political figures.[25]

MacDonald received Laski coolly and was 'very official and hard'. He turned down all his requests, and stated emphatically that the White Paper had been formulated by the Cabinet Committee and adopted by the Cabinet so that it was impossible to contemplate amending it. To

Laski's question as to why Jewish leaders had not been consulted (he was referring mainly to Louis Brandeis), MacDonald replied that foreigners could not be made a party to decisions on national policy. Laski mentioned the protests of American Jewish public opinion, and warned of the effect on U.S.–British relations, but MacDonald accused him of exaggeration and said that he was convinced that the Jews would eventually be persuaded of the good faith of the British Government.

Two days later, after publication of a letter to the *Times* from the Leader of the Opposition, MacDonald summoned Laski again and asked him whether he could persuade his friends in the United States that the Government would do everything in its power to act justly towards Jewish demands. Laski demanded the dismissal of Passfield and revoking of the White Paper. MacDonald asked him why, as an anti-Zionist, he was so bitter and vehement on this issue, to which Laski replied:

> I said my views on Zionism had not changed, but that as a Jew I resented a policy which surrendered Jewish interests, in spite of a pledged word, to the authors of an unjustifiable massacre. No doubt when the Arabs killed the next lot of Jews, Webb would be allowed to expel all Jews from Palestine.[26]

He went on to tell MacDonald that there could be no solution until the document was withdrawn, a suggestion which MacDonald rejected, and Laski was left with the impression that 'MacDonald is very stiffnecked and vain, he is cock-a-hoop over a deal with the Liberals which guarantees his safety'.[27]

Laski was now convinced, and tried to persuade Chaim Weizmann, that only Labour defeat in the Whitechapel byelection could lead to a change in Government policy. (This suggests that on this issue he was placing Jewish national interests above the interests of Labour.) He was, however, over-pessimistic, since MacDonald, under pressure from the Opposition and out of concern for the future of relations with the United States, was beginning to relax his inflexible stand.

Several days after his second conversation with Laski, MacDonald sent a letter to Weizmann[28], the pretext being that he had received copies of Weizmann's recent correspondence with Passfield. The Prime Minister claimed that the differences between them 'are of the most minor character', and that the dispute revolved around questions of interpretation. The public uproar was a mere storm in a teacup and there was no reason why cooperation should not be established between the Government and the Zionist movement. MacDonald concluded by asking Weizmann to meet him, stressing that this was a friendly gesture on his part since he was extremely busy.

The two men met on 6 November[29], and MacDonald's son, Malcolm, who had become the mediator between the two sides, was also present. According to Weizmann, MacDonald appeared very weary, but tried to create a relaxed and intimate atmosphere. He complained of his heavy workload, and said that he could not control it all, and that not everything was reported to him. He appeared to be trying to play down his responsibility for the White Paper.[30] The Prime Minister went on to tell Weizmann that the Government planned to establish a Cabinet Committee to reexamine certain problematic clauses in the White Paper, and that representatives of the Jewish Agency would be invited to attend. This was, in fact, an admission that the

Government had erred in not consulting Jewish leaders before drawing up the White Paper. When Malcolm asked him whether the Committee would amend the White Paper, he replied enigmatically: 'There is no White Paper.' Formally speaking, he had told Weizmann, the document could not be revoked immediately, but the clarifications and amendments would annul it, in practice.

When Weizmann told MacDonald that he intended to report to American Zionist leaders on the conversation, MacDonald urged him to do so without delay. Relations with the United States were very important to him, and he had, in effect, taken over conduct of Anglo-American relations from his Foreign Secretary. He feared that the influential American Zionists, led by Louis Brandeis, could damage these relations.

The meeting ended with MacDonald's friendly assurances that he would try to arrange a meeting between Weizmann and the Indian Moslem leaders who were then visiting London. He also promised to consider the replacement of several senior officials in the Mandatory administration.

Speaking two weeks later in the House of Commons, MacDonald warmly commended the achievements of Zionist settlement and recalled his visit to Palestine. He promised that the Government would honour its obligations under the Mandate, and assured Jewish leaders that Government policy was to their advantage.

The decision to set up a Cabinet Committee and this speech marked the end of MacDonald's active role in the White Paper affair. After the setting up of the Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Foreign Secretary, Palestinian affairs were taken out of Passfield's hands, in a manner which took no account of his personal feelings. At the Committee's deliberations, Henderson paid little heed to Passfield and silenced him unceremoniously on several occasions. He conducted the sessions forcefully and with the plain intention of arriving at agreement as soon as humanly possible, sometimes revealing impatience with Weizmann's tendency to longwindedness.[31]

Since Henderson was directly responsible for the phrasing of the MacDonald Letter, and is usually regarded as sympathetic to the Zionist cause, it is illuminating to examine the stand he adopted after publication of the White Paper.

Henderson, it will be recalled, had promised Kaplansky in the early stages of the crisis that when the Palestine question was brought before the Cabinet, he would not hesitate to express his support for the Zionist case. This was a reversal of his earlier attitude of consistent refusal to intervene in matters which he considered to be in the domain of the Colonial Secretary. The White Paper was, however, discussed in the Cabinet during Henderson's absence from the country (he was attending the League of Nations meeting at Geneva). The fact that so far-reaching a decision, with international repercussions, was taken without his participation, apparently angered him considerably. When Laski came to him with a request for assistance, Henderson was generous with advice and political aid, mediating between him and MacDonald and even urging him to advise American Jewish leaders to exert political pressure through the British Embassy in Washington.[32]

Henderson's expert advice to Laski, the fact that he and Bevin pressed the Prime Minister and Colonial Secretary to establish the Cabinet Committee, and his businesslike management of the Committee's sessions, should not mislead us as to his basic approach to the Palestine problem. He shared MacDonald's views and did not differ greatly with Passfield.

Immediately after publication of the White Paper, the Under-Secretary of Foreign State

Affairs, Hugh Dalton, conveyed to Kaplansky Henderson's message that he supported the principle of equal obligations to both peoples in Palestine. Dalton added that, sooner or later, there would be no escape from setting up a legislative council in Palestine 'even if it is not of so democratic a nature as the Labour socialists would like'.[33] He adhered to this opinion throughout the Committee's deliberations. (Berl Katznelson subsequently reported to Mapai Central Committee that 'on the Mandate question – our weak point is the Mandate's obligation to the Arabs … I have no great faith that we will meet with great success on this matter'.[34]) This principle, as noted, found expression in the Letter with which Henderson fully concurred.

The MacDonald Letter (13 February 1931) – the End of the Affair

The policy set forth in the MacDonald Letter was, in effect, a reiteration of the political principles underlying the Churchill White Paper of 1922. The Labour Government, and with it the labour movement, were thus returning to the traditional approach to the Zionist movement and the Palestine question. It was as if the historical continuity, interrupted in 1929, were now being restored. The Letter should therefore be examined in comparison to the White Paper.

It should first be emphasized that the Letter was the outcome of the joint efforts of the Government and the Zionist leadership to find a solution to the crisis. This time, in contrast to the deliberation of the White Paper, the Zionists were granted an active role in composition of the documents. This augured well for the future relations between the movements, and if Labour had remained in power, this might have become the accepted arrangement.

The Letter itself, like all documents which are the fruit of negotiations, reflected a compromise between two positions:

(a) The Passfield White Paper had made a *deliberate* attempt to withdraw from the commitment to the entire Jewish people contained in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. (We stress that this was 'deliberate' on the basis of the views held by Passfield and Shiels previous to its publication.) The MacDonald Letter, on the other hand, explicitly stressed that the Government continued to advocate the principles reflected in the 1922 White Paper, which recognized that the obligation of the Mandate was towards the Jewish people and not towards the Jewish population of Palestine alone.[35]

(b) The Letter reiterated the Government's obligation to encourage dense Jewish settlement in Palestine, and thus, in effect, rendered void the White Paper intention to ban Jews from buying land in certain areas of Palestine.

(c) The Letter offered a new interpretation on the delicate question of dispossessed *fellaheen*, whom the White Paper had championed. The former defined as 'dispossessed' those persons who could prove that because of land transfer they had lost their place of employment.

(d) The Letter reaffirmed that the scope of immigration to Palestine would depend on the absorptive capacity of the Jewish economy alone and not of the entire Palestinian economy. Furthermore, it dismissed the argument that the purchase of land by Jews would mean the dispossession of *fellaheen* and the view that the principle of 'Hebrew labour', advocated by Jewish national institutions, violated the terms of the Mandate.

But although the Letter differed from the White Paper on certain matters of principle and practical politics, there were several issues on which it echoed the line of the earlier document. First and foremost, it did not amend the basic pronouncement of the Labour Government concerning equal obligations to Jews and Arabs, and emphasized the traditional Labour conviction that the true solution to the Palestine problem could be achieved only through mutual agreement and cooperation between Jews and Arabs. It did, however, go on to state that 'until that is reached considerations of balance must inevitably enter into the definition of policy'.[36]

By its adherence to the principle of 'balance', the Labour Government made its own contribution to the interpretation of the Balfour Declaration. It abandoned the concept of the dual, though not equal, commitment to Jews and Arabs implied in the Declaration, in favour of the concept of balance, meaning an *equal commitment* to both sides. The practical significance was that Labour interpreted the principle of safeguarding the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities, as implying the social right of the Arabs to land and work. This could have been given a negative interpretation by a hostile administration.

Hence, the changes which MacDonald introduced in the Mandatory administration at the end of 1931 (replacing the High Commissioner, Chancellor, by Sir Arthur Wauchope) were of far-reaching historical significance.

As we have noted, the 1930 White Paper was of no practical importance. The Letter revoked part of it, formally speaking, and most of it in practical terms. And less than a year after its publication Labour was no longer in power, though MacDonald continued to head a National Government until 1935. Between 1931 and 1935 the status of the Yishuv was transformed; as a result of mass immigration it developed from a small community of 180,000 Jews into a substantial entity of 400,000. And in the second half of the decade it became clear to the British, as to the majority of the Zionist movement, that the solution lay in the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. The issue under discussion now was not the national home but the national state. Without underestimating the political factors which brought or contributed to this change – such as the rise of the Nazis to power, the intensification of antisemitism in Eastern Europe, the lull in violent Arab opposition to immigration, the appointment of a more pro-Zionist High Commissioner – it should be emphasized that the MacDonald Letter provided the legal and political basis for this development. If the White Paper had remained in force, it is to be doubted whether it would have been possible.

It appears, therefore, that despite objective difficulties, it was the same Government which once intended to restrict severely the growth of the Jewish national home which, in the final anaysis, supplied the legal foundation for the expansion of the Yishuv in the pre-State years.[37] The conclusion is that Zionism owed a great debt to MacDonald, who was responsible for the Letter which bore his name. Without going into the question of the nature of the British Government's political and economic calculations which facilitated the growth of the Yishuv in Palestine,[38] we can consider whether this development conformed with or contradicted MacDonald's views on Zionism. But first it is illuminating to recall his last remarks on the Zionist question as Labour Prime Minister.

In summer 1931, on the eve of the defeat of the Labour Government and at the time of the 17th Zionist Congress in Basel, the Prime Minister received Ben-Gurion at Chequers, on the initiative of Chaim Weizmann and thanks to the intercession of Malcolm MacDonald. Weizmann asked Ben-Gurion to bring to the Prime Minister's attention a scheme then taking shape among

the moderate majority of the Zionist Executive (i.e. the Weizmann camp and the labour movement), which envisaged Jewish-Arab government on a basis of parity in Palestine. As explained by Ben-Gurion, the intention was to establish local government on a basis of complete equality between the two peoples, without taking into consideration either present or future numerical ratios between them.

According to Ben-Gurion's report of July 1931,

> MacDonald said that he entirely agreed with this assumption. He had already discussed it with Weizmann before the Congress, and understood that this principle would be determined as Government policy in Palestine for both Jews and Arabs. He himself even thinks that the parity principle should favour the Jews. He tends to decide in favour of the Jews. He believes that this was the original intention of the Mandate, – not to give the Jews what the Arabs have in Palestine, but rather to give them more.[39]

One cannot doubt the reliability of Ben-Gurion's report. He was not the man to embellish or interpret over-optimistically remarks made to him by Labour leaders during the crisis. This being so, MacDonald was expressing a drastic change in his attitude to Zionism, since he was refuting the principle of equal obligations which he had proclaimed from the beginning to the end of the crisis. Ben-Gurion was so taken aback by the reversal that he was led to doubt the sincerity of MacDonald's intentions (noting, in contrast, that Malcolm MacDonald was a straightforward and honest young man).

These remarks by Ramsay MacDonald strengthen the impression that he was the most interesting and enigmatic personality of all those involved in the lengthy affair. Of all Labour politicians, it was he who publicly lauded Zionism in the warmest terms, but he was also the premier who agreed to the White Paper which could have had a disastrous impact on Zionism. Then again, he was responsible for the compromise document which gave legal and political sanction to the Yishuv's renewed burst of growth in the late thirties. Which of these measures reflected his true attitude? His critics would regard these anomalies as proof of his opportunism and political hypocrisy, and betrayal of his own beliefs. But it would seem that the answer is not as unequivocal as that and that there is no simple key to understanding his complex attitude to Zionism, as to political issues in general.[40]

We believe that there was a link between the man who visited Palestine in 1922 and was moved by the young pioneers, the Prime Minister who signed the White Paper in 1930 and the same man who read out his Letter in the House of Commons. In all three stages he admired Zionism in his own moderate, utopian, romantic fashion. Believing as he did in the gradual growth of socialism, he was convinced that the slow and gradual expansion of the Yishuv in Palestine was the only right way to realize the Zionist socialist vision. Arab opposition to Zionism concerned him, above all, because of the heavy burden it imposed on the British Government and the threat it held out to the very survival of Zionism. For this reason he chose to advocate moderation.

The changes in this outlook over the years of the Palestine crisis cannot be explained away solely as opportunism and twofacedness (of which he was, like all politicians, not entirely free), but were caused also by his weakness. We are not necessarily referring to his political vulnerability as a minority premier, but rather to his personal weakness, particularly striking in the years of economic and social crisis through which he was obliged to steer the country.

Psychologically and intellectually, he was probably not the right man to lead a Government in times of crisis, believing, as he did, in gradual advancement through mutual persuasion and compromise. Furthermore, he was afflicted by physical debility as well. At sixtyfive he was an old man, tired and weakened by ill health.[41] His nature as a politician, and his physical condition, undoubtedly affected his attitude to Zionism. The Jewish-Arab confrontation weighed heavily on him, and he was under pressure from the Opposition on the one side, and Passfield and his colleagues on the other. Preoccupied as he was by internal crises in Britain, it is unlikely that he found the time to scrutinize closely every document handed to him, and he may also have lacked the intellectual capacity to comprehend the delicate connotations of the White Paper terminology. All he wanted was to extricate himself as fast as possible from the Palestinian labyrinth, and hence his vacillations and failure to display firm resolution or to fight for his standpoint.[42]

This analysis may help explain MacDonald's enigmatic remarks to Ben-Gurion. When the storm in Palestine died down and the political solution was found, MacDonald was again able to weave his utopian dream of the growth of a Jewish society in Palestine in cooperation with the Arab population, and to believe in the preferential rights of the Jews there.

To sum up, the explanation for Labour's indecision on Zionism in the twenties would appear to lie in the consolidation of two approaches within the movement. The first assumed that the period of significant growth of the national home would end with the decade, in the face of Arab opposition and the objective restriction of area for settlement (according to Hope-Simpson). The proponents of this approach were Passfield, Shiels, Beatrice Webb, and left-wing circles such as the I.L.P. According to the second outlook, there was still *lebensraum* and political potential for continued, controlled and gradual growth of the national home, on condition that this development was directed at Jewish-Arab cooperation, on which depended the future of the country and the national home. This conception was supported by MacDonald, Henderson, Snell, Brailsford, Laski and others. The White Paper was composed in the spirit of the former approach, while the Letter reflected the latter. Both groups accepted the principle of equal obligation to both peoples – an innovative interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, deriving from Labour's outlook as a socialist party.

NOTES

1. Mapai Central Committee meeting, 22 December 1930, File 23/30, M.A.
2. The letter, written in Hebrew and undated, was filed among Katznelson's papers. It was apparently never sent.
3. Mapai Council, 25 October 1930, File 22/2, M.A. In contrast, see Ben-Gurion's optimistic letter to Z. Aharonovitch (Aranne), 11 August 1930, File 3/6/20, M.A.
4. The official interpretation of the White Paper by the *Daily Herald* must have shocked Labour Zionists. An editorial explained that the Government had a 'double undertaking', to help the Jews set up a national home, and to help the Arabs safeguard their rights, 'and the fulfilment of one part of it must not bring with it a violation of the other'. *Daily Herald*, 21 October 1930.
5. See note 3.
6. Yosef Sprinzak, *Igrot* (Letters), p. 70.

7. *Ibid*., note 3.
8. Allan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, vol. 1, London, 1960, pp. 455–7.
9. See, for example, telegrams Hoz received from Palestine and copied into his diary. Dov Hoz, *Yoman Avoda* (Working Diary), pp. 335, 338. The diary is in the possession of his family.
10. Hoz to Mapai Secretariat, 7 November 1930, 101/30, vol. 1, British section, M.A.
11. Additional evidence of Bevin's effective intervention is the change of policy of the *Daily Herald*. Bevin was on the paper's editorial board and was probably at least partially responsible for the editorial which stated that a government which betrayed its obligations to the Jewish people was not worthy of power. See: *Daily Herald*, 2 December 1930.
12. Hoz to Party Centre, 5 December 1930. Hoz family collection.
13. Yosef Sprinzak, *Igrot*, vol. 1, pp. 81–2.
14. Chaim Arlozorov, *Writings*, vol. 6, pp. 246–7.
15. *Davar*, 1–2 January 1931.
16. Hoz to Golomb, 30 January 1931. Hoz family collection.
17. Interview with E. Bevin, 18 July 1932, 101/32, vol. 2, British section, M.A.
18. *Diaries*, 26 October 1930.
19. *Forward*, 7 November 1930.
20. Webb Archives, L.S.E.
21. R. MacDonald to C. Weizmann, 22 October 1930, W.A.
22. See exchange of cables between MacDonald and Smuts, published in *The Times*, 22, 23, 24, 27 October 1930.
23. M. Shertok to B. Katznelson, 7 March 1921. Katznelson Archives, M.A.
24. To Mapai Central Office, 31 October 1930, Katznelson Archives, M.A.
25. Kingsley Martin, *Harold Laski*, 1953.
26. Laski to Frankfurter, 26 October 1930, Frankfurter Archives, Library of Congress.
27. Yosef Gorni, 'The Jewishness and Zionism of Harold Laski'; *Midstream*, vol. XXIII, No. 9, November 1977.
28. R. MacDonald to C. Weizmann, 31 October 1930, W.A.
29. See report of meeting in W.A.
30. MacDonald tried, in rather ungentlemanly fashion, to pass on the blame to Passfield. According to Weizmann, during the same conversation 'he said Passfield was old, in some ways very efficient, but that he has the mind of a German professor and an indestructible belief in the experts who sit in the Colonial Office'. (On 17 November 1930, Lloyd George stated in the House, apparently wth MacDonald's approval, that the P.M. had not been sufficiently involved in writing the White Paper, and expressed his belief that had the P.M. known of the exact content, he would not have approved it. MacDonald did not react and hence, by implication, agreed.)
31. Arlozorov at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 26 December 1930, 23/30, M.A.
32. Laski to Frankfurter, 26 October 1930.
33. Kaplansky to A. Reis, 21 October 1930, 101/30, M.A.
34. Mapai Central Committee meeting, 25 December 1930, 23/30, M.A.
35. Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 13 February 1931, vol. 244, cols. 749–55.
36. *Ibid*., col. 750.

37. On reactions of Palestinian labour leaders to the Letter see: David Ben-Gurion, 'Perush MacDonald Al Hasefer Halavan' (MacDonald's Interpretation of the White Paper), *Hapoel Hatzair* 20, 27 February 1931. Ben-Gurion thought the Letter revoked the Shaw Commission conclusions, the Hope-Simpson Report and the White Paper's intentions. It 'broke' the anti-Zionist policy of the Colonial Office and ushered in a new period in relations between the Mandatory Government and the Zionist movement.
38. See G. Sheffer, 'Tadmit Palestinait vehayishuv kegorem be-itzuv hamediniyut hamandatorit bishnot hashloshim' (The Palestinian image and the Yishuv as a factor in formulating Mandatory policy in the thirties), *Tziyonut* C, p. 289.
39. D. Ben-Gurion, on his meeting with MacDonald, 11 July 1931, *Zikhronot* (*Memoirs*) A, p. 481.
40. David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, Jonathan Cape, London 1977.
41. *Ibid*., pp. 544, 571.
42. The following episode bears out this theory. On the eve of publication of the MacDonald Letter, a rumour reached Weizmann that MacDonald had reconsidered the decision to read it in the House. He contacted MacDonald and, according to his own report, spoke to him firmly, even forcefully. MacDonald capitulated and agreed to read the Letter. Report appears in a document classified as 'Top secret and not for publication', 101/31, vol. 1, British section, M.A.

PART THREE

IN THE WEB OF CONTRADICTIONS 1931–1945

Introduction

The fifteen-year period from 1931 to the end of the Second World War differed substantially from the brief, second stage in relations between British Labour and Zionist socialism discussed in the previous section. In certain ways it was reminiscent of the first period –1917–29. In the thirties Labour was once again in opposition, as it had been during most of the twenties. In the context of relations between the two movements, this historical fact is of basic significance; there was undoubtedly a high degree of correlation between Labour's power standing and its attitude to Zionism.

There were additional similarities between the first and third periods: both were shadowed by war. The first period began towards the end of the First World War, and the third ended with the 1945 peace. The sufferings experienced by the Jewish masses in Europe in wartime had a strong impact on Labour's attitude to Zionism. In 1917 Labour recognized the Zionist movement and the right of those Jews who so desired to return to Palestine, and in 1944, towards the end of the Second War, it issued a statement which, reversing its previous policies, supported the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state.

Furthermore, in both periods Labour participated in coalition cabinets, led by prime ministers of vision and imagination, who were known for their pro-Zionist sympathies. There is no way of knowing whether Lloyd George and Winston Churchill imparted their views on Zionism to the Labour leaders who served in their cabinets. But the fact that those same Labour ministers, who were party to discussions on Palestine and Zionism within the Cabinet, later became the policymakers on these issues in Labour Governments, is important. When Arthur Henderson (member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet) and Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin (members of Churchill's War Cabinet) took up positions of political power, they brought to them some knowledge and experience of national policy on Zionism.

There were, of course, basic differences between the first and third periods. The twenties were marked by optimism, while in the thirties pessimism reigned. In the second decade of the century people believed that there would be no more world wars, that disarmament could be achieved through international agreements and that the League of Nations could become powerful enough to prevent armed conflicts. In the social sphere, the conviction existed that in the industrialized Western countries socialism would gradually change the nature of regimes. The thirties, in sharp contrast, were an era of shattered illusions, frustration and disappointment. The unprecedented economic crisis which began in 1929 undermined faith in social progress. The rise of fascism and downfall of social democracy in Germany, Austria and France raised the query of whether democratic reformist socialism were capable of tackling the problem of the age. Italian aggression in Ethiopia and particularly Italian and German intervention in Spain, combined with the impotence of the democratic governments, cast doubt on the very essence of the democratic-liberal regime. On the other hand, the show trials in the Soviet Union exposed the cruel face of communism and destroyed many illusions.

In Palestine as well, there was a fundamental difference between the two periods. In the twenties it was still feasible to assume that the gradual expansion of the Yishuv in Palestine would eventually lead to reconciliation between Jews and Arabs, and that a progressive binational society would develop there. But the popular Arab uprising against the Jews in 1929 and the Arab revolt of 1936–9 proved, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that there was a deep-seated conflict between the two peoples, and that hopes of establishing a binational society were illusory.

In the twenties there had been a kind of symmetry between the political status and development trends of the Palestinian and British labour movements. Both evolved gradually from small, politically insignificant movements into large parties, taking over responsibility for national leadership. In the thirties this symmetry was disturbed. Labour went into opposition, while the Palestinian labour movement became the central political force in the Zionist movement. The existence and subsequent upsetting of this symmetry were of considerable importance to the network of relations between the movements.

Changes also occurred within the Labour leadership. Until the early thirties the movement was dominated by people of proletarian background, lacking formal education, whose socialist outlook was basically emotional and influenced by certain religious concepts, particularly of Methodist and Baptist origin. These personalities were now beginning to be replaced by a younger, more middleclass, university-trained generation, whose socialism was more secular and rational. This group did not constitute the dominant force within the Party, since political power in the real sense was focused in the trade unions. But the alliance between Ernest Bevin, who represented both sociologically and culturally speaking the proletarian-popular leadership, and Clement Attlee, who was characteristic of the new leadership, reflected the changes which had taken place.

In Palestine, on the other hand, the leadership of the labour movement remained unchanged; the men and women who headed the movement in the twenties stayed at the helm throughout the thirties and forties. It should be noted that, from the point of view of social background and education, the Palestinian leaders had more in common with the new Labour leaders than with their predecessors. The personal ties were also closer than before, and visits from Palestine to London were more frequent.

The question of how the new Labour politicians conceived of Zionism and their political views on how it should be implemented will be discussed below. But it should be noted here that the links between the movements in this third period were decisively affected by the internal problems which preoccupied each of the movements and the international events to which they were obliged to react. European Jewry grew increasingly threatened and the tension between Jews and Arabs in Palestine intensified. At the same time an international crisis was brewing, and in England the economic situation of the working masses steadily worsened. Under these conditions it was only natural that the Palestine question, though of vital and central importance to Zionism, was only marginal for Labour.

Here we are confronted by the tragic character of the relations between the Jews and Western society in the 1930s. The Jews were, at the same time, the targets of Nazi antisemitic hatred aimed at uprooting them from European society, and the main victims of Western democracy’s desire for appeasement. During the Second World War the Jews participated in the fight against fascism, but in the thirties their national problem was a hindrance to the national interests of the democratic states. And the hand of fate seemed to dictate the events which occurred in rapid

succession and often in parallel in Europe and Palestine, leading the Jewish people inexorably towards their holocaust.

In January 1933 the Nazis came to power in Germany, and in October of the same year the Arab nationalist movement commenced its political struggle against the British Mandate over Palestine. Between 1933 and 1935 Jewish immigration to Palestine from Germany and from Eastern Europe constantly increased, reaching 65,000 in 1935. In September of that year the Nazis issued their racist 'Nuremburg Laws', dictating complete separation between Jews and Aryan Germans. There followed the pogroms against Poland's Jews in 1937, the occupation of Austria by the Nazis in March 1938, which aggravated the refugee problem, and the Kristallnacht pogroms against the Jews of Germany in November 1938. These events brought home to the democratic nations the gravity of the Jewish refugee problem. But these nations did not demonstrate the moral willingness, political force and desire to accept the economic cost of solving this humanitarian problem. The Evian Conference on refugee problems, convened in July 1938 on the initiative of President Roosevelt, proved a failure, and hundreds of thousands of Jews remained without hope.

This being the situation, Palestine might have been considered to offer the sole refuge for the persecuted Jews. And in fact, the widescale immigration in 1935 aroused hopes that a comprehensive solution could be found in Palestine. But in Spring 1936 the Arabs began to use violence in their struggle against the Mandate and the Jews in Palestine, which soon took on the nature of a nationalist rebellion, highlighting the profound conflict of interests between the two peoples, Jews and Arabs.

In late 1936 the British Government despatched a Royal Commission to Palestine, led by Lord Peel, to investigate the causes of the unrest and to propose solutions to the situation. In 1937, this body arrived at the unexpected and revolutionary conclusion that Palestine should be divided into sovereign states, linked by political ties to Britain. These proposals, though they awarded the Jews only a small part of Palestine, held out hope of rescue for hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees. It was for this reason that the 20th Zionist Congress (August 1937) accepted the concept of partition after fierce debate, while demanding geographical amendment of the borders of the proposed Jewish state. The Arab leadership, in contrast, totally rejected the proposals. The British Government, and in particular the Colonial Secretary, Ormsby-Gore, tended to favour the recommendations. But in the course of 1937 and early 1938 they were subjected to heavy pressure on the part of the Arabs and the Moslem world to retreat from this scheme. Towards the end of 1938 the Government despatched another Commission, led by Sir John Woodhead, to examine whether partition was practically implementable. Its conclusions were negative, and the British Government consequently withdrew from the plan.

At this very same time, as illusions of peace prospects were gradually shattered and Europe began to prepare for the possibility of war, the Government became increasingly convinced that British strategic interests called for appeasement of the Arabs of the Middle East, even at the expense of the Jews.

In February 1939 a London Round Table Conference on Palestine was convened, with the participation of British, Jewish and Arab delegates. On 17 May 1939 the White Paper on Palestine was published, stipulating that within ten years a Palestinian state would be set up in Palestine, restricting Jewish immigration to ten thousand per year for five years and granting twenty-five thousand immigration permits to Jewish refugees. The British Government thereby in effect proclaimed the date of the end of the Mandate; announced its total withdrawal from the

Balfour Declaration, thereby spelling the end of Zionist hopes in Palestine; and almost totally closed the gates of Palestine to Jewish refugees. The Jewish tragedy had reached its height. In September 1939 the War broke out and the trap closed on them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A New Era Begins

The split in the British Labour Party, establishment of the National Government led by MacDonald in August 1931, and the severe Labour defeat in that year's general elections, did not greatly disturb Palestinian labour leaders. One might even say that the changes in the composition of the Cabinet were greeted with satisfaction, and the defeat with equanimity.

When the appointment of J. H. Thomas as Colonial Secretary was announced, *Davar* expressed its gratification. Its editorial column openly welcomed the fact that the Passfield-Shiels era was over, and expressed the hope that the new Secretary would keep the promise of the previous Government and proffer practical development aid to Palestine.[1] The gratification was so great that the writer forgot to mention that only two years previously, on the eve of the formation of the Labour Government, Thomas had been considered an anti-Zionist and Passfield's appointment had been greeted with relief. But Passfield and Shiels were now anathema to Zionists, and even Thomas was preferable.

Chaim Arlozorov, recently appointed Head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, shared this view. At a meeting of the Mapai Central Committee, he stated jubilantly that 'there is now an outstanding pro-Zionist concentration in the new Government'.[2] He saw it as composed of two circles: an inner circle of such Cabinet ministers as Lord Reading, Lord Samuel and MacDonald himself, and an outer circle of influential members of the Coalition Cabinet, including William Ormsby-Gore of the Conservative Party and Sir Archibald Sinclair of the Liberals.

Incidentally, *Davar* never reacted to MacDonald's 'betrayal' of his party, though Moshe Beilinson, in an article on 'The Failure of a Leader', expressed approval of MacDonald's national policy, while condemning his rebellion against party discipline.[3] The paper did, however, respond to Labour's electoral defeat, and headlined the story 'Triumph of the "National" Government'.[4] The inverted commas, suggesting that *Davar* doubted the Government's sincerity, angered Moshe Shertok, who sent the paper a letter of protest.[5] He urged the editors to exercise caution and restraint in evaluating events in Britain, and reminded them that '*the working masses* have voted this time … not for Labour but for the power which, *at this moment*, promises them more than Labour, i.e. a way out of the straits. They may be wrong, but this is their feeling and it cannot be ignored.' Katznelson (then editor of *Davar*) apparently took these words to heart, and on the following day published a more restrained and objective analysis of the election results.[6]

The caution preached by Shertok and the response by *Davar* undoubtedly reflected Mapai's desire to adopt a circumspect stand towards the new British Government. Though Mapai sympathized with Labour, it hoped for a friendly attitude to Zionism on the part of the new Government. But the hopes aroused by the 'Zionist concentration' in the new Government were

not long-lived. At a political debate held by the Mapai Central Committee in early 1932, all the speakers expressed their disillusionment with the new British Government. They emphasized the importance of the MacDonald Letter as a political document reiterating the principles on which the national home was founded, but criticized the Government's inaction on practical issues. Nothing had been done to implement the promises or to increase the number of Jewish employees in Mandatory service, expand working immigration, implement agrarian reform or invest in widescale development projects. And above all, the Government had not fulfilled the promise of its predecessor to set up a Cabinet Committee, with the participation of Jewish Agency representatives, to clarify a range of practical problems relating to the national home.

The general feeling among Jewish labour leaders in Palestine was that the 1929 events and the White Paper episode served as a warning that relations between British Labour and Zionism were approaching a dangerous watershed. This belief led two of the leading party intellectuals, Chaim Arlozorov and Moshe Beilinson, to ponder long-term Zionist policy. Arlozorov, anxious for maximum cooperation with the British Government, proposed to the party leadership that it begin planning for a 'national' social policy, to benefit all inhabitants of Palestine, both Jews and Arabs. Beilinson, on the other hand, believed that Zionism should prepare itself for the moment when Britain abandoned it completely. He therefore proposed a Middle Eastern federation of which the future Jewish state would form part. Both proposals were firmly rejected by Ben-Gurion, voicing the majority view. He told Arlozorov that the task of Zionist policy was, first and foremost, to concern itself with the Jewish people in the Diaspora and the Yishuv in Palestine. 'We can conduct a national policy after the implementation of Zionism', he said. In reply to Beilinson he said that, as long as the Yishuv remained so small, there was no point in discussing a federation, because of the danger of its total disappearance within a wider political framework.[7]

Two years later Ben-Gurion was to change his mind and support the federation, on condition 'that when Palestine becomes *for the great part* [italics in original] a Jewish country, the Palestinian state will join the Arab federation without severing its ties with the British federation'.[8] This change in outlook was caused by two developments. The first was Ben-Gurion's recognition in the wake of the organized Arab riots in Haifa in 1933[9] that there was an Arab nationalist movement in Palestine. He believed that this movement, by its very nature, would aspire to unification of the Arab nation. The second development was the tremendous upsurge of Jewish immigration, which led him to hope that a Jewish majority would evolve within a short time.

The debate on various aspects of medium- and long-term Zionist policy also touched on an issue of the greatest practical implications, namely resuscitation of the plan to establish a joint legislative council for all inhabitants of Palestine, based on proportional representation. This plan, it will be recalled, was broached in the 1922 White Paper, was totally rejected by Arab leaders and opposed by the Zionist movement, though at the time, for tactical reasons, they did not publicly denounce it. In due course the Zionist movement officially and publicly deplored the plan and, in the wake of the 1929 riots, a substitute scheme was mooted, namely the establishment of a council based on equal representation for both peoples. The Jewish labour movement, which rejected the scheme in the twenties out of nationalist consideration and for social reasons (refusal to cooperate with feudalistic elements in the Arab population), decided in the early thirties to support the concept of parity. Ben-Gurion, who had discussed the idea with

MacDonald in 1931, elaborated on it in 1933. He proposed that, in addition to the legislative council, joint Jewish-Arab and British rule be instituted on a basis of equality between the two local peoples. This would endure until the Jews became the majority and the Jewish state joined the Arab federation.

Ben-Gurion's threefold scheme for a council, joint rule and a future federation was greeted in Mapai with mixed feelings. Most of his colleagues were united in their support for the idea of a council based on parity, and thought that the idea of a federation was desirable for the future.

In 1934 the legislative council became a very real issue. In a conversation with Ben-Gurion, the High Commissioner made it clear that the Government intended to convene a council reflecting the balance of power within the population. This naturally aroused the concern and opposition of the Zionist movement. As was customary in times of political crisis, London was the focus of Zionist political activity, aimed at persuading leading politicians of the justice of the Zionist case and at mobilizing public support. This contact was renewed between Palestinian and British labour.

Moshe Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency (since the 1933 murder of Arlozorov), was sent to London, and returned with a discouraging report. He claimed that the Zionist Executive had lost contact with public opinion and influential figures in Britain, and had neglected its ties with Labour. 'A new generation has arisen meanwhile in the Labour Party', he said. The former heads had been removed – MacDonald, Henderson and Snowden – and there was a new generation which needed educating. 'This time it is a long-term investment, because Labour will not be returning to power so soon. But it is a necessary investment.'[10]

He went on to say that it was not easy to ask Labour's help at this time. In a talk with the Deputy Party Secretary, Gills, he had sensed the latter's unwillingness to become involved in Palestinian affairs. Even the friendly Brailsford was not anxious to write a pro-Zionist article. On the other hand, he had been interested in hearing how the Palestine workers' movement was playing its part in the general struggle of international labour. He accepted Shertok's explanation of the importance of continued Jewish immigration despite the threat of economic crisis, but did not hide his doubts as to Zionist activity in the sphere of Palestine-Diaspora relations. He thought that Zionist activity was important but could distract the attention of Jews from their affairs in the Diaspora.

Shertok's overall conclusion was that Dov Hoz was needed in London and so, in repetition of his 1929 pre-electoral trip, Hoz was despatched to England. He immediately tried to arrange meetings with various Labour Party leaders to explain his movement's viewpoint (particularly on the legislative council), and to organize a Labour delegation to Palestine.[11] He talked to Gills, Shiels and two of the Party's left-wing Jewish intellectuals, Harold Laski and Leonard Woolf. Laski was already identified with Zionism, while Woolf was highly assimilated and kept his distance from all Jewish matters. His opinion, as a member of the Labour Committee on Imperial Affairs, was important to Hoz, who tried to persuade him that the time had come for Labour to formulate a plan of action for Palestine in anticipation of its eventual return to power. This plan, he thought, should be based on the principles laid down in the MacDonald Letter. Woolf replied that Labour was consistent in its traditional support for Zionism. On the idea of a proportionally representative council, he said:

> When you constitute the majority in Palestine you will demand a legislative council with the same vehemence with which you now oppose it, and the Arabs – it may be assumed – will

> then be against it. This means that you are asking us to proclaim that as long as there is no Jewish majority in Palestine, there will be no legislative council and the country will be run like a British colony under British imperialistic rule. Can we appear before the movement with such a plan? And where is the commitment in the Mandate to help in setting up self-rule institutions in Palestine?[12]

Finally, after lengthy discussion, the two agreed that self-rule bodies should be developed gradually and in stages, the first stage to be the entrusting of greater powers to municipalities and local councils.

Hoz held similar talks with Shiels, as a kind of rehearsal for his meeting with the twenty-five members of the Labour Party's Committee on Imperial Affairs which took place on 14 October. Hoz delivered a short lecture, and a discussion followed. To his surprise, the main advocate of his own views was Shiels, who said that agreement between Jews and Arabs should precede the establishment of a legislative council. He did, however, attack the idea of 'Hebrew labour', though Hoz partially succeeded in winning him over. Hoz summed up his impressions as follows: The remarks of the speakers revealed a great deal of ignorance and a desire for the simplest and most convenient solution, as is customary in colonies and other countries. But I think that my remarks and Shiels' reliable help won us a majority.'

Hoz continued his activity until after the 1935 elections and, inter alia, renewed his contact with Bevin, made the acquaintance of Attlee, established friendly relations with Herbert Morrison and met Snell several times. At one of these meetings, Snell made a comment which casts light on his own attitude and that of his comrades to the Zionist endeavour. He expressed his fear that 'the immigration of German Jews, who fear the rise of Hitler, could lower the moral and pioneering tone of the Jewish community in Palestine'.[13]

Hoz held rewarding meetings with Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps. The former was swayed by Hoz's arguments against the council and promised his help in Parliament. Cripps admitted his ignorance of Palestinian affairs, and when Hoz explained that immigration was a matter of life and death for the Yishuv, he asked whether Jewish natural increase did not match up to the level of Arab increase. He, too, promised his aid and even expressed the desire to visit Palestine.

An interesting episode was Hoz's meeting with the Secretary of the Building Workers Union, John Hicks, who dismissed the claim that there were Jewish building workers in Palestine. 'You must mean those who walk around the building site with a stick', he said. 'We call them foremen. Real building work means plastering, bricklaying.' Hoz riposted by offering to take five hundred Jewish boys from Whitechapel and train them as builders, on condition that the Union would then agree to take them on. The Secretary replied that this was impossible since there was unemployment in the trade and others had priority. To which Hoz replied triumphantly: 'There you have the essence of Zionism … You deny us work and then complain that Jews carry the foreman's stick.'

But Hoz's most challenging conversation, from the ideological point of view, was with M.P.s who represented the cooperative movement. They found it hard to comprehend the complicated structure of the Histadrut, pointing out the possible clash between productive cooperatives, which employed hired labourers, and the trade union which represented them. They went on to argue that the Zionist endeavour was essentially of a capitalist nature and hence there was no chance of creating a cooperative society, also expressing doubt as to whether the Jews, because

of their national character and history, were capable of creating such a society at all.

Though Hoz failed to counter some of their arguments, the outcome of the meeting was not wholly negative. The M.P.s agreed that it was necessary to learn more about the political and social situation in Palestine, so as to base their views on facts rather than prejudices.[14]

The effectiveness of Hoz's lobbying became evident in early 1936, when the Committee on Imperial Affairs submitted recommendations for long-term policy in Palestine. The Mandate, they wrote, should continue until the Jews and Arabs arrived at agreement, and the Government should not give it up until such a move was in the interests of both peoples in Palestine. The Committee also proposed examination of the possibility of bringing Palestine into the Commonwealth as an independent dominion, when the Mandate came to an end. It rejected the idea of extending the borders to the national home to Transjordan but recommended that Jewish settlement be permitted there, on condition that it had no detrimental effect on the Arab population.

The Committee stand on the legislative council was unequivocal:

> The immediate establishment of a Legislative Council in Palestine wholly or partially elected with ministerial or executive responsibility would probably promote irresponsibility and discord, without satisfying Jews or Arabs, or facilitating good government. Any proposal to set up such a legislature now should be opposed and information should be elicited as to present Government's intentions in the matter.[15]

Finally, the Committee recommended a Government Commission of Enquiry to investigate the problems entailed in making the proposed constitutional changes in Palestine.

The Committee's stand was publicly expressed at a Parliamentary debate on the question of a Palestine legislative council on 24 March 1936, initiated by Labour. There was almost unanimous objection from all parties to the scheme, and Labour spokesmen proposed an alternative, namely transfer of power to the country's inhabitants in stages, starting with increased power for local authorities.[16]

Shertok, however, was slightly disappointed by the Labour stand in the debate, since he felt that it should have emphasized more strongly that extension of self-government would enable the Arab majority in the proposed council to obstruct Jewish immigration, and hence hamper the rescue of the Jews under threat in Europe.[17]

In conclusion, the information campaign conducted by the labour Zionists among Labour leaders was an almost total success from the immediate practical point of view but not as regards the amendment of basic principle.

In this period of renewed contact, the Zionist leaders evolved a certain image of Labour and of the British working class. Of the three prominent Party leaders, Attlee, Morrison and Bevin, it was the latter who was most highly esteemed. Attlee was considered a grey personality, and a weak and unimpressive politician. Morrison was seen as a talented politician with qualities of leadership, but an unstable and unreliable individual.[18] Bevin made a profound impression not only as a political leader, but also because of the outlook he expressed and the methods he used to lead his party. Katznelson, who saw Bevin in action at the Labour Party Conference in a debate on rearmament, was captivated by his appearance and described it as 'tremendous and awesome'. An introspective and hesitant man himself, he was apparently attracted by Bevin's

forcefulness and his blunt, even crude style. But he was also impressed by the views which the man expressed, and by his vigorous attack on the Party's left wing for opposing rearmament. It was Bevin's insistence on the organic ties between the working class and the nation, between national and class interests, which appealed to Katznelson. 'He was totally immersed in the working class in Britain and in its history and rights, conquests and achievements', Katznelson wrote. 'For him it was not, as for other people in various opposition parties, a game. It was a matter of the life of the entire class, the entire nation – a great vision.'[19]

The Zionist socialist leaders generally took a pessimistic view of Labour as a political force in the light of the internal disputes on rearmament, the Spanish Civil War and other issues. They tended to admire members of the Party's 'old guard', such as George Lansbury, the humanist and pacifist, and to dislike what they regarded as the noisy and superficial left wing, because of their natural affinity with the more conservative and nationalist elements in the Party.

While taking a critical view of the Party and most of its leaders, the Palestinian socialists deeply admired the British working class. They were struck by the political involvement of the simple workers, and their fighting spirit, and were profoundly moved by the hunger marches. Katznelson, in particular, saw in these mass demonstrations the spirit of dedication, loyalty and a manifestation of the living spirit of democracy. 'One can imagine nothing more characteristic of the class and more democratic than those marches.'[20]

In the thirties, the Palestinian socialists came to understand Labour better than ever before. The Labour Party leaders, on the other hand, did not gain greater knowledge of the Palestinian labour movement. Since 1929 they had been more profoundly aware of the complex political problems which the implementation of Zionism entailed, but they were not closely acquainted with the leading Zionists and were not able to differentiate between the various trends within socialist Zionism. British Labour leaders did not frequently visit Palestine, and when they did so, they found it difficult to analyse issues clearly, paradoxically enough because of the profound impression made on them by the new Jewish society there. In reporting to their comrades, they tended to dwell on this phenomenon and to underplay political questions. The attractions of the Zionist socialist project, which had so captivated MacDonald and Wedgwood in the twenties, were still strong, perhaps even stronger, despite the complicated political problems.

It should be recalled that the imbalance in the degree of mutual acquaintance was also related to the imbalance in the measure of importance which each side attributed to the problem. For Labour leaders in the thirties, the Palestine problem was marginal, while for Palestinian socialists, what went on in Britain was of vital importance. In passing, it should also be emphasized that the impressions of Labourites who visited Palestine appeared in the press and were hence cautiously expressed and probably edited, whereas the views of Palestinians on the Labour politicians were expressed frankly and fully in private letters and at closed meetings.

Three Labour Party personalities visited Palestine in the thirties – Herbert Morrison, Susan Lawrence and Arthur Creech-Jones, and they were representative of three different groups in the Party and movement. Susan Pethwick Lawrence was a contemporary of MacDonald and Henderson, and her status owed a lot to her warm personality and veteran standing. Morrison was a member of the second generation, one of the central figures in the new leadership, while Creech-Jones was one of the young intellectuals carving out a niche for themselves in the thirties. Their impressions were basically identical. The new Jewish society won their hearts and fired their imaginations, and all three refrained from discussing burning political questions.

Susan Lawrence wrote enthusiastically about the collective settlements she saw, where she felt that utopia was being achieved. Although she believed that such utopias could only be created by an idealistic intellectual elite and that the British working class had not yet attained this level, she still hoped that such settlements could one day exist in Britain. Meanwhile, the Palestinian achievements could serve as an example to others: 'These colonies are little actual utopias; and it is a fine thing to have set one's foot in Utopia.'[21]

Morrison, who was more closely acquainted with Jewish life than the other two visitors and was able to compare the Jewish communities of London and Palestine, was deeply impressed by his visit to Palestine in 1935. He later wrote that the visit had made a stronger impression on him than any other visit abroad.[22] And he wrote, with enthusiasm and a tinge of prejudice; 'I have met many Jews in many countries. I know the London Jew very well. But the Palestinian Jews were to me different; so different that a large proportion of them were not obviously Jews at all.'

Morrison saw that the new Jews were self-confident, calm, disciplined and cultured, free of the inferiority complex of a national minority, unlike their brethren abroad even though they too were still a minority in Palestine. The absence of this inferiority complex, he argued, proved that the Jews felt that Palestine was their national home. Like Susan Lawrence, he was aware that the new Jewish society was the outcome of qualitative selection of immigrants by Zionist institutions, a problematic issue for a socialist of internationalistic outlook. But this did not dampen his enthusiasm and he concluded his article with the words: 'The New Jew to be found in Palestine was a revelation to me. Go to see him if the chance comes in your way.'[23]

Creech-Jones also discovered the new Jews of Palestine, whom he described as a new race of handsome, sunburned, sturdy and intelligent people, building a common Jewish culture and society on the basis of the different traditions they had brought from their countries of origin.[24] But unlike Susan Lawrence and Morrison he tried to grasp the Palestine situation in general, and expressed views on the basic political issues such as the final objective of Zionism and the relations between the Jews and Arabs. His remarks cast new light on the attitude to Zionism of a man who was regarded as a warm friend until his appointment as Colonial Secretary in 1947. He wrote that the Jews coming to Palestine wanted to establish 'not a political state but a cultural nation'. And he went on to say that he was encouraged by the fact that 'the most discerning Jews I met declaimed the cruder ideas of nationalism and independent political sovereignty and had no wish to override the rights of other peoples'.

He was of course quoting those who were ready to content themselves with a spiritual centre in Palestine, and not the views of the Zionist socialist leaders,[25] and it is interesting to note that he identified completely with the former. He did, however, advocate continued Jewish immigration and wrote that the development of the country's economy, particularly on Jewish initiative, would facilitate the absorption of the newcomers and raise the standard of living of the Arabs. He concluded by advising all students of social sciences to visit Palestine and learn from the fascinating social experiment there.

To sum up, in the brief period from 1931 to 1935 before the outbreak of the new Palestine crisis, the British and Palestinian Jewish labour movements appeared to have arrived at agreement. But this period witnessed the beginning of the rift between them on the central question which was to determine their relations in the mid-forties. The Zionist socialists, as we have seen, had moved, hesitantly but gradually, from the concept of national autonomies in

Palestine, through the idea of national cantons with joint Jewish-Arab rule, and the plan for a legislative council based on parity, to the vision of a Jewish state in Palestine within the framework of an Arab federation. This dream of a Jewish state, once repressed and concealed, was now openly discussed, and it highlighted the differences in outlook between the two movements. Labour, in accordance with its traditional attitude to Zionism and the outlook of the new leadership in the thirties, could never accept the idea of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. Such a plan contradicted Labour's interpretation of the Balfour Declaration since the early twenties and violated its internationalist socialist outlook. British Labour, it will be recalled, favoured a binational society. The concept also conflicted with the idealistic-utopistic view of Jewish society in Palestine held by pro-Zionist Labour leaders and intellectuals.

At this stage the difference between the viewpoints of the two movements on the Jewish state was more on the ideological than on the practical political plane. More profound practical conflicts developed in the second half of the thirties on the issue of partition of Palestine and establishment of a Jewish state in part of the country.

Another problem which emerged in this period and was to intensify later in the decade was that of the immigration of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and antisemitic discrimination. In 1934 Ben-Gurion proclaimed the need for 'rescue immigration' and pointed to Palestine as the solution to the plight of the Jews. But Zionist leaders feared that Labour leaders did not comprehend the full urgency of the problem.

It was around these two issues – the Jewish state and the rescue immigration – that conflicts between the two movements were to focus in the second half of the thirties.

NOTES

1. *Davar*, 8 September 1931.
2. Mapai Central Committee Meeting, 7 September 1931, File 23/31, M.A.
3. *Davar*, 31 August 1931.
4. *Davar*, 29 October 1931.
5. Letter, in Shertok's handwriting, and undated, in the Katznelson Archives, M.A.
6. 'Elections and their Meaning', *Davar*, 30 October 1931.
7. Mapai Central Committee, 6 February 1932, File 23/32, M.A.
8. Mapai Central Committee, 5 August 1934, File 23/34, M.A.
9. *Ibid*., 4 November 1933, File 23/33, M.A.
10. Political Committee meeting, 19 August 1934, File 23/34, M.A.
11. Dov Hoz to Party Secretariat, 23 October 1934–101/34, vol. 1, British section, M.A.
12. Dov Hoz to Party Secretariat, 27 October 1934–101/34, vol. 1, British section, M.A.
13. Z. Aharonovitch to Party Secretariat, 9 December 1935 – 101/35, vol. 1, British section, M.A.
14. Z. Aharonovitch to Party Secretariat, *ibid*.
15. Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions – Palestine, no. 160A, February 1936, N.E.C.
16. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, vol. 310, no. 56, 24 March 1936.
17. Mapai Central Committee, 16 April 1936, File 23/36, M.A.
18. Letter of Z. Aharonovitch to Mapai Secretariat, 12 November 1935, File 101/35, vol. 1, British section, M.A.

19. Katznelson disagreed with several of the Labour leaders who told him that Bevin was trying to split the Party as MacDonald had done five years previously. He thought Bevin was only trying to guide the party into a more conservative path.
20. Mapai Central Committee, 9 December 1936, File 23/36, M.A.
21. Susan Lawrence, 'Jewish Colonies in Palestine', *Labour*, July 1935. On her return, Susan Lawrence dined with Hoz and several M.P.s, and according to Hoz, spoke about the settlements emotionally with tears in her eyes. She said that, when she retired, she would like to build a hut in a kibbutz and spend the rest of her days among the people there. Z. Aharonovitch to Mapai Secretariat, 10 December 1935, 101/35, vol. 2, British section, M.A.
22. Bernard Donoughue and G. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison, Portrait of a Politician*, London, 1973, pp. 255–7.
23. H. Morrison, 'Wonder City of the Desert', *Daily Herald*, 12 September 1935.
24. A. Creech Jones, 'A Tourist in Palestine – A New Nation in Making', *The New Clarion*, 12 August 1933. He also published a series of articles on Palestine, see *The Clarion*, 22 June, 29 June and 26 August 1935.
25. We do not know whose views Creech Jones was citing, but they resemble those of Hashomer Hatzair, left Poalei Zion or Brit Shalom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Jewish State or Palestinian State? 1936–1939

The Party Stand

The Labour Party outlook on Zionism and its reaction to Government's Palestine policy underwent certain changes in the three years of unrest in Palestine. From the onset of the violence in April 1936, until the appointment of the Peel Commission of Enquiry, Labour's stand on Zionism was reserved and, in some circles, hostile. Publication of the Commission's recommendations in 1937 caused confusion and hesitation. Only after the publication of the 1939 White Paper, and under the impact of the growing plight of Eastern European Jewry, did this hesitant support for Zionism harden into resolute opposition to Government policy.

The first outbreaks of violence in Palestine on 19 April 1936 found the Labour Party in the grip of an internal crisis. The left and right wings of the Party were involved in a fierce controversy on rearmament and the Spanish issue, and hence had little attention left for Palestinian problems. It was only two weeks after the riots comenced that the *Daily Herald* began to publish informative reports. The first article explaining the cause of the riots appeared only in mid-May,[1] and attributed the unrest to the fact that the long arm of Fascism had reached the Middle East. This assertion was bound to arouse readers' sympathies for the Zionist cause, but the editors avoided expressing explicit views on the question.

Two months after the riots began, Parliament debated the Cabinet decision to despatch the Peel Commission to Palestine.[2] The three Labour spokesmen in this debate, Tom Williams, Arthur Creech Jones and Herbert Morrison, were all known for their pro-Zionist sympathies. All three had recently returned from a visit to Palestine, as guests of the Histadrut, and referred to their positive impressions of the new Zionist socialist society there.

The Labour speakers unequivocally condemned the instigators of the riots for their reactionary and fascist motives, stressing that the naïve and ignorant Arab masses were incited by representatives of the interests of feudal Arab rulers. They refuted the Arab claim that Jewish settlement endangered Arab existence in Palestine, and argued that the opposite was true: the Jews were benefiting the country's economy and contributing to the progress of its entire population. They were, however, unanimous in the opinion that the country's future depended on cooperation between Jews and Arabs.

Morrison made the most pro-Zionist speech of the three (Ben-Gurion had briefed him on the previous evening),[3] and opposed the despatch of a Commission of Enquiry. Ben-Gurion had warned him of the danger that such a Commission might, like the Shaw Commission, return with anti-Zionist recommendations. Morrison's view, however, was not shared by the Party leadership, and the *Daily Herald* reflected official Party views in several editorials.[4] The paper demanded that the Government give a clear answer to the Arab demand for the suspension of Jewish immigration as a precondition for ending the general strike and armed struggle. The

author of the editorial, like the Labour leadership, must have been aware that immigration was a vital issue for the Zionist leaders, and that the Palestinian labour movement fiercely objected to the suspension of immigration demanded by the Arabs. Ben-Gurion had made this abundantly clear, and had enlisted Creech Jones' aid in persuading Labourites, but later admitted defeat.[5]

At the same time, however, the *Daily Herald* denounced the conduct of the Arabs and demanded firm Government action against 'armed Arab bands'. It also despatched A.L. Easterman, a Jew and a pro-Zionist, to Palestine to report on the situation, and his reports emphasized the fascist and reactionary nature of the views of the leaders of the uprising.[6]

Katznelson came to London at the end of 1936 and, although hampered by ill health and poor knowledge of the English language, initiated meetings with Labour leaders (sometimes communicating with them with the aid of an interpreter). He reported on these meetings to the Party immediately after his return to Palestine.[7]

Katznelson's first contacts were with Norman Angell and H.N. Brailsford, who had no official standing in the Labour Party, though they were veterans of the labour movement. He had known both for many years and described Angell as a man who 'lives the sufferings of the Jewish people to a remarkable extent … and regards British policy in Palestine as a great mistake for that country as well'. He found Brailsford deeply involved in the controversy over the Popular Front and regretfully noted that his old friend had little time to spare for Palestinian problems.

The meeting with the greatest practical political implications was with Clement Attlee, and Katznelson described their conversation as 'very bitter'. Attlee and Arthur Greenwood had approached the Colonial Secretary several days previously, after having been asked to bring pressure to bear on the Government on the Palestine question.[8] Katznelson gained the immediate impression that Attlee was 'already tired of Zionism', though the Labour leader received him cordially. Nor was he convinced by Attlee's assurance that the Colonial Secretary had promised him that there would be no restrictions on immigration. Katznelson countered by reminding him that there had been new developments: the Government was trying to involve neighbouring Arab rulers in the Palestine situation and might have made promises to them. This irritated Attlee and an argument ensued, but Katznelson felt that Attlee was bound to defend official policy because 'he sees himself as likely to become premier – though he probably never will be – and as representative of the British Empire'. The atmosphere became heated when Katznelson asked Attlee to intercede with the Government for the arming of Jewish settlers, and Attlee flatly refused.

This clash on a question which was marginal in importance in relation to overall British policy in Palestine vividly illustrates the gulf between the views of the two men. For Katznelson, self-defence was a historic value and a means of safeguarding the physical existence of the Yishuv in Palestine. For Attlee, it represented an attempt by private citizens to take the law into their own hands, and offended his love of legalistic formalism. It also ran counter to his belief that fascist aggression could not be prevented by rearmament. He advocated international disarmament and restricting arms to the strengthening of the policing powers of the League of Nations. Hence his reaction to Katznelson's request for arms for Jewish settlers. But, these reasons apart, Attlee had always been the most consistently anti-Zionist of the Labour leaders (and was to remain so). In the early twenties he had already stated his view that Zionism was a romantic and irrational movement.[9]

Katznelson's most interesting encounters took place at the Labour Party Conference in Edinburgh (which he attended with the *Davar* correspondent, Ari Ankorion). He met Susan Lawrence, and found her concerned at what she considered to be indifference and hostility within the Party to the Zionist issue. 'Susan Lawrence told me what is going on at the N.E.C. regarding Palestine … There are people there who are influenced by Arab propaganda and have doubts on Zionism. And all their meetings are taken up with their internal debates.'[10] Katznelson nevertheless tried to persuade Susan Lawrence to submit a draft resolution to the N.E.C. formulated by the Zionist Executive in London. She thought such a move was doomed to failure, but promised to propose a debate on the Palestine issue, and arrange for a resolution to be submitted to the Conference plenum. The Labour leadership soon found itself under pressure from several directions: the Poalei Zion draft resolution was counterbalanced by an anti-Zionist resolution from a Whitechapel group. It was finally decided to adopt the resolution passed several months previously by the T.U.C. Conference at Plymouth.[11] It affirmed the movement's support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, deplored the riots in Palestine which were against the interests of workers of both peoples, and reiterated belief in the possibility of 'cordial cooperation' between Jewish and Arab workers.

So far the resolution appeared balanced and routine in tone, but the Executive decided to add a clause which aroused the concern of the Zionist Executive.

> Recognizing the fact that the situation of Palestine makes it a point of extreme strategical importance, and as such an object of rival imperialist ambitions, this Conference declares that in the interests of the peace of the world *that country should be under international control*; it therefore upholds the principle of government under the existing British Mandate under the League of Nations, so as to ensure equal economic opportunities to all countries and a proper protection of minorities. [12] [*Emphasis added*]

According to Katznelson, this clause greatly distressed Chaim Weizmann, who read about it while in Paris and interpreted it as implying Labour's intention to advocate return of the British Mandate to the League of Nations. His reaction indicates how much importance he attributed to Labour's public pronouncements on Zionism. Katznelson, who was closely involved in the events, was unconcerned, because of his known scepticism on the subject of public proclamations and because the resolution contained a guarantee to support the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

It would seem, however, that the additional clause was not inserted merely in order to placate the Party's left wing. It also reflected certain traditional elements in Labour's outlook on international problems and on Zionism in Palestine. These included hatred of imperialism; belief in the possibility of solving disputes through the League of Nations, and belief in the need to mete out just treatment to all peoples, and particularly minorities. The clause suggested that the British role in Palestine was to ensure equal economic conditions to both peoples and to defend national minorities. This role was incumbent on Britain as the League of Nations trustee, but was not consonant with the guarantee (in the opening section) to continue supporting the establishment of a national home.

The resolution undoubtedly reflected the atmosphere at the Conference. Presenting it to the delegates, Susan Lawrence obliquely suggested that Zionism was no longer merely a national movement: 'It began as a national and religious movement. It has gone a great deal further.'[13]

She went on to describe in glowing terms the socialist utopia being created in Palestine and the Histadrut's contribution to the lives of both Jewish and Arab workers. Ankorion later reported to Palestine that her speech was greeted with 'lack of interest and even a tinge of hostility towards us … Hands were raised in favour of the Executive resolution but not immediately and not eagerly, and certainly not out of recognition of the justice of the resolution; it was because Susan Lawrence raised her hand – … and the delegates could not refrain from supporting her opinion, which is that of the Executive'.[14]

Katznelson reported that there were doubts as to whether the resolution would be submitted to the Conference because of the preoccupation with other urgent issues. And he described the Palestine debate as

> far from inspiring … an honest, veteran socialist from Whitechapel got up and said: 'what do you want, we are in favour of peace among nations', and a young man got up and made an openly anti-Zionist speech, saying that it was all a trick of the imperialists … And someone said that Palestine is the National Home of the Arabs and the Jews have national homes wherever they live … The audience was not greatly interested. And if I were not a Palestinian and a Zionist, I would have thought they were right.[15]

Katznelson had a natural tendency to understand the motives and views of his opponents, and hence his mere restrained description. But it was Ankorion who summed up the occasion almost prophetically.

> Labour has expressed its sympathy for us in a resolution which is certainly an important political document, a binding document, even if it does not contain all we would like … But this does not change the fact that this sympathy is felt only by a few of the best of the Labourites who are now slightly acquainted with our endeavour and are in contact with our leaders. In the Party itself there are nuclei of antipathy and opposition to us, and under certain conditions, particularly as a result of successful Arab propaganda … they could become a grave threat to us.[16]

Ankorion's views were echoed by a young Palestinian, Elazar Haglili, then a Poalei Zion emissary in London, in a letter to Ben-Gurion in January 1937. He described public debates on the Palestine situation, attended by socialist intellectuals and by liberals who were not identified with socialism. His conclusion was that despite the eloquence, fluent English and convincing statistical evidence of the pro-Zionist speakers, 'the great majority of the non-Jewish audience is sympathetic to the Arab cause'. The Arabs won the hearts of their audiences as representatives of an oppressed people striving for national liberation, he wrote, while the Jewish speakers (most of them Londoners and not emissaries from Palestine), missed the mark.[17]

The appointment of the Peel Commission alerted the Labour Party to the need to plan long-term policy on Palestine. In early 1937 two confidential documents relating to this issue were circulated in Party institutions: the first a report of the sub-committee appointed by the Party's International Department,[18] and the second a memorandum produced by the Committee on Imperial Affairs.[19] The memo offered guidelines for Party policy on Palestine, and expressed unequivocal opposition to the plan to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab cantons (which had been widely mooted in Government circles from Spring 1936).[20] 'Cantons would merely

stereotype communalism and foster disruptive and factious sentiment', the memorandum stated. It reiterated the traditional Labour demand that the appropriate social, economic and political conditions be created for the fostering of Jewish-Arab cooperation in Palestine. The memorandum went to to advocate continued Jewish immigration to Palestine adapted to the country's absorptive capacity, and the honouring of the commitment towards the Jewish people with regard to the national home. But a recommendation was made which aroused controversy in the Committee and concern in the Zionist Executive. It read as follows: 'For a period of ten years the immigration of Jews should also be governed by a proviso that the present relative proportions of Jews and Arabs in Palestine should be preserved approximately. This would be a most important device allaying Arab apprehensions.'

Although the Sub-Committee report noted explicitly that members had differed on this point, the plenum accepted the recommendation, thus concurring with the views of moderate Arab leaders in Palestine,[21] and after six months also with the Government's attitude.

The committee also proposed for Palestine a form of government like that existing in Ceylon, where local representatives dealt with internal affairs and the High Commissioner was entrusted with foreign affairs, security and immigration, and enjoyed extensive veto powers. This was considered to be preferable to unlimited self-rule for Palestine, which might lead to total anarchy.

Finally, it was recommended that the memo be submitted to the Party Executive for discussion prior to the publication of the Peel Commission recommendations, but that the final decisions be postponed until after the latter appeared.

In a second report, submitted in April, the Sub-Committee explicitly recommended that for the next ten years the ratio of Jews to Arabs be maintained at forty to sixty. This time the members were unanimous in their opinion. They also abandoned the idea of delegating internal affairs to representatives of the local population (which was anathema to the Zionist Executive), and recommended expansion of the powers of local municipal authorities. They concurred with the Zionist view that representative legislative bodies should be elected only after the two peoples had demonstrated their ability to cooperate with one another.[22]

While the Labour Party Committee was sitting, various friends of Zionism tried to persuade the members to amend their recommendations. Dov Hoz was summoned to London again to meet Labour leaders, including Morrison and Bevin.[23] In May Hoz, Katznelson and Ben-Gurion met the Committee members against a background of rumours that the Peel Commission was going to recommend partition of Palestine.[24]

The Committee Chairman, Hugh Dalton, assured the Palestinians of the Party's sympathy with Zionism and asked for their views on partition. The latter, for reasons to be discussed below, evaded the issue and preferred to dwell on the restrictions on Jewish immigration. They also said that they would scrutinize the Royal Commission's recommendations in the light of the Balfour Declaration. Ben-Gurion declared that he opposed partition since Palestine had already been partitioned twice: after the First World War, France had taken part of the country, and in 1922 Transjordan had been taken. Hoz summed up his impressions of the meeting by noting that 'there was no great inspiration. One could sense profound weariness, though accompanied by good will.'[25]

The Committee did not take a stand on partition, but were undoubtedly against it, since they strongly opposed the less radical cantonization scheme.

Attlee did not attend the meeting, so Hoz notes, because he was occupied with an important debate in the House, but two weeks later he was provided with an opportunity to proclaim his views on partition. At the beginning of July, a month before publication of the Peel Commission's Report, Weizmann convened a group of politicians in order to explain his own views on the issue.[26] Unlike Ben-Gurion, he unequivocally supported the Commission's recommendations, saying that if partition were accepted, at least fifty thousand Jews would be able to go to Palestine each year and thus escape persecution in Europe. In response, Churchill expressed his reservations on partition and declared himself less optimistic than Weizmann, though he promised that, if requested, he would refrain from publicly criticizing the plan. Attlee then propounded his views at length (for the first time).

> Mr. Attlee said that he was shocked by the suggestion. The Jews had done great work in Palestine. It was a great experiment which had proved very successful. What was being proposed now was a concession to violence. Of course, if the Zionists agree to the proposal he would not fight it, but it seemed to him to put an end to a great experiment in co-operation between peoples; it represents a complete confession of failure in the working of the Mandate and would be a triumph for Fascism, and he, Attlee, could not agree to the idea.

These unequivocal remarks need no elucidation, and have a significance extending beyond the immediate issue, illuminating, as they do, Attlee's basic stand on Zionism. His views on the 'great experiment in co-operation between peoples' echo the intellectual socialist outlook of the *New Statesman* in the twenties (with which he was associated). They could be reconciled with his belief that the Return of Zion was a romantic, impractical and even harmful concept since he regarded the universal and socialist experiment as a thing apart from the reconsolidation of Jewish nationalism on a political basis.

Attlee's claim that partition would be tantamount to a confession of the failure of the Mandate as an international agreement explains his formal support for the continued expansion of the Jewish national home in Palestine.

His overall internationalist outlook was such that he could not oppose a phenomenon which existed with the encouragement and approval of international bodies, even if his approval was tempered by his ideological and political reservations. His remark that partition was a triumph for Fascism possibly suggests a certain degree of sympathy for Zionism as the victim of Fascist aggression. He promised Weizmann, however, as Churchill had done, that he would not publicly condemn partition if the Zionist movement decided to support it. This was undoubtedly a gentlemanly gesture to Weizmann, appropriate to the friendly and intimate atmosphere of the meeting. Moreover, as a party leader and experienced politician Attlee undoubtedly knew that, in the face of its traditional friendship for Zionism, Labour could not express open opposition to a plan acceptable both to the British Government and to the Zionists.

The *Daily Herald* expressed its unqualified support for partition on the day after publication of the Peel Report (7 July 1937).[27] It adhered to the neutral stand it had advocated since the beginning of the Palestine unrest, having arrived at the conclusion that the Mandate had failed because of Britain's conflicting commitments to both Jews and Arabs. Now that armed conflict was dashing all hopes of cooperation between the two peoples, partition seemed the lesser evil. It would compensate the Jews for their sufferings by granting them a state in part of Palestine, which would be more than a national home. At the same time it would soothe Arab fears that the

Jews might dispossess them, and would hold out hope that Palestine's Arabs might unite with those of Transjordan in the establishment of a strong Arab state. And the article concluded: 'On the whole, this plan is, in principle, probably the best that can be devised.'

The paper opened its columns to debate on the partition scheme, and published articles by Ben-Gurion, and by John Philby, the pro-Arab Englishman who was the confidant and agent of the King of Saudi Arabia. While Philby supported partition, Ben-Gurion totally rejected it. 'The Jewish people', he wrote, 'have always regarded, and will continue to regard Palestine as a whole, as a single country which is theirs in a national sense, and will become theirs once again. *No Jew accepts partition as a just and rightful solution*'[28] [*emphasis added*].

This was obviously a political ploy on Ben-Gurion's part, since he had favoured partition since the idea was first mooted. He feared that enthusiastic Jewish support for the scheme would automatically turn the Arabs against it, and also believed that by expressing opposition, he could extract from the British better territorial conditions for the Jewish state. (He hinted, in the *Daily Herald* article, for example, that a Jewish state without Jerusalem was unthinkable.) His policy was that the Zionist movement should demand emphatically the continuation of the Mandate: should partition be forced upon them, however, they should endeavour to ensure the best possible border for their state.

Ben-Gurion and Weizmann were divided on this issue. The latter, it will be recalled, had openly advocated partition and tried to recruit political support for it in Britain. The fact that Ben-Gurion as Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and leader of the Palestine labour movement was against partition, saved Labour from a dilemma. At the same time, the Labour leaders avoided condemning partition on principle.

On 21 July the House of Commons debated the Peel Commission conclusions,[29] and Labour speakers propounded various, sometimes contradictory theories. They condemned the reactionary, feudal and even fascist character of the Arab national leadership, and roundly denounced Arab gang terror. At the same time, they stressed their sympathy for the Arab *fellaheen* and workers, without considering whether Arab leaders were reflecting the wishes of the masses in opposing the Jews. And untroubled by doubts, they continued to advocate the traditional view that a joint society of Jews and Arabs should be set up in Palestine: 'We still feel', said Tom Williams, 'that there is room in Palestine for Arab and Jews to live and to co-operate together for their mutual advantage'.[30]

The Labour M.P.s criticized the actual plan on practical political grounds. Pointing to the tiny dimensions of the proposed Jewish state, they expressed fears that the sizeable Arab majority in the Jewish area would, in effect, negate its Jewish nature. They also saw the geographical division of the two states as unfeasible and the proposed economic ties as impracticable. And, under the influence of various Zionist spokesmen, they declared that any proposed Jewish state must include Jerusalem. As Morgan Jones, chief Labour speaker, said: 'Jerusalem, after all, is the heart and soul of the Jewish hope in respect of Palestine.' It was also pointed out that partition of Palestine might cause all-out war between the Jews and the Moslem world.

But, whatever their reservations, the Labour spokesmen did not unequivocally condemn the plan. After a lengthy debate, the Party agreed to support a resolution which implied that the House neither a priori approved the Government plan, nor rejected it outright.[31]

Later, at the 1939 Labour Party Conference (at Bournemouth), the official report represented

the resolution as an important parliamentary political achievement.[32] This was undoubtedly true, since Labour had certainly achieved what it had set out to do in this debate. The partition proposal had been shelved, and the status of the League of Nations institutions whose authority Labour wished to strengthen was recognized. Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, emerged from the debate with a totally different impression, aware that he had gone too far in his tactical opposition to partition. Pro-Zionists had so effectively expressed their reservations about the plan, under his influence, as to endanger the entire scheme.[33]

The day after the Commons debate, the *Daily Herald* changed its tune from enthusiastic to qualified support, claiming that the partition plan was impractical.[34] A week later. it wrote that the longer the plan was delayed while being rescrutinized, the more likely it was to become superfluous. More and more Jews and Arabs would come to realise 'that mutual reconciliation and cooperation would be preferable to the scheme of partition which is in fact before them'.[35]

Two weeks later, after the 19th Zionist Conference in August 1937 had approved partition in principle but rejected the geographical area of partition, the paper proposed that a tripartite Jewish-Arab-British conference be held to discuss the future of Palestine.[36]

In its new spirit of neutrality, the *Herald* now opened its columns to leaders of the Arab nationalist movement.[37] It continued, however, to deplore acts of terror and to demand their uncompromising suppression. At the same time it noted that military force and a power policy could not solve problems like that of Palestine, and cited the cases of Ireland and India as proof.[38]

The Party, at this time, adopted a policy of minimizing its commitment to solution of the problem. The 1937 Party Conference did not pass a resolution on Palestine, though the Palestine question was mentioned in the annual report to delegates.[39] The same deliberate avoidance of a clear stand was evident in a speech by Ernest Bevin at the T.U.C. Conference in Norwich. He spoke of Palestine as having been earmarked from the beginning of the Mandate as a refuge for persecuted Jews, and described Nazi persecution of Jews as a new and cruel example of national discrimination. And he went on to say:

> Now a new proposal has emerged to partition Palestine. I make no pronouncement on the demands of that proposal. It has been the subject of serious discussion at the Zionist Congress. The test which I think will have to be applied by the Labour Movement is whether it will contribute towards the ending for all time of the persecution of the Jewish race. Will the fact that they are a State with Ambassadors at the various Chancelleries of the world assist them to a greater extent than the Mandate granted by the League.[40]

The reservations Bevin cited were based on humanitarian arguments: concern for Jewish refugees and the need to find a refuge for them. He himself took pride in his statement and, encountering Ankorion at the Party Conference, asked him to convey to the comrades in Palestine 'that it was not only Ernest Bevin who said it; all the T.U.C. stands behind it'.[41] Though it could be argued that Bevin was merely trying to win new supporters, he deserves the benefit of the doubt: he continued to display interest in the plight of the Jews both publicly and behind the scenes. In 1938 he corresponded with Labour leaders in Australia and New Zealand in

order to find a refuge for Jewish refugees.[42]

This evidence suggests that Bevin's concern for Jewish refugees was not a political ploy. It may be assumed that he sincerely sought an effective solution. It should be recalled that the T.U.C. did not welcome the prospect of a mass influx of German Jews. But again, this does not render Bevin's motives suspect. He could have claimed that the problem was an international one, the affair of the League of Nations or the governments concerned. He chose to act otherwise, which suggests that his stand on Jews and Zionism was more complex.

According to Ankorion, the 1937 Party Conference was more relaxed in atmosphere than the previous Conference. He thought that the weakening of the left wing had had a positive effect on the Party stand on Zionism. Reporting on his talks with pro-Zionist Labour leaders, Ankorion wrote that Susan Lawrence and Philip Noel-Baker disapproved of partition since the possibilities available under the Mandate had not been exhausted. Noel-Baker spoke of the vital need for Jewish-Arab cooperation and criticized the Mandatory Government for not insisting that Palestinian children learn both Hebrew and Arabic in school. Susan Lawrence expressed her gratification that Labour had not taken any final decision on partition in the light of the differences within the Zionist movement.

Creech-Jones told Ankorion that unanimous Labour approval of the Peel Report had been replaced by a more critical approach, but the Jewish attitude was now causing confusion. On the one hand, they appeared to want partition, and on the other, they feared it. He thought that 'there is a possibility of winning many concessions for the Jews if they were not hasty but stood firm on their demands'.[43] Creech-Jones was obliquely advising his Jewish friends not to rush into acceptance of partition, but to fight for what they wanted, including widescale immigration.

The reserved Labour approach to partition aroused the concern of labour leaders in Palestine, and convinced them of the urgent need for propaganda activity. Susan Lawrence was persuaded to submit to the Party Executive a memorandum stating that, as matters stood, partition was the necessary evil or sole possible good. She proposed that the Jewish state might become affiliated to the British Commonwealth (an idea undoubtedly suggested to her by Jewish friends).

The Parliamentary Party and the Party International Committee held a joint meeting on Palestine in the House on 10February 1938, and Ben-Gurion was invited to attend.[44] The Government decision to despatch another commission – the Woodhead Commission – to Palestine was discussed, and the general view was that the Government intended by this move to shelve the partition scheme. In the face of this threat, Ben-Gurion abandoned his previous tactics and spoke frankly. He tried to explain why he had 'misled' the British comrades at their previous meeting. As Chairman of the Zionist Executive, he said, he had been prohibited from expressing an explicit opinion on a matter still sub judice within the Zionist movement; only after a decision was taken by official movement institutions was he permitted to explain why he had always favoured partition. For him, as for Weizmann, the primary object of the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine was the speedy rescue of two million European Jews and their transfer to Palestine. In order to achieve this aim, it was essential to amend the Peel Commission recommendations and to extend the borders of the Jewish state by adding Galilee, the Negev and Jerusalem to it. And meanwhile, while the scheme was under discussion, widescale rescue immigration should be permitted.

Was it possible to arrive at agreement with moderate Arabs, Attlee asked. Ben-Gurion replied in the negative, explaining that even the more moderate Arabs refused to accept Jewish national

existence in Palestine. To questions on the practical territorial aspects of the partition scheme, Ben-Gurion answered that his movement would not give up Galilee, since 'apart from the value of Galilee in itself to the Jewish people, the proximity of Lebanon is a question of life for us and for Christian Lebanon'. He did not however insist on annexation of the Negev to the Jewish state, and was ready 'to agree to a British Mandate in the south, if it ensures immigration and settlement'. (His audience were particularly interested in the fate of Galilee because of its large Arab population and the problem of their status under a Jewish state.)

When Susan Lawrence proposed that the Party set up a committee to examine the practical aspects of partition, Attlee replied sharply that no decision had yet been taken on the principle itself. A lengthy discussion followed Ben-Gurion's departure from the meeting, and the following statement was issued:

> There was a general agreement after a long discussion, that the party should maintain its critical attitude towards the Government for its administration and abandonment of the Mandate; should continue to press for an early announcement by the Government of its definite policy; raise the matter of Jewish immigration and continue to adopt a *non-committal* attitude as regards the principle of partition, on the understanding that any plan proposed by the British Government for a new Jewish State should be examined from the standpoint of its practicability as a unit Government, its security, and the possibility of growth within the new frontiers.[45] [*Emphasis added*]

This was essentially a compromise, whereby the opponents of partition were conciliated by the promise of a 'non-committal attitude' and qualified supporters were also satisfied. Ben-Gurion was promised both that the Party would be more restrained in its criticism of the Government and that it would take a greater interest in the problem of Jewish immigration.

Ben-Gurion's impressions of the meeting are recorded in a letter to Zalman Aharonovitch, written four days later.[46] Attlee, he wrote, opposed partition for several reasons:

> (a) He does not believe in the possibility of solving the Jewish problem in Palestine, and sees Zionism only as spiritual centre. (b) He fears that, for strategic reasons, the Jewish state will be unable to survive. (c) He sees the repeal of the Mandate as a blow to the League of Nations. (d) He does not believe – and I doubt if he has any interest – in the strict implementation of the Mandate, but his heart is not drawn to a Jewish state.

Ben-Gurion elaborated on this theme when he addressed the Mapai Central Committee immediately after his return from London.[47] He claimed that Labour's official policy had been constantly Zionist, and attributed the crisis in the early thirties solely to Passfield's personality. But, even if that episode was insignificant,

> we had too much faith in the Zionism of the Labour Party. First of all – there are very few people within it who understand Zionist issues, and this does not surprise me, since after 30–40 years existence of the Zionist movement, there are few Zionists who grasp what Zionism is, and it is doubly difficult for a non-Jew to understand.

Moreover, Labour's support for Zionism should be assessed in the context of the character of the parliamentary regime in Britain. Labour had spent many years in opposition and it was therefore incumbent upon it to oppose Government policy; Zionism had benefited from this fact.

Despite his sceptical analysis, however, Ben-Gurion conceded that

> within the Labour Party there are, relatively speaking, more people who sympathize with Zionism than in other parties. This is because it is a humanistic party and because the labour movement is playing a major part in the Palestine endeavour. There is friendship between the two labour parties. *But we should not exaggerate the significance of this friendship*. [*Emphasis added*]

Ben-Gurion reiterated the views that Attlee supported the Mandate only because it had been approved by the League of Nations. He had little faith in the chance of Labour backing on immigration since, 'in order to help us on immigration they must believe in Zionism. And Attlee, who sees no connection between immigration to Palestine and the plight of Polish Jewry, will find it hard to harness himself to this task.' Hence, Ben-Gurion feared that territorialist ideas might be revived, with a consequent detrimental effect on the relations between Labour and Zionism.

Ben-Gurion may have been right about Attlee, who believed (like Sidney Webb) that the Jewish problem should be solved in the Jews' countries of residence. As for other Labour politicians, we have noted that Bevin had expressed an interest in mass settlement projects in Australia and New Zealand, and tried to clarify the practical aspects of the scheme. In August 1938, after the breakdown of the Evian Conference, Morgan Jones wrote an article in which he argued that mass immigration to Palestine was impossible under prevailing conditions. The British Government should open the gates of Palestine to the thousands seeking entry, but this could not suffice. What was needed, he wrote, was a mass settlement project somewhere in the world entailing organization on an international scale and very large budgets.[48]

The *Daily Herald*, which condemned British xenophobia and demanded that a controlled number of Jews be permitted to enter Britain from Germany, also suggested that an overall solution to the problem be sought in an underpopulated British dominion.[49]

The most clearly stated document on the refugee problem was a memorandum submitted to the Party Executive at the end of 1938.[50] It was confined to discussion of the problems of refugees from Germany and Austria, but stressed that any solution would serve as a precedent for the Governments of Poland and Rumania, which were anxious to rid themselves of millions of Jews. The danger was that the finding of a constructive solution for German and Austrian Jews would create pressures on the millions of Jews of Eastern Europe and on international institutions for a similar solution. The conclusion was that Palestine, because of its tiny dimensions and political situation, could not absorb mass immigration, nor could Western Europe provide a solution. At the most the two areas could take in a small proportion of the refugees, but the comprehensive solution should be sought in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Despite their growing interest in alternative territorial solutions to refugee problems, the Labour leaders kept their promise to Ben-Gurion to concentrate on immigration to Palestine. In a debate in the Commons, Labour speakers sharply attacked the restrictions the Government had imposed on immigration of Jews to Palestine at a time when their plight was worsening.[51]

Thus, the territorialist issue was added to the issues in dispute between Labour and Zionist socialism in the thirties. The basic dissent between the movements on such questions as Hebrew labour, local elected institutions, the Jewish state and the territorial solution, were never the

subject of political debate, since Labour was not in power. Because of their political status and because of their traditional support for Zionism, Labour tried to gloss over the differences in so far as possible. They therefore avoided unequivocal statements and policies deviating from the Mandatory and Balfour Declaration guidelines (which offered considerable room for manoeuvre).

Characteristic of this stand were the editorials published in the *Daily Herald* before and after the Woodhead Commission Report was published. No clear-cut decision could be taken on Palestine, the paper wrote, since the Government had involved itself in dual commitments. 'The fact of today is that both Jews and Arabs are in Palestine, that both feel it is their "home", (that it is impossible to turn either out) … Under some agreement they must live side by side in peace in Palestine.'[52] The editorial which appeared after publication of the Report, approved the Government plan for a Jewish-Arab round table conference on Palestine.[53] Success of the conference depended on two factors, the paper wrote: the Arabs must be persuaded that the Government has no intention of depriving them of legitimate rights; secondly, it must be clear that no British policy could be regarded as humane which disregarded the growing plight of Jews in Nazi Germany and elsewhere in Europe. How the paper hoped to reconcile these two just claims it did not say.

The Labour Zionist emissaries from Palestine were concerned at the official Labour stand and the attitude adopted by local branches and trade unions. Elazar Haglili reported to the Mapai Central Committee at the end of 1938 that he had encountered within the Labour Party 'an abyss of total ignorance of our achievements, our path and our demands; sometimes it is not only ignorance, but also readiness to deny our cause'. His conclusion was that 'it would be naïve to believe that in times of trouble all these people would rally to our support. The outcome might be totally different, and if it is not, it will be a miracle.'[54]

The 'miracle' did in fact occur. When the 1939 White Paper was published, and it transpired that the Government intended to abandon the Jews to the mercies of the Arab majority, Labour rallied to their aid. In the Commons, at the Annual Conference, on every available platform, the Labour Party attacked a policy they regarded as a political blunder and moral crime. The *Daily Herald* strongly condemned the injustice towards the Jews perpetrated by the Government.[55] The situation called for a compromise, which would satisfy neither side but would enable them to live together, the paper wrote:

> The White Paper was thus bound to be a sorry document at best. But it was not to be outrageous. It was bound to cause disappointment. But it was not bound to cause a wave of tragic despair to sweep blackly over one of the two parties. It was bound to be a compromise. But it was not bound to be a sacrifice … Once again, as if it were a recrudescence of 'appeasement', the comparatively helpless are sacrificed to those with power … Once again the trust of those relying upon the pledge of great power is betrayed. Once again, broad considerations of justice and humanity are subordinated to a narrow conception on 'imperial interests'.

The paper hastened to add that,

> If these remarks stress the Jewish claim for consideration, it is not because there is no equal strong Arab claim. Indeed, it is fundamental to recognize that in moral force the Jewish and

> the Arab claims are equal. But this White Paper does not treat them as equal. It concedes the Arab claim by cancelling the Jewish claim.[56]

In the Commons debate on the White Paper Labour speakers, as well as many Conservatives, including Churchill, attacked Government policy.[57] Tom Williams said that the document contravened the spirit of the Mandate, since it did not further the social development of the country.

Philip Noel-Baker also denounced the White Paper's intention to abandon the Jewish minority to the Arab majority. He warned the Government that the Jews would not accept the suspension of immigration and were liable to take up arms. The policy would fail, he said, 'because in the most tragic hour of Jewish history the British people will not deny them their promised Land'. Herbert Morrison said that the disgraceful plan could not be regarded as binding on future governments. In a dramatic appeal to the House, he begged that Jewish refugees be permitted to reach their last haven on earth, a country the size of Wales.

The tone of these speeches was emotional, reflecting a humanitarian attitude towards Zionism, rooted deep in the traditions of the labour movement. This mood contrasted with the atmosphere of intellectual debate on questions of principle and tactical points which characterized the thirties. But, though the tone was new, their verbal content was unchanged. For better or worse, Labour remained loyal to the formula of the Mandate as interpreted by the British Government in the 1922 White Paper. This was true of the resolution passed at the Party's Annual Conference at Southport on 29 May 1939. It expressed strong opposition to the White Paper for attempting to perpetuate the minority status of the Jews in Palestine; and reiterated the guarantee to support the building of the national home, but clung to the formula of absorptive capacity as a criterion for the scope of immigration: 'This conference calls upon the Government to rescind the White Paper policy and to re-open the gates of Palestine for Jewish immigration in accordance with the *country's economic absorptive capacity*.' [*Emphasis added*.][58] This criterion, appropriate to the twenties, was inadequate in a period of crisis, when the fate of hundreds of thousands hung in the balance. One can scarcely criticize Labour leaders for failing to anticipate the dimensions of the coming catastrophe. But the plight of hundreds of thousands of German and Austrian Jews should have sufficed to convince Labour of the need for new criteria for absorption in Palestine.

What view did the Jewish Palestinian emissaries in London take of Labour's standpoint at the time? Hoz noted with gratification in his diary at the beginning of May that Attlee had asked for a meeting with the Prime Minister in order to persuade him to shelve the White Paper.[59] Yet he remained sceptical as to Attlee's personal attitude and that of the movement as a whole towards Zionism. 'The Labour Party', he wrote,

> has taken a wellknown stand on our affairs. Attlee is the party leader and thinks that it is his duty to carry out loyally the policy adopted by the Party. Hence, he is seen to be active in the House, though his heart is not completely with us … And we should realize that Attlee is not the only Labour Leader who is opposed to the Party line.[60]

Hoz went on to describe the Labour Party Conference, and noted that the Palestine question had been discussed in a friendly atmosphere but rather hastily. And he added: 'We must make intensive efforts within the Labour Party to preclude surprises in the lengthy campaign we are now undertaking.'

These remarks by Hoz, on the eve of the Second World War, conclude this section. They deserve attention not merely as a shrewd political assessment by an alert emissary, but as a reflection of labour Zionism's growing misgivings in the course of the thirties. These misgivings were not lulled by Labour's stand on the 1939 White Paper; they were nurtured on memories of experiences with the MacDonald's second Government, on ideological controversy, on cognizance of the opportunistic approach to Zionism of some Labour leaders, particularly Clement Attlee, and on the critical attitude of Party radicals.

The Radicals

The term 'radicals' is used to define those individuals and political groups who stood to the left of the movement and seceded from Labour in the course of the thirties. They included such people as H.N. Brailsford, the former members of the Socialist League, rallied around *Tribune*, and the I.L.P. We also include journals which had always adopted an independent stand, such as *Forward*, or the *New Statesman*. Our survey ranges from the moderate to the radical, in other words from the *New Statesman* to the I.L.P.

The *New Statesman*[61] of the thirties reflected the humanistic and intellectual socialism of its new editor, Kingsley Martin. On his own evidence, he was 'a political hybrid, a product of pacifist nonconformity, Cambridge scepticism, Manchester Guardian Liberalism and L.S.E. socialism'.[62] Despite his close friendship with Harold Laski, he took little interest in Zionist affairs, and there was a dearth of articles on Zionist and Jewish matters in the journal. Nothing at all was published in the first half of the decade, and only three articles appeared between 1936 and 1939; two of these deserve to be quoted.

The first was written by G.T. Garratt, an expert on agriculture and colonial administration, who visited Palestine in the early thirties. The author advocated a certain degree of national autonomy in Palestine, and also believed that all uncultivated land should be allotted for Jewish settlement.[63] Though the article was interpreted as favourable to Zionism,[64] Garratt was sceptical as to the future of Zionism, since he presaged the intensification of the Jewish-Arab confrontation, thought that Jewish settlement would lead to dispossession of *fellaheen* and, finally, was not convinced that Palestine offered a solution to the Jewish problem.[65]

The second, more important article, was unsigned and appeared after the publication of the White Paper (it was probably written by Martin himself).[66] The writer dwelt on the consistently pro-Zionist stand of the *New Statesman* over the past two decades. He believed that this support resulted from conviction that the Jews were creating a significant social experiment by building a binational society where two nations could maintain their separate cultures while establishing harmonious political and economic cooperation. But time had shown that the ideal was unworkable, and a dangerous and tragic political situation now existed in Palestine. Two peoples were locked in uncompromising struggle and Britain was 'tied by pledges *which perhaps we ought never to have given*, but since we have given them we cannot escape without disgrace and danger' [*Emphasis added*].

The article disputed the Zionist view that the Palestine riots were being conducted by criminal gangs and were backed by the Arab masses incited by feudal leaders and fascist propagandists.

> There is a real Arab nationalism in Palestine, widespread, deep-rooted and formidable … Their fears may be exaggerated, but it is idle to imagine they can be conjured away or ignored … We cannot be expected, on grounds either of principle or expediency, to suppress Arab nationalism for the sake of Jewish nationalism.

The logical outcome should have been abandonment of the Mandate, but the writer recognized the validity of the commitment made to the Jews and was sensitive to their terrible plight in Europe. The twofold solution he proposed was that the problem of the Jewish refugees be solved in another territory, such as British Guiana, and immigration to Palestine continue in accordance with the economic absorptive capacity of the country. In practical terms, this meant the immigration of 150,000 Jews over the next five years (twice the number suggested in the White Paper). In the sphere of immigration, the White Paper should serve as an interim plan, until a better scheme was evolved, 'which would secure to the Jews their National Home in the shape of a Jewish State within the framework of the Arab State or of a Federation State'.

Convinced that Palestine's Arabs were struggling for national liberation, and that the Jewish problem could not be solved in Palestine, the author of the article should logically have supported the objectives of the White Paper. But like many members of his circle he was not fully consistent, because he recognized the justice of Jewish demands for a national home and knew that historical facts could not be altered. His hesitations and doubts on basic issues were shared by radical Labour personalities.

H.N. Brailsford is another example of a man genuinely perplexed by the search for a just solution to a complicated situation. In 1936 he was a member of the Socialist League, and wrote for *Reynolds News*. Katznelson, it will be recalled, found him at this time to be preoccupied with internal Party disputes, with little attention to spare for Palestine. He did, nonetheless, react to the Palestine events[67] in an article which echoed his earlier views. He accused the organizers of the riots of reactionary and fascist tendencies, and praised the Jewish settlement endeavour as the most promising socialist experiment outside the borders of the Soviet Union. He reiterated his belief that cooperation must be established between progressive Zionism and the backward Arab masses.

A year later, having studied the Peel Commission Report, Brailsford came to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to divide Palestine into two states.[68] He admitted that his hopes of cooperation between Jews and Arabs had been dashed; two separate national societies existed side by side and 'I had to realize that the Jews, no less than the Arabs, were nationalists'. Though Palestine could not solve the problem of millions of Jewish refugees, he believed that room could be found there for at least one million, though this would entail expanding the borders of the proposed Jewish state.

A year later, in the face of the increasing unrest in Palestine, and the Government's abandonment of partition, Brailsford changed his mind. He reverted to the opinion that the establishment of a Jewish national home should be conditional on improvement of the standard of living of Arab masses, and accused the Zionist movement and the Mandatory Government of neglecting this issue. They were now suffering the consequences and were the targets of the fury of the Arab masses.[69]

But whatever his views on Zionist and British policies, Brailsford continued to express his

concern for the refugees. As he became increasingly aware of the problem of bringing Jews into Palestine, he urged the British to take in refugees and called on all enlightened countries to undertake international efforts on their behalf.[70] These refugees, he wrote, should not be feared as potential competitors for employment; in fact, many of them, as members of the liberal professions, could contribute to Britain's economy. He did not despair of the idea of widescale immigration to Palestine at some time in the future. On the eve of the Round Table Conference he drew up a multi-stage plan for the solution of the Palestine problem.

Firstly, he proposed that the gates of Palestine be opened to refugees from Germany 'as far as *economic prudence permits and a little further*'[71] [*Emphasis added*] (The principle of economic absorptive capacity was accepted as axiomatic even by those truly concerned with the plight of the German Jews). The second stage in the plan was agrarian reform in Arab villages, and aid in improvement of Arab cultivation methods, particularly irrigation. The underlying purpose was to convert Arab agriculture to intensive cultivation, thus freeing land for sale to Jewish settlers. His third proposal was a greater Arab federation, within which the future Jewish state might find a place.

Brailsford described the White Paper as a shameful document which had broken explicit promises to the Jews, and took issue with the intention to maintain the Jews as a minority within an Arab state.

Brailsford was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the views of his friends in the Zionist movement, and there was nothing in his plan to which any of them could have taken exception.[72] But his opinions also reflected the inner debates and doubts of a man who believed in the justice of both causes and never despaired of the hope of finding a solution acceptable to both peoples.

Stafford Cripps, leader of the left-wing radical Socialist League (he was expelled from the Labour Party in 1937 for his activities on behalf of the Popular Front), held similar views to Brailsford. It will be recalled that in 1939 Cripps had been suspected by the Zionists of antisemitic predilections. Several years later, in a conversation with Dov Hoz, he expressed sympathy with the Zionist cause, but displayed what Hoz regarded as appalling ignorance on the Palestine issue and particularly on Jewish-Arab relations. During the 1936–7 crisis, Cripps made no public comment on Palestine, though the rank and file of the Socialist League was vociferously anti-Zionist. But then, in 1938, Cripps unexpectedly published in the *Tribune* an original and profoundly pro-Zionist article. It was inspired by his sense of outrage, as a man of deep-rooted religious and moral principles, at the persecution of German Jewry.[73]

Cripps criticized the British Government for conducting a policy of imperialistic intrigue in Palestine. He called the activities of the Arab leaders fascist gangsterism, and reiterated the view that peace could not be achieved until the true needs of both peoples were recognized. But he added:

> Account too must be taken of the present world situation so far as Jew and Arab are concerned. The Arab is not a persecuted outcast; there are wide dominions in which Arabs can live in safety and happiness … not so the Jews … At a time of persecution like the present it would indeed be criminal to snatch from the Jewish race the hope of having even a tiny territory that they may call their own.

This was not to suggest that there was room in Palestine for all the Jewish refugees. What Cripps proposed was that all the homeless refugees be granted Palestinian passports, facilitating their free movement. Despite his basic objections to nationalist organization and his belief in the possibility of cooperation between the Jewish and Arab proletariats, Cripps felt that this plan was impractical without a Jewish state. He therefore advocated partition 'not as a final step, but as a temporary expedient with the hope of an early possibility of federation'. It was 'unthinkable' that the Jews should be deprived of the 'last vestige of hope of a national home'.

Cripps spoke in favour of provisional partition,[74] during the Commons debate on the White Paper, but abandoned his scheme for Palestinian passports, having apparently realized what the Arab reaction might be.

The Scottish radical journal, *Forward*, opened its columns to both pro-[75] and anti-Zionist opinion[76] in the mid-thirties, but the editorials were consistently opposed to Zionism. For example,

> Popular opinion would say at once that Palestine naturally belongs to the Jews. Popular opinion would be wrong. The Jews have been out of Palestine longer than they were in it. They won it by force of arms and lost it by the same process – a sequence which is commonplace in history. Between the Jews and Palestine there is a vacuum of centuries. Before the Mandate the Arabs were more firmly established in Palestine than are most of the races in Europe in their present areas.

A more extreme article, decidedly antisemitic in tone, appeared in 1938. It accused Jewish capitalists of controlling certain governments and wrote that aliens aroused hatred against themselves. It cautioned the Government that pro-Zionist policies would turn the Arabs into fascist sympathizers. It was wrong to force hundreds of thousands of alien immigrants, i.e. Jews, upon the Arabs, and their objections were only natural. It was unrealistic to demand that Palestine should become the refuge for victims of Nazi persecution, since the country could not absorb them all. All those who supported Zionism agreed that the scope of immigration should be determined by the country's absorptive capacity. The journal offered an original solution:

> It may be that the solution of the refugee problem lies in finding some new territory. Surely it is not beyond the wit of the great powers to find the land and establish *a Jewish State* where there could be complete autonomy and complete freedom without encroaching on lands where the Jew is a continuous problem.[77]

In Zionist circles in London, and particularly, among the emissaries from Palestine, it was widely believed that the I.L.P. had strong reservations about Zionism. When it officially seceded from Labour in 1932, the Zionist Executive approached its Secretary, Fenner Brockway, and requested the I.L.P.'s views on Zionism.

In a long letter on 4 July 1938[78] to J.L. Cohen, then Secretary of the Zionist Executive in London, Brockway replied that the Party was neither indifferent nor unfriendly to the socialist achievements in Palestine. It had not consolidated its views on the issue because it felt that it was necessary to establish guidelines on imperialism and the mandatory system in general. The general conviction that the mandatory system was the instrument of imperialist interest could not be indiscriminately applied to Palestine, where several unique factors had to be taken into

consideration. According to Brockway, there were three predominant attitudes to Zionism within the I.L.P.: Brailsford's enthusiasm for Zionist socialism; Maxton's view of it as the instrument of British imperialism; and his own middle-of-the-road view which deplored the Mandate but approved of the Jewish labour movement's contribution to the development of Palestine as a whole. He summed up as follows: 'I think, on the whole, my view is that of the majority of the I.L.P. We regard the Jewish experiment as a constructive contribution to Socialism, only less important than the enormous experiment in Russia.'

At the same time, the Party was aware of Arab opposition to Zionism and felt that any solution should ensure their political rights and improve their standard of living.

Maxton remained adamantly anti-Zionist throughout the thirties, and was unmoved by lengthy discussions with Marxist Poalei Zion leaders in Palestine, Yitzhak Yitzhaki, and Zeev Abramovitch, and with Mordechai Orenstein of Hashomer Hatzair. In 1936, Maxton wrote the introduction to a pamphlet by Abramovitch, in which the latter denied that Zionism was the instrument of imperialism and accused the Arab nationalist movement of reactionary tendencies. He proposed complete political and civil equality for the two peoples in Palestine, freedom of immigration, social and agrarian reform and a joint class struggle. Maxton stressed that the I.L.P.,

> in common with most other socialist parties, is not inclined to accept the Zionist view. It does, however, recognize the urgent need for some place on the surface of the globe, where Jewish workers can live without having to face daily danger of imprisonment, torture, starvation and butchery.[79]

The clichés which both Abramovitch and Maxton employed served to conceal the basic conflict between them. The former wanted mass Jewish immigration to Palestine, while Maxton favoured a territorialist solution. And, more significant, Abramovitch wrote of agreement between the two 'peoples', while Maxton preferred to emphasize the solidarity of the Jewish and Arab working classes, playing down the nationalist factor.

Maxton's views were unaffected by the worsening plight of German and Austrian Jewry. In the 1939 Commons debate on the White Paper, he demanded immediately independence for Palestine, and tried to persuade the Jews that they need not fear minority status, citing the example of the Scots. 'I do not see why the Jews, with their experience of centuries of struggle, should be afraid to face life on a democratic basis in the minority which is only one to two.'[80] His proposal that the Government set up a democratic state in Palestine echoed the extreme stand of the Arab leadership.

This speech reflected a more extreme viewpoint than the customary I.L.P. stand, and Brockway hastened to despatch an explanatory letter to Orenstein.[81] He feared, he wrote, that the comrades in Palestine had suffered a disappointment; they should realize that the I.L.P. was split into two camps on the Zionist issue. In the past the Party had been criticized for leaning too far towards Zionism. 'The criticism can now be made that Maxton has gone too far in the other direction.'

A deputation of two I.L.P. M.P.s had visited Palestine in 1937. The two – the uninvolved John McGovern and strongly anti-Zionist Stephen Campbell – returned as converts to Zionism. McGovern wrote a rapturous article in the *New Leader*, describing the achievements of Jewish workers. 'Instead of driving or keeping them out of the country, I say send into Palestine

unlimited numbers of Jews so that they can use their power and culture in order to bring civilization to the poor Arabs.'[82] There was room enough for both peoples, he declared.

Shortly afterwards McGovern toured Europe, meeting many Jewish refugees, and his impressions served to strengthen his support for Zionism. He became particularly friendly with Orenstein, then Hashomer Hatzair emissary in London. Orenstein described McGovern as 'shaking with emotion' when he spoke of the tragedy of the Jewish refugees.

> He is strongly critical of Brockway for his qualified statement and his fear of unequivocally condemning the Mandate. He wants the I.L.P. to stop evading practical issues relating to Palestine. He has no scruples in proclaiming that he is totally against the Arab movement, and favours Jewish immigration to Palestine, their sole home in the world.[83]

With Orenstein's help, McGovern prepared a speech for the November 1938 Commons debate, which was the most strongly pro-Zionist statement delivered there.[84] He again called for 'unlimited immigration' and appealed to the Government to honour its commitments to Jews, 'because antisemitism seems to grow more quickly even than the Jew himself can pursue his ordinary struggles through the world'. The truth of this statement would be tragically demonstrated before long, but at the time his ardent pro-Zionism aroused sharp criticism within his own Party, and the Young I.L.P. went so far as to produce a pamphlet dissociating itself from his views. Incongruously enough, Orenstein reported that Brockway had asked him to talk to McGovern, 'who has been overstepping the mark, speaking at Zionist meetings, discussing the Mandate without reservation, forgetting the Arab question in speaking of the Jews. And he (Brockway) wants *me* to restrain him.'[85]

At the April 1939 Party Conference[86] it was suggested that the I.L.P. officially dissociate itself from McGovern's statements. One of the delegates (who was of Jewish origin, as the *New Leader* hastened to point out) resoundingly attacked McGovern for supporting the Mandate. McGovern defended his views, spoke of the plight of the refugees and said that 'he would fight their rights everywhere he could'. He kept this promise as long as he remained in Parliament.

The McGovern affair was noteworthy not for its political significance, which was minimal, but because of the personal drama involved. What impelled this simple, non-intellectual representative of Scottish workers to conduct such a courageous struggle on behalf of a people remote from himself and from his constituents? It can only have been the strong moral instinct and refusal to tolerate injustice of any kind which can sometimes, hearteningly be found in the world of politics.

The majority of the Party (represented by Fenner Brockway) held views halfway between those of Maxton and of McGovern. In his autobiography Brockway wrote frankly:

> One of the most difficult questions was Palestine. To most problems one can apply general principles, but to Palestine – no. By no other questions have I been so puzzled; on no other questions have I so allowed facts and influences to surround me, examining them quietly, weighing and estimating them before reaching a conclusion.

His views, he wrote, were closer to those of Maxton than to McGovern's outlook. He saw Zionism as the instrument of British imperialism and as influenced by the interests of Jewish capitalists. He felt that any solution should encompass the great Jewish contribution to the

region, and the anti-imperialist uprising of the Arab masses, and hence he favoured 'the establishment of an Arab-Jewish Workers State independent of Britain and the forerunner of a federation of Workers States in the Arab territories'.[87]

He elaborated these views in various articles.[88] Torn between his identification with the sufferings of the Jews, and his sympathy for the Arab nationalist struggle, he wrote that the Jews should persuade the Arabs that they had no intention of establishing a national state. If they demonstrated their sincere intention to establish a socialist society in the country and the entire region, Arab opposition to mass Jewish immigration would lessen.[89] As the plight of the Jews worsened and, concomitantly, Arab hostility increased, Brockway nurtured an almost messianic vision of a socialist idyll in the Middle East, a federation of Middle Eastern and North African countries, where room would be found for millions of Jewish refugees.

> From a socialist standpoint such a prospect would be full of promise. It would provide a refuge and a great constructive task for the millions of Jewish workers persecuted in Europe. It would provide an opportunity for thousands of Jewish workers to give themselves to the creation of not only an Arab Federation of States but an Arab Federation of socialist states.[90]

These words were written at the time of the Round Table Conference, when it was clear that the partition plan was no longer valid, and can therefore be regarded as an alternative socialist proposal. Brockway believed that the key to success lay in Jewish renunciation of the demand for a Jewish state, and Arab withdrawal of the demand for immediate independence in Palestine. In effect, therefore, he was advocating the continuation of the Mandate despite his conviction that it was the instrument of imperialism. This anomaly was the outcome of his moral and ideological confusion with regard to Palestine and the Jews. Brockway did not regard himself as a supporter of Zionism. He even tried to persuade his friends from Hashomer Hatzair, such as Orenstein, to boycott the Zionist Congress,[91] and despite his affinity with Poalei Zion, he disapproved of their Zionist convictions.

The I.L.P.'s official stand on Zionism reflected the views of its Secretary, Fenner Brockway, rather than its beloved leader, Jimmy Maxton. In late 1938 it published a comprehensive plan for solution of the Palestine problem, entitled 'How Arab and Jewish Workers can Solve the Palestine Problem',[92] based on Brockway's proposals.

Immediately after publication of the White Paper, Brockway and Yitzhaki initiated the establishment of a Jewish-Arab Committee to Combat British Imperialism. Their manifesto was signed by Maxton (which suggests a change of heart), and such intellectuals as Bernard Shaw and Leonard Woolf.[93] It appealed to the workers of both peoples to unite in one socialist party for the sake of the anti-imperialist struggle. On immigration, it declared that 'it is imperative whilst maintaining similar efforts elsewhere, to open the gates of Palestine to the Jewish masses persecuted by Fascism and seeking a place of refuge in their darkest hour'.

Shortly afterwards, the I.L.P. responded to an article by Yitzhaki accusing British imperialism of trying to prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine, by declaring[94] that it 'champions the right of the persecuted Jewish workers of Europe to enter *not only Palestine* but all countries including Britain and Dominions'. The rationale was that the sincerity of declared opponents of fascism and anti-semitism would be tested by their willingness to offer refuge to victims of those

ideologies. The I.L.P. was thereby adopting the conventional territorialist theory widely advocated by British Labour, and inevitably clashed with Marxist Zionists on this issue.[95] Neither Hashomer Hatzair nor Poalei Zion were willing to contemplate solution of the Jewish problem outside the borders of Palestine.

The ideological outlook of radical socialists at this time was marked by confusion and contradiction: they believed in humane and democratic socialism but admired Soviet communism; advocated pacifism but called for an armed struggle against fascism; opposed rearmament but wanted aid for Spanish Republicans. Yet there was a certain paradoxical logic in their attitude to the Jewish predicament. The more radical their general ideology, the wider and more radical the scope of the solution they proposed. For example, the *New Statesman*, in the wake of the White Paper, proposed that the scope of immigration be increased over the decade from 75,000 to 175,000. Brailsford and Cripps, who were proponents of socialist activism, envisaged a more far-reaching solution – abandonment of the 'economic absorptive capacity' criterion and the granting of Palestinian passports. The I.L.P., with its revolutionary Marxist outlook and Trotskyite leanings, insisted on the right of millions of Jews to settle in Palestine and the vicinity. Even *Forward*, despite slight antisemitic tendencies, was not indifferent to the Jewish plight and, in violation of its basic internationalist convictions, proposed the establishment of a Jewish state somewhere in the world.

We find this attitude paradoxical because, objectively speaking, it was in harmony with the aims of Zionism, namely widescale immigration to create a Jewish majority. Thus it was the radical left, which objected to Zionism as a reactionary class movement, which in effect advocated its rapid implementation in Palestine. It should be added that, on the refugee question, the radical left went further than the Labour Party which, despite its objections to the White Paper, continued to adhere to the formula of economic absorptive capacity. The difference in outlook was probably related to political status; Labour had prospects of returning to power, and hence avoided long-term commitments, whereas the radical groups were more free to express their views and offer solutions. Furthermore, the radical intellectuals displayed greater sensitivity to questions of conscience in general, and to Jewish suffering in particular, than did the popular Labour Party.[96] The radicals also placed great emphasis on the moral and ideological aspects of socialism. It was conviction that the Jews would further the socialist cause in the Middle East which influenced the I.L.P. stand on the Jewish question in the thirties.

NOTES

1. 'Italy Stirs up Arab Riots: Secret Agents at Work in Palestine', *Daily Herald*, 13 May 1936.
2. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, vol. 313. no. 106, 19 June 1936.
3. Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary, one day before the debate (18 June 1936): 'I prepared a speech for Herbert Morrison.'
4. *Daily Herald*, 3 September 1926; 8 September 1936.
5. *Political Diary*, London, 19 June 1936. File 201/1/136, M.A.
6. See *Arab Strike that Failed*, 12 October 1936; *Land of Three Conflicts*, 2 November 1936; *Arab Pupils of Fascism*, 3 November 1936; *Can Jew and Arab Agree?* 5 November 1936; *Daily Herald*.

7. Mapai Central Committee meeting, 9 December 1936; 23/36 M.A.
8. This was reported in the press. See *Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 1936.
9. In a 1922 conversation with Moshe Rosetti (later First Clerk to the Knesset), who was Secretary of the Labour Party branch in Limehouse at the time, and Attlee was President.
10. Mapai Central Committee, 9 October 1936, 23/36 M.A.
11. Levenberg, p. 255.
12. *Ibid*., p. 224.
13. *Ibid*., p. 225.
14. Ankorion to Mapai Secretariat, 19 October 1936; 101/36, English section, vol. 2, M.A.
15. See note 7.
16. See note 14.
17. E. Haglili to Ben-Gurion, 19 January 1937; 101/37, English section, M.A.
18. Labour Party, International Department. Report of the Palestine Sub-Committee on Proposed Long-term Policy for Palestine, N.E.C., 179 (a), undated. The members of the sub-committee were: N. Bentwich, D. Shiels, S. Maynard and Susan Lawrence.
19. Labour Party, International Department. Palestine Sub-Committee Memorandum, adopted at a meeting held at the House of Commons on 10 February 1937.
20. See Gabriel Cohen, 'The Idea of Partitioning Palestine and the Jewish State (1933–35)' (Hebrew), *Tziyonut* C 1973, pp. 402–3. The idea of cantonizing was first broached by Dr Avigdor Yaakobson between 1924 and 1931.
21. About the attitude of the British Government towards partition, see Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, London 1978, chapter 15.
22. Labour Party, International Department. Report of Palestine Sub-Committee, April 1937, 179c, N.E.C.
23. Dov Hoz to Berl Locker, 21 March 1937. 101/37. English section, M.A.
24. See 'Dividing Palestine Between Jews and Arabs', *Daily Herald*, 2 April 1937.
25. Dov Hoz to Moshe Shertok, 26 May 1937, Hoz family archives.
26. Secret Note of Conversation at Dinner given by Sir A. Sinclair, 8 June 1937. Z.A., Z 4/17320.
27. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald*, 9 March 1937.
28. *Daily Herald*, 9 March 1937.
29. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 20 July 1937, vol. 326, no. 150.
30. *Ibid*., Tom Williams, p. 2356. A similar stand was adopted by Creech Jones. 'A. Creech Jones, M.P. – Unravels the Palestine Tangle', *Labour*, August 1937.
31. *Parliamentary Debates*, 22 July 1937, vol. 326, no. 150, p. 2381.
32. Levenberg, p. 225.
33. David Ben-Gurion, *Letters to Paula and the Children* (Hebrew), p. 186 (English ed., Vallentine, Mitchell, 1971).
34. *Daily Herald*, 22 July 1937.
35. 'Not Too Hasty', *Daily Herald*, 30 July 1937.
36. *Daily Herald*, 12 August 1939.
37. Musa El Husseini, 'My Cousin, the Grand Mufti', *Daily Herald*, 22 October 1937. The author tried to draw a positive picture of the Mufti, depicting him as a fighter for his people's freedom.

38. ‘Freedom in Palestine’, *Daily Herald*, 19 October 1937.
39. Levenberg, p. 225.
40. Levenberg, p. 259.
41. Ankorion to Mapai Central Committee, 11 October 1937; 101/37, vol. 1, English section, M.A.
42. A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*, vol. 1, p. 631. Bevin discussed this matter with the leaders of the Jewish Freiland Association, which advocated territorialism.
43. See note 14.
44. D. Ben-Gurion, Political Diary, London, 10 February 1938; 201/1/38, Section 2, M.A.
45. Joint Meeting on Palestine of the International Sub-Committee of the National Executive and members of the Parliamentary Party, 10 February 1938. Labour Party, International Department N.E.C.
46. Ben-Gurion to Z. Aharonovitch, London, 14 February 1938; 201/1/38, Section 2, M.A.
47. Mapai Central Committee, 4 April 1938; 23/38. M.A.
48. Morgan Jones, M.P. ‘The Problem of the Stateless Jew’, *Labour*, August 1938.
49. ‘The Refugees’, *Daily Herald*, 26 April 1938.
50. Memorandum on Refugees, December 1938, N.E.C. 175 J.G.
51. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 24 October 1938, vol. 341, no. 13.
52. ‘Palestine’, *Daily Herald*, 13 October 1938. See also editorial ‘Thistles in Palestine’, *Labour*, vol. 1, no. 4, December 1938.
53. ‘Around the Table’, *Daily Herald*, 10 November 1938.
54. Haglili’s report of mission to England. Mapai Central Committee, 12 October 1938, 23/38, M.A.
55. ‘This Plan is Unjust’, *Daily Herald*, 18 May 1939.
56. An editorial which appeared two weeks later was written in the same style and spirit: ‘Palestine’, *Daily Herald*, 23 May 1939.
57. *Parliamentary Debates*, 22 May 1939, vol. 347, no. 107.
58. Levenberg, p. 229. Hoz explained that Labour leaders had been impressed by an economic expert’s warning against extravagant commitments which would be difficult to honour in the future. note 59.
59. Hoz’s diary, London, 9 May 1939. Hoz family archives.
60. Mapai Central Committee meeting, 5 June 1939; 23/39, M.A.
61. See Kingsley Martin’s autobiography, vol. II, *Editor 1931–1945*.
62. See Kingsley Martin, vol. I, *Father Figures*, p. 201.
63. G.T. Garratt, ‘Palestine before the Commission’, *New Statesman*, 3 October 1936.
64. G.T. Garratt, ‘Palestine before the Royal Commission’ (Hebrew), *Davar*, 8 November 1936.
65. Conversation between Katznelson and Garratt; see Mapai Central Committee, 9 December 1936. 23/36, M.A.
66. ‘The New Palestine Plan’, *New Statesman*, 20 May 1939.
67. H.N. Brailsford, ‘The Arabs are Attempting to Frighten Britain’, *Reynolds News*, 24 May 1936.
68. H.N. Brailsford, ‘Will Partition Solve Palestine Puzzle?’, *Reynolds News*, 25 July 1937.
69. H.N. Brailsford, ‘What Next in Palestine?’, *Reynolds News*, 13 November 1938.
70. H.N. Brailsford, ‘Britain Should Welcome the Jews’, *Reynolds News*, 7 August 1938; ‘World Should Unite to Save the Jews’, *ibid*., 6 October 1938.

71. H.N. Brailsford, 'We Break Faith in Palestine', *Reynolds News*, 28 May 1939. The plan for a limited federation between the two Palestinian states after partition, or a wider federation, as proposed by Brailsford, was acceptable to the Zionist Executive, particularly Weizmann and Ben-Gurion, as one possibility of solving the Palestine dilemma. See: Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea of Palestine During Mandatory Times*, Shikmona 1970, pp. 201–8.
73. Stafford Cripps, 'Palestine, The Only Way to Make Peace', *Tribune*, 21 October 1938. Professor H. Levy, 'Why Jews are Persecuted', *Tribune*, 24 March 1939.
74. *Parliamentary Debates*, 25 May 1939, vol. 347, no. 107, pp. 2045–6.
75. Pro-Zionist articles: Misha Louvish (Secretary, Glasgow Poalei Zion)' Jews and Arabs', *Forward*, 31 October 1936; Michael Marcus, 'Fair Play for the Jews, Are the Arabs Exploited', *ibid*., 3 April 1937; Herbert Morrison, 'Fair Play for the Jews, a Plea for a Persecuted Minority', *ibid*., 22 January 1938. An anti-Zionist article was: Wilfrid Wellock, 'Does Palestine Belong to the Jews?'
76. *Ibid*., 17 April 1937.
77. 'The Problem of Palestine – Whose Land is it?', *Forward*, 24 October 1936.
78. Fenner Brockway to J.L. Cohen, 4 July 1932, C.Z.A. S 25 1802.
79. Z. Abramovitch, *Whither Palestine*, London 1936.
80. *Parliamentary Debates*, 23 May 1939, vol. 347, no. 108.
81. Brockway to Mordechai Orenstein, 14 June 1939, Secretariat Files, H.H.A., Merhavia.
82. John McGovern, 'Jews in Palestine', *New Leader*, 19 May 1937.
83. M. Orenstein to Kibbutz Artzi Secretariat, 1–2 November 1938, Secretariat Files, H.H.A., Merhavia.
84. *Parliamentary Debates*, 24 November 1938, vol. 341, no. 13, p. 2069.
85. See note 83.
86. See report on conference in *New Leader*, 14 April 1939.
87. Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left*, London 1942, pp. 291–2.
88. Fenner Brockway, 'The War in Palestine', *New Leader*, 14 October 1938.
89. Fenner Brockway, 'Socialist View of Palestine', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938. See also 'Terror in Palestine', 15 July 1938.
90. Fenner Brockway, 'Is it too Late Now for Jewish-Arab Unity?', New *Leader*, 10 March 1939.
91. See note 87. When I had the pleasure of meeting Fenner (now Lord) Brockway in 1972 he proved consistent in his views, negating Zionism because of Arab opposition but supporting the existence of Israel because 'it is the greatest achievement of social democracy'.
92. 'How Arab and Jewish Workers can Solve the Palestine Problem', *New Leader*, 4 October 1938.
93. 'A Call to the Workers and Peasants of Palestine', *New Leader*, 26 May 1939.
94. J. Yitzhaki, 'Why British Imperialism Doesn't Want More Jews in Palestine', *New Leader*, 21 July 1939. Yitzhaki claimed that immigration was not only a rescue operation but was also bringing socialist progress to the Middle East, hence imperialist objections.
95. On relations between the I.L.P. and Poalei Zion, see Elkana Margalit, *Anatomy of the Left (Poalei Zion Left in Palestine, 1919–1946* (Hebrew), Peretz Publication House, 1976, pp. 196–203.
96. This is illustrated by the reversed attitude of trade unions to the influx of Jewish refugees into Britain. T.U.C. General Council Minutes, Finance and General Purposes Committee,

1935–46, 23 March 1936, item 77.

> A Report was given of an informal consultation which had taken place between representatives of the printing, engineering and building trade unions concerning the training of refugees. Whilst being sympathetic with the plight of the refugees, the representatives did not feel that their Executives would accept the proposal that refugees should be enabled to obtain training in their industries as recommended by the committee at a previous meeting.

See *ibid*., 20 January 1936, item 53. In public the trade union leaders expressed their sympathy with the plight of the Jewish people persecuted by the Nazi Regime in Germany. See Haim Shamir, *Before the Holocaust, Jews in the Third Reich and Western European Public Opinion, 1933–1939* (Hebrew), Tel-Aviv, 1974, pp. 105, 189, 219, 288.

CHAPTER NINE

Second World War 1939–1945

The Labour Party

The pro-Zionist campaign initiated by Labour immediately after publication of the 1939 White Paper was stepped up when the Second World War commenced. The Party first showed its readiness to continue its struggle against Government policy in Palestine, despite the international crisis, when the Government published regulations for land transfer in Palestine.[1]

The Zionist leaders took a grave view of the Government's move. The new regulations were liable to put an almost complete stop to plans for expansion of Jewish settlement; furthermore, by submitting the regulations to the House, the Government was demonstrating beyond the shadow of a doubt its clear intention to carry out the policy laid down in the White Paper. The Zionists did not so much fear the immediate impact of the regulations (they still possessed land reserves and the Negev was still open to Jewish settlement) as the creation of constitutional facts which could prove difficult to revoke after the War. Weizmann, Shertok and Berl Locker held discussions with Attlee and Tom Williams on two occasions. At the first meeting Attlee promised to bring maximum pressure to bear on the Government. Weizmann spoke of the plight of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation, and cited his usual 'secret weapon' in such situations – the influence of the American Jewish community. He hinted that his forthcoming visit to the United States would bring no advantage to Britain if the regulations were passed. Attlee agreed that 'at a time like this it is ridiculous to consider such a law',[2] and promised to bring pressure to bear on the Government. He subsequently discussed the matter with Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, but found him obdurate, as he reported at the second meeting with the Zionist leaders.[3] On this occasion Weizmann told Attlee that he intended to discuss with the U.S. President 'a Jewish state in Palestine on the basis of the recommendations of the Peel Commission and exchange of populations'. He added that if a Jewish state with wider borders were set up and the Arab population were transferred, room could be found therefor three to four million Jews. Weizmann argued that after the war new European borders would be redelineated and millions of people would be obliged to change their countries of residence, so that the Palestine transfer would be part of the process. The new Jewish state could become a member of a Middle Eastern federation of Arab countries.

'Major Attlee nodded assent when transfer of population was mentioned. He asked, however: "Are you not putting all your eggs in one basket? There are, after all, other baskets; is not the Jewish problem too big for this one – 17,000,000 people?"' It was explained to him that the number of potential settlers was nowhere near this number, since the Jews of the United States were not included and only part of the remainder would come. 'If Palestine took three or four million Jews, the whole of the younger generation of Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe could be saved. Those who remained would find their position very greatly eased.' Furthermore,

the Zionists pointed out, there was ‘only one basket’, since no other alternative for Jewish settlement was practical or feasible.

Shertok noted that Attlee had ‘nodded assent’ to transfer of population, though he mentions no similar assent to mention of a Jewish state. Attlee was, of course, opposed to the concept of a Jewish state, but may have believed that transfer of population would create the possibility of a political entity shared by the two peoples living in Palestine. This is only a surmise, and it should be added that international experience had shown that transfer of population was linked to the establishment of separate national states. If Attlee did, in fact, approve of the idea of population transfer, he was recognizing something which he had never before admitted, namely that there was a connection between the Jewish plight and Palestine.

Attlee kept his promise to try to dissuade the Prime Minister from submitting the land transfer regulations to Parliament, and Zionist leaders accepted his assurance and that of other Labour leaders that the Government had shelved the plan. Locker reported to Mapai’s Political Committee that Chamberlain had made no explicit promises to Attlee, but that the impression had been gained ‘that he realizes that this is not the time for a quarrel with the Jews … In short, the general feeling in London is that the evil will be averted and MacDonald will not succeed in carrying out his wishes.’[4]

Consequently, the publication of the Bill and its submission to Parliament came as a total surprise to both Zionists and the Labour leadership. The latter were not only disappointed but also deeply affronted, since MacDonald had misled them. Their reaction was swift, and drastic, namely tabling of a motion of no-confidence in the Government.[5] This was an unexpected move: Labour had refrained from using this weapon on more vital questions, such as partition or the 1939 White Paper, and was now employing it on a marginal question, and in wartime, to boot. Even the Zionists expressed doubts as to the political wisdom of the step.[6]

Speaking in the Commons debate, Noel-Baker sharply attacked the Government, and said the regulations spelled the end of the development of the national home. Referring to the plight of Polish Jews, he said:

> Does the Secretary of State believe that when the war is over, Jews will continue living in a country where things like that have happened? Does he still pretend that we can solve the problem by our cruel futilities about British Guiana and the West Indies, where in two bitter years we have not found safety for even 100 hunted Jews? He knows, as we know, there is one indispensible solution – the Jewish National Home in Palestine – and whatever else there may be, there must be that as well.[7]

This Labour Party declaration of support for a national home in Palestine was doubly significant in the light of its reluctance to make pro-Zionist statements immediately after the outbreak of war. At the above-mentioned session of the Mapai Political Committee on the eve of the Commons debate, Locker reported on a conversation with Noel-Baker. Locker had been given the task of trying to persuade Labour to include a pro-Zionist clause in their planned statement of post-war objectives. He chose to discuss the matter with Noel-Baker and, in his own words,

> to my amazement I found a blank wall on this question. He said: we intend to deal with the war objectives in general lines, so why should we include details such as Palestine? I said,

> that is no detail for us it is everything. He replied: Palestine is not part of the war. I replied: but the Jewish people is. He said: after all, we're not mentioning the Arabs in the statement. I said: there is no Arab problem in Europe but there is a grave Jewish problem. He said he would think about it.[8]

Nor was Noel-Baker persuaded by the pleas of his good friend, Blanche Dugdale, though he promised that the Party would publish a special document on the Jewish question.

There is no way of ascertaining why Labour leaders refused to include a Zionist clause in the statement of policy. Labour politicians apparently feared public commitments linking the solution of the Jewish problem exclusively with Palestine. To include Palestine within the framework of the problems created in the wake of the war would have implied admission that the new reality called for new solutions, and Labour was apparently not yet ready for this step. Noel-Baker's parliamentary speech may be taken to be the separate public statement he had promised.

The Party stand in the debate made a profound impression on the Palestinian labour movement. More than a year later, Ben-Gurion, who on his own evidence was not a great admirer of Labour, expressed his admiration for the political courage of a party ready to propose no confidence in its Government in wartime and in the teeth of public opinion. He saw this as an expression of the democratic nature of British society and as a move 'unprecedented in British history and hence in world history'.[9]

Yet the Zionists were still not persuaded that Labour would now become Zionism's loyal ally. The formation of the Churchill Coalition Government in 1940, with Labour participation, should have aroused Zionist optimism. However, they had no illusions as to the future. In mid-1940, the Mapai Political Committee discussed the changes in Britain[10] and Moshe Shertok, in a survey of the situation, said: 'I told Ben-Gurion yesterday that there is a danger that as a result of the changes in the British Cabinet, a new mood will prevail in the Yishuv, and that I am trying to prevent *empty optimism* and moral disarmament.'

Shertok went on to say that of the two Labour members of the War Cabinet, Attlee and Arthur Greenwood, only the latter was unreservedly pro-Zionist. He took a negative view of Morrison, whom he described as untrustworthy, though he might be willing to help because of political calculations. Bevin, too, might be helpful, though he was remote from Zionist affairs.

Hoz was on a mission to London at this time and, as was his wont, he started by trying to renew personal contacts with Labour leaders, starting with the Cabinet ministers. At his first meeting, with Arthur Greenwood, he complained that the British Government was not utilizing the Yishuv in the war effort, despite its great potential. Greenwood, he wrote, 'was hurt and amazed and promised to bring up the matter without delay'.[11] Hoz also met the Deputy Colonial Secretary, George Hall, who urged him to prepare development plans for Palestine, such as the draining of the Huleh swamp. Hoz summed up his impressions as follows:

> I can say of the Labour Party people in the Government that they are as loyal to us as before. Their possibilities of action on our behalf are limited because of their roles in the Government, but there is a basis for action and by drawing up the correct plan and mobilizing our force we can perhaps bring about realization of our aspirations.

To bear out his optimism, he described his meeting with Ernest Bevin. He had been told that it would be impossible to gain access to Bevin, who was greatly overworked, but succeeded

nonetheless. He described the meeting (which Ben-Gurion also attended) as

> very useful. Its importance lies in the seriousness of Bevin's approach. He listened and made notes, asked questions, tried to extend the meeting for another twenty minutes although people were waiting in the next room to see him. When I apologized for troubling him with matters which were not his direct concern, he replied: I have heard what you have to say with great interest; are you leaving things to me? When I affirmed this he said: I will see what I can do. And although this was not an explicit promise, I emerged from this meeting more confidently than from previous meetings.

According to Hoz, Bevin immediately contacted Churchill, who conveyed his comments to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Lloyd.

This meeting between Bevin, Hoz and Ben-Gurion brings us to one of the enigmas of our study – Bevin's attitude to Zionism. On that and other occasions, he was not only ready to help, but even offered advice on how to evade the Colonial Secretary's order to recruit equal numbers of Jews and Arabs into the Palestine military units. According to Ben-Gurion, Labour Cabinet Ministers were against parity, and Bevin advised the Zionists to propose 'that the surplus of Jews should not be trained in Palestine but be sent to train in Egypt. We accepted this and Churchill approved it.'[12] A memorandum written by Ben-Gurion in the same year also reveals that at the same meeting Bevin suggested shelving the idea of a Jewish army and working for an immediate solution, i.e. Jewish state or autonomy, in Palestine. 'Mr. Bevin's suggestion … indicates more lofty sentiment than sound judgement or sufficient knowledge', Ben-Gurion commented.[13]

In late 1941 the War Cabinet discussed the official stand on the Palestine problem in general and the establishment of Jewish units in the British Army in particular. Churchill noted that when the war ended in Allied victory, 'the creation of a great Jewish state in Palestine would be discussed at the Peace Conference'. The Colonial Secretary complained that the Zionists were weaving unrealistic plans, and that Weizmann, for example, was talking of the immigration of three million Jews to Palestine. He asked the Cabinet to express its public disapproval of these statements. Churchill preferred to state his views in a private conversation, and Bevin said, with his characteristic directness, 'that, if an autonomous Jewish State could be set up, the question of regulating the flow of immigration thereto would be a matter to be settled by the authorities of that State. This would greatly ease our difficulties in the matter.'[14]

During the War, Bevin received various requests from Zionist leaders and their supporters in the United States. Despite his sympathy for Zionism, he exercised caution and avoided explicit commitments. In early January 1941 he held a meeting with Chaim Weizmann, at which Creech Jones and Berl Locker were also present.[15] Weizmann protested against the inflexible Mandatory policy toward refugees from Nazi Germany. Bevin replied that he personally was most anxious to see the Jewish people established in Palestine, but that it was impossible to ignore one important factor in Palestine – namely the Arabs. Despite British victories in the Middle East, the Arabs were still hostile to Britain. And he denied Weizmann's accusation that Britain was conducting a reactionary policy towards the Jews while attempting to conciliate the Arabs.

In conclusion, Weizmann asked Bevin to dissuade the Government from implementing the White Paper as long as the war was on. The tone of the meeting was friendly and the two men were impressed with one another. Bevin's favourable impressions of the Zionist leaders

undoubtedly helped to shape his positive attitude to the concept of a Jewish state, and encouraged Creech Jones to submit a far-reaching pro-Zionist memo to the Party in the same year. In it he stated:

> (1) We must face an immigration of millions of homeless Jews from Central and Eastern Europe at the conclusion of the war.
> (2) Palestine alone can contribute substantially to the solution of that emigration problem.
> (3) The Jews must have a State in Palestine with independence and complete freedom in respect of immigration and economic development.[16]

Creech Jones had held pro-Zionist views since the mid-thirties, but it is unlikely that he would have been able to voice such extreme opinions at this time if they had been in conflict with those of his Minister.

As Zionist appeals to Bevin proliferated and he became increasingly aware of the complexity of the problem, his attitude became more cautious. At the beginning of 1942, William Green, President of the American Federation of Labour (A.F.L.) in the United States, appealed to Bevin to persuade the British Government to relax the immigration regulations, arguing the need for manpower in the Palestine economy. Bevin replied:

> I can assure you that the problem is a *vexed* one and has to be handled with very great care. There are others living in that part of the world as well as the Jews who cannot be ignored, and I can only hope that as a result of victory in this struggle, a final solution of the Palestinian problem will be found which will be *satisfactory both to the Arabs and Jews*.[17] [*Emphasis added*]

To what extent did Bevin realize the implications of the last phrase, which contradicted his previous statements? He was certainly aware of the fact that the Arabs had rejected this proposal outright, and that it could not therefore be defined as ‘satisfactory’ to both parties. This letter would appear to mark the beginning of a change in Bevin’s attitude to Zionism.

What were the motives behind Bevin’s sympathetic attitude to Zionism during the War? Engaged as he was in the vitally important task of recruiting manpower for the war effort, he still found time to discuss such relatively marginal problems as the establishment of Jewish military unites, the contribution of the Yishuv to the war, and the problems of illegal immigration. He now had nothing to gain from supporting Zionist demands, nor was he merely adopting the contrary stand to that of the Government. One can only surmise as to his motives, on the basis of circumstantial evidence.

Bevin’s first contact with Zionism was made through Dov Hoz, for whom he felt sincere affection. An authoritative and overpowering man, Bevin was also capable of close friendship with younger men (particularly those who accepted his authority), and he liked and admired Hoz. In the early days of the war, there was no cause for tension between the two; rather the contrary, the situation called for close cooperation between the Zionist movement and the British Government.

Bevin, as a politician, wholeheartedly immersed himself in every task he fulfilled. In the thirties, he had been a loyal militant trade unionist and he now became the most energetic member of Churchill’s Cabinet. It was only natural that, unacquainted as he was with the subtleties of British Palestinian policy and deeply preoccupied with the war effort, he accepted

any logical proposal which appeared to further his efforts. This also explains his readiness to intercede with the Colonial Secretary and Prime Minister for the establishment of Jewish fighting units, and to offer advice to Ben-Gurion and Hoz on this issue, although it was outside his jurisdiction.

There is an additional explanation for his role as 'champion' of the Zionist cause in the Cabinet. Like any other power-loving politician, Bevin liked to demonstrate to supplicants his ability to arrange matters by informal means and direct appeal. In the thirties he had shown Hoz that he was able to influence Cabinet decisions by interceding with Henderson, and he now promised to put Zionist arguments directly to the Prime Minister.

Finally, it should be noted that in the course of the thirties, Bevin learned something of the essence of the Palestinian labour movement, became aware of the plight of Jewish refugees, and gained knowledge of the plans for the political future of Palestine, such as partition. He proved sympathetic on all these issues. As long as he remained unaware of the full complexity of the political situation in Palestine, and did not feel that support for Zionism could damage British national interests, he was ready to offer full support to the Jews, even expressing public approval of the idea of a post-war Jewish state. In 1942, as a result of his talks and correspondence with Lord Moyne and Lord Lloyd, and conversation with Churchill, he came to realize how 'vexed' was the Palestine issue, and it was apparently then that his attitude began to change.

While the Zionists were bringing urgent practical issues to Bevin's attention, the Labour Party was making renewed efforts to formulate several political principles relating to a future solution of the Palestine problem after the war. The Party's International Department asked two members of the Sub-Committee on Imperial Affairs to prepare guidelines for future policy. One of them was Leonard Woolf, known for his guarded view of Zionism.[18] He noted his intention to propose a scheme which would do minimal injustice to the two peoples living in Palestine and facilitating the future establishment of a binational state. He therefore proposed (a) total rejection of the partition plan, which implied despair with the Mandate and with hope of a binational state; (b) support for continuation of the Mandate under international supervision.

Independence should only be granted to Palestine, he wrote, after the two peoples had been taught to coexist through introduction of democratic local government, expansion of cultural and religious autonomy and increased participation in government of the local population. He proposed that a plan be formulated for a Middle Eastern federation to encompass Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Palestine. Lest this political process be disrupted by Jewish action which could arouse Arab apprehension, Woolf proposed continued restrictions on Jewish immigration and on transfer of land to Jews. His proposals on these two vital issues were rather vague. He wanted to restrict immigration on the basis of two criteria: prevention of a Jewish majority in Palestine, and the economic absorptive capacity of the country. Land-sale control, he said, would be justified only if it protected the Arab smallholder and not if it was aimed at preventing Jews from buying land.[19]

The author of the second memorandum was T. Reid, a Party expert on imperial affairs.[20] He went further than Woolf and tried to show that the population of Palestine, both Jews and Arabs, was ready for self-rule, though independence would have to be postponed till after the war. He suggested that the future state be linked in military treaty with Britain, because of Palestine's strategic and geopolitical importance. On immigration, land sale and a Middle Eastern federation his ideas resembled those of Woolf. But unlike Woolf, who (though of Jewish origin) totally

disregarded the question of the plight of Jewish refugees, Reid recommended mass Jewish settlement in the Middle East after the establishment of the hoped-for federation.

In late 1942, the International Department of the Party published a memorandum which summed up the proposals of Woolf and Reid.[21] It reiterated the Party's opposition to partition of Palestine into two states, and proposed that, as soon as possible after the war, Palestine be granted political independence and the status of a dominion in the British Commonwealth. It adopted Woolf's proposal for expansion of national autonomy and democratization of municipal government, and for a Middle Eastern federation. At the same time, it discarded Reid's idea of a military alliance and proposed instead a communal defence pact within the framework of the Middle Eastern federation. On immigration and land sale, the recommendations of the two men were adopted in full.

The three memorandums demonstrated that the views of many Labour politicians on Palestine had not been influenced by wartime events. In 1942 they still adhered to the ideas they had advocated in the thirties. It should be emphasized that the memorandums had no impact on the Party's public proclamations, which revealed growing identification with the Zionist cause.

Noel-Baker submitted several draft resolutions on international relations to the Party's 1942 Annual Conference, including one on the Jews and Palestine. Having expressed the Conference's abhorrence of the persecution of the Jews and sympathy for their sufferings, he went on to discuss the principles on which post-war solution of the Jewish problem should be based: civil rights in their countries of residence and 'international assistance … to promote by immigration and settlement the Jewish National Home in Palestine'.[22] There was nothing new in this statement. The assumption that the Jewish problem should be solved in their countries of residence and in a national home, and the attempt to involve international institutions in the matter, had always been cornerstones of Labour policy. But from conference to conference, the Party's public commitment to the Zionist cause grew.

The 1943 Party Conference passed an exceptional resolution: 'The Conference declares that victory must ensure for the Jews full civil and economic equality and their national rights. *It reaffirms the traditional policy of the Labour Party in favour of building Palestine as the Jewish National Home*.'[23] [*Emphasis added*] It also proposed that the Jewish Agency be granted an exclusive concession to develop Palestine.

This was a far-reaching declaration which, though it asserted that it was a reaffirmation, was clearly deviating from the policy accepted since 1922, when the Churchill White Paper was published. The Party had then proclaimed support, not for 'Palestine as a national home' but for a 'Jewish national home in Palestine'. The 1943 resolution reverted to the formula adopted by Party leaders in their 1920 letter to Lloyd George, calling on the Government to accept the Mandate over Palestine 'with a view of its being reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish People'. In other words, this was a leap backwards over two decades.

This draft resolution on Palestine was presented to the Conference by the Poalei Zion representative, Maurice Rosette. Another version of the resolution called on the Conference to confine itself to appealing to the Government to take note of the problem of refugees in general, including Jewish refugees. The national home was not mentioned.[24] This draft was rejected in favour of the Poalei Zion version.

What led the Party to abandon the interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and of the Mandate

which they had accepted for over twenty years? The decision was undoubtedly made under the impact of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Harold Laski, one of two speakers on behalf of the resolution, introduced himself as a member of the N.E.C. and a Jew: 'It is, I think, fitting', he said, 'that a member of the National Executive who is also a Jew should have the opportunity, on behalf of his colleagues, of accepting the resolution that is done in the name of the Poalei Zion'.[25] And he went on to say that the Party leadership accepted the right of the Jewish people 'to develop in Palestine their homeland'.

This decision was not lightly taken and was preceded by considerable debate and soul-searching. Five months after the Conference, Berl Locker returned to Palestine, and his report to the Mapai Secretariat cast light on the political negotiations preceding the resolution.[26] Some ten draft resolutions on Palestine and the Jews had been submitted to the N.E.C. before the Conference. Negotiations between the Zionist representatives, Locker and Rosette, and the N.E.C. were conducted through the mediation of Laski and James Walker. Walker tried to persuade his Jewish comrades to include a hint on their acceptance of the territorialist principle. He suggested that mention be made in the resolution not only of the national home but also of the possibility of Jewish settlement in African countries, but this idea was totally rejected. The revival of the territorialist schemes by Labour resulted from the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to re-examine the partition scheme. Morrison, the Chairman of the Committee, admitted to Laski at a Party gathering that he was racking his brain to find another country for the Jews. Laski replied (according to Locker), 'I am not known as an extremist Zionist, but I tell you that no Jew will even consider such a thing and the very broaching of the idea is an insult to us.'

In the face of external and internal opposition, the Party withdrew its public support from the territorialist plan. At the same time, it rejected the Zionist request that the term 'national home' be replaced by the phrase 'Jewish Commonwealth' used at the Zionists' Biltmore Conference (1942).[27] Walker told Locker that the Party Executive as such did not object to the term, but that Labour Cabinet Ministers felt that the term implied a political commitment which they could not yet undertake.

Why, therefore, was the Labour leadership (including Ministers who had shown themselves to be very cautious) ready to commit itself at this time to support the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish national home? This is even more puzzling in the light of the Prime Minister's initiative in reviving the partition plan, and Attlee's reaction to this move.

In April 1943, as noted, Churchill appointed a Cabinet Committee on Palestine, headed by Herbert Morrison, an old friend of Zionism and known advocate of partition. The Prime Minister then distributed to his Cabinet a memorandum containing his own proposals for possible solution of the Palestine problem after the war. The Government would then be free to reconsider its Palestine policy, he wrote. American pressure for a new political statement could be anticipated, and he emphasized the need for Anglo-American policy on Palestine. Churchill asked his ministers to consider the possibility of founding Jewish colonies in North Africa, to be linked (if they so chose) with a Jewish national home in Palestine.[28]

Churchill was, therefore, toying with the idea of a national-imperialist solution – a national homeland plus colonies in Africa. He received several responses from senior Ministers, including his Deputy, Clement Attlee. This was one of the few occasions on which Attlee expressed his

views on the Zionist issue, and they deserve to be quoted at length.

His reply, though written immediately after the Party Conference, in June 1943,[29] contains no reference to the Conference resolutions. He also totally ignored Churchill's proposal, the question of the national home and the problem of the Jewish displaced persons. He wrote under the strong impact of extremist Zionist propaganda in the United States and the violent activities of the 'Stern group' in Palestine, and cautioned the Cabinet that violence was spreading in Palestine. He feared that, by trying to keep order, Britain would become the target of the recriminations of both Jews and Arabs.

'It appears', he wrote, 'that the Zionist movement in Palestine has fallen under the control of reckless fanatics. If they attempt to gain their ends by violence, the results will be disastrous to the Jews all over the world.' The attempt to implicate world Jewry in the acts of violence committed by Jews in Palestine is somewhat distasteful. Attlee objected on principle to the use of force in solution of disputes, and was known for his strict formalistic respect for the letter of the law.[30] His statement may have been motivated by these convictions, or by his fear of possible antisemitic incitement.

Attlee went on to formulate his own proposals for a solution:

> No one but a visionary imagines that Palestine can absorb all the Jews, even if they were willing to go. Millions will desire and be obliged to live in Gentile lands in Europe, America and other continents. They will depend for their restoration to their old homes, for their continuance in their present or for their settlements in new homes on the good will of the United Nations, especially of Britain, the United States and Russia. We should, I think, endeavour to bring to bear on the Zionists the influence of those Jews who intended to live in Gentile lands.

It is only fair to note that the belief that there was no room in Palestine for all Jews, and that most would find a home elsewhere, did not necessarily imply an anti-Zionist stand. Chaim Weizmann and Moshe Shertok had told him in 1939 that they took 'mass immigration' to mean the immigration of three to four million Jews. Moreover, Attlee was not negating the possibility of mass Jewish immigration to Palestine; he merely questioned whether the country could solve the problem of many millions of Jews.

His last sentence is particularly interesting, with its suggested threat to world Jewry. How otherwise can one interpret his proposal that pressure be brought to bear by those Jews planning to remain in their present countries of residence? Their only reason for complying would be fear that extremist Zionist policies could directly harm them.

Attlee concluded the memorandum by proposing that the Palestine problem be discussed in close collaboration with the United States and that the future relations between Jews and Arabs be taken into account. In the light of his cautious approach and reluctance to commit himself before the subject had been studied in depth by the Cabinet Committee, it seems puzzling that he did not dissuade his Party from making public statements containing explicit commitments to a Jewish national home.

A week after the Labour Party Conference ended, Ben-Gurion referred to its resolutions at a meeting of the Mapai Central Committee.[31] He warned against excessive optimism, and said that Labour's commitment should not be regarded as a 'promissory note' which would fall due when the Party came back to power.

> Such an interpretation would be misleading. This is not hypocrisy; it is the way of the world. A Conference's resolution is not an official guarantee that if this party comes to power, it will immediately implement it. Although Labour representatives now play a considerable role in the Government and did not object to the resolution, this does not mean that tomorrow we can approach Attlee or Morrison and say: you passed the resolution now revoke the White Paper and open the gates of Palestine. That would be naïve of us … But despite the qualifications … this resolution is an important political event. This is a great party, perhaps the greatest. The fact that its parliamentary strength is limited is unimportant; it has a future, and perhaps not too far ahead.

And he concluded that the ties which had existed since fate linked the Jewish people to Britain had endured even though other friendships had broken down, 'and the British Government which, 25 years ago, was officially the only body which guaranteed to help the Jewish people, has also abandoned us'.

Locker[32] and Shertok[33] concurred with Ben-Gurion, stating their conviction that Attlee, Bevin and Morrison were aware of the Jewish problem and conscious that a solution was required for the post-war period, but were less than enthusiastic about the Zionist Palestinian solution.

These evaluations bear out the view that in 1943 there were two schools of thought in the Labour Party vis-à-vis Palestine. The young intellectuals, Noel-Baker and Harold Laski, supported by James Walker of the trade union movement, believed that the Jews should be given maximum compensation for their sufferings. They brought pressure to bear on the Party leadership to issue a far-reaching public commitment to the Jewish people and the Zionist movement. The second major group, consisting of the Labour Cabinet Ministers, together with the Chairman of the T.U.C., Walter Citrine,[34] thought it advisable to 'water down' any pro-Zionist statements. This being so, why did they 'explicitly agree' to the 1943 resolution (according to Shertok)? We will return to this question later on.

The 1944 Labour Party Conference formulated a plan to be submitted to the anti-fascist powers for a new international postwar order. It contained the following clause on Palestine and the Jewish people:

> Palestine. Here we are halted halfway, 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 irresistible case now, after the unspeakable atrocities of the cold and calculated German Naziplan to kill all Jews in Europe. Here, too, in Palestine surely is a case on human grounds 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 organized 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 Palestinian boundaries, by agreement with Egypt, Syria or Transjordan*. Moreover, we should seek to win the full sympathy and support both of the American and Russian Governments for the execution of this Palestinian Policy.[35]

This was the most explicitly pro-Zionist pronouncement by any British political body since the Balfour Declaration. Moreover, in its political and moral logic it extended beyond any public demand by the Zionist movement over the preceding thirty years. Even the Revisionist movement had never advocated so extreme a political solution.[36] It can be denoted revolutionary, in its practical and theoretical interpretation of the concept of the national home of the Jewish people. This interpretation was founded on the tragic plight of the Jewish people on the one hand, and the vast territories held by the Arabs on the other. It emphasized the rescue of one people at the cost of minor injustice to another.

What impelled Labour to go so far beyond its own commitment of the previous year? The document as a whole advocated a gradual process of decolonization, ranging from immediate independence for India to self-rule, in stages, for various South-East Asian and African colonies. The Labour leaders must have realized how problematic was their proposal for mass Jewish settlement in Palestine. And, surprisingly enough, the document was read out to the delgates by Attlee himself, who had displayed such great reluctance to undertake commitments to Zionism, and had emphatically dissociated himself from its more extreme manifestations. Again we must turn to contemporary witnesses in order to understand the anomalies.

The author of the document as a whole, and of the revolutionary Zionist section, was Hugh Dalton. He had first acquired knowledge of Zionism while serving as one of Arthur Henderson's deputies in the second Labour Government. He established contact with various Zionist leaders over the years and, as Under-Secretary for Industrial Affairs, corresponded with Chaim Weizmann on the manufacture of synthetic rubber. In composing the Zionist clause however he chose, for reasons best known to himself, not to consult the Zionists. This aroused both the concern and the suspicions of Zionist leaders.

Dalton himself explained in his memoirs[37] that he had arrived at his conclusions not only under the impact of the war, but also because of his longtime interest in Zionism. He admitted that in the late thirties he had advocated partition as the sole solution in the face of Jewish and Arab inability to live together (this being a fair compromise). The 1944 plan, however, undoubtedly weighed the balance in favour of the Jews.

Dalton explained his change of views as follows: 'This declaration was, perhaps, *more sharply etched* than previous Labour Party declarations on Palestine, and pulled out some implications more abruptly. But there was no *discontinuity in our declarations*.' [*Emphasis added*] And to bear out his argument of continuity, he cited the Party's stand on the 1939 White Paper and the 1940 Land Regulations.

Though Dalton was justified in stating that an increasing degree of support for Zionism was evident in Labour proclamations from 1939 onwards, it is hard to accept his retrospective view that the document he formulated merely 'etched more sharply' previous statements. He contradicted himself by saying that

> It was also inherent in our declaration that the old doctrine of immigration limited by 'economic absorptive capacity' should disappear. This old formula … seemed to me to have no meaning in this new situation. We are now at a point of sharp discontinuity in world history.

There is no reason to doubt that these were his views on the Palestine question as well. He was well acquainted with Palestinian conditions and aware of the implications of his proposals. The

first draft of the document was composed in January 1944, and in April he discussed it with the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, on the latter's initiative. Dalton subsequently wrote in his diary:[38]

> Oliver Stanley comes to see me to say how very disturbing is our Palestine paragraph in L.P.W.S. It is, he says, 'Zionism plus plus'. It is tacked on, he feels, rather unnaturally, to a long and helpful statement on Europe. It will not, he hopes, be much played up in our propaganda. I say that I don't think it will. But I remind him that the Labour Party has always taken a pro-Jewish line in Parliamentary debates for many years.

It may be assumed that this was not Stanley's sole effort in this direction: he probably approached other Labour leaders as well to dissuade them from extending such far-reaching support to the Zionist cause. The matter was also debated by the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the N.E.C., where the supporters of the declaration won the day, and it was amended in even more pro-Zionist terms.[39] Dalton's draft had contained a sentence reading: 'Nor should we close our minds to another possibility, namely of throwing open Libya or Eritrea to Jewish settlement.' This sentence was omitted from the final text of the declaration, apparently under pressure from Noel-Baker and Laski, who had opposed such proposals in 1943.

The debate and the pressures brought to bear on Dalton again demonstrate that the commitment was not lightly undertaken. The Labour leadership had time enough to change the wording, since almost a year elapsed between its first publication in early 1944 and the Party Conference in December. In the interim the document came under fire from an unexpected direction – the Zionist movement.

Shertok and Locker, who were in London at the time, confessed to their colleagues that they had been totally taken by surprise by the content of the declaration. They were both surprised and offended, and this was particularly so in the case of Locker, who was closely associated with many of the Labour leaders, was totally at home within the Labour Party, yet was kept in the dark on such an important matter. He complained to Laski at not having been consulted and, to Laski's query as to his specific complaints, he replied that he would have omitted the idea of the population transfer. It might anger the Arabs to the extent that no further negotiations could be contemplated.[40]

Moshe Shertok made it clear to the Mapai Central Committee why the Labour declaration should arouse concern:

> We had grave doubts on the transfer issue, which were not necessarily aroused by the content of this clause. When I came to England, this was one of the issues which was being broached. It was revived with great vigour, not on Jewish initiative but through non-Jewish logic. They said: one of two things – either nothing can be done, or, if it can, if Palestine is to be given to the Jews, it must be given wholly; in that case the Arabs must be removed. This theory reached us from various sources. One of these was Dalton and Noel-Baker. I had an argument on this question with Noel-Baker … he said, why can't Arabs be transferred out of Palestine? We will give them one hundred million pounds to settle elsewhere etc. I said that this would be possible only in the final stage. It could not be the beginning of the solution or a precondition. If one links the overall solution to transfer of Arabs, then this transfer becomes the *conditio sine qua non*. In other words, without transfer of Arabs there is no

absorptive capacity. Such a transfer would be an almost impossible task, but it would be easy to arrive at the conclusion that the country has no absorptive capacity and that policy cannot be changed, and that would be the outcome.[41]

The Zionist movement found itself in an embarrassing situation. On the one hand it feared the short- and long-term implications of the transfer scheme, as Shertok explained, but on the other hand it believed that to turn down the idea after it had been publicized would be interpreted by anti-Zionists as a victory for them.

The solution lay in the interpretation of the phrase 'transfer'. Ben-Gurion declared at a press conference that there was no intention of forcing the Arab inhabitants of Palestine to accept the scheme against their will. If some of them preferred to emigrate for economic reasons, to such neighbouring countries as Iraq, Syria and Transjordan, the Jewish Agency would not, of course, object. But this was an internal Arab matter and not necessarily connected with mass Jewish immigration to Palestine.[42] Locker discussed the matter with Dalton in the same vein and proposed that, when the issue was discussed at the Party Conference, it be explained that there was no intention to move populations by force. Dalton noted in his diary that Locker 'agrees that it is quite clear that "encouragement" in this context does not mean "compulsion". I asked him to send me any further points on this.'[43]

The Zionist movement did not content itself with these behind-the-scenes contacts and asked for a public statement in this spirit before the Party Conference. This was conceded, in the form of a speech by Arthur Greenwood at a May Day meeting organized by Poalei Zion,[44] in which he explained the declaration. On the sensitive issue he said: 'The document speaks of voluntary transfer and suggests that the Arabs might be compensated … Therefore, any movement out of the Arabs would be a movement of people who wished to go.'

The talks with Dalton and public explanations appeared to alleviate the fears of the Zionists, and they came to the conclusion that it would be wise to derive the maximum political advantage from the extreme pro-Zionist volte-face of the Labour Party. This seemed particularly sensible since rumours were rife in London of the Government's intention to revive the partition scheme after the War, which would have conflicted with declared Zionist policy.[45] The Zionists appear to have tried to counter the Partition Committee's recommendations by rallying Labour opposition to the idea and emphasizing the prime and immediate importance of immigration.

The declaration was approved by the Party Conference and the Palestine clause was passed without amendment. Less than a year later, events demonstrated how right Ben-Gurion, Shertok and others had been to warn against pinning exaggerated hopes on a Labour Government. But despite the minimal practical value of the declaration, it was a significant stage in the annals of Labour's developing attitude to Zionism.

A retrospective view of the fluctuations in Labour's Zionist policy from 1917 onward reveals the existence of two separate viewpoints, one sympathetic and the other qualified. The 1944 declaration was the culmination of the former approach, which evolved through several stages: the initial recognition in 1917 of the right of those Jews who so chose to *return* to Palestine; belief that an ideal socialist society was being created there; willingness, in the thirties, to support the establishment of a Jewish state with wider borders than those recommended by the Peel Commission. In 1943 the even more far-reaching concept of 'Palestine as a Jewish national home' was adopted. And finally, proponents of this approach arrived at the idea of handing over

Palestine to the Jews.

Each of these stages was the logical extension of the preceding one, and each was the logical response to a given historical situation. The political and economic upheaval which Eastern European Jewry suffered in the wake of the First World War, and recognition of the national rights of minorities, generated Labour's 1917 statement of principle; the prevailing conviction in the twenties that European society was progressing towards socialism and the search for a social-democratic alternative to Bolshevik communism fathered the hope that the Yishuv might become a new 'light for the nations'; the Jewish refugee problem of the 1930s and the Jewish-Arab confrontation brought many Labourites to the conclusion that partition and a Jewish state were the sole possible answer to the Palestine problem. The Labour declarations of 1943 and 1944 were motivated by a sense of moral outrage in the face of the Holocaust, and by the political assumption that the Great Powers could cooperate in solving the Jewish and Palestine problems. Labour's pro-Zionist plan was conditional on the political assent and economic support of the other two powers.

Dalton made this clear in his speech at the 1945 Blackpool Conference on the eve of the general election which brought Labour to power. In effect, he qualified the Party's commitment to mass Jewish immigration, claiming that this issue, like all other international questions, called for close cooperation between the British, U.S. and Soviet Governments, particularly if a secure settlement was to be achieved.[46]

Though Dalton said that the Party had adopted the 1944 declaration as part of its election platform, his Conference speech nonetheless revealed certain differences. He made no mention of the population transfer scheme, and placed greater emphasis on the need for cooperation between the Powers for solution of the problem. And, more significantly, he now referred specifically to the intention to set up a Jewish state. He specified however, that he was referring to a Jewish state in Palestine and not to Palestine as a Jewish state, and this could suggest his renewed commitment to the idea of partition.

Although the publication and ratification of the declaration in 1945 may have resulted from political considerations, there can be no denying the sincerity of the original motives. The Labour Party had often demonstrated its sensitivity to the sufferings of others, even when its response appeared to defy political logic. This time morality and political logic were on the side of Zionism, and hence it was only natural that the resolution, however revolutionary, was approved by the Conference.

The declaration itself (and Dalton in his speech) stressed the desirability of dividing the task among the Powers or international institutions, as a condition for implementation. And, at best or worst, Labour's commitment was limited; this is confirmed by a pamphlet distributed on the eve of the Conference by the Party's International Department.

The pamphlet opened with a discussion of the conflicting demands of Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and concluded that 'there is not much hope of compromise between the two peoples, and the settlement of the Palestine problem will in all likelihood be left to the statesmen of the United Nations'.[47] As for Attlee, his 1939 remarks to Weizmann are proof enough that he was not irrevocably opposed to the idea of population transfer. In 1944 the outcome of th war was already certain, but the post-war status of the Middle East was unclear and it must have seemed advisable to avoid clear-cut decisions. A Labour Party resolution could not be regarded in the future as binding on a Labour Government. On the other hand, rejection of the resolution could

have been interpreted as a negative stand on Zionism, arousing internal debilitating controversy.

The Radicals

In the war years, the radical Left often displayed greater intellectual sensitivity to the plight of the Jews than the Party itself, and its press devoted considerable space to Jewish and Zionist issues.[48] In contrast, the *New Statesman* throughout the war published only four letters to the editor on Jewish questions (two of them written by Laski),[49] and no articles at all.

In 1942, the I.L.P. produced a plan for the rescue of Jews from Nazi-occupied countries,[50] entailing exchange of Jews for German P.O.W.s, an Allied demand to the neutral countries that they take in Jewish escapees, and establishment of an international fund to finance Jewish post-war rehabilitation. According to Fenner Brockway, copies were sent to the Prime Minister and to Attlee, who did not respond. In an article expounding the plan, Brockway appeared to readers and his fellow Party members to bring pressure to bear on their M.P.s to demand Government action on behalf of the persecuted Jews.

A year later, the *New Leader* published two articles written on visits to Zionist training farms in Britain, lauding the Zionist socialists' experiment.[51] The author's conclusion was that

> British socialists should watch Palestine closely. It is a social experiment and like a good experiment it is concerned with basics. The collectives and cooperatives are social-revolutionary and as such they touch life and society in every point.

Zionist socialism had never before been so enthusiastically depicted by the *New Leader*, which suggests that the pro-Zionist school of thought had temporarily prevailed in the I.L.P. At the same time, the Party had not abandoned its basic conviction in the possibility of setting up a binational society in Palestine.

Of greater practical significance was the stand reflected by the *Tribune*, because the *Tribune* group was to play an active role in the post-war political struggle on Palestine, and because its leader, Stafford Cripps, held office in the War Cabinet and the subsequent Labour Government. He was one of the Ministers asked by the Prime Minister to react to the memorandum on Palestine distributed among Cabinet members in 1943.[52] It is interesting to examine his views and compare them with those expressed by Attlee at the same time.

Unlike Attlee, Cripps viewed the Palestine question in the wider context of the tragic plight of a large part of the Jewish people, and hence sympathized with what he called the 'hysterical mood' of many Zionist leaders. He proposed a joint Anglo-American policy based on several principles. The Jews should be promised rehabilitation in their countries of residence and restoration of their full civil rights. But he went further than Attlee in calling for a declaration 'that there was no departure from the policy of fostering a Jewish national home *in* Palestine'. He also called for efforts to provide provisional or permanent refuge for Jewish refugees in various countries, including Palestine and Eritrea. He proposed several practical measures: a conference of Zionist leaders of all the free countries should be convened which would, he hoped, succeed in restraining the excesses of extremist Zionists. Cripps believed that as the situation of European Jews improved, increasing numbers of Jews would choose to remain in their countries of residence and would even emigrate back to Europe from Palestine. Other proposals were:

continuation of the White Paper and controlled Jewish immigration beyond the 75,000 specified therein; a joint Anglo-American guarantee that the Powers would oppose attempts to set up a Jewish state by force; and attempts to establish a binational state in Palestine within the framework of a Middle Eastern federation 'as we succeeded in establishing in Canada. If we can do it within a wider federal grouping – including Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan – so much better.'

The mention of Canada suggests that Cripps was contemplating Jewish national cultural autonomy, and was citing the example of a society with a majority and a minority nation. He took it for granted that the Arabs would never agree not only to a Jewish state in Palestine but to any state where there was a chance that the Jews might become the dominant force. In other words, he remained consistent in his objections to partition, which he regarded solely as a temporary solution until the binational state could be achieved. He was troubled by the Jewish plight, as he had been in 1935 when he proposed that homeless refugees be granted Palestinian nationality, and his concern contrasted with Attlee's insensitivity. He also realized, as Attlee did not, that Zionist extremism was the outcome of despair. They were in accord only in the belief that the solution for the Jewish masses would be found in their countries of residence.

A more understandable way of thinking was reflected in the *Tribune*, which was concerned more than other Labour papers with the Jewish Holocaust.[53] Under the leadership of the editor, Aneurin Bevan, the journal consistently supported the Zionist demand for Jewish units within the British Army. Though it cited practical reasons related to the war effort[54] it also, on one occasion, linked the issue to the right of the Jews to set up a state of their own and a defensive force.[55] When the British Government finally established the Jewish Brigade in 1944, the *Tribune* was the only Labour paper which welcomed the decision. It refuted the argument that a separate Jewish unit could perpetuate the ghetto spirit, and said that there would be 'worldwide satisfaction that the hunted and most persecuted people of this war has in this way gained recognition as an ally'.[56]

Under the impact of the Nazi atrocities in Poland and later the Holocaust, the *Tribune* also became convinced that any solution of the Jewish problem called for drastic changes in the relations between peoples. In the early days of the war, an article appeared assessing the demand for a Jewish state in Palestine when hostilities ended.[57] Though the author agreed with the view that most Eastern European Jews would choose to abandon their former countries and that Palestine was their sole refuge, he doubted whether the Jewish problem could be solved by creating yet another national state. He preferred to regard the Jewish problem 'as one of the issues of a New Europe'.

Four years later, the journal published an article condemning the murder of Lord Moyne, but saying that it understood the motives of the perpetrators.[58] It was the horror of the Holocaust and the ineffectual and inadequate rescue efforts by the democratic Powers which had led young Jews to commit an act of despair. All they wanted was a refuge for their people, and 'those who say that Palestine offers no solution for this *natural desire* must be prepared to offer a reasonable alternative' [*Emphasis added*]. The weekly doubted whether the problem could be solved by mass immigration to British colonies, which could arouse local opposition. The sole solution was the radical one – to remove the artificial barriers of national borders and recognize the right of all people, whatever their religion or nationality, to live wherever territorial and economic

conditions permitted. Only then could peace be achieved and politicians live without fear of assassination.

We have seen that in the Winter of 1944 Labour's sympathy for and identification with the sufferings of the Jewish people and the objectives of Zionism reached their height, enabling passage of the revolutionary resolution at the Party conference. Even Labourites who were reluctant to accept far-reaching commitments found no political pretext for opposing the resolution. And even the radicals, who were the most deeply moved by Jewish sufferings, did not deny the validity of Zionist nationalist aspirations as long as no other humane solution was offered to them.

The manifestations of Labour sympathy swayed even the most sceptical Zionist leaders. They were profoundly grateful to a political party which, at so fateful an hour, was ready to devote time and attention to a small, isolated movement, lacking both sovereign power and military might.

At a time when millions of Jews were being annihilated in death camps and ghettoes, a time of almost total Jewish impotence, when Zionist diplomacy could not chalk up great achievement, Labour's pronouncements had great moral impact. And it was precisely because they appeared hasty and somewhat naive from the practical political viewpoint that they illuminated the more human and attractive aspects of the Party's image.[59]

Labour's return to power, after the war, marked the beginning of a new era of conflict between good intentions and practical political interests.

NOTES

1. Palestine Land Transfer Regulations. These divided the country into three areas: 65% of the country in which sale of land was restricted to Arabs alone; 30% where land could be sold to Jews with the approval of the High Commissioner; 5% where sale was unrestricted.
2. *Short note of conversation with Major Attlee and Mr. Tom Williams*, House of Commons, 17 October 1939, W.A.
3. *Secret Note of Conversation with Major Attlee and Mr. Tom Williams*, House of Commons, 30 November 1939, W.A.
4. Political Committee deliberations, 8 November 1939; 23/39 L.A.
5. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 358, no. 35, 6 March 1940, p. 412.
6. See *Mapai Central Committee*, 13 March 1940, 23/40 L.A.
7. *Ibid*., note 5, p. 425.
8. See note 4.
9. Ben-Gurion at Mapai Central Committee, 19 February 1941, 23/41 L.A.
10. *Political Committee*, 14 May 1940, 23/40 L.A.
11. Dov Hoz's report of his visit to South Africa and London, *Mapai Central Commitee*, 7 August 1940, 23/40 L.A.
12. *Mapai Central Committee*, 19 February 1941, 23/41 L.A. The Bevin Archives (Churchill College, Cambridge) include a memo on the need for Jewish military units, apparently submitted by Hoz. Bevin wrote in the margin: 'have dealt with this, with Lord Lloyd – P.M. E.B.'
13. D. Ben-Gurion's Memorandum on Outlines of Zionist Policy', London, 17 October 1941,

Locker Archives, Section 8, L.A.

14. W.M. 99 (41) CAB. 65.19 P.R.O.
15. Report of Interview with the Right Hon. Ernest Bevin, 28 January 1941, Z.4/14716 Z.A.
16. Labour Party International Department. Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, N.E.C. 238a, December 1941.
17. Bevin to W. Green, 22 April 1942, Churchill College, Cambridge.
18. Labour Party International Department Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, Report on Palestine by L.S. Woolf, N.E.C., 238a 1941.
19. Norman Bentwich also submitted a memo on Palestine, but it contained nothing new in comparison with Woolf's proposals. Labour Party International Department Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. Supplementary Note by Prof. Norman Bentwich on a Memorandum on Palestine by A. Creech Jones M.P., N.E.C., No. 238a, December 1941.
20. Labour Party International Department Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. Draft Report on Palestine by T. Reid, N.E.C. No. 238a, January 1942.
21. Confidential Labour Party RDR 166, International Relationships Sub-Committee Report on Palestine, December 1942.
22. The Labour Party Conferences Reports. London 25–28 May 1942. See also Broadcast from London by the Right Hon. Arthur Greenwood, M.P. to Annual Dinner of American Palestine Committee. New York, 25 May 1942, Z.A. S 25/5594.
23. Levenberg, p. 244.
24. See Levenberg, pp. 248–9, 251. Labour Party Conference, London, 14–18 June 1943.
25. Levenberg, pp. 249–50. See letter from Levenberg to Shertok, 17 July 1943, Z.A. S 25/5594.
26. Mapai Central Committee, 6 October 1943, 23/43 L.A.
27. The conference was held at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in May 1942. The statement of the conference demanded: (a) To open the gates of Palestine for Jewish mass immigration; (b) To place the immigration into the hands of the Jewish Agency; (c) To establish Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world.
28. Palestine Note by the Prime Minister, W.p (43) 178. 23 April 1943, P.R.O.
29. Palestine, Memorandum of the Deputy Prime Minister, W.p (43) 266, 23 June 1943, P.R.O.
30. When Weizmann appealed to him to prevent the expulsion from Palestine of the survivors of the immigrant ship *Patria*, which had been sunk by the Hagana in Haifa Port, Attlee replied: 'Dr Weizmann, you really think that these people are entitled to act against the law.' See B. Locker, recorded memoirs, Interview No. 4, L.A.
31. Mapai Central Committee, 23 June 1943 23/43, L.A.
32. Mapai Central Committee, 6 October 1943, 23/43, L.A.
33. Mapai Central Committee, 8 May 1944, 23/44, L.A.
34. See Locker, Mapai Central Committee, 6 October 1943, 23/43, L.A. Perusal of minutes of the T.U.C. General Council 1929–47 demonstrates the truth of Locker's statement. The leadership refused on principle and consistently to adopt an independent stand on Zionist and Jewish affairs. All appeals were rejected and passed on to the Party. For example, a request for official condemnation of antisemitic manifestations was politely rejected, on the grounds that the matter needed clarification and further investigation (24 May 1943, Item 162).
35. 'A Policy for Palestine', extract from the Report 'International Post-War Settlement'

submitted by the Labour Party Executive to the 43rd Annual Conference. Labour Party Conference 11–15 December 1944, London.

36. For example, Z. Jabotinsky did not insist on the transfer as a condition for the establishment of a Jewish state. See his last book, published in 1940 (the year of his death), *The Jewish People's Battle Front* (Hebrew), Jerusalem 1941.
37. H. Dalton, *High Tide and After, Memoirs 1945–1960*, London 1962, pp. 145–51.
38. H. Dalton's private papers. Diary entry, 2 April 1944, L.S.E.
39. See M. Shertok, Mapai Central Committee, 8 May 1944, 23/44, L.A.
40. Recorded memoirs of Locker, Interview no. 5, Locker Archives, L.A.
41. See Note 39.
42. *Davar*, 11 May 1944.
43. *Diaries*, 25 May 1944.
44. Levenberg, pp. 214–5.
45. See conversation between Hugh Dalton, M. Sharett and Locker, held three months before the Labour Party Conference on 26 September 1944. Shertok emphasized that as far as he knew the Soviet Union would not oppose a 'Jewish Palestine'. Dalton's diaries, L.S.E.
46. Dalton's declaration at the Blackpool Party Conference, *Davar*, 22 May 1945.
47. Labour Party International Department. N. 276 – Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, October 1944. 'Economic Approach to the Palestine Problem'.
48. Forty-two articles and short items were published in all, on antisemitism in Britain, the Holocaust, and the Palestine problem.
49. H. Laski, 'A note on antisemitism', *New Statesman*, 13 November 1943; 'On a Jewish soldier's letter', *ibid*., 9 October 1943.
50. The main points appeared the following year in Fenner Brockway's 'When is something to be done about the Jews?', *The New Leader*, 10 July 1943.
51. Douglas Rogers, 'I have just returned from socialism', *The New Leader*, 30 December 1944; and 'Will Jews and Arabs unite in Palestine', *ibid*, 6 January 1945.
52. Palestine, Memorandum by the Minister of Aircraft Production, WP (43) 288, 1 July 1943, P.R.O.
53. See A.B. Rimer, 'The Murder of a Nation', *Tribune*, 12 December 1941; A.J. Bern, 'Licensed Jew Slaughter', *ibid*., 9 April 1943; 'Warsaw Ghetto Rebels', *ibid*., 1 May 1943; 'Ghetto's Last Patrol', *ibid*., 1 June 1943.
54. (1) A.J. Bern, 'A Palestine Home Guard', *Tribune*, 7 July 1942; (2) Geoffrey Lansdowne, 'East of *Suez'*, *ibid*, 31 July 1942; (3) A.J. Bern, 'From Lawrence of Arabia to Shertok', *ibid*., 1 August 1943.
55. James A. Malcolm, 'The Arab Record', *Tribune*, 10 December 1943.
56. 'Jewish Army', *Tribune*, 22 November 1944.
57. Frank Horrabin, 'Our Attitude to the Jews', *Tribune*, 16 August 1940. The article reviewed Jabotinsky's book *The Jewish War Front*.
58. 'From Jerusalem to Croydon', *Tribune*, 17 November 1944.
59. It is noteworthy that on 29 June 1945, on the eve of the parliamentary elections, Churchill in a letter to Weizmann wrote: 'I need scarcely say I shall continue to do my best for it. (i.e. Zionism). But, as you will know, it has few supporters, and even the Labour Party now seems to have lost its zeal.' See Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p. 273.

PART FOUR

THE SECOND POLITICAL CRISIS 1945–1948

Introduction

The changes wrought by the Second World War had immediate implications for relations between Great Britain and the Zionist movement, and between the two – Palestine and British – labour movements in particular. Britain was no longer a first-rank world power, while the Jewish people, demographically speaking, had ceased to be a European nation. A government which was trying to repair its weakened international status by bolstering its strategic and economic standpoint in the Middle East was confronted by a movement convinced that its policies had been tragically justified by the horrors of the Holocaust. The overriding preoccupation of British society was social reform and rapid economic rehabilitation after the war years, while the Jewish people felt that the time had come to fight for independence and national existence. The British, including those who remained loyal in their support of Zionism, were convinced of their country's increased economic and political dependence on the Middle East; Palestine could no longer be regarded as the essential refuge for millions of persecuted Jews, since the 'Jewish problem' was now restricted to several hundred thousand survivors, not all of whom sought their future in their historic homeland.

In this era of conflicting national interests, the two labour movements bore the full weight of national responsibility. This was not the first political confrontation between them. They had clashed in 1929–31, but at that time Labour, though in office, had been under strong opposition pressure as a minority Government, and the Jewish labour movement had not been the dominant force in the Zionist world. The limitations on their power had mitigated the intensity of the dispute between them. Things were different after the war.

On assuming power, Labour chose to tackle three tasks: economic recovery, social reform, and decolonization. The Palestinian labour movement, in the same period, was engaged in the political struggle in the international arena for the establishment of a Jewish state, and in combat on the battlefield, and was bracing itself for the mass absorption of Jewish refugees. The sheer weight of the responsibilities they faced had a decisive impact on the relation between them.

In addition to altering their political standing and increasing their burdens, the war had an additional impact on the two movements. Paradoxically enough, Britain's international status was undermined despite her victory, while the international standing of the Zionism movement was strengthened as a result of the Holocaust. As a consequence, Zionism became less important to the Palestinian labour leaders. The focus of the political struggle shifted to the international arena, and as political interests came to the fore, movement values moved into second place.

How did the British labour movement react to political events and to the confrontation between the Labour Government and the Zionist socialist leadership? Was there a consensus on the political interests advocated by the leadership, or was there opposition within the movement? To what extent did such opposition stem from internal political calculations relating to the power struggle? And finally, did the break in historical continuity as a result of the war affect the traditional ideological and personal links between the two movements?

These questions relate mainly to the labour movement rather than the Labour Government, and it is necessary to distinguish between them because of certain essential differences. A movement, even when in power, is free of most of the constraints which limit a government. The latter is bound by the decisions taken and the facts established by its predecessor. It is hedged by an administration composed of experts with extensive experience and clearly formulated views, and is bound to a network of international forces and immediate national interests which cannot be ignored. A movement usually endeavours to maintain ideological continuity, whereas a new government sometimes faces the need for political and social change of direction. In this section, we will examine how both the labour movement and the Labour Government behaved in their dealings with Zionism.

It is our view that Labour's dilemma with regard to Zionism and the Palestine question exposed certain aspects of the ideological and moral fibre of the movement. The ideological debate and political decisions on this question form an organic part of the annals of the movement.

The main theme of this section is the public debate on Palestine within the movement, and will also touch on the Cabinet's reaction to movement resolutions and attitudes, and the personal viewpoint of several senior ministers. In the present context we are not concerned with the decision-making process as such and the various internal and external factors which affected it.

The political developments around which the public debate revolved can be summed up briefly as follows: When the Second World War ended, the Jews commenced an intensive and overall struggle for a solution to their national problem. This was the finest hour of a people which had just undergone the horrific experience of the Holocaust but nonetheless found the spiritual strength to initiate a political campaign and military struggle against the British and the Arabs for the sake of their national future.

This comprehensive struggle was conducted on three planes: in Palestine by the uprising against the Mandatory regime: through complicated and nerve-racking negotiations between the British Government and the Jewish Agency Executive; and in the international arena.

In Palestine, opinions were divided among the Jews as to the most effective method of struggle. The extremist organizations, the Stern group and the Irgun, adopted a policy of total warfare against the authorities, both military and civilian, and their army and administrative installations. This entailed mutual bloodshed and claimed many innocent victims. In contrast to these organizations, which constituted the minority of the Yishuv, the majority, who were organized in democratic institutions and accepted the authority of the Jewish Agency Executive, preferred to conduct a restrained struggle. The Hagana, the military arm of the Jewish Agency, denounced attacks on persons but tried to destroy installations which hampered 'illegal immigration', such as radar installations, patrol vessels and detention camps. The main effort of the Hagana was focused on organization of 'illegal immigration' of Jewish refugees from Europe and establishment of Jewish settlements in areas where Jewish settlement was banned under the 1939 White Paper.

The mode of struggle of the organized majority was based on several political calculations. The Jewish Agency Executive believed that this was a means of exerting pressure on Britain without forfeiting the chance of conducting political negotiations. In addition, the effort to avoid harming the innocent and the nurturing of the image of Jewish refugees pitted against British destroyers, were aimed at winning the sympathies of Western public opinion, and finally, by the tactics of settlement, particularly in the south, the Zionist Executive planned the delineation of

the borders of the future Jewish state.

In October 1945, the three underground organizations set up a joint framework to coordinate the struggle against the British. This cooperation, created despite the tradition of bitter conflict between the organizations, resulted from the activist initiative of David Ben-Gurion. It met with the objections of the moderate faction in the Jewish Agency led by the President of the Zionist Movement, Chaim Weizmann. Ben-Gurion hoped to increase the pressures on the British Government by concerted action, and to supervise the activities of the other underground movements, and cooperation lasted until Summer 1946. In July, as a result of the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem by the Irgun (in which dozens of civilians were killed), the Jewish Agency decided that such actions could harm the prospects of political negotiations, and consequently disbanded the framework of joint struggle. From then until the British decision to withdraw from Palestine, the minority organizations conducted separate struggles which set British public opinion against them, and the majority organization concentrated its efforts mainly on illegal immigration and strategic settlement.

Just as the Zionist leadership chose to conduct a restricted struggle against the British, so the latter exercised considerable restraint in utilizing suppressive measures against the Yishuv. Despite the consistent policy of checking illegal immigration, the extensive arms searches, the imposition of curfew on Jewish settlement, mass detentions, including the arrest of moderate leaders, and execution of Stern group and Irgun fighters, the British Government never granted the military the licence to suppress totally all Jewish resistance. This policy was influenced by the desire to continue negotiations, but also by consideration for world public opinion and by the ability to distinguish between the extremist minority and the moderate and responsible majority within the Yishuv.

Paradoxically enough, despite the tendency of the British to retreat from certain points of the anti-Zionist policy formulated in the White Paper, and the readiness of the Jewish Agency to accept political compromise, negotiations between them ended in failure. In August the Cabinet Committee (of which Bevin was a member), chaired by Morrison, recommended continuation of Jewish immigration according to a monthly quota of 1,500 immigrants until a permanent solution was found to the Palestine problem. This decision, which did not satisfy Jewish demands, was the first deviation from the White Paper policy. In other words, Jewish immigration was extended beyond the five-year period and without the permission of the Arabs, which had been stipulated in the White Paper.

In November, the Government announced the establishment of an Anglo-American Commission to re-examine the Palestine situation. This implied basic acceptance of the possibility that the White Paper might be revoked. After the Commission recommended, in May 1946, permission be granted for the immediate immigration of 100,000 Jews, the Government proclaimed its readiness to adopt this recommendation on condition that the United States agreed to become a full partner in implementing the plan, and on condition that the underground organizations on both sides agreed to disarmament. By stipulating these conditions the Government was, in effect, rejecting the scheme, but in principle it had agreed to deviate from the White Paper. In July 1946, the Cabinet produced its own compromise proposal in conjunction with the U.S. State Department. The ‘Morrison Plan’, as it was called, proposed the partition of Palestine into three cantons: British (43 per cent of the area of Palestine), Arab (40 per cent) and Jewish (17 per cent), the three autonomous cantons to be under joint central rule. This scheme was rejected by the Jews, since it offered them too little, and by the Arabs, who felt

that the Jews were being given too much. But in any event, it should be noted that, in effect, the 'Morrison Plan' cancelled out the White Paper. That document had aspired to transform Palestine into a democratic independent Palestinian State safeguarding the rights of the Jewish minority, while the Morrison Plan recognized Palestine as a binational political unit under British rule.

In the end, after all attempts to arrive at a compromise had failed, the British Government announced in February 1947 that it was returning the Mandate over Palestine to the United Nations.

Within the Jewish Agency, the moderates prevailed after the King David Hotel incident. In the wake of Weizmann's threat of resignation, it was decided to end the armed struggle and to concentrate on far-reaching political initiative. The Executive convened in Paris in August 1946 and decided to commence confidential diplomatic negotiations concerning the partition of Palestine. This was a retreat from the resolution adopted at the 1942 Biltmore Conference which had demanded the establishment of a Jewish state in the entire area of Palestine. The Zionist Congress which met in Basel in December 1946 rejected the idea of partition and deposed the moderate Weizmann, but this was only an outward demonstration. Ben-Gurion was, in truth, ready to accept a far-reaching compromise with Bevin, according to which Britain would retain the Mandate on condition that it permitted mass Jewish immigration and land purchase.

In the international arena, the Jewish question became a political issue in the inter-power global struggle for strategic areas of influence.

There can be no doubt that the wave of sympathy for the Jews which swept Western public opinion after the Holocaust was to the advantage of the Zionist movement. To this could be added the problem of tens of thousands of D.P.s who left Poland in the wake of antisemitic action (which was to reach its height in the Kielce pogroms in July 1946). The mass Jewish exodus from Poland, partly spontaneous and partly organized, proved to the world that the Jews were unwilling to be reabsorbed in their countries of birth. It was this situation which impelled President Truman to approach the British Government in August 1945 with the demand that they facilitate the absorption of 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine. This marked the beginning of U.S. political involvement in the struggle for the future of Palestine. Although the United States tried to avoid practical interference in Palestine, it was finally forced to intervene under pressure from American Jewry, which organized into a highly effective mass pressure group under the charismatic Zionist leader, Abba Hillel Silver. It was this pressure which led the United States, despite hesitations and reservations, to support partition.

The Soviet Union tried to exploit the situation in order to further its own regional interests, and aided the Zionist movement both directly and obliquely in its struggle against the British. Soviet authorities did not prevent the exodus of Polish Jews to D.P. camps in Germany in 1945–6, supported the partition plan at the United Nations in 1947, and supplied arms for the Jewish struggle in 1948–9 by way of Czechoslovakia.

In the final analysis, the crisis between the British Government and the Zionist movement was not caused by the fact that each adopted inflexible political stands, but resulted rather from the absence of a joint long-term Anglo-American plan for the Middle East marked by political daring, social vision and moral sensitivity.

It may be assumed that in 1945 the combination of U.S. military and economic might and British political experience could have created a regime in the Middle East able to provide justice for the Jews, bring progress to the Arabs and check the Soviet threat. A Marshall Plan for the

Middle East, agrarian reform, democratization of Arab society, a Jewish state in Palestine, and strong Western military presence could perhaps have changed the structure of the Middle East. But the historical reality was different and the Jewish people and Western society are still paying the price.

CHAPTER TEN

Before the Storm July 1945 – April 1946

The political upheaval which brought Labour to power in Britain appeared at first to be greatly to the advantage of the Palestine labour movement.[1] Despite their sceptical view of pro-Zionist pronouncements, they recognized that for the first time since the Balfour Declaration a party was in power in Britain which was publicly committed to Zionism and had made far-reaching promises to it. Moreover, Zionist labour leaders were on friendly terms with several of the new Cabinet ministers.[2] The first portents appeared, however, shortly after the elections and even before the selection of the Cabinet was completed.

In July 1945 rumour reached the Zionist Executive in London that Attlee planned to appoint as his Colonial Secretary not Creech Jones, the old friend of Zionism, but G.H. Hall, who had been Deputy Colonial Secretary in Churchill's Cabinet. Since Hall was considered unsympathetic to the Zionist cause, Locker was asked to intercede with his old friend, Arthur Greenwood, on this matter. He tried to persuade Greenwood that a pro-Zionist Colonial Secretary would counterbalance the hostile Foreign Office experts and Mandatory officials. Locker also pointed out that the appointment of Hall would be regarded by the Zionist Executive as 'the first blow inflicted on us by the new Government'.[3] Locker, on his own evidence, did most of the talking, Greenwood contenting himself with brief replies and promising to raise the matter with his colleagues.

This intervention, though not perhaps tactful, can be understood in the light of his close ties with several Labour leaders, including Creech Jones himself. Greenwood did not take umbrage and even urged Locker to stay in touch with him. (The two men did in fact remain friends, Greenwood often reporting to Locker on Cabinet discussions on Palestine.)

After Hall was appointed Colonial Secretary and Creech Jones his Deputy, Ben-Gurion met them and described the meeting as reassuring.[4] They promised him that the Government would try to solve the problem of the Jewish refugees, and Creech Jones personally guaranteed to remain vigilant on Zionist issues. Worrying rumours, however, continued to reach Palestine, and *Davar* was impelled to put the picture straight. In an editorial, the paper warned against both exaggerated hopes and despair before the Labour Government had had time to formulate its future policy on Palestine. It expressed the hope that Labour would not deviate from its commitments, 'but honouring of this commitment calls for fundamental changes in Palestine policy in the face of real and illusory obstacles, and these will not be made unless a resolute body firmly and constantly demands them'.[5] The paper took the realistic view that it was still necessary to fight for the Zionist cause; no achievements would emerge without effort.

The general mood was expressed vividly by Eliezer Kaplan on his return from the Zionist Conference held in London in August. He warned the Mapai Secretariat[6] that there would shortly be a confrontation between Zionism and the Labour Government, and admitted that his

faith in Labour was weakening. After the elections he had been convinced

> that we were opening up a new chapter … We knew that there were some people in Labour who were unfriendly to us but that we had some loyal friends. We knew we must … try to reduce their promises and resolutions to practical politics, and present our case … frankly and out of goodwill.

But even this limited hope had been dashed. 'The beginning was not auspicious … we did not succeed in reaching the most important people in the Government, – Bevin, and to a certain extent, Morrison … and they, in effect, evaded us and directed us to the Colonial Office.' Though this meeting had proved encouraging, the Zionist Executive in London continued to feed on rumours and hints thrown out by Bevin. Yosef reported to the Party Secretariat on a talk between Bevin's secretary Hector McNeil and Chaim Weizmann, at which McNeil (whom he described as a 'very intelligent young man') tried to persuade Weizmann that there were no grounds for Zionist fears.

> McNeil asked how long it would take to settle one million Jews in Palestine. Weizmann said he could not say but the plan was to send one hundred thousand in the first year. McNeil commented that all he could say without revealing the secrets of the Cabinet scheme was that in content the Government would not deviate from the principles determined by the Labour Party.[7]

Was McNeil deliberately misleading Weizmann? Blanche Dugdale, Weizmann's close associate, believed that the intention was to create a rift between Weizmann and Shertok, by appealing to the former's more moderate tendencies.[8]

The impression gained from perusal of British Cabinet documents in this period is that, as in 1929, the Cabinet had not yet formulated a clear policy towards Palestine, and the anti-Zionist predilections of the majority of Ministers were not yet being fully expressed. It is evident, however, that the Cabinet wanted to formulate short-term policy as soon as possible and, on 28 August 1945, a Cabinet Committee was appointed to do this job; it was chaired by Morrison and included Bevin, Dalton and Hall, none of whom had an anti-Zionist record. The Committee worked with great despatch and submitted its conclusions at the beginning of September.[9] It recommended that a policy be adopted for an interim period of no more than six months, to be based on the following principles:

(a) Jewish immigration should continue on the basis of the quotas specified in the White Paper;

(b) the U. S. Government should be informed that the British Cabinet was endeavouring to evolve a long-term Palestine policy to be submitted to the U.N. for approval;

(c) military units in Palestine should be augmented to forestall any possible unrest there.

The Committee expressed its sympathy for the sufferings of the Jews and undertook to honour the Mandate, but rejected the Zionist demand for mass Jewish immigration. These recommendations were approved by the Cabinet, which asked the Colonial Secretary to prepare a memorandum on long-term policy.[10]

The memorandum which Hall submitted several weeks later, in consultation with Bevin, proposed several alternative policies: continuation of the Mandate, implementation of the White

Paper, or partition of Palestine.[11]

The new Labour Government was forced to turn its attention to the Palestine question for urgent constitutional and political reasons. The five-year period specified in the 1939 White Paper for the immigration of 75,000 Jews was due to lapse in 1945. From now on, the scope of immigration would be conditional on Arab approval. In August, President Truman asked Britain to permit 100,000 Jewish D.P.s from refugee camps in Germany to enter Palestine.

Though Cabinet papers do not reveal whether the decision on interim policy was taken unanimously, Arthur Greenwood confided to Locker that he, Dalton and Bevan had opposed the decision.[12] Of the three, A. Bevan (1897–1960), perhaps the most colourful and charming Labour leader, had been the least involved in the past in Zionist affairs. What led him to lend his support to Zionism to the point where he even threatened at one stage to resign from the Cabinet? His official biography offers no explanation.[13] We believe there were several reasons why he advocated a Jewish state rather than a binational state (like Cripps, his former mentor). He was on extremely close and friendly terms with Israel Sieff,[14] a veteran Zionist and close confidant of Chaim Weizmann. Secondly, Bevan was at loggerheads with the authoritarian and conservative Bevin, and Palestine was only one of the bones of contention between them. And finally, one must take account of Bevan's own personality; his humanitarianism, poetic nature and visionary ardour. His imagination was fired by a meeting with Weizmann on the eve of Bevin's November 1945 Commons speech, at which Weizmann described to him some of the plans for Palestine's economic development. Bevan arranged for him to be received by the Foreign Secretary, but Weizmann's two meetings with Bevin increased his apprehension as to the Cabinet's intentions.[15] Some members of the Zionist Executive proposed drastic measures, such as Weizmann's resignation, suspension of the negotiations, or even preparations for an armed struggle in Palestine. These measures were rejected by the majority, who still believed in the effectiveness of political negotiations and the Labour Party's ability to sway the Cabinet.

At the beginning of October, Shertok and Locker attended a meeting of the N.E.C., chaired by Laski.[16]The two Zionists spoke at length about the Holocaust, the Jewish war effort, the fate of Jewish D.P.s in Europe, and the moral and legal obligations of the Labour Party. The questions which followed revealed that the Labourites greatly feared that an Arab uprising might ensue in Palestine if Jewish demands were met. Laski even expressed the fear that neighbouring Arab countries might rally to the anti-British banner. He proposed, as short-term policy, abolition of the land transfer regulations and the issue of 100,000 immigration permits. In the long run he thought that the Palestine problem should be solved in collaboration with the United Nations. When Locker commented that decisions should only be taken in consultation with Zionist leaders in accordance with the Labour Party resolution, H. Clay commented that 'resolutions are not always drafted in precisely the same way as policy has got to be worked out. It is the broad principles and spirit that must be kept in mind.' Barbara Ayrton Gould (who was half-Jewish and a pro-Zionist) asked who would finance the absorption of 100,000 Jews, and Shertok (who believed she had raised the issue in order to allay the fears of her comrades)[17] assured her that the Jews would bear the cost.

After this meeting the N.E.C. met with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Colonial Secretary,[18] and Laski's report on the discussions is highly illuminating.

Laski was later to demonstrate his political courage by openly defying Bevin, but at the meeting in question he displayed circumspection and moderation. The N.E.C., he emphasized, had no intention of criticizing the Government and was merely asking for explanations. The meeting was a family discussion and should not be made public lest the mistaken impression be created that the Cabinet was subject to Party supervision. Formally speaking, Laski was adhering strictly to the principle of the separation of Cabinet and Party, to prevent a campaign of pressures and counterpressures. Then again, he undoubtedly recalled the accusations that the second Labour Government had buckled under to Party pressure. Another reason for caution may have been his feeling that, as a Jew and pro-Zionist who was also Chairman of the Party, he was under certain constraints.

Laski stated that there were three urgent issues: revoking of the White Paper, in accordance with the Party resolution; the refugee problem; and the economic development of Palestine and Transjordan to facilitate immigration and raise Arab living standards. Attlee replied that Cabinet proposals

> would be built upon the abrogation of the White Paper, that he and his colleagues were agreed with the Party decisions that they could not stand; and that the purpose of their proposals would be the fulfilment of the Mandate the principles of which the Labour Party had always supported.

Meanwhile, the debate had been brought into the open through the press. In mid-September, *Tribune* had published a lengthy article on Palestine in response to the first post-war Zionist Conference, held in London.[19] Though recognizing Labour's obligation to Zionism, it noted that

> Palestine presents one of those issues where there is no unassailable right or wrong … and where it is impossible to give full satisfaction to either side without a certain injustice to the other. Even theoretically, an ideal solution cannot be found.

The only possible solution which offered 'a short-term way out of the dilemma' was partition, until a binational state could be set up. The U.S.A. and the Soviet Union should become Britain's partners in the search for a solution.

The views of Aneurin Bevan and Jennie Lee undoubtedly coloured *Tribune*'s approach to the Palestine problem. Not only did the paper advocate the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, it also expressed sympathy with the underground Jewish movements and (as in the case of Lord Moyne's assassination) described their activities as the despairing response of those who felt that the enlightened world had abandoned them. Though the paper felt that Labour had paid insufficient attention to Arab opposition, it also totally rejected the Cairo Plan, submitted to the Cabinet by Middle Eastern experts, which recommended that immigration be halted at once. It approved of the plan (rumoured to have been proposed by Attlee to the U.S. Government) for:

(a) Anglo-American guarantees of the political rights of Palestinian Arabs;

(b) controlled Jewish immigration to Palestine to answer the need of refugees in Germany;

(c) a widescale economic development scheme with British and American aid.[20]

At the same time, the *Town Crier* was publicizing Bevin's views on the Palestine question.[21] Explaining why the British Government was not moving out of Palestine, it argued that Britain

could not abandon her strategic Middle Eastern standpoints and oil resources. It attacked the U.S. Government for demanding that Britain permit 100,000 Jews to enter Palestine while refusing to share the economic and political burden entailed. And it concluded: 'The world owes a heavy debt of suffering to the Jews, but the repayment must be shared by all the nations. Britain cannot carry it alone.'

On 13 November 1945, Bevin announced to the Commons the main points of Britain's interim Palestine policy, based on the recommendations of the Morrison Committee. There were only two innovations. He announced that the Government could not accept the view that all European Jews should abandon their countries of birth, thus precluding the possibility of contributing to the rehabilitation of Europe.[22] He also announced the establishment of an Anglo-American Commission to study the condition of Jewish refugees in Europe and the possibilities for rehabilitating them in Europe, and to examine the political and economic conditions for mass Jewish immigration to Palestine.

How should this public statement be interpreted? Ben-Gurion and Shertok were probably correct in their assessment that, by agreeing to a joint commission and linking the solution of the refugee problem to immigration, Labour was, in effect, proclaiming the need to revoke the White Paper. Consequently, the Zionist Executive in London greeted the new policy with relative calm. Blanche Dugdale wrote:

> First impressions are that it might have been worse. The salient points seem to be that U.S.A. is associated with the new Commission of Enquiry, and that by implication the White Paper has to go … Ben-Gurion considers it as a very clever document from the point of view of keeping the Labour Party quiet.

The London branch of the Zionist Executive decided not to respond until the General Executive met in Jerusalem, and meanwhile to issue a statement emphasizing the need for immigration and for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Ben-Gurion publicly denounced the official proclamation with his characteristic vigour.[23]

The *Daily Herald*, which had refrained from editorial comment before Bevin spoke to the Commons, greeted the Government statement with an appeal to patience.[24] It criticized Ben-Gurion for claiming that the issue was not a humanitarian but a political one, and that the issues at stake were unlimited immigration, the creation of a Jewish majority and the establishment of a Jewish state. This was a disappointing response, the paper wrote, at a time when human progress so clearly depended 'upon renunciation of nationalistic pride.'

The *Tribune* welcomed the Government statement, which it saw as a compromise between the views of Foreign Office and Middle Eastern experts, and the Labour Party resolutions and U.S. demands. It felt that Bevin had advanced from the 'sterile status quo outlook' of his Tory predecessors by showing readiness to promote widescale economic development as a step towards the objective of Jewish-Arab coexistence.[25]

Tribune rejected what it believed to be the view of officialdom that Zionism was an artificial response to Nazi persecution. It cautioned that, just as pro-Zionists had once underestimated Arab opposition, opponents of Zionism were now underrating that movement. It was now plain that 'both the Arab movements in the Middle East and Zionism are strong and positive nationalist movements'.[26]

The *New Leader* continued to support the rights of Jewish D.P.s to immigrate to Palestine, the establishment of a binational state, and a socialist Middle Eastern federation encompassing a binational Palestinian state.[27] It is interesting to note that Maxton's views had taken a pro-Zionist turn. Speaking at a public meeting, he severely criticized the Arabs for their intolerance towards foreigners. They should learn to accept the presence of non-Moslems in their midst, he said, otherwise they forfeited the moral justification to demand rights for themselves. He also spoke of the

> moral bounden duty on the whole of the human race to see that a way of life shall be found for the Jewish people and some place where they can live, calling it their own and feeling as much sense of security at least as the other nations of the world.[28]

Since Maxton recognized the rights of both Jews and Arabs to national homelands, it may be assumed that he favoured partition.

H. N. Brailsford more or less concurred with the I.L.P. He stated his opinion that a binational state should be established[29] but, unlike the I.L.P., did not think that this could be done in the immediate future. He envisaged a step-by-step plan: development of national-religious autonomies like the *millets* of the Ottoman Empire; then inter-community cooperation, and finally rule over Palestine. 'In due course, if Palestine evolved happily into a binational state, capable of self-government, it might federate with Syria, the Lebanon and Transjordan.'

The most interesting response to Bevin's statement came from Laski.[30] The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, he wrote, had not promised the Jews either a majority or a Jewish state, but the latter guaranteed their right to immigrate as long as they did not thereby affect the rights and status of Palestine's Arabs. An imaginative widescope economic plan (such as the Lowdermilk irrigation scheme) could facilitate the absorption of hundreds of thousands of Jews, and thus a Jewish majority could be achieved. Laski expressed his disappointment that the Government had not increased immigration quotas of its own volition, and reiterated his belief that the territorialist solution advocated by many Labour leaders was unrealistic. For the Jews no place but Palestine

> has historic or spiritual significance … That means that Mr. Bevin is now committed to finding a permanent solution of the world problem of Jewry so that the Jew everywhere is, and feels himself to be, as fully a citizen in the land where he dwells as he certainly feels himself to be in the Jewish settlements of Palestine.

So in this moment Laski believed, naïvely, that Bevin would be his 'partner' in seeking a solution whereby every Jew could feel at home in his historic homeland as in his country of birth. For him this was Zionism's contribution to the normalization of the status of Jews among the peoples of the world, and this suggests what led him to sympathize with Zionism.[31] It was ironic that Laski believed Bevin had been entrusted with the historic task of solving the problem of the universal status of the Jewish people.

All those involved in Palestinian affairs were now united in anticipation of the recommendations of the Anglo-American Commission, and the public debate was muted for a time. It was generally agreed in Labour that the far-reaching promises made before the elections to Zionism could not be honoured, and that a moderate and balanced policy was required in the

interim. Although Bevin's statement was not criticized openly, the intellectual left differed with the trade unions, who supported Bevin unreservedly. The left emphasized the rights of the two national movements to self-determination, and hence approved of partition. The trade unions stressed Britain's military and economic interests in the Middle East and refused to consider any political plan unacceptable to the Arabs. The left advocated cooperation between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union for solution of the Palestine problem, while the right preferred collaboration with the U.S. alone.

NOTES

1. *See Davar*, 31 June 1945.
2. i.e. the senior Cabinet Ministers Morrison, Greenwood and Dalton, as well as Noel-Baker, Bevan and Creech Jones.
3. Interview with Arthur Greenwood, 30 July 1945. Locker Archives, File 82, L.A.
4. Dov Yosef's report on his visit to London, Mapai Secretariat, 28 August 1945, 24/45, L.A.
5. *Davar*, 3 August 1945.
6. Mapai Secretariat, 27 September 1945, 24/45, L.A. See also Yosef, 25 September 1945, *ibid*.
7. See note 6.
8. Blanch Dugdale of this meeting (held on 19 September 1945): 'Bevin has not seen Chaim but sent a young fool of a private secretary (Hector McNeil), who tried to drive a wedge between Chaim and Moshe, insinuating that the proposals would be acceptable to Chaim', *Diaries*, p. 225.
9. CAB 129 CP (45), 8 September 1945, P.R.O.
10. CAB 129 CP (45) 196, 28 September 1945, P.R.O.
11. CAB 128 CP (45), 11 September 1945, P.R.O.
12. See Yosef, note 6.
13. Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan*, vol. 1, 11, MacGibbon and Kee, 1962, 1973, London.
14. Israel Sieff, *Memoirs*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970, London, pp. 194–6.
15. See Blanch Dugdale, *Diaries*, pp. 225–6.
16. *Labour Party International Department* N.E.C. 91. A meeting was held on Friday 5 October 1945. Present for N.E.C.: Mr Harold Laski (Chairman), Mr H. Clay, Mrs B. Ayrton Gould, M.P., Mr W. Green, Mr P.T. Heady, Mr C. Johnson, Mr Morgan Phillips (Secretary).
17. Shertok at meeting of Mapai Secretariat, 10 December 1945, 24/45, L.A.
18. N.E.C. vol. 92, 22 October 1945. Notes of discussion with the Prime Minister (Rt. Hon. C.R. Attlee), the Foreign Secretary (Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin) and the Colonial Secretary (Hon. George Hall), on Palestine.
19. 'The Palestine Dilemma', *Tribune*, 14 September 1945; 'Wanted: a Policy for Palestine', *Tribune*, 25 September 1945.
20. 'Palestine Expectant', *Tribune*, 9 October 1945.
21. 'The Wandering Jew', *Town Crier*, 8 October 1945.
22. This was a straight Foreign Office Proposal. See M. Gilbert, p. 274.
23. B. Dugdale, *Diaries*, p. 226; D. Ben-Gurion, press conference, 14 November 1945, Jewish Agency, Z.A.

24. ‘Patience’, *Daily Herald*, 15 November 1945.
25. ‘What’s Happening’, *Tribune*, 16 November 1945.
26. ‘Organized Exodus?’ *Tribune*, 11 January 1946.
27. See Douglas Rogers, ‘Dilemma in Utopia’ *New Leader*, 20 September 1945; ‘Jews and Arabs in Palestine’, *New Leader*, 29 September 1945; Fenner Brockway, ‘War against the Jews?’ *ibid*., 3 November 1945; Douglas Rogers, ‘Palestine in search of a solution’, *ibid*., 3 November 1945.
28. ‘Maxton on the Labour Government’, ‘The Jewish Problem’, *Forward*, 24 November 1945.
29. H.N. Brailsford, ‘A plan for Palestine?’ *New Statesman*, 27 October 1945.
30. H.J. Laski, ‘What about Palestine?’ *Forward*, 24 November 1945.
31. See Gorni, *Midstream*, November 1977.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

At the Political Crossroads May 1946 – February 1947

The Cabinet

The report of the Anglo-American Commission, published on 20 April 1946, surprised[1] and confused the Labour Government because of its recommendation, supported by President Truman, that 100,000 Jewish D.P.s in Germany be allowed to enter Palestine at once. Such a step seemed liable to disrupt Britain's long-term plans for Palestine.

Between April 1946 and February 1947 (when Bevin announced that the Mandate was being returned to the United Nations), Cabinet deliberations revealed general indecisiveness, and differences of opinion between Ministers.[2] The Cabinet was particularly hesitant in its attitude to the United States. While anxious to arrive at an agreement on joint policy in the Middle East, Britain was unwilling to accede to Truman's request on the D.P.s, and this precluded cooperation. A further example of indecision was the decision to adopt stringent military measures against the Jewish underground movement (Operation Agatha 29 June 1946) and simultaneous rejection of Army demands for total suppression and eradication of all Jewish underground movements.[3] The Cabinet also wanted to isolate extremist elements within the Zionist movement, without showing willingness to accept the compromise proposals of the moderates.[4]

While there was general agreement as to which solutions were unacceptable, the Cabinet found it difficult to formulate a positive and acceptable solution of its own. It was unwilling to continue the Mandate in its original form, to accept partition (because of Arab opposition), or to impose the 1939 White Paper (because of Jewish opposition bolstered by Western public opinion). Hence the Cabinet vacillated between different schemes: the national cantonization plan (the Morrison-Grady scheme); a proposal for a five-year interim settlement entailing immigration of 100,000 Jews within two years and subsequent establishment of a democratic Palestinian state with guaranteed rights for both peoples[5]; and the final decision to return the Mandate to the United Nations.[6]

There were marked differences between the pragmatic approach of Attlee and Bevin, which was totally detached from the traditional Party policy on Zionism, and the views of the minority group (including Strachey, Shinwell, Dalton and Bevan) who, for both pragmatic and ideological reasons, remained true to traditional policies. This group approved Bevin's intention to formulate joint Anglo-American policy, but demanded that international institutions share in the policy-making process.[7] They favoured partition for various reasons: establishment of a friendly state in a region liable to fall under Soviet influence (Bevan), lack of any other realistic alternative (Shinwell), and liberating Britain from the political and financial burden (Dalton). They were, in effect, adhering to the Party's pre-war policy on partition.

The new Colonial Secretary, Creech-Jones, was in a particularly difficult position: once an ardent proponent of partition,[8] he was obliged to accept Bevin's viewpoint.[9]

The Cabinet finally approved the decision to submit the issue to the U.N.[10] The decision was conveyed to the Commons by Ernest Bevin on 25 February 1947. His speech, though it adds nothing to our knowledge of the Cabinet's motives, throws interesting light on the personality of the Foreign Secretary himself.

Bevin was one of Britain's most important Foreign Secretaries, and held office in a period fraught with difficulties and challenges. His efforts to maintain his country's standing as a world power after the war still await the final verdict of historians. But it is generally agreed that he suffered a grave defeat over Palestine. Even if one accepts the claim that there was no feasible alternative to his decision to hand the entire problem over to the U.N., or that his policy was justified in the context of British interests and general considerations of justice, his policy still appears to have been a total failure when measured against his original intentions.

Unaccustomed to defeat, Bevin always found it difficult to swallow. And on the Palestine question, he had been vanquished not by some force which he accepted as stronger than himself, but by the Jews, for whose abilities and resistance in political and military confrontations he had little admiration. He was unable to reconcile himself to this fact, to forgive or to forget. And his tremendous fund of self-confidence enabled him to ignore the true situation and to remain staunchly convinced of the justice of his own actions.

The first part of Bevin's Commons speech, analysing the Palestine problem and the course of the Cabinet deliberations, was fair and balanced. But the latter section revealed his resentment and desire to blame his failure on the Jews and on the United States. As at the 1946 Party Conference, Bevin introduced a personal note, describing his own role in the negotiations and their impact on him. He referred slightingly and even crudely to President Truman, to Jewish Agency leaders and to those politicians who differed with his own views.

The Foreign Secretary described the Palestine problem as 'very vexed and complex'. This indicates his increasing awareness of the complexity of the issue, because of Britain's dual commitment to Jews and Arabs based on an irreconcilable clash of interests. At the same time, he lauded Jewish settlement projects in Palestine and spoke sympathetically of Britain's earlier support for a Jewish national home. He went on to emphasize, however, that the situation had now changed, since both Jews and Arabs were now demanding independent sovereign states. He assured the House that he approached the Palestine question without prejudices, and had studied all the alternative schemes submitted to the previous and incumbent Governments before concluding that the sides would never agree, and so a solution must be imposed. While negotiations had still been under way, official policy had been based on the 1939 White Paper. He admitted frankly that Labour, having guaranteed to revoke the White Paper, now faced a moral dilemma. But, he stated emphatically, as long as the document had not been revoked by Parliament, it continued to constitute official policy.[11]

He went on to conduct a public reckoning with his opponents: the U.S. Government and the Zionist leadership. He accused the former of injudicious intervention in Palestinian affairs, citing as an example Truman's unqualified support for the Anglo-American Commission's recommendation regarding immigration of D.P.s. Truman's pro-Zionist pronouncements, he said, made with an eye to elections, had hampered his own efforts to establish rapprochement between the Jews and the Arabs. 'In international affairs', he went on to say, 'I cannot settle

things if my problem is made the subject of local elections. I hope I am not saying anything to cause bad feelings with the United States, but I feel so intensely about this.'

Bevin was not so politically naïve as to believe that his statement would not have a detrimental effect on his country's relations with the United States. At the same time, his egocentricity did not permit him to ignore what he regarded as a personal slight.

The Foreign Secretary then turned his attention to the Zionist leadership, and criticized their objections to a unitary state in Palestine.

> It is said that if we have a unitary state, the Jews, as Jews, will not be in the United Nations. Really, this is raising a very big question. Are we in the United Nations as a religion, are we in the United Nations as a people geographically situated, or how are we in it?

He objected to representation on a religious basis in the U.N. which, he felt, could have dangerous implications for the British Commonwealth. (His sincerity is questionable, since the Cabinet had just agreed to the partition of India.)

In passing, let it be noted that Bevin had not borrowed his conviction that the Jews were a religion rather than a nation from his advisers in the Foreign Office. As far back as 1932 he had compared the Arab-Jewish conflict to the Irish conflict, describing both as disputes between two religions.[12]

Turning to practical political issues, Bevin said that if it were merely a question of finding a home for D.P.s, even the Arabs would be willing to cooperate, but the Jewish Agency insisted on speaking in terms of millions of immigrants. He sympathized with the Arab objections to entrusting immigration matters to the Jewish Agency.

> We have in Great Britain a House of Commons to determine whether people shall be admitted into this country or not. No one else is doing that. Why should an external agency, largely financed from America, determine how many people should come into Palestine and interfere with the economy of the Arabs, who have been there for 2000 years?

This identification with the Arab stand reflected both his resentment at U.S. and Zionist attitudes and his conviction (no doubt echoing that of Attlee) that the Jews of Palestine should be differentiated from the rest of the world.

Though partition appeared the only logical solution in the face of the uncompromising Jewish demand for independence and Arab fears of dispossession, Bevin rejected it for the reasons he had cited in Cabinet deliberations: inability to fix borders; the creation of a large Arab minority in the Jewish state; and perpetuation of the conflict. He did, however, express unreserved support for an Arab-Jewish unitary state, and painted a very rosy picture of it.

> I am convinced that if the Jews and Arabs in Palestine … are given a chance to work together, they will work together and solve this problem, but if it is to be settled in accordance with the Jewish Agency's dictates, it will never be settled. I am speaking, I hope, impartially.

This claim of impartiality is somewhat unconvincing in the face of his uncritical acceptance of the Arab claims, and rather implausible description of the moderation of Arab leaders and their willingness to welcome hordes of Jewish immigrants.

Bevin summed up by admitting that Great Britain was handing over to the United Nations reluctantly and would prefer to deal with the issue 'on a humanitarian basis', i.e. by settling the

refugee problem through the interim cantonization scheme.

Bevin, who was hypersensitive to criticism, was undoubtedly wounded by Truman's conduct, by the public attacks on his own policy, and by the intransigence of the Zionist leaders, to the point where his political judgement was clouded. A methodical man, who found it difficult to abandon stereotyped and traditional ways of thinking, he moved from error to error and failure to failure in his Palestine policy. Bevin found it impossible to grasp that he was faced with a Jewish national movement whose force transcended the numerical strength of the Yishuv in Palestine. Nor could he comprehend the profound impact of the Holocaust on Jewish yearnings for national independence, or the direct influence of American Jewish public opinion on the U.S. political system.[13]

Bevin's volte-face was not, however, as Machiavellian as it is sometimes depicted. We have already shown that, despite his utilitarian political reasons for supporting Zionism, Bevin's support was qualified.[14] He was firmly convinced that the Jews were a religious group and not a nation. And though he supported partition in the late thirties, he was not convinced that setting up a state would solve the problems of European Jewry, and advocated a territorial alternative. During the War, while supporting Churchill's partition plan, he became aware of the extent of Arab opposition and began to fear its impact on Britain's status in the Middle East. This does not mean that, given greater Jewish strength, he would not have become a more ardent proponent of Zionism if this movement had appeared to him to serve British interests. But at the same time one should keep in mind the consistency of his reservations in the fifteen years preceding his appointment as Foreign Secretary. It should also be noted that, though undoubtedly crude in his methods, aggressive and sometimes ruthless, Bevin was a man of values. He identified fully and wholeheartedly with the working class and saw himself as the representative of the downtrodden, and this was a factor in his stand on Palestine.[15] He regarded the Palestinian Arabs as a politically and economically deprived group in comparison with the Zionists, who were backed by Jewish capitalists. He even came to believe that Jewish capital was creating a worldwide conspiracy against him.[16] As to the Jewish survivors of the death camps, he was not indifferent to their fate, and apparently sincerely believed that their problem could be solved within the framework of an international agreement, though mostly outside the border of Palestine. And on this point, as on many others, Bevin had the loyal backing both of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister.

Attlee was consistently hostile to Zionism and, from the outset, his hostility related to the essence of Zionist ideology. In this he resembled Sidney Webb, who rejected the very idea of a solution in Palestine and saw the Jews as a religious group and not a nation. In due course, Attlee also became an opponent of the political objectives of the Zionist movement, such as the establishment of a Jewish state. These views were intensified by his strong revulsion from acts of violence and illegal conduct. He never expressed his views publicly, for internal party reasons or because of his status as deputy to a pro-Zionist Prime Minister. In his memoirs, he wrote that the Balfour Declaration 'was done in a very thoughtless manner … a wild experiment that was bound to cause trouble … The interests of Arab and Jew in Palestine were quite irreconcilable.'[17]

It is hard to condone Attlee's statement (while defending mass arrests of Jews in Palestine) that the Jewish underground in Palestine had adopted 'some of the very worst of the methods of

their oppressors in Europe'.[18] This was a disproportionate reaction to the acts of terrorism and sabotage which he cited, and would appear to stem from Attlee's own insensitivity. He had revealed similar insensitivity twice before: in 1940, he justified the exiling to Mauritius of survivors of the immigrant ship *Patria*, on the grounds that they had broken the law; and in 1943, he threatened Jewry that they might suffer the consequences of Jewish terrorism in Palestine. It was the combination of ideological hostility, insensitivity and practical considerations which shaped Attlee's attitude to Zionism.

Were Bevin's angry outbursts and Attlee's cool malice motivated by deep-rooted antisemitic sentiments? If we take antisemitism to imply denial of the rights of Jews to live as equal citizens in non-Jewish society, they they were not anti-semitic. But if we are speaking of prejudices against Jewish culture, conduct, economic acumen and social 'pushiness', they were not innocent. Like Beatrice Webb, both were acquainted with Jewish life in East London, with all its clamour and vivid colour.[19] They knew something of the nature of the Jewish workers and of the Jewish employer as sweatshop owner. This could explain their hostility towards Jewish capital and its extensive political influence in the United States. (Ramsay MacDonald, it will be recalled, held similar views.)

The Cabinet Minister ranking third in importance in Palestine policy was Herbert Morrison. He was an old friend of Zionism and had been closely involved in Zionist affairs since the late twenties. It will be recalled that he had visited Palestine in 1935 and sung paeans of praise to the Zionist socialist endeavour. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Peel Commission's recommendation on partition in 1937, and demanded that the borders of the proposed Jewish state be expanded. It was he who proclaimed in 1939 in a Commons debate on the White Paper that no future Labour Government could regard itself as bound by this unjust document. Because of his involvement, he was appointed chairman of two Cabinet Committees on Palestine. He was accepted in Zionist and other circles as a friend of Zionism, though many Zionists who knew him well claimed that he was an opportunist and lacked moral fibre.

Though essentially a pro-Zionist and supporter of partition, Morrison was in a difficult situation in Attlee's Cabinet. He had hopes of succeeding Attlee, but the powerful figure of Bevin, his long-standing rival, stood between him and his objective. Morrison, reluctant to confront Bevin openly, avoided any public pronouncements on Palestine, which was the exclusive domain of the Foreign Secretary.[20] His caution aroused the resentment of other champions of Zionism: in late 1945 (on the eve of Bevin's announcement on the despatch of the Anglo-American Commission), Laski wrote to Felix Frankfurter: 'I had looked for my main support from Herbert Morrison, who is publicly as committed as anyone could be, but he has been uneasily neutral.'[21] And in fact, the official Cabinet minutes do not record him speaking on this problem.

Morrison, however, did maintain contact with those Labour M.P.s, headed by Richard Crossman, who rebelled against Bevin's Palestine policy. (In 1949, when Bevin's power was waning, Morrison and Bevan demonstratively attended a reception held by the Israeli Mission on the first anniversary of Israel's independence, although Bevin was still against recognition.'[22]

Another Cabinet minister involved in Zionist affairs was Stafford Cripps. In the mid-thirties he had displayed indifference, even ignorance, on the Palestine question. Towards the end of the decade his sympathies were aroused by the plight of German Jews, and he proposed that

Palestinian nationality be granted to all homeless Jewish refugees. In 1943, it will be recalled, he submitted a memo to the Morrison Committee advocating a binational state, with special status for the Jewish national home. He remained consistent in his stand and supported the idea of cantonization. The Morrison-Grady plan, which he defended in the House,[23] was congruous with his view of partition as a provisional solution on the road to a binational state. It seems rather puzzling that Laski chose to write of him to Frankfurter in the following terms: 'To my surprise Stafford has been the strongest supporter of Bevin, and I even think (I hope I am not unjust) that I detect a faint anti-semitic trait in his attitude.'

Hugh Dalton was also involved in Palestinian affairs; his Zionism was based on intellectual analysis rather than emotion. In the late thirties he had supported partition and he remained loyal to this view, enthusiastically advocating it together with Aneurin Bevan. Dalton was not, however, ready to fight for his convictions, as Cabinet minutes prove. His memoirs reveal that his conscience later troubled him because of his failure to urge his views on his colleagues.[24] Elsewhere he explained that, towards the end of the political struggle, he gave up the fight altogether as a result of his shock at the hanging of two British sergeants by the Irgun Zvai Leumi. It was only the achievements of the infant state of Israel which restored his sympathy for Zionism.[25]

To sum up, the leading Labour politicians such as Attlee, Bevin, Dalton, Morrison and Cripps showed considerable consistency in their stand on Zionism, whether favourable or negative. At the more junior level, however, there were some surprising reversals, Creech Jones and Noel-Baker adopting a negative stand while Aneurin Bevan and John Strachey, once indifferent, became ardent proponents of Zionism.

The Press Reaction

The public debate on Palestine in the labour movement was part and parcel of the general controversy on international policy. Shortly after the formation of the new Government, the debate narrowed to confrontation between Bevin and the Party's left wing, on such issues as relations with the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., British involvement in Greece, the rate of decolonization, and relations with Spain, as well as Palestine.[26] One of the main issues was whether it was possible to create a socialist alternative to capitalism and communism. In the case of the Middle East, an important issue was the significance of the region as a strategic bastion of Britain and the democratic world in general, checking the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union. Whereas Bevin was anxious to preserve Britain's standing as one of the great powers, his opponents on the left, who believed in the socialist alternative, wanted to see their country as the leader of the Western European socialist countries and liberated Asian and African states. They therefore advocated social reform and economic development both in Europe and in the colonial countries, including the Middle East. Hence, the issue was not maintenance or restriction of Britain's role, but rather the essence of the role itself.

Attitudes to overall policy and to the aspirations and struggles of the Zionist movement were reflected in the Labour press, which represented every spectrum of opinion from conservative trade unionism to the radical left.

The *Town Crier*, the Birmingham trade union weekly, was the mouthpiece of the Foreign

Secretary, and its editorials lauded Bevin and his policies.[27] They also provided an outlet for the resentment which he was not always able to voice publicly because of his position, and are reminiscent of his outspoken, sometimes aggressive style and lack of self-criticism. The Great Powers were accused of hypocrisy and colonial peoples taking up arms were denoted ingrates.[28] The Jews were accused of having forgotten how much British soldiers had sacrificed to save Jewish lives. The weekly condemned Jewish terrorism in Shylock's words: 'The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.'[29] The title of the article ('The Eternal Jew') also had antisemitic implications.

The *Town Crier* also accused the Jews of 'extreme nationalism', which had aroused corresponding nationalism in the Arabs.[30] The Jewish labour movement was the villain of the piece to the *Town Crier*, which denounced the social policies based on Hebrew labour and on refusal to accept Arabs into Jewish trade unions.[31] It rejected the comparison (made by left-wing circles) between the Irish and Jewish underground movements, stating that the Jews were going against the wishes of the majority of the country, while the Irish were themselves the majority. Finally, it claimed that Zionism was linked with international Jewish capital.[32]

The *Town Crier* also warned world Jewry that terrorism in Palestine could arouse antisemitism. This in itself was not a new theory, but the weekly went on to issue a veiled warning to British Jews:

> From conversations in the factories or with the man in the street one has the feeling that hatred of the Jews did not end with the death of Hitler. Recent events are also creating in the minds of many people a dumb sense of resentment which, if sharpened by further atrocities, may threaten the harmony which has always existed between Gentile and Jew in this country.[33]

The weekly echoed Bevin's views on the United States and anticipated his February 1947 speech by attacking Truman, on the grounds that his policy was determined by internal electoral considerations. U.S. Middle Eastern policies were shaped by imperialist motives, it wrote, and the U.S. would eventually abandon the Zionist movement.[34]

The *Town Crier* supported the Morrison-Grady plan, and thought it could partially satisfy the national demands of both Jews and Arabs.[35] In January 1947, at a time when the Cabinet was willing to agree to partition if it was acceptable to both sides, it praised the readiness of moderate Zionists to accept partition.[36] One month before the U.N. decision on partition, the weekly described it as the sole practical solution, but without British involvement: 'We have had enough.'[37] After the U.N. resolution, it reiterated this view: 'Our own people have suffered enough. They want economic stability and peace of mind. If other people want a taste of blood and tears, let us get out and look after our own garden.'[38] The implication that Britain had been involved in Palestine out of purely altruistic motives was reminiscent of some of Bevin's statements.

The *Daily Herald*[39] was more moderate in its condemnations of terrorism, and its articles were innocent of antisemitic connotations. It did, however, draw a comparison between Goebbel's propaganda efforts and the anti-British propaganda of Zionist extremists.

> It has not been easy for British people to stomach the accusation that a country which has for centuries stood before the world as a champion of liberty, the country which first took upon itself the duty of challenging hitlerism, was directing in Palestine just the kind of anti-semitic campaign in which Hitler delighted.[40]

The paper continued to vacillate between support for a binational state or society and recognition of the inevitability of partition as the sole possible solution. It welcomed the Anglo-American Commission's recommendations primarily for their rejection of the idea of two national states. The Jews and Arabs now had the opportunity to set the world an example of compromise, it wrote.

> By working together – and with the United Nations – they can achieve happiness and prosperity for Palestine. If they pursue nationalistic ends, they will gain nothing and they may well provide the seed of a third global conflict.[41]

The *Daily Herald* echoed Attlee's view that the immigration of 100,000 Jews should be made conditional on disarmament of the underground movements and full American cooperation in the economic and military burden; it approved of the Morrison-Grady plan[42] as an honest compromise. In 1946, when the Government plan to convene a Round Table conference to discuss the Morrison-Grady plan was foiled by Jewish refusal to participate, the paper suddenly came out in support of partition. This stand contravened the views of the majority of the Cabinet; it is possible, however, that the *Herald* had been asked to hint that the partition issue might be raised at the conference if the Jews agreed to attend.[43]

But this deviation from the accepted Government line was shortlived. After Bevin's February 1947 speech, the paper reverted to the idea of a unitary Jewish-Arab state, echoing Bevin's theories.

> One achievement of civilization has been to secure tolerance and co-operation in the common affairs of life among men whose religions are diverse or contradictory. Let us not – as the Jewish Agency seeks to do by its attitude in Palestine – reverse the trend.[44]

The article emphasized Arab reasonableness and amenability as against Jewish reactionary extremism.

The *Daily Herald* also reverted to the territorialist arguments of the thirties. On the eve of the U.N. resolution, it wrote that Palestine could never absorb all the Jewish D.P.s and that they should be settled elsewhere, preferably in North and South America.[45] In 1948, it welcomed British withdrawal from Palestine and appealed to both Jews and Arabs to exercise moderation and forestall catastrophe.[46]

The *New Statesman* devoted less space to the Palestine problem in the forties than a decade earlier, but did not abandon its moderate pro-Zionist stand. It continued to advocate partition and welcomed the Anglo-American Commission's conclusions.[47] A U.N. trusteeship over Palestine could prove detrimental to the Jewish cause, it wrote, because of the dangers of an Arab-Soviet coalition, and only partition offered a feasible solution. Since Transjordan had been granted independence, the Jews too should be given a national state, and Arab opposition could be overcome by making it clear to them that Britain would not support extremist claims.[48]

Britain could not continue to rule Palestine against the will of its inhabitants, the weekly wrote. 'A British police state in which civil liberties have been destroyed and two adult peoples subjected to arbitrary colonial rule is something no socialist government – indeed no British Government – can afford to maintain.'[49] Furthermore, British policy was based on overestimation of the strategic value of Middle Eastern bases.[50] Thirdly, the *New Statesman* believed that partition would be the end result whether imposed by an international force or as the outcome of a bloody conflict. The Government should proclaim its willingness to accept the U.S. resolution, refrain from hasty withdrawal, and take part in imposing the political settlement.[51]

The radical *Forward*, which reflected the pro-Zionist trend in the Labour left, published a lengthy article by one of its editors, Emrys Hughes,[52] on the increasing political tension and terror in Palestine. Hughes recommended acceptance of the Anglo-American Commission proposals and advocated widescale economic development, social reform in the Middle East, and a speedy end to colonial rule. The Palestine problem, as well as the problem of Jews all over the world, would be solved within the framework of comprehensive international policy, aimed at solving social and political problems.[53] *Forward* opened its columns to Harold Laski in his struggle against Bevin's policies, and later enthusiastically welcomed the establishment of the state of Israel.[54]

Reynolds News advocated Anglo-American cooperation for solution of the problems of Jewish refugees and the Palestine problem. If this proved unsuccessful, the issue should be referred to the U.N.[55]

Of all the leading Labour papers, *Tribune* was the most consistently pro-Zionist, and the most keenly aware of the Jewish problem. Its proposals deviated from the accepted doctrines of the socialist left, and were influenced by the humanitarian outlook of its editors and contributors, and particularly Aneurin Bevan and Jennie Lee.

In late 1948, after the establishment of Israel, the weekly published a letter to the editor complaining at the journal's pro-Zionist bias and asking if it was compatible with a socialist outlook.[56] The editors revealed that they had received numerous letters of this type, and argued that British Labour had a special commitment to the Jewish labour movement in Palestine which coloured its outlook. Denial of this commitment would be a tragic error.

> The Arabs, of course, have a powerful case. Our columns have never been closed to their protagonists. But we cannot accept the view that Jewish immigration into Palestine or the establishment of Israel is comparable to the invasion of one country by another people. It is arguable, no doubt, that the Balfour Declaration should never have been made. But once there were 600,000 Jews living in Palestine they no less than the Arabs had rights. *Tribune* has always advocated a partition whereby neither people would be made subjects to the other. In fact the policy which we have criticized has brought misery on the Arabs themselves.[57]

It was rather indifference to and disregard for the problems of the Jews which would represent 'a breakdown of social democracy',[58] the journal wrote on another occasion, because the Labour Government was confronting a Zionist leadership headed by a labour movement.

In dozens of articles and editorials after the Anglo-American Commission Report, the paper warned the Government of the disastrous outcome of its Palestine policy and its refusal to implement a fair compromise there. It also believed that British withdrawal from the Middle East would create a vacuum, which would speedily be filled by the U.S.S.R. and United States.[59] Britain should initiate Great Power cooperation in formulating a political settlement and carrying out social reform in the region.[60] The Government should encourage progressive forces in the Middle East, evacuate its troops from Egypt as soon as possible, and recruit American aid for a widescale development scheme for both Jews and Arabs in Palestine. *Tribune* did not explain how it hoped to reconcile U.S. and U.S.S.R. interests and bring about cooperation, and persisted in envisaging Britain as the effective balance between them. Britain's standing in the region should be grounded in Egypt and the Palestinian Jews. After the Palestine issue was entrusted to the U.N., *Tribune* urged Bevin to complete the negotiations on evacuation of British forces from Egypt and to support partition, in order to establish friendly bases in the area.[61]

On the eve of the U.N. Assembly session, *Tribune* advised the British Government not to act hastily.

> 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 of the two years' interval to lay the foundation that may save the Middle East from chaos and collapse.[62]

The Intellectuals

Another aspect of the debate on Palestine was the personal confrontation between Bevin, as representative of the conservative element in the Party, and a group of left-wing intellectuals.[63] Such people as H.N. Brailsford, Harold Laski, Michael Foot and Richard Crossman courageously challenged the Party leadership. Brailsford and Laski had supported Zionism from the early thirties while Crossman and Foot, members of the post-war generation of political leaders, became sympathizers under the impact of the Holocaust, and through analysis of the international political situation and its implications for the Middle East.

A great deal of political courage and conviction was required in order to attack one's own party just after it had assumed power after fifteen years in opposition. Laski and Crossman at least did so at considerable personal and political cost. The latter had been appointed to the Anglo-American Commission by Bevin, who had held him in esteem and referred resentfully to his 'treachery'. Laski forfeited the role of intellectual confidant of power-holders, which he had enjoyed greatly. He felt no animosity towards Bevin and wrote to Frankfurter: 'In a curious way I like E.B. I even think he has odd moments when he likes me.'[64] Furthermore, because of his hypersensitivity to antisemitic manifestations, he found it especially difficult to speak out at this particular time. Brailsford had advocated various political solutions over the period of his involvement in Zionist problems. In early 1947, in the face of the uncompromising stand of both sides, he reverted to support for partition. 'The time has gone for half-way solutions. I used to advocate a plan of communal autonomy … Without the will in Jews and Arabs to live together it would be hopelessly unworkable.'[65]

Brailsford castigated the Government for its indecision on Palestine, in contrast to its policy on India, and proposed an interim solution, namely the settlement of 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine. This was not beyond the absorptive capacity of the country, he said, and would fulfil the Party's election promises to the Zionists. After the establishment of Israel, Brailsford urged Bevin to extend military aid and send volunteers to aid the beleaguered state. He regarded this not only as a humanitarian duty but also as a socialist obligation.[66] He also tirelessly preached conciliation between Labour and Zionism and demanded that the Labour Government, as a first step, recognize the state of Israel within the ceasefire borders.[67]

Laski's platform for his onslaught on Government policy was *Forward* which, as noted, had become increasingly pro-Zionist since the war. No longer Party Chairman, Laski was now freer to express his criticism. He had found grounds for optimism in Bevin's Commons speech, and remained optimistic in the face of the recommendations of the Anglo-American Commission, which he saw as a compromise between Arab and Jewish demands. Like Brailsford, he advocated the immediate immigration of 100,000 refugees as implementation of a Labour promise. He approved of the Government's demand for U.S. involvement in the Palestine problem, and went even further, advocating imposition of a solution by a joint military force. He advised Attlee and his Cabinet to treat the Jews generously, as Lloyd George and Churchill would have done, and concluded: 'I hope they will remember what Edmund Burke meant when he said that a great empire and little minds go ill together.'[67]

Laski did, however, praise Bevin's Middle Eastern policy and particularly the intention to evacuate British forces from Egypt. He thought that British standing in the region should be based on strongholds in Cyrenaica, Malta and perhaps Haifa, but that its active role in the region should be reduced.[68]

After the mass arrests and arms searches in Palestine, Laski's criticism became more savage and he called for a change in British policy. He urged the Government to permit 100,000 D.P.s to immigrate to Palestine rather than contemplating their resettlement in Europe, since antisemitism was a deep-rooted phenomenon in Europe. He advised them to encourage the more moderate element within the Zionist movement, such leaders as Weizmann and Shertok, and, surprisingly enough, urged them to persuade the Arabs that the establishment of a Palestinian state with equal national rights for both peoples was in their own interest.[69]

This was a reversion to his thirties opposition to partition. He explained his change of mind by saying that there was nothing in the Mandate or in the Balfour Declaration 'which would justify the Zionist demand for the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish State'.[70]

Though Laski joined in the chorus of condemnation of terrorist acts in Palestine, he publicly opposed the Government's insistence that the Jewish Agency take part in suppressing terrorism. Such a demand would only be justifiable if the Government changed its anti-Zionist policy, he wrote.[71]

Laski admitted that his ideal was a binational state 'in which Jews and Arabs lived on the same friendly terms as Englishmen, Scotsmen and Welshmen in Great Britain'.[72] This being unfeasible, he advocated an improved version of the Morrison-Grady plan: self-rule for both peoples, and Jewish right to absorb immigrants in their own area, develop their economy and receive international loans. He was careful to define the unit as a 'Jewish homeland' rather than a

'Jewish state' (first using the term at the 1943 Labour Conference). He also proposed that the Jewish national autonomy become a member of the U.N., apparently recalling the precedent of the Ukraine and White Russia. This proposal was made on the eve of the London Conference, when hopes for a settlement were high. When it transpired that the talks had failed, Laski adopted a new stand (which echoed Ben-Gurion's views): Britain should impose a solution on Palestine, he said, reverting to the terms of the original Mandate. This would entail immediate immigration of 100,000 Jews, revoking of restrictions on land purchase, and continued immigration on the basis of absorptive economic capacity.[73]

Laski's tone was restrained, and he often voiced the hope that Attlee and Bevin would find the courage to change their policies. He later claimed that in this period he was in contact with both Bevin and Morrison on foreign policy, and particularly on the Marshall Plan.[74] The decision to lay the dispute before the United Nations encouraged his belief in the possibility of finding a compromise. He bided his time and tried to remain on close terms with Bevin, although convinced that he was unfit to conduct foreign policy. Laski admired Attlee, on the other hand, and wrote to Frankfurter that Attlee's handling of the Indian issue had raised his hopes that the Government would act similarly on Palestine.[75]

His optimism was shattered by the Cabinet decision in September 1947 to reject the U.N.S.C.O.P. recommendation of partition for Palestine. Four days before the fateful Cabinet meeting, Laski convened the Party Foreign Affairs Committee (with the cooperation of Bevan and Shinwell), which called on the Cabinet to accept the recommendation. Attlee responded by appearing before the Party Secretariat to explain Government policy. According to Laski:

> the substance of his speech was
> (1) that the Majority Report was 'fantastic', because it gave the Jews more than any other committee had ever suggested,
> (2) that if we accepted it we should be repudiating Bevin, and
> (3) that there was no suggestion in the sub-committee's proposal that Great Britain should be aided in imposing the Majority-plan.[76]

Laski denounced the decision as a pro-Arab tactic and claimed that Bevin was motivated by the desire to revenge himself against the Jews. And he concluded: 'I emerged completely convinced that our Government proposes to sell out the Jews down the river … I have not any words to describe what I feel about it all.' He was convinced of the Cabinet's Machiavellian intent to persuade the Americans that British evacuation of Palestine would lead to catastrophe, and hence win their support for anti-Zionist policies. The final objective was to bolster strategic positions and maintain control of oil resources.

Laski subsequently attacked the Government in no uncertain terms for what he regarded as deliberate intent to foment tension between Jews and Arabs. He even appealed to Creech-Jones to resign in protest against policies with which he did not essentially agree.[77] After the establishment of Israel, Laski denounced British policy towards the infant state, and said it was aimed at helping the Arabs destroy Israel. He denoted it the most shameful policy since Munich, reminiscent of the attitude of the same leadership towards the Republicans in Spain.[78]

Whereas Laski avoided public criticism of the Government until the last stages of the struggle,

Richard Crossman did not hesitate to engage in combat with Bevin in the House of Commons, at Party conferences and in the press. The Foreign Secretary had appointed him to the Anglo-American Commission, inter alia, because of his neutral stand on Zionism in the past. Hence Bevin's profound disappointment when Crossman 'stabbed Britain in the back' as the prime author of the Commission's recommendations. In Summer 1948, Bevin told Harold Nicholson 'how much he regretted that Dick Crossman, with all his ability, did not possess a more stable character'.[79]

Crossman arrived at his commitment to Zionism as a result of his profound horror at the Holocaust, his meetings with Jewish D.P.s in Germany and Austria, and his intellectual analysis of the Jewish national experience. His ideological identification with the Zionist socialist endeavour dated from his first visit to Palestine with the Anglo-American Commission, and was intellectually grounded in his belief in universal socialism, hence his views on the future of the Jewish people outside Palestine. He supported Weizmann's political views and was greatly drawn to him as a personality, regarding him as the personification of the Jewish spirit and its noblest aspirations. Crossman abhorred what he regarded as the aggressive extremism of certain Zionist circles, and was repelled by the radical testimony before the Commission of Abba Hillel Silver, the famous Zionist leader in the U.S.A. Shortly after his return from Palestine, Crossman published a fascinating book about his mission in which he described his path to Zionist commitment.[80] His first revelation, so he wrote, was that there did in fact exist one Jewish people, despite the fact that they were scattered throughout the world.

> The Jewish problem really exists. It cannot be argued out of existence by liberal generalities. My natural inclination as an Englishman and a Socialist was to say that it was 'reactionary' to admit that an American Jew was anything but an American or to accept the view that a Polish Jew, after the Nazi revolution, ceased to be a Pole and became just a Jew. Many progressives revolt from this conclusion. They desire instinctively to solve the Jewish problem by denying its existence and treating the Jewish people simply as a religious community.[81]

The second conclusion, somewhat in conflict with the first, was that a new Jewish nation had developed in Palestine, differing from diaspora Jewry.[82] This new nation was characterized by self-confidence and firm resolve, and no solution could be imposed against its will. His dialectical conclusion was that the emergence of the new nation spelled the end of the Jewish people's existence elsewhere. The Jews he had discovered around him were doomed to extinction within one or two generations, because of a dual purpose of integration: the state of Israel would integrate in the Middle Eastern federation, and diaspora Jews would be absorbed in their environment, only a small percentage immigrating to Palestine.

> Within two generations the Jews of Britain and America will feel far more spiritual kinship with their Gentile neighbours than with the Jewish Commonwealth. They will have something of the mixture of feelings for Jerusalem which a New Englander has for London. They will be bound to it by ties of history and religion, but not by a common culture.[83]

Moreover, 'the idea that every European Jew who is homeless shall go to Palestine is in accord neither with Zionism nor with the Mandate'.[84] Crossman conceived of Zionism as an elite

movement, dependent on the quality of the newcomers and of the regime and not on mass immigration.

His final conclusion was that partition was the sole and in-escapable solution to the Palestine problem.[85] This conclusion was based in part on his perusal of the 1937 Peel Commission Report, which he considered an impressive and convincing document, and in part on what he learned in the course of the Commission's enquiries. Partition would satisfy Jewish and Arab national aspirations, and enable Britain to draw up defence treaties with both peoples for maintenance of her strategic bases. Furthermore, the two independent nations, entrusted with responsibility for their own national survival, would be forced to arrive at agreement between themselves.

It is interesting to note that, despite his support for partition, Crossman never totally abandoned the dream of a binational state. Years later he admitted he had hoped that the Jewish state based on his favoured partition plan (with a large Arab minority) would eventually evolve into a second Lebanon.[86]

Crossman did not attempt to impose his views on the Commission because of Bevin's insistence on unanimous recommendations, but he remained loyal to partition. At the 1946 Labour Conference he spoke in support of a Jewish-Arab Middle Eastern federation, for tactical reasons.[87] He was apparently avoiding an unequivocal commitment to partition until the Zionist leadership had made up its mind finally on this issue. He also said nothing about partition in an article on Palestine written in July,[88] and made no contribution to a Commons debate on the Morrison-Grady plan on 5 August. In January 1947, Crossman spoke out in a Commons debate and accused the Government of encouraging terrorism and undermining moderate Zionist elements by its indecisive policies. He hinted that partition was the sole solution.[89]

Only after the failure of the last round of negotiations with the two sides, and Bevin's proposal that the Palestine question be handed over to the U.N., did Crossman openly advocate partition. It was an inevitable outcome, he said, and the question was whether it would be implemented peacefully or as a result of bloody conflict. Britain, he thought, should tell the U.N. that the Mandate could not continue, that it recommended partition and propose a date for British evacuation.[90] A similar solution had been formulated for India. Yet Crossman continued to regard partition as the first step towards a Middle Eastern federation with participation of the Jewish state.[91]

The fluctuating attitudes of Brailsford, Laski and Crossman towards Zionism reflected the dilemma of the radical left in general. All three were deeply involved in Zionist affairs and personally acquainted with Zionist leaders, and were regarded by the latter as friends despite differences of opinion. Their standpoint was characteristic of left-wing intellectual circles in Labour. i.e. courageous and consistent advocacy of moral and humane principles in politics (as on the issue of the 100,000 D.P.s). They demonstrated the capacity of the left to avoid dogmatism in both the ideological and the pragmatic sense. Hence the troubled transition from the internationalist approach (which implied a binational state), to recognition of the positive force of nationalism and historical inevitability, which led them to support partition.

All three also reflected the special affinity of the radical left, even when critical of Zionism's aspirations, for the socialist achievements of the Jewish labour movement in Palestine. From the

political point of view, their proposals were often unfeasible or based on contradictory conceptions. The vision of Anglo-American co-operation was in conflict with the idea of transforming Palestine into an experimental arena for Three Power activity. The proposal that the U.S. invest in the economic development of the region was not compatible with the idea of making the U.S.S.R. a partner in exploitation of oil resources. The eagerness to entrust responsibility for solving the Palestine problem to the U.N. contradicted their concern at the prospect of an anti-Zionist Arab-Soviet alliance in that body.

Paradoxically enough, the left-wingers with their socialist ideology displayed a degree of pragmatic idealism, while more conservative Labourites remained dogmatic pragmatists. Thus the extreme left preserved the socialist humanistic traditions of the labour movement in their attitude to Zionism, while its opponents, particularly Attlee and Bevin, deviated from those traditions.

It is a matter of opinion who were more realistic in their political proposals at the time, Attlee and Bevin or the left, though political events seem to have demonstrated the validity of left-wing evaluations. Partition was implemented, despite British objections, as a consequence of armed conflict between the two sides. The establishment of Israel compensated the Jews somewhat for their wartime sufferings and satisfied their national aspirations. As a whole the problem of the Jewish displaced persons found its solution in Israel, yet the Jewish state did not become the alternative for Jews in the liberal and democratic countries. The hasty British exodus from Palestine and the Middle East created a political vacuum which was filled by two contending powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. And thus the Middle East became an additional focus of international tension.

NOTES

1. CAB 128 CM 38 (46), 29 April 1946, P.R.O.
2. For a lucid summary of the Cabinet discussions and the standpoint of the British administration and general staff, see Michael J. Cohen, ‘Why Britain Left: the end of the Mandate’, *Wiener Library Bulletin*, 1978, vol XXXI, no. 45/46.
3. CAB 128 CM 60 (46), 20 June 1946; CAB 128 CM (47) 15 January 1947.
4. CAB 128 CM 66 (46), 8 July 1946, CAB 128 101 (46), 28 November 1946, P.R.O.
5. CAB 128 CM 18 (47), 7 February 1947. See also report of talks between Bevin and Creech Jones, and representatives of the Jewish Agency, headed by Ben-Gurion, 10/2, 19/2, 27/2 Z3/20 193 Z.A.
6. CAB 128 CM 22 (47), 14 February 1947.
7. CAB 128 CM 38 (46), 29 April 1946.
8. CAB 128 CM (47), 15 January 1947.
9. CAB 128 CM (47), 22 January 1947. Moshe Rosetti, who met Creech Jones in the fifties, relates that he apologized for his fickle stand and asked to be invited to visit Israel.
10. CAB 128 CM 22 (47), 14 February 1947.
11. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 433, no. 55, 25 February 1947.
12. Crossman claims that Bevin and Attlee, as a result of their close acquaintance with Whitechapel Jews, were convinced that the Jews were only a religious community. Richard Crossman, *A Nation Reborn*, Hamish Hamilton 1960, pp. 68–9.

13. F. Williams, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 91.
14. This is hinted at in *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, p. 335.
15. Crossman expressed a similar opinion; see *A Nation Reborn*, p. 71.
16. See Aubrey Eban's report of his visit to London, in which he quoted Crossman's impressions of a meeting with Bevin. A. Eban, *Report on Visit to London*, 6–9 August 1947, Z.A. 4/20. 197.
17. F. Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers*, pp. 182–3.
18. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 424, no. 166, 1 July 1946.
19. Roy Jenkins, *Mr. Attlee, an Interim Biography*. Heinemann, London 1948, p. 51.
20. B. Donoghue and J. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison*, pp. 434–5.
21. Laski to Frankfurter, 21 October 1945, *F. Frankfurter's Private Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington.
22. See note 20.
23. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 426, no. 189, 1 August 1946.
24. H. Dalton, *High Tide and After*, p. 150.
25. *Ibid*., 190.
26. See 'Keep Left', *New Statesman* pamphlet, 1947.
27. 'Giant Assailed by pigmies', *Town Crier* 18 May 1946, 'Bravo Bevin', *Town Crier* 3 April 1948.
28. 'Patience of Job', *Town Crier* 21 September 1946; 'Abdication of Anarchy', 28 December 1946.
29. 'The Eternal Jew', *Town Crier* 13 July 1946.
30. 'The Wailing Wall', *Town Crier* 3 August 1946.
31. 'The Eternal Jew', *Town Crier* 13 July 1946.
32. 'Appeal to Reason', *Town Crier* 11 January 1947.
33. *Ibid*.
34. 'Kings and Pawns', *Town Crier* 25 October 1947.
35. 'The Wailing Wall', *Town Crier* 3 August 1946.
36. 'Appeal to Reason', *Town Crier* 11 January 1947.
37. 'Kings and Pawns', *Town Crier* 25 October 1947.
38. 'Get Out', *Town Crier* 6 December 1947; 'Devil's Brew', *Town Crier* 29 May 1948.
39. See 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 24 July 1946, 14 August 1946.
40. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 19 February 1947.
41. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 2 May 1946.
42. 'Honest Compromise', *Daily Herald* 1 August 1946.
43. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 10 September 1946.
44. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 26 February 1947.
45. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 29 September 1947. Raymond Blackburn, M.P., 'The Jewish Problem can be Solved', *Daily Herald* 15 August 1946.
46. 'Palestine', *Daily Herald* 27 April 1948.
47. The criticism of Bevin's foreign policy, including Palestine, by the *New Statesman* irritated him very much; see Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters*, Vol. III, p. 145.
48. 'Palestine Prospects', *New Statesman* 18 May 1946.
49. 'America and Palestine', *New Statesman* 25 June 1946.
50. 'Mr. Bevin and the Middle East', *New Statesman* 24 May 1947.

51. See note 50.
52. Emrys Hughes, 'Problem of Palestine', *Forward* 13 July 1946.
53. See Morris Linden, 'Europe and Palestine', *Forward* 22 May 1948.
54. See Douglas Young, 'Rise of Israel', *ibid*.
55. David Raymond, 'Palestine', *Reynolds News* 4 August 1946.
56. 'Tribune and Palestine', *Tribune* 17 December 1948.
57. *Ibid*.
58. 'The Breaking Point', *Tribune* 8 August 1947.
59. 'Defeatists in High Places', *Tribune* 18 October 1946.
60. 'The Way to the Stars and Stripes', *Tribune* 21 March 1947.
61. 'Tel-Aviv Tea Party', *Tribune* 7 February 1947; 'The Breaking Point', *Tribune* 8 August 1947.
62. 'Bevin's Waterloo', *Tribune* 5 September 1947.
63. For clarification of the terms 'intellectuals' and 'intelligentsia' see: 'Intellectuals and Tradition', *Daedalus*, Spring 1972.
64. Laski—Frankfurter, 21 June 1947.
65. H.N. Brailsford, 'Palestine Problem', *Reynolds News*, 5 January 1947.
66. H.N. Brailsford, 'Start a New Palestine', *Reynolds News*, 29 September 1948.
67. H. Laski, 'Critical Days in Palestine', *Forward*, 11 May 1946.
68. H. Laski, 'The Changing Middle East', *Forward*, 1 June 1946.
69. H. Laski, 'Justice for the Jews', *Forward*, 20 July 1946.
70. H. Laski, 'Jerusalem Bomb Outrage', *Forward*, 3 August 1946.
71. H. Laski, 'A Massive Failure in Palestine', *Forward*, 26 October 1946.
72. H. Laski, 'British is the Best Friend the Jews Have', *Forward*, 11 January 1947.
73. H. Laski, 'The Government Must Impose a Palestine Settlement', *Forward*, 15 February 1947.
74. Laski—Frankfurter, 21 June 1947.
75. Laski—Frankfurter, 27 September 1947.
76. In this and the preceding letter Laski related that Noel-Baker, once a friend of Zionism, was one of the most ardent supporters of Bevin's policies and blamed Jewish extremists for all the negative developments in Palestine.
77. H. Laski, 'Bankruptcy of a Policy', *Forward*, 11 October 1947; 'The Big Three and Palestine', *Forward*, 25 October 1947.
78. H. Laski, 'Palestine Policy, a Stain on Britain's Good Name', *Forward*, 5 June 1948.
79. Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters*, vol. III, p. 145.
80. Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mission*, Harper, New York—London 1947.
81. *Ibid*., p. 209.
82. *Ibid*., p. 210.
83. *Ibid*., p. 24.
84. *Ibid*., p. 212.
85. *Ibid*., p. 181.
86. Richard Crossman, *A Nation Reborn*, Hamish Hamilton, London 1960, p. 93.
87. See Crossman's speech at Party Conference, Bournemouth, June 1946. It may be assumed that Crossman tried to disseminate his pro-partition views through Michael Foot as early as February 1946. See Michael Foot, 'A Palestine Policy we Can Afford', *Daily Herald*, 19

February 1946.

88. R. Crossman, ‘Can we Prevent an Anglo-Jewish Struggle?’ *Reynolds News*, 7 July 1946. See also two articles written shortly after the publication of the Commission’s recommendations: ‘War in Palestine’, *New Statesman*, 11 May 1946; ‘Arab Myth and Reality’, *New Statesman*, 18 May 1946.
89. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 432, no. 538, 31 January 1947.
90. *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 433, no. 55, 25 February 1947.
91. Crossman and Foot, *A Palestine Munich?* Gollancz, 1947, p. 31.

Summary – The Ambiguous Tie

The thirty years of British rule over Palestine were a period of unique ties between British Labour and Zionism, and particularly the Jewish labour movement. This tie was based on ideological consensus with regard to social issues, on continuous political dialogue over almost twenty years (from the late twenties to the mid-forties), and on close ties between some of the leaders of both movements.

During this period, British Labour faced several ideological and political tests vis-à-vis Zionism. As a consequence Labour sometimes amended its views to Zionism's advantage or detriment. Thus, the principle of 'equal obligations' advocated by the second Labour Government harmed Zionism, while the Party's support for partition in the late thirties furthered Zionist interests. An overall view of the period reveals a drastic erosion of Labour's stand on Zionism. Between August 1917, the date of its first pro-Zionist pronouncement, and February 1947, when Bevin announced the return of the Mandate to the U.N., there was a definite deterioration in Labour's stand.

Yet it would be incorrect to take a schematic view of the development of Labour's Zionist attitude. It was always ambiguous, and this ambiguity characterized each of the four periods described in this study, all the ideological groups within the Party, and almost all the movement's leaders. In other words, support for Zionism was always tempered by doubt, and opposition by sympathy.

Furthermore, in speaking of changes in attitudes, we should differentiate between the movement and the Party, the Party and the Cabinet, as well as between various individual leaders. In the Labour Party, one should distinguish between the majority of trade unionists, with their parochial outlook, and the intellectuals who became involved in the Zionist issue for socialist and humanitarian reasons. The former were ready enough to support just and moral international causes, but only when their leaders so advised. Thus their support for changing Government policy was of no essential significance. The intellectuals, on the other hand, and particularly the left-wingers among them, strove with the Palestine problem from the early twenties until after the Second World War. Despite certain basic reservations, they were in essence pro-Zionists and remained consistently so.

The Party leaders who became Cabinet ministers were also basically consistent throughout – Webb, Attlee and Cripps in their reserved opposition, and Dalton, MacDonald, Henderson, Morrison and Bevan in their reserved support. Even Bevin's opportunistic approach was essentially consistent.

The Jewish labour movement was also ambiguous in its attitude to British Labour, though more on an emotional than on a practical political level. Zionists were torn between faith and doubt, esteem for the British people and their labour movement[1] and constant apprehension that this movement might some day let them down. This fear, deriving from close acquaintance with personalities and groups within the British labour movement and a sober view of the facts, did

not, however, generate bitterness. It was always accompanied by a degree of understanding.

Finally, if our assumptions regarding the ambiguous nature of the tie are correct, then this study not only is a chapter in the annals of relations between Britain and Zionism, but also casts some light on the very nature of the attitude of the progressive liberal and socialist world towards the Jewish problem and Zionism.

NOTE

1. See Ben-Gurion's remarks in 1941 upon his return from London under the blitz.

   > 'I saw the glory of man at its supremest height. I saw supreme courage, both physical and moral, not of individuals or pioneers but of a nation of millions of workers, shopkeepers, clerks, ministers and journalists. I know of no parallel to this wondrous sight in history … For every Jew in Palestine it is sacred. And I must say that I did not only love London … I felt that there was holiness in this place.'

   Mapai Central Committee, 19 February 1941, 23/41, L.A.

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D. Ben-Gurion papers (includes unpublished political diary and private letters, S'de-Boker, Israel) (Hebrew)
D. Hoz private papers, in the family possession, Israel.
S. Kaplansky private papers, the Archives of labour movement, Tel-Aviv, Israel.
B. Katznelson papers, The Archives of the Labour Party Mapai, Beith-Berl, Israel.
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C. Weizmann papers and letters, Rechovot, Israel.

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