IV. PALESTINE

By Abraham Revusky*

The year 5703 will be marked as a year of salvation in the history of Palestine Jewry. While the political future of the country is still in doubt, and the application of the White Paper restrictions causes much apprehension, the Yishuv was tremendously relieved when General Montgomery turned back Marshal Rommel's Afrika Korps and the danger of a Nazi invasion was definitely over.

While the Yishuv showed much bravery and coolheaded efficiency even in the worst days of Rommel's break-through in Egypt, the ending of the imminent Nazi threat doubled its energies and helped to accelerate the tempo of its creative activities.

Their own homes now safe again, the Jews of Palestine were extremely distressed by the wholesale Jewish massacres in Nazi dominated Europe. Nowhere did a Jewish community react in a stronger or more imposing way. Strikes, mass demonstrations and fasts were proclaimed and scrupulously observed. The most hardened observers were touched at the sight of a community in deep mourning and in bitter, although helpless protest. At the same time came practical suggestions that the gates of Palestine and of the lands of the United Nations, wherever possible, be opened wide to as many potential victims of Hitler as could be saved.

Underneath all this, like the steady throb of a machine, there continued Jewish efforts to build Palestine. Capital influx since the start of the war and up to the end of 1942 amounted to £P 15,000,000 (over $60,000,000); a third of this sum was, according to reliable sources, transferred during 1942. The foreign trade of Palestine also surged ahead during that year. While the statistics available here do not go beyond October, the preliminary estimates for the whole year show that imports doubled, and that exports increased even more. And these figures exclude military goods or strategically important materials.

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Palestine’s remarkable progress in the fourth year of the war is manifest in the increase of its agricultural production and a still greater advancement in its industrial output. About five hundred new factories have been established since the outbreak of the war, and the current rate of industrial production is nearing £P 35,000,000 a year, of which 75 per cent represents the contribution of Jewish shops and factories.

On the reverse side of the medal was the unprecedented rise in the cost of living. Retail price indexes, especially for foodstuffs, climbed high; 290 in June 1943 as compared with 100 in August 1939. Mitigated only slightly by the relative stability in rents and some other items, the cost of living for an average working family has increased almost 140 per cent since the war. Although wages and salaries also increased, they did not keep pace in most cases with the cost of living. Thus purchasing power generally is lower than in 1939, and only longer working hours keep the living standards of the working population from dropping much below the pre-war level.

Jewish War Effort

At the beginning of the period under review the danger of a Nazi invasion stimulated the demand for a Palestinian Jewish force to serve in the defense of Palestine and the neighboring East. Undaunted by previous refusals, the Jewish Agency in London offered to the British Government a military force of 72,000 men, consisting of 32,000 for fighting duty and 40,000 for home guards. It was proposed to form the fighting force by merging the 12,000 Palestinians then serving with the British armies of the East with 20,000 new recruits enrolled in Palestine. Without waiting for the acceptance—or rejection—of this proposal, the Yishuv intensified its recruiting campaign. In July alone, 1,870 Jewish volunteers joined the British forces, and by the end of 1942 the number of Jewish volunteers from Palestine in the British army numbered 19,207 and, in addition, 3,000 men joined other Allied forces (Poles, Czechs, Greeks, and Fighting French) garrisoned in the East. These figures include about 2,000 PATS (Palestinian Women’s Territorial Ser-
vice), but do not include the 7,300 Settlement Police now receiving regular military training. Palestinian Jewish volunteers now number 22,000.

In line with its general attitude toward the Jews of Palestine the British Government rejected the new army offer. It decreed, however, as a slight deviation from its previous policy, the formation of a Palestinian "regiment" with Jewish and Arab battalions. The size of the regiment was not specified, and the impression was given that there would be no objection if it would actually reach and even exceed the size of an average brigade.

Most of Palestine's Jewish volunteers are not serving with this Palestinian "regiment" which remains within the country, but in various units on the African and Mediterranean fronts. Many of them were commanded by a fellow Palestinian, Brigadier General Frederick Kisch, the former political representative in Jerusalem of the Jewish Agency, who was killed in Tunisia. Kisch was the chief engineer of Montgomery's Eighth Army and, after his death, it became known that much of the engineering and pioneering work of the victorious desert army was done by Palestinian units which had performed their extremely dangerous tasks with great efficiency and unusual bravery.

Another important contribution toward the desert victory was made by large units of Palestinian drivers serving with the Eighth Army, whose duties involved considerable danger. Recently Palestine was saddened by a report of the drowning of 138 of its military drivers sent by sea to North Africa. In all countries conquered by the British in Africa, Palestinian policemen were used to maintain order and to instruct local constabulary organized by the victors. Units of such police served in Eritrea, Somaliland and Cyrenaica, and are now fulfilling this task in Tripolitania.

In every North African city taken by the British in the course of their offensive, Jewish units from Palestine immediately sought out the local Jews to bring light and hope into their darkened homes and help them reorganize their communities and resume their normal pursuits interrupted by Axis persecution.

The increasing contribution of Palestine's industry and its scientific laboratories toward the Allied effort in the East
was fully recognized by leading British statesmen, including Prime Minister Churchill.

A part of Palestine's war effort is its endeavor to aid in every way the Soviet Union, and to create thereby a basis for mutual understanding and closer relations between the two communities in the future. Continuing the policy inaugurated by the late M. M. Ussishkin in the beginning of the year 1941-42 in a radio address to Russian Jewry, a Victory League for Russia was founded at a meeting on August 25, 1942, in Jerusalem attended by two Soviet emissaries, P. Mikhailovitch, and M. Petrenko, from the Russian Embassy at Ankara. The League participated not only in Russian war relief but sought to enlist Soviet support for the Jewish National Home in Palestine. By the end of 1942 it had enrolled eighteen thousand members in 86 branches and developed a considerable activity. Ambulances, tons of bromides, thermometers, surgical instruments, serums and vaccines, sweaters and blankets—all made in Palestine—were sent by the long overland route through Syria and Iraq into Russia. The last reported transport included a considerable quantity of matrices for linotype machines, also made in Palestine.

The leaders of the Victory League are now planning to establish a factory employing 700 to 1,000 workers for production of blankets and woolen garments for the Russian Army. Most of the cost will be covered by contributions of its members. It has also been reported that six hundred large hospital tents and similar equipment were recently ordered in Palestine by the British Red Cross for transportation to Russia.

The Jewish Agency now publishes a Russian-language bulletin devoted to Jewish activities in Palestine. The bulletin is sent to Soviet institutions and libraries where it appears to have aroused much interest.

Immigration

The impact of the news of massacres and persecutions in Europe on British public opinion forced the London Cabinet to recede somewhat from its rigid opposition to wartime immigration into Palestine. While reiterating its adherence
to the restrictions of the White Paper, the British Government declared at the end of 1942 that the unfilled part of the quota provided by the White Paper for the five-year period following April 1939, would be immediately available. According to the latest tabulation brought up to April 1943, this means a possible admission of 33,833 refugees till March 31, 1944.

In accordance with this ruling the Palestine Government lately became more liberal in the drawing of its immigration schedules; 5,400 immigration certificates were allowed for the first quarter of 1943, and for the second quarter, ending on June 30, this number was raised to 13,500. Most of these certificates were allotted to children. Since the certificate of an adult can be used to bring in his wife and minor children, the total number of persons who can be brought in on both schedules may reach 25,000.

The demand of the British Government that 80 per cent of the certificates must be used for children created, however, a situation where most of the precious permissions could not be used within the scheduled time. While there are many refugee families in countries from which transportation to Palestine can be easily arranged, the rescue of children is dependent not only on transportation but also on the cooperation of some of Hitler's satellites as well. Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary, which seemed willing and eager to permit Jewish children to leave, are now reported under pressure from Berlin to disavow their offers. Attempts to bring from the Soviet Union a large number of Polish Jewish children were hindered by the tendency of the Russians to consider them Soviet citizens. The refusal of Iraq to permit them to cross into Palestine was an added difficulty. Because of this refusal 1,227 refugees who arrived in February from Iran — 838 of them children — had to travel by the long, difficult sea-route through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

In spite of these difficulties, groups of refugees reach Palestine every month. The 1,227 arriving from Iran was the largest single group since 1940. Two to three hundred immigrants now enter Palestine every month.

The influx of refugee children gave rise to a sharp controversy concerning their religious or secular education. The
present practice is to send the children to non-religious settlements if they had no religious background, and to place them in Mizrachi colonies or orthodox homes, if they belonged to religious families. The leaders of Youth Aliyah, the organization that takes care of such children until they reach maturity, considers this practice to be eminently fair. Some of Palestine's rabbis, especially those belonging to Agudath Israel, insist that every Jewish child whatever its background must receive a religious education.

In spite of the threat by spokesmen of the latter group to place obstacles in the way of the collection of Zionist funds, the leadership of the Jewish Agency remains firm, and is supported in its attitude by Mizrachi, the Orthodox wing of the Zionist movement. Rabbi J. L. Fishman, the Mizrachi leader of Palestine, issued a statement in support of the present policy which he contends insures full religious liberty to all concerned.

Agricultural Development

The development of agriculture during the year in review followed two lines: the increase in the production of the existing settlements and the establishment of new colonies.

The progress of the existing settlements was achieved by increasing their cultivated area, by improving agricultural methods, by greater use of irrigation facilities, and by the introduction of new crops, partly under the pressure of war demands.

Gratifying progress was achieved in the field of irrigation. The settlements of the Keren Hayesod which are devoted, as a rule, to mixed farming, increased their irrigated area by 162 per cent in the years from 1937 to 1942. Mekoroth, one of the largest water cooperatives serving the settlements of the Esdraelon Valley, delivered 6,500,000 cubic meters of water in 1942 as compared with 4,657,000 in 1941, and 2,826,000 in 1940. To increase further the quantities of water available for irrigation, artificial lakes were built in several localities for the accumulation of rainfall.

Intensification of Jewish farming enabled producers to supply a much larger portion of the Yishuv's food requirements than ever before. Thus Jewish farms supplied 58 per
cent of the milk consumed by the Jewish population of Palestine, 64 per cent of its egg consumption, 63 per cent of the vegetables, and 54 per cent of the potatoes. Before the outbreak of the war the corresponding percentages were 34 for milk, 37 for eggs, 54 for vegetables, and only 8 for potatoes.

The continuing crisis in the citrus industry caused by the loss of foreign markets at the outbreak of the war, lost some of its sharpness. Some citrus planters (particularly those living abroad) uprooted their groves thus preventing further losses. Many of the local citrus owners planted vegetables and profited by high market prices. The increasing industrial utilization of citrus fruits has also proved helpful. For instance, the value of essential oils manufactured during the last season from citrus fruit, amounted to £P 780,000, which is about 15 per cent of the value of Palestine’s pre-war citrus exports. Finally, because of the United Nations’ control of the Mediterranean route, some of the coming winter crop may reach England as return freight in transports sent to the Middle East.

During the year important crops of rice, beets, hemp, peanuts and medical plants were harvested in Palestine for the first time.

In the first ten months of the year 5703, eight new settlements were founded. One to the south of Gaza establishes a new southernmost record of Jewish colonization. Another new colony on the eastern shore of lake Huleh, near the Syrian border, pushes the frontiers of Jewish settlement farther to the East.

The budget of the Jewish Agency for 1943–44 includes £P 392,000 for agricultural expansion; about half of this sum will be spent for the establishment of new settlements.

Owing to new land purchases the total area in possession of the Jewish National Fund reached 631,440 dunams by April 1943, a new record as compared with 595,000 dunams a year ago.

**Industrial Progress**

Spurred by war demands the Jewish industries of Palestine are continuously expanding their production. They have reached, however, a point where further progress will
be extremely difficult because of the acute shortage of labor. The number of the workers in Jewish industry recently passed the 50,000 mark. In January 1943 the index of employment reached 181 as compared with 100 at the outbreak of the war.

According to preliminary figures, the Jewish industrial output of Palestine reached in 1942 the record value of £P 25,000,000 as compared with £P 18,000,000 in 1941 and £P 11,000,000 in 1940. About 40 per cent of the output was absorbed by military demands. The rest went to meet local requirements or was exported to civilian customers in the neighboring countries.

Available space does not permit a detailed description of Palestine's remarkable industrial effort, but a few examples of recent developments will be of value. Of particular interest is the diamond industry established by Belgian refugees. Thirty-five hundred workers are now employed in an industry which supplies much of the American requirements for industrial diamonds used in war manufactures. Another new development is the manufacturing of drugs and vitamins; while mainly serving the present war demands this industry seems to have promising postwar prospects. A third important development is the great spurt in the production and export of wearing apparel. The annual fashion show in Tel Aviv attracts even in war time an increasing number of buyers from Egypt, Syria and other countries of the East. Progress was also achieved by the rapidly expanding textile industry. A typical example is the textile factory "Atta," near Haifa, established shortly before the war with a capital of £P 112,000. Its output in 1942 exceeded £P 500,000 compared with £P 390,000 in 1941. It employs 522 workers, mostly women, and it paid a 25 per cent dividend for 1941.

**Maritime Trades**

With the idea of securing after the end of the war a considerable part of Palestine's ship traffic formerly monopolized by Italian and other foreign companies, the leaders of the Yishuv are actively promoting a large program of training young Jews in maritime trades. About eight hundred youths now attend elementary courses in seafaring and receive practical training in four coastal towns. Hundreds of young
men who volunteered for the Royal Navy are also counted upon to serve in a Jewish merchant marine. At the same time marine officers are being trained in the nautical school at Haifa established shortly before the outbreak of the war. At its first graduation in January 1943, 19 students received their diplomas as marine engineers, wireless operators, navigators and shipbuilders.

The same general aim is being pursued by efforts to increase Jewish participation in the fishing industry. Its total yield in 1942 amounted to 8,118,000 pounds, and it is expected to reach 11,000,000 pounds in 1943. In addition, about half a million pounds are taken yearly from artificial ponds, a recent innovation in a number of Jewish settlements. The rapid increase in Palestine's still underdeveloped fishing industry is due mainly to Jews who introduced large motor boats for deep-sea fishing, and combined fishing with farming as a source of livelihood for several coastal villages.

The Growth of Tel Aviv

A most astonishing progress was achieved in the course of the year by Tel Aviv, the largest Jewish city of Palestine. Recognizing its urgent need for expansion, the government finally acceded to its demands for a larger area by transferring to the municipality some of the land to the north of the Yarkon River, formerly the northern limit of the city. The Arab village of Summeil was incorporated into the Jewish city, and Tel Aviv now maintains for the first time an Arab public school. It is planned to make it the best school of its kind in Palestine.

The expenditures of Tel Aviv for 1942-43 amounted to £P 740,000, and its recently approved budget for 1943-44 reached the unprecedented record of £P 990,000 (slightly over $5,000,000). The most remarkable sign of Tel Aviv's progress is the proposed city loan of £P 5,000,000 which will be issued at 3.5 per cent with government approval. Most of its proceeds will be used for roads and canalization. Besides, £P 300,000 will be spent on school buildings, £P 250,000 for a central hospital, £P 750,000 for low cost housing, and £P 325,000 on parks, gardens and athletic grounds. All this work will start at the end of the war.
Education and Culture

According to the last available figures, those for June 1942, the number of pupils in the schools of the Jewish National Council (Vaad Ha-Leumi) reached 62,807 as compared with 58,692 a year before. Schools increased from 407 to 437; teachers from 2,296 to 2,367. The schools of the National Council consist of 198 kindergartens, 204 elementary schools, 25 secondary schools, 5 teachers seminaries, and 5 trade schools.

A considerable number of Jewish schools are not under the supervision of the National Council. The total number of the pupils in all Jewish schools of Palestine, including private schools and orthodox institutions, is now estimated at 90,000.

An estimate made by the National Council puts the total expenditure for Jewish public education for the year ending September 1942 at £P 750,000. Of this sum, £P 517,940 was spent on the schools of the National Council. The government support to all these schools was only £P 56,000.

In spite of the war the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Technological Institute in Haifa (Technicum) continued their activities. While the number of students decreased slightly owing to many enrollments in the army, both schools established new courses and enlarged their laboratories and research institutes. The University laboratories are now manufacturing an increasing volume of serums and vaccines for the Allied armies in the East, as well as for Russia. The Technicum cooperated with army bureaus and local industries in the solution of important technical problems. The students of the Hebrew University now number 1,053, while the enrollment at the Technicum, including its nautical school, is 297.

Palestine's publishing activities which suffered a serious setback in the first years of the war were resumed at an accelerated pace after Rommel's defeat. A new development in this field is the large-scale publishing undertaken by labor organizations, and other public institutions. Am Oved (A Working Nation), the publishing branch of the General Workers Federation (Histadruth), and Sifriath Poalim (Workers' Library) of the Hashomer Hatzair are vying with each other in the number and quality of books issued.
Mossad Bialik (The Bialik Institute), established after the death of the famous Hebrew poet by his friends and admirers with the support of the Jewish Agency, awards annual prizes to aid promising authors to publish their works. The Kook Institute, established as an orthodox counterpart to the Mossad Bialik (and likewise receiving a subsidy from the Jewish Agency), stimulates the publication of religious books. A number of private publishers, Dvir, Schocken, Mitzpe, R. Mass, and a few others, increased the scope and quality of their activity during the year.

Among the larger literary projects now in the course of realization is the Encyclopedia of General and Jewish Literature, being prepared by an Editorial Board consisting of Prof. Joseph Klausner, Max Brod, Asher Barash, Jacob Fichman, S. Streit and P. Ginsburg, with Baruch Krupnik as editor-in-chief. The first volume of this ambitious undertaking—covering Aleph to Gimel—has already been published.

Another important literary undertaking is the encyclopedia of the Scriptures, under the editorship of Prof. E. L. Sukenik. A full edition of the Babylonian Talmud, planned by the Kook Institute, also appears as a promising venture in the field of religious literature.

The most interesting thing is that the general public in Palestine is buying these books, and only a few of them depend on subsidies or foreign sales.

The drastic restrictions upon the use of paper recently established by the government threaten to hamper some of these literary activities. In some cases, however, publishers intend to restrict new editions to a limited number of copies preserving the plates for future use.

Daily newspapers appear regularly, but their news items and articles are somewhat condensed because of the scarcity of paper. Theatrical performances continue as usual. During the year a number of operas (Offenbach's "La Belle Hélène," Puccini's "La Bohème," Verdi's "Aida," and a few others) were sung in Hebrew for the first time. During its sixth season, ending in August, the Palestine Symphony Orchestra gave 201 concerts compared with 165 in the previous year, and 94 in 1939–40. Of these concerts, 38 were given in Egypt, 35 in rural settlements, and the others in towns and military camps of Palestine.
Health Activities

During the year the activities of the Jewish health institutions were conducted on a larger scale than ever before. A new Rothschild-Hadassah hospital, costing £P 25,000, was opened at Haifa. A recent convention of Kupat Holim, the Sick Fund of the Palestine workers, was attended by delegates representing 112,000 members, and a budget of nearly £P 500,000 was adopted for the current year. It maintains three hospitals, five sanitariums, 420 dispensaries and child welfare stations, and its staff consists of 1,325 persons, including 382 physicians; 88 per cent of its income is from membership dues, and 10 per cent from employers. The government's contribution to this vast effort is exactly £P 750 a year.

Malaria cases in Emek Hofer, once a center of infection, dropped from 70 per cent in 1932 to 0.1 per cent in 1942. This vast improvement in health conditions was reflected in the rapid increase in population. In 1932 there were three villages and seventy settlers in Emek Hofer. Today there are twenty villages and more than five thousand inhabitants.

Relations with Arabs

The local relations with the Palestinian Arabs continued to improve, in spite of the animosity of Arab leaders toward Jewish aspirations in Palestine, and their negotiations and intrigues concerning the proposed Arab Federation. For the first time in years Arab delegates participated in conventions in Tel Aviv. Arab journalists from Egypt were feted by their Jewish colleagues on a visit to Palestine. Jewish and Arab sporting clubs met frequently in friendly games. Arab workers of the Haifa municipality formed a joint union with their Jewish comrades. The study of Arabic greatly increased in Jewish settlements, and the Vaad Ha-Leumi recently established a seminary for training teachers of Arabic for Jewish schools. And, according to the Hashomer Hatzair, groups of Arab youths in some neighboring villages are imbued with the idea of establishing collective settlements along the Jewish pattern.

All these favorable symptoms should not however lead to hasty conclusions. They do not mean that the Arabs of
Palestine are ready to revolt against the chauvinistic policies of their leaders. There is no reason to expect such a development as long as Great Britain adheres to the White Paper policy and actually supports the present type of Arab leadership.

In the summer of 1942, Dr. Judah L. Magnes, the most consistent protagonist of a Jewish-Arab understanding, tried to stimulate eventual negotiations with the Arabs by an exploratory talk with Auni Bey Abd el Hadi, the strongest Arab leader now living in Palestine. The results were so deeply disappointing, even to Dr. Magnes, that soon after the Ihud, the political group embodying his ideas, hastened to declare that it favored an uninterrupted Jewish immigration and recognized the exclusive rights of the Jewish Agency to conduct any feasible negotiations with the Arabs. Since then there is a tacit understanding among all Jewish groups that there is no sense in any negotiations as long as the Arab leaders are convinced that the White Paper policy is here to stay.

Much resentment among Palestine's Jewish leaders was created by a recently published "Post War Development Plan" sponsored by the government, which ignores completely the Jewish aspects of the Palestine problem. David Ben-Gurion, the chairman of the Council of the Jewish Agency, characterized it in a public speech as "an ingenious scheme to build up Palestine as an Arab country with Jewish money." The general belief is, however, that the plan will have to be discarded with the general revision of the White Paper, which is considered unavoidable at the end of the war.

During the year 5703, Palestine lost some of its leading personalities. The most prominent of them was Dr. Arthur Ruppin, the distinguished sociologist who in the beginning of our century laid the foundation for modern Jewish colonization. Another deeply regretted loss was the death of Brigadier General Frederick Kisch the chief engineer of Montgomery's Eighth Army who was killed in Tunisia. Among the other losses, Dr. Benzion Mossinson, one of the founders of the Tel Aviv Gymnasium and for many years its principal, deserves mention. At the time of his death he served as the head of the Hebrew School system in Palestine.