

PALESTINE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

By H. Lowenberg

PALESTINE

THE YEAR BEGINNING June, 1947, and ending May, 1948 was among the most crucial and critical periods in Palestine's modern history. The United Nations' historic partition decision of November 29, 1947, divided the year into two halves, each of different importance for the Yishuv and indeed for all Jewry: the uneasy peace before, and the communal war after the UN decision; the struggle to find a solution to the Palestine problem before, and to prepare for and defend the Jewish state after that fateful day. Outside Palestine, in the Middle East as a whole, the UN partition decision and the Arab rebellion against it, left a mark scarcely less profound than in Palestine itself.

UNSCOP

On May 13, 1947, the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations created the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) with instructions to "prepare and report to the General Assembly and submit such proposals as it may consider appropriate for the solution of the problem of Palestine . . . not later than September 1, 1947."

In Palestine, the Arabs followed news of UNSCOP with apparent indifference. They adopted an attitude of hostility towards the Committee, and greeted it with a two-day protest strike starting on June 15, 1947. Thereafter, they

took no further notice of the Committee, the Arab press even obeying the Mufti's orders not to print any mention of UNSCOP. This worried the Committee, as boycott by one side to the dispute might mean a serious gap in its fact finding. Strong efforts were, therefore, made to move the Arabs to co-operate. However, during UNSCOP's country-wide tour from Dan to Beer Sheba—in which they gained a truer impression of Palestine than from a dozen testimonies—the Arabs remained aloof.

But the Yishuv greeted UNSCOP with a mixture of hope and misgivings. Eighteen earlier commissions had grappled with a solution to the "Palestine problem," and the recommendations of each commission had either been rejected or shelved. The Royal Commission's partition plan of 1937 had ended in the restrictive White Paper, and the recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry for an immigration of 100,000 and local self-government had led to naval interception of refugees and their transportation to Cyprus, and martial law in Palestine. As Chaim Weizmann bitterly told UNSCOP: "You can almost cover the surface of Palestine with excellent reports." Nevertheless, the Jews made preparations for the Committee, and did their best to put their case before it.

The Palestine Mandatory Administration, too, prepared to receive the Committee. But, in British official circles, unlike in the Yishuv, a certain disdain was discernible for this latest Committee. Bevin had declared at the Labor conference in May, 1947 that Britain intended to stay in the Middle East and not to share her interests there with any other power.

The Committee's sittings took place in the YMCA auditorium in Jerusalem, opposite the famous King David Hotel. The first two sittings on June 16 and 17 were "factual," that is to say, the Palestine government and the Jewish Agency were each accorded one sitting to present documents and to interpret them factually. The Jews took exception to the way in which the Government presented the "facts." The Government had asked UNSCOP for a secret session

to present the material, and this aroused widespread adverse comment. Charges were levied by the Yishuv that the Government tried to influence UNSCOP by unfair means. The Jews declared that Government statistics were prejudicial to Jewish interests in such matters as population, trade, Jewish tax burdens, etc. Then the Agency presented its own memoranda and statistics in open session. The Arabs did not appear, nor, as a result of the Mufti's strong influence at the time, did any Arabs dare to watch the hearings as members of the public.

When formal hearings began on July 4, the Agency was the first to give evidence. The electric atmosphere of strife between the Yishuv and the Government had already charged the proceedings, and the Government had submitted a number of anti-Zionist memoranda. In consequence, the Agency evidence contained more emphasis on charges of misgovernment and anti-Zionist bias of the Mandatory regime than proposals for the future. The first demand of the Agency was for the abolition of the British mandate. The Administration agreed that the mandate had "proved unworkable in practice," but hastened to add that "obligations undertaken to the two communities were irrecconcilable." The Agency refused to agree that there were any "irreconcilable obligations." In the words of David Ben-Gurion: "not the Mandate, but the Mandatory have failed."

The second Jewish demand was for Jewish independence. Although UNSCOP had received a preliminary Agency memorandum in New York urging Jewish statehood in Palestine, at the early stage of the inquiry no Agency witness dared to say what shape this independence should take, for fear of the Agency's making a commitment which would exclude other more acceptable solutions. Ben-Gurion merely said: "Only by establishing Palestine as a Jewish state can the true objectives be accomplished: immigration and settlement for the Jews, economic development and social progress for the Arabs."

Chaim Weizmann, who testified in a private capacity

since he held no Zionist office, was the first to voice the demand for partition. This was done after consultation with the Agency. To the practical men of UNSCOP this demand came as a welcome change. They had been a little embarrassed by the emphatic accusations against the Government and by the absence so far of a tangible plan for a solution. They therefore took up the partition idea, and questioned Weizmann and Ben-Gurion about it in some detail. It could not be denied that they were strongly impressed by the anti-British charges.

After Dr. Weizmann, various groups and movements testified for their own particular interests. Most of these were Jewish, except for the British Christian Bishops in Jerusalem who gave the religious *fiat* to the British policy of opposing a Jewish state by pleading that: "Palestine is essentially the Holy Land of Christendom, and its unique character as the meeting place of the three monotheistic religions should not be undermined."

Outstanding among the Jews was J. L. Magnes, president of the Hebrew University, whose plan for a bi-national state was squarely opposed to partition and a Jewish state. The Committee listened attentively to Magnes' impressive exposition; but Judge Sandstroem, the chairman, made it clear that they viewed the plan as prophetic rather than realistic because the Arabs were unlikely to agree to equal rights for the Jews as a people, and parity of representation meant a perpetually deadlocked government.

On July 18, the Committee concluded its hearings in Palestine. The Palestinian Arabs, under the Mufti's pressure, had throughout remained unco-operative. However, the Arab states had changed their attitude. While continuing to support the maximalist claim that Palestine become a sovereign Arab state, they considered it unwise to slight the UN authority by boycott, as well as to miss the opportunity of positively influencing the Committee's findings. The Arab states therefore consented to meet UNSCOP. For face-saving reasons (ever important in the East) it was agreed that Jerusalem was unsuitable for the last-minute

reversal. The Lebanon was chosen as the most "neutral" and convenient meeting place. From two hearings, numerous unofficial talks and a visit to Trans-Jordan, UNSCOP learned the attitude of the Arab political spokesmen for the Palestinian Arabs. The Lebanese Foreign Minister warned UNSCOP that: "any question which does not take the rights and feelings of the Arabs into consideration will not only be invalid, but will be doomed to failure and result in most serious consequences." Their stay in half-Christian Lebanon also enabled UNSCOP members to meet privately the leader of the Christian minority, Bishop Aridah, and to hear from him something of the unpleasant reality of Christian minority status in a Moslem state.

Thereafter, the Committee left for Geneva. Palestine waited with suspense for the report. But before UNSCOP had left, the chronic problems of terrorism and immigration had drawn the country into new and more severe crises.

Terrorism

The activities of the terrorists, which had become a major public problem in the two years since V-E day, continued in the spring of 1947. The avowed aim of both Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Group was to terrorize the British mandatory regime and the British army into leaving Palestine, as a prerequisite to Jewish independence. On the other hand, Haganah, which in 1945 and 1946 had become more actively anti-British, slowly developed an attitude of hostility to terrorism. At first, however, this hostility remained on the level of verbal denunciation.

Terrorist activities did not cease even during the special session of the UN. On April 30 a sensational jail break had been staged at Acre to demonstrate the power of Jewish arms in an all-Arab city to the UN. While the trial of five participants in the jail break was proceeding early in June, Irgun renewed its sensational fight on June 9 by kidnapping two British policemen as hostages for the accused. At this point it became clear to Haganah and the Jewish Agency

that if terrorism were allowed to continue, the Jewish case before UNSCOP might be seriously impaired. Haganah, therefore, reacted with determination and forced the release of the two constables, thus preventing a new local crisis on the eve of UNSCOP's arrival. About the same time, Haganah foiled an Irgun attempt to blow up the Tel Aviv command of the British army.

These two incidents of Jewish intervention against terrorist activities marked a change from popular approval in 1946, to verbal deprecation, and finally, active opposition. The process of change had been long and difficult. The Government did not contribute to the strengthening of the position of the Jewish moderates against the terrorists. For what happened immediately thereafter was bound to poison British-Yishuv relations anew, and to encourage fresh terrorism and extremism.

In the trials, three of the five accused Irgunists were sentenced to death, precisely on the day when UNSCOP arrived. Public feeling ran high. However, appeal from military courts had recently been prohibited by the Government, and there was nothing to do but petition London and Lake Success. The Stern Group retaliated by killing four British soldiers in Tel Aviv on June 29. UNSCOP, which was interested in maintaining peace and quiet during its hearings, intervened with the Palestine government on June 22, and requested the suspension of the executions in order to avert "possible unavoidable repercussions which the executions might have on the Committee's work." The British government replied with a rebuff, stating that "it was not its practice to interfere with the High Commissioner's power in exercising his discretion of pardon." In order to avoid friction, UNSCOP did not reply to the Government, but the executions did not take place while UNSCOP remained in Palestine.

However, no sooner had UNSCOP left Palestinian soil at the end of July, than the Government proceeded to execute the three young terrorists. Irgun had anticipated this, and having again captured two British sergeants in Nathanyah

on July 12, announced that they would be held as hostages. The Government instituted martial law on the district and organized a large-scale search of the area, but did not find the two hostages. The Jewish public knew and feared that, after the Gruner executions in April, Irgun meant what it said, and that reprisals might ensue if the terrorists were hanged. But neither the Government nor Irgun relented. Anxious to avoid further complications, the Jewish Agency itself, through Haganah, carried out a search, parallel with that of the British army, for the two hostages. When this proved unsuccessful, the Government boldly decided to ignore the Irgun threat as an "impudent affront" to British authority, and executed the three condemned men on July 29, in spite of pleas by the Chief Rabbis and by the Jewish Agency. The Government's reply to the Vaad Leumi was that "Government was aware of the feelings of the Yishuv and this had already been considered in taking the execution decision."

News of the executions came as a severe shock to the whole country. The public organs of the Yishuv sent out frantic pleas to Irgun to spare the two hostages. After forty-eight anxious hours, it was announced that the two had been "executed by an Irgun field court-martial after trial for espionage." Their bodies were found hanging in an orange grove, and one of them having been booby-trapped, it was dismembered in the process of being cut down.

The Yishuv was shocked. Many people, after years of terrorist propaganda and British provocation, saw justification in the reprisals. The vast majority, however, felt that a very severe blow had been inflicted on the Yishuv. Later on, it became known that the question of executing the British sergeants had been debated at length at the Irgun command, and had been resolved by only a bare majority vote. Apart from all considerations of morality, the hanging of the sergeants was proved to be a grave tactical and political blunder on the part of Irgun. Terrorist extremism lost a good deal of support in Palestine, and it did great harm to the cause of Zionism in the rest of the world.

It strengthened the Jewish resolution to oppose further terrorist acts by all means short of co-operation with the British.

The Palestine government was at first bewildered by Irgun's sharp and prompt reprisals. On August 5, it arrested about thirty-five Revisionist leaders, together with the mayors of Tel Aviv, Ramath Gan and Nathanyah. The wave of arrests of right-wing intellectuals immediately reunited the Yishuv against the Government. To arrest respected public figures like Israel Rokach (mayor of Tel Aviv), Oved Ben-Ami (Nathanyah's council chairman and head of the Palestine diamond industry), and Arie Krynitzki (mayor of Ramath Gan), seemed as senseless as it was outrageous. The wave of arrests continued on a minor scale into September. The arrested persons were only gradually released when the UN reassembled in September to consider the Palestine issue.

Another incident which had extreme Jewish reactions was the Farran case. On May 6, a Jewish boy of sixteen disappeared in Jerusalem under circumstances described by eye witnesses as kidnapping. The boy never came back, nor was his body traced. On the spot a police cap was found with the name "Farran." Only after Irgun threatened revenge, and the foreign newspaper correspondents were roused to investigate, did the Government take any action. A Captain Farran, who was not on the official payroll, was implicated in the disappearance of the boy, and rumor had it that the boy had been killed and buried in a wadi (dry river bed) in the Arab countryside east of Jerusalem. Early in June, the Government sent out a searching party which "found no trace." Inquiries to the police came in large numbers, until by mid-June it became known that Captain Farran had fled to Syria.

The Government was forced to take action. Farran was brought back to Palestine on June 16. After being pointed out three times at an identification parade, he was found "to have escaped" from detention in British army barracks in Jerusalem on June 19. Public indignation ran high. Farran was somehow brought back again, "having given

himself up" on June 30. He was held on a murder charge until October 2, when a military trial was staged before British officers.

Fergusson, assistant Inspector-General of Police, was found to have organized a special squad of policemen "to deal with terrorists by unorthodox methods." When the assistant Inspector-General was called by the prosecution to identify Farran, he claimed the privilege of refusing to do so. The court upheld the claim and consequently the case was dismissed on the grounds that the prosecution had failed to make a case. Farran and Fergusson were hastily shipped off to England, for fear of terrorist assassination.

The trial revealed the peculiar conception of law and order held by the police and the Palestine government.

As noted above, relations between the terrorist organizations (Irgun Zvai Leumi and Stern Group) and Haganah had been very strained throughout 1947. As the terrorists became more violent and aggressive, Haganah was driven further into taking the defensive against irresponsible attacks upon British personnel, which might bring disaster and bloodshed to the entire Yishuv. Nevertheless, in spite of an invitation by the Mandatory to become actively anti-terrorist, Haganah confined itself to deprecating the terrorists. When Irgun's prestige fell sharply after the lynching of the two sergeants mentioned above, Haganah became actively anti-terrorist and began curbing the worst excesses.

By the time of the partition decision, relations between Haganah and Irgun-Stern were very strained. Yet everyone expected the terrorists would disband, now that they had achieved their aim of forcing Britain to leave Palestine. Indeed, in the first sweep of joy Irgun proclaimed that it would dissolve (the Stern Group did not so commit themselves). Soon, however, it became clear that the Stern Group would continue its terrorist tactics, and Irgun too decided to renew its attacks. The terrorists found themselves in a new disagreement with Haganah, who had insisted during the Arab rebellion on not engaging the British forces. Consequently, both terrorist groups stayed outside the official

Jewish defense scheme against the Arabs, while Irgun put up defensive action of its own.

In January, public pressure forced negotiations between Irgun and Haganah with a view to co-operation between these two parties. Neither organization, however, was really anxious to come to terms; each hoped to outwait the other in expectation of some untoward event. Ben-Gurion and the Mapai leaders were opposed to any form of accommodation short of Irgun's complete dissolution. Irgun, however, demanded its corporate entry into the Haganah. As negotiations between the commands dragged on, flagging with Jewish successes and reviving at emergencies, street tension between the followers precipitated armed clashes in February and March of 1948. The Yishuv was shocked, and demanded a quick settlement. A draft agreement was eventually put before the Zionist General World Council in March and approved. The settlement came into force in mid-April. By May, however, when the State was declared, Irgun again announced that they would completely dissolve and transfer their men to the Haganah Defense Army. Stern Group transferred its 500 members without any negotiations. On June 20, 1948, while the Irgun transfer was still incomplete, Irgun tried to run the UN Truce Commission's blockade with the arms ship *Altalena*. The Israeli Government, which could tolerate neither an exposure to truce breaking nor the assumption of arms traffic by an unofficial organization, demanded that Irgun hand over all the arms, and thereby accepted the challenge to the young authority of the Government. Irgun refused, and in the course of the ensuing armed clash the *Altalena* was set on fire and several hundred Irgun members arrested. Irgun at once turned against the Government and stopped all further transmobilization. The Government then became convinced that Irgun intended to continue its own existence and that it had tried to arm its own members, possibly for ultimate internal political tactics as well as for defense. The Irgun challenge to the established majority Government was foiled and Irgun decided to disband all over Israel.

In Jerusalem, however, both Irgun and Stern Group claimed the right to independent existence, using the argument that the Holy City was not part of Israel. By local arrangement they agreed to co-operate with Haganah in the defense of the city. Meanwhile, in Israel the Stern Group had ceased its separate existence. Irgun's leader, Menachem Beigin, and his principal associates decided to quit terrorism for politics and to form the Freedom party, based on the Revisionist teachings of Vladimir Jabotinsky, to attract the elements discontented with the regime.

Religious Controversy

As the problem of terrorism and violence was receding in the new state, the forces of orthodoxy and free thought began a struggle to dominate the new structure of Israel. In February, 1948, a country-wide conference of Rabbis decided to press hard for the supremacy of the Torah in Jewish life and law under the leadership of Chief Rabbi Herzog. On the other hand, the large non-orthodox section of Israel had not, at the time of writing, agreed that orthodox observances should be compulsory in all public affairs. The struggle for orthodoxy found expression in questions dealing with the new constitution, the army, law reform, appointments, etc. There was no doubt that it would continue. The victory of orthodoxy would hinge on the effectiveness of orthodox leaders in attracting Israel's youth to their tenets.

Immigration

As Ben-Gurion had pointed out to UNSCOP, immigration was one of the main Jewish aims in Palestine. During UNSCOP's sojourn, and later while it examined the Jewish displaced persons camps in Europe—indeed, throughout the whole year—Jewish immigration continued into Palestine. It had two distinct features.

The "legal" immigration was at the rate of 1,500 persons a month, in accordance with immigration certificates pro-

vided by the Palestine government. Of these, 750 were allocated to people who had previously tried to land without permission and had been deported to detention camps on Cyprus. In June, 1947, 15,000 were awaiting entry into Palestine. Preference was accorded by the Government to children and their parents.

Throughout, however, "illegal" immigration continued, that is, attempts to immigrate surreptitiously without government permits. Organized by Haganah, many small flat-boats loaded beyond the safety point with refugees, departed from various Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, and made daring efforts to reach Palestine. But the British government kept a close naval blockade on Palestine's coast. Against the use of such modern weapons as destroyers, radar, aircraft, etc., successfully running the blockade was almost impossible. A number of determined small boats, however, succeeded in making the Palestinian coast. When they were caught, British naval boarding parties forced their way on board and met with stiff resistance from passengers who were determined to get to Palestine.

While UNSCOP was still in Palestine, one Haganah boat carrying 4,500 Jews was sighted by the British Navy outside Palestine waters. It was the *Exodus 1947*; its crew (partly consisting of American Jews and non-Jews) was determined to make the coast openly and to defy the naval blockade. But a British naval party went on board after a severe fight in which three Jews were killed. The ship's crew called for help to the Yishuv in a direct broadcast from the ship to Haganah's radio station. When the ship reached Haifa on July 21, its passengers were forcibly transshipped to three British merchant vessels in the presence of members of UNSCOP. The Yishuv declared a fast and protest strike in sympathy with the immigrants.

Contrary to expectations and to previous practice, however, the ships did not sail to Cyprus. After eight anxious days of wild rumor as to their destination—Mauritius, Kenya, Canada, etc.—they were reported to be off the southern French coast, where they were detained at Port de Bouc.

The Yishuv in Palestine made many efforts to move the world's leaders to prevail on the British government on behalf of these immigrants. France had generously offered to grant them entry; but only eighty-three sick people landed, victims of the terrible conditions on board. The rest were determined not to land voluntarily except in Palestine. But all persuasion was in vain. When the ships steamed off via Gibraltar back to Germany, the Yishuv was aghast. After a seven-weeks' Odyssean journey, the Jews were reported to have been forced off the boats by clubs, tear gas and water hoses, and transported in wire cages to German detention camps. Habeas corpus proceedings in London in their behalf had failed. Intervention from Washington, Jerusalem, and other parts of the civilized world did not prevail. This incident extinguished the last vestige of goodwill for Britain in Palestine.

But it did not mark the end of illegal immigration. Apart from an average of three or four small ships with 700 passengers each a month, two large loads of displaced persons arrived, from Eastern Europe on December 30 alone: the *Pan Crescent* and *Pan York*, sailing from Constanza with 14,500 Jews, were redirected on the high seas to Cyprus, where their passengers brought the number of interned immigrants to over 30,000.

Many of the *Exodus* immigrants are now in Palestine. Thousands more have since come in under "Immigration A" (legal) as well as "B" (unauthorized) and "C" (forged papers on proper ships). The battle of immigration was lost by the British government in 1947. But the British naval blockade and the wasteful search for immigrants were not discontinued until the very last day of the Mandate.

August Disorders

On August 15 Arab riots broke out in some parts of Palestine. This brought the Arabs back to the political scene. Most of the Palestinian Arabs had supported the Germans during the war and their political stock was low in the

postwar months. While Jewish terrorists kept the British army on the alert, and the British administration was busy "crystallizing" Jewish developments, the Arabs quietly prepared for a fight. They were strongly encouraged by local British agents, who secretly distributed arms to the Arab fellahin; by the Arab military organizations, Futuwah and Nejadah, which drilled and recruited quite openly; and by the Arab Higher Committee under the Mufti in Cairo and his cousin Jamal Husseini in Palestine. The latter reorganized themselves and strengthened their hold on the Arab cities and villages, completely excluding all opposition. Outside Palestine, the Arab League was active, with the help of British representatives in Cairo, Beirut and Baghdad. In May, 1947, the Arab rulers met at Bludan (Sinai peninsula) and made a number of secret decisions in the event that a Jewish state would be set up in Palestine.

The troubles were started in Jaffa and Jerusalem. Some Jewish property was looted and set on fire, and a number of Jews were killed. Haganah, apprehensive of an Arab rising before the UN could decide on Palestine, went out to stop the riots from spreading by silencing the attacking mob. The Jewish Agency quite frankly declared that "they hold the Administration responsible for peace and order," which was intended to mean also "for strife and disorder." The Mufti did not start the disorders; on the contrary he telephoned orders from Cairo to quell them. Coming while UNSCOP was drafting its report, the abortive riots were intended to demonstrate the strength of Arab opposition, "if aroused" by an untoward recommendation.

British Threats of Chaos

But the Mufti was not yet ready. The August incidents taught that the Arabs might indeed be aroused to a fight should political developments go against the Mufti's interests. The British government promptly used this argument to frighten the Jews and their supporters away from any pro-Jewish settlement. Thus, in his first speech at Lake Success

on September 27, British Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones declared that the British would withdraw completely from Palestine, and a Foreign Office spokesman added that chaos and bloodshed was then bound to break out. The Yishuv at the time refused to take the withdrawal promise seriously and regarded it as another device for prolonging British rule. As to the threat of chaos the Agency pointed out at once that there was no need whatever for disorder if Britain carried out her duties as Mandatory. "The Yishuv will carry the burden of government and look after themselves," declared Ben-Gurion on October 2.

However, the withdrawal promise and the threat of chaos had such a poor reception among population and foreign journalists alike in Palestine, that the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, on returning from London, was compelled to hold a special press conference on October 8 in order to emphasize the British "hope and fear" prediction. He declared: "I think it essential that the people of this country should realize that withdrawal is really meant and it is essential that they should see what the effect of it will mean." Furthermore, by the time the UN was ready to vote on the partition plan in November, the local British administration had convinced everyone in Palestine, not only that chaos would be likely to ensue, but that the British would do their best to make it come true.

Partition Vote

The long-delayed partition decision at Lake Success,¹ and all the diversionary Arab moves were watched with impatience by the Yishuv. The debates, the waverings, and the pressures and counter-pressures behind the scenes determined the daily temper of the Yishuv for several months. The Yishuv felt more than ever that its fate for a generation or more to come was being shaped and determined by the UN.

The doubts of achieving the necessary two-thirds majority

¹ See volume 49, p. 508.

seriously troubled the Yishuv. When the radio carried the news on November 29 that a vote of thirty-three to thirteen had been taken in favor of the partition plan, unprecedented jubilation swept the Yishuv.

Arab Rebellion

Scarcely seven hours after the partition vote, however, the joy was marred by the first shot fired by Arabs on Jews. After a day of bleak Arab disappointment, trouble broke out in Jaffa, ever a hotbed of Arab extremist elements and a criminal nest, and in Jerusalem, the capital, as well as in Ramle, half way between the two. The Arabs declared a three-day national strike inside and outside Palestine. The Jews immediately took up defensive positions all over the country, should the trouble spread and the "prediction" of chaos and bloodshed come true.

In the first week the trouble was confined to these three towns. Indeed, it was slow in spreading to the north and south, for one simple reason: The local Arab population and especially the fellahin (villagers) were not willing to fight the Jews. They were afraid of the combined power of Haganah and the terrorists, and in any case they saw little advantage in rebellion, other than general economic disorder and a severe loss of trade. The Mufti's Arab Higher Committee, however, was well entrenched in the Arab centers. From the towns, Husseini agents went out into the countryside to whip up the feelings of the credulous, religious villagers with the usual stories of Jewish cruelty and aggression. In many places the Arabs turned a deaf ear to the agents, because, when they had previously been led to rebellion by similar stories, the trouble had lasted three whole years and ruined many of them. In other villages, the agents had an easier job. They recruited young men for the Arab irregular bands. Their job was facilitated by British police agents, who distributed new rifles and grenades to the villagers, and who recruited men for the irregular bands by offering a "king's shilling" of twenty-five piasters.

Defense or Attack?

The Jews were faced with a serious problem: Should they merely defend themselves against Arab aggression and so give no provocation for the spreading of the riots, or should they go out to suppress aggressively all organized rioting? The first, defensive line had been the Jewish attitude in the riots of 1936 to 1939. But aggressive defense bore grave possibilities, because it might lend fuel to just that rebellion, bloodshed and chaos which the Jews were most anxious to avoid. It was obvious from the first that the "aggressivist" position would prevail. After a few days of restrained defense, Haganah took punitive action on December 12 in an attack on Arab Ramle.

But the hope that the Arabs might be silenced into peacefulness by aggression did not materialize. A number of Arab villages in the immediate vicinity of Jewish settlements continued to make gestures of peace and good-neighborliness, in a mixture of fear and opportunism. These, however, became fewer and fewer in number. They could continue their peaceful attitude only so long as they were free to decide local policy in their own villages. This was not for long: Arab guerrilla bands roamed the countryside and formed nests in the towns; and the British did all they could to help the aggressive Arabs and hinder the defending Jews. Whenever it became known that Arabs maintained friendly relations with adjacent settlements, Arab agents were sent in. If these could not change the villagers' policy, Arab marauders occupied the village and made it a base for assaults on the Jews. Then the Jews were compelled to beat back and punish the bands, and in due course, the local villagers bore the brunt not only of the bandits' occupation—requisitioning of money, food and houses,—but also of the counterattacks by the Jews. Thus peaceful Arab villagers were drawn into the maelstrom of rebellion. There were several known cases where Arab villagers, fearing these consequences, drove off the bandits who tried to make their

base there, and in at least one case there was a bloody gun battle leaving a dozen dead Arabs.

Rebellion Spreads

The Arab rebellion against the partition vote gained impetus during December, 1947. Early that month, the main fighting took place in Jerusalem and Jaffa, and on the road linking the two. In Jerusalem the Arabs attacked and set fire to the Jewish commercial center, directly adjacent to the British police and army headquarters. The fires raged for several days, and were accompanied by wholesale looting. Jewish losses amounted to many hundred thousand pounds. The looting was committed in full view of the British police who were still responsible for "law and order" and claimed exclusive power to exercise that responsibility. The intentional inactivity of the police gave encouragement to the Arab bandits and to the mob.

In Jaffa, Arab bandits endangered the entire borderline of Tel Aviv suburbs by placing themselves in commanding buildings and sniping at civilians. When Haganah took up defensive positions, the British army "intervened," searched the Jews for arms, disarmed them, and thus enabled the Arabs to continue attacking unarmed Jews. The army even staged a number of courts-martial of Haganah youths for carrying arms and sentenced them to terms of up to two years' imprisonment.

Similarly, as the highroad from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and to the south became increasingly more dangerous because of the threat of ambush, Jews utilized convoys with armored vehicles to protect passengers. But very frequently, British army patrols disarmed the defenders and arrested them. There were many known cases where soldiers at once sold the confiscated arms to the waylaying Arabs, and in at least one instance a gun thus confiscated and sold to Arabs was reconquered by Jews after a gun battle on the Jerusalem highroad.

Not that the entire British army of 80,000 men behaved in this way. Much depended on the attitude of the officers in charge locally. There were instances of correct conduct, and even of help being extended to Jewish defenders. On the whole, however, the army treated the Jews as the attackers who alone carried weapons, with no threatening Arabs around; only the British could be trusted to keep "law and order" and to protect the Jewish population from lawlessness. In fact, however, many British soldiers, and especially British policemen, took advantage of the Arab rebellion to take revenge for Jewish terrorism. There were also definite instructions from above to hamper the Jews and to encourage the Arabs.

The British army and police in Palestine, subjected to anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic propaganda for three years and under constant terrorist attacks, had fascist elements in their midst which were quiescent during the sensational Farran disclosures, but were determined to injure the Yishuv before their evacuation.

On February 1, British policemen and soldiers parked an army truck of explosives outside the *Palestine Post* newspaper offices in Jerusalem, and blew it up, killing three persons and rendering scores homeless. Three weeks later, on February 22, three army truckloads of explosives were blown up in Ben Yehuda Street, Jerusalem's business street, killing fifty-three Jews and destroying many houses. An investigation by well-known lawyers charged that British soldiers had committed these outrages. But the Government considered the evidence "insufficient."

During December the Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers, meeting in Cairo and The Lebanon, appointed military commanders for the "Arab Army of Liberation in Palestine." They also promised to help by raising funds and recruiting volunteers. In January there were three Arab commands in Palestine comprising about 15,000 irregulars of Palestinian, Iraqi and Levantine origin: in the north there was Kawkji El Fawzi, Syrian Nazi notorious during the 1936-1939 rioting; in Jerusalem there was Abdul Kader el Husseini,

a relative of the Mufti, and in Jaffa, Tewfik es Said, an Iraqi general. In order to obtain a show of unity between these three rival commands, the Arab League appointed General Safwat Pasha of Iraq as commanding general over all Arab irregulars in Palestine.

Arab Strategic Aims

The strategic aims of Arab rebellion at the time were (1) to endanger and close Jewish cross-country supply lines, and (2) to keep Jews under fire by attacks from surrounding Arab villages and suburbs. The battle for the roads was by far the more serious. While the Arabs were spread over 750 villages and twenty-five towns and townships, the Jews were concentrated in three main cities and about 200 settlements. Theirs was the need to maintain the connecting roads, except in a few areas of close Jewish settlement. Two vital roads in particular were vulnerable: the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the southern settlements, and the road from Tel Aviv to Haifa. As practically all the forty miles of the Jerusalem road went through purely Arab territory, diversions were laid through Jewish areas to shorten the exposure to Arab ambush. On the Haifa road there was a small but dangerous stretch dominated by an Arab village which could not be cleared, as a nearby British army camp protected it.

The object of the Arab attacks on Jewish roads and on the extended front of the perimeters of several hundred individual Jewish areas was clearly a wearing-down process designed to lower the efficiency of Jewish defense preparations until the promised Arab armies would come in after the end of the British mandate on May 15. For five and a half months the Jews bore the brunt of the attacks and held all their settlements. In April they even founded a new settlement in the Negev. But they paid a comparatively high price in Jewish lives. At the end of February, after three months of guerrilla fighting, the government put the casualties at 1,378 dead and 3,086 injured. Of the dead,

550 were Jews. The Arab command prohibited the publication of Arab casualties; but Jewish casualties continued to be known. The casualties did not greatly affect the Palestinian Arabs because Iraqi, Syrian and Trans-Jordan irregulars were highest among them.

Arab Evacuation

In April, 1948, a development occurred which the Jews had not hoped for: the Arab rebel command became apprehensive of a coming Jewish offensive, and therefore gave orders for the Arab evacuation of the entire Sharon coastal area north of Tel Aviv. After initial refusals to leave their homes and fields, the *fellahin* were forced to move into the mountain area, leaving the whole coastal plain between Tel Aviv and Zichron Jacob clear for the Jews. The result was a bloodless clearing of the greater part of the future Jewish territory by the Arabs.¹ According to the Bernadotte Report, submitted to the United Nations on August 16, 1948, 330,000 Arab refugees were homeless and destitute.

Military Operations

This was a sign for a general Jewish offensive to mop up Arab resistance within the Jewish defense area, corresponding roughly to the partition plan territory. The operation started on April 13 in Tiberias, a mixed township which had not previously been infested by guerrillas. When bandits came in and attacked the Jewish quarter, the Jews took the offensive and expelled the irregulars, who in the course of

¹The Arab evacuation was also attributable to the political tactics of the Arab leaders, who evacuated the local Arab population in order to be able to use the refugees as a weapon to influence public opinion. Other factors were the unwillingness of Arab masses to remain in Palestine when the *effendis* and Arab leaders had fled, and the credence they gave to threats of Jewish violence, after the Deir Yessin incident of March, 1947, in which the Irgun committed an act of indiscriminate warfare against women and children, an action deprecated by all of Jewish Palestine.—ED.

their retreat also put the local Arabs to flight. About three-score British troops who tried to intervene found a strong Haganah force in occupation, and withdrew. This operation strengthened Jewish defenses against Trans-Jordan at Lake Galilee and in the Jordan valley. At a later stage, Arab Tsemach and Beisan were cleared. The occupation of Safed in Galilee completed the Jewish occupation of the northern territory, except for an Arab pocket around Nazareth. Later, Arab Acre was occupied for purely defensive purposes.

Ever since the British had demonstrated the desire to withdraw their officials and army from Palestine, it had been generally understood that Haifa would be held by the British until the last soldier was shipped off. The Arab rebellion, too, had been much slower in reaching Haifa, and the British had shown some readiness there to calm tempers and to help in making a truce. In the middle of April, without previous notice, the British evacuated several army camps and installations in Haifa. Before the Arabs realized what was happening, the Jews seized the opportunity, and in the wake of the withdrawing British advanced into the Arab quarter to clear out foreign brigands there. In a thirty-six hour battle, the whole town fell to Haganah, excepting the port area held by the British, which later came under Jewish military control.

Encouraged by the Haifa victory, a battle was planned to clear Jaffa of the bandits and lift the threat to Tel Aviv. Both Haganah and Irgun considered the plan, but Haganah decided not to attack. Irgun concentrated its men in Tel Aviv and on the first day of Passover, April 25, began an attack which lasted four days. After three days of stiff fighting, Irgun conquered the northern part of Jaffa and began to advance into the town center. At the same time Haganah started a diversionary attack on Jaffa from the south to relieve Irgun forces. The British army, fearing that the Jews might conquer the all-Arab city in the manner of Haifa, after five months of "non-intervention," marched on Jaffa, summoning troops by land, sea and air. About 2,000 British troops arrived and took up positions between the Jewish

and Arab fighting lines. They declared they would put down by force any attempt to renew the fighting. But panic had seized the Jaffa Arabs. Together with the Iraqi and other irregulars they fled by sea and land, so that in the end only 4,000 of the poorest Arabs were left in the town. When the British army withdrew on May 12, two days before the end of the Mandate, a few Arab notables surrendered Jaffa to the Jews to save it from destruction by battle. Jaffa has since been under Haganah's military occupation.

The conquest of Jaffa put almost the entire area allocated to the Jews by the partition plan under Jewish military control. The occupation of Jaffa and other Arab places was essential for the maintaining of the Jewish territory by eliminating all hostile elements, and for the preparing of its defense against the Arab armies due to invade from outside.

Jewish Autonomy Develops

After the partition decision and the delayed appointment of the Palestine Commission at Lake Success to implement the partition, there was still hope in the Yishuv that the Jewish state would be established in an orderly fashion with UN help by May 15. As January wore on, however, it became increasingly obvious that the United States was slowing down the work of the UN Palestine Commission. Meanwhile, inside Palestine, the Jews were not content to rely entirely on the UN, or to trust the British.

When U. S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall declared in March that the partition plan was unworkable and that "temporary trusteeship" would be proposed to a new special session of the UN General Assembly, the Yishuv finally realized that the partition plan could only be carried out in Palestine, and that the Jewish state could only be set up and defended by the Jews. At that time a number of British administrative services were already disintegrating, and the British police had evacuated some Jewish and Arab areas. The Jewish authorities, i. e., the Agency and Vaad Leumi, took over control of the Jewish police elements, as

well as many vital services in purely Jewish areas, such as Tel Aviv. These were the first steps in Jewish self-government. They began in such elementary phases as defense and security, voluntary taxation, Jewish information services, food distribution and supply control, etc. The Agency and Vaad Leumi guided the creation of these autonomous services, and the will of the Yishuv to achieve autonomy manifested itself in a readiness to carry on voluntarily a complete state system which was in the process of creation. In April and May, 1948, the last Mandatory government services, such as post offices, ceased to function, and the Jewish People's Cabinet and Parliament (Minhelet Ha'am and Moatzat Ha'am) took over all these services.

Zionist General Council

The Jewish Agency had long intended to convene the Zionist General Council—a small forum of the parties represented at Zionist Congress—in order to discuss general policy, and to receive instructions for new steps. After many delays, the Council met in Tel Aviv on April 6, and had before it three principal problems: (1) the attitude of the Jews to the special session of UN on Palestine which was called for mid-April; (2) the Jewish defense of Palestine; and (3) the development of Jewish self-government. Political strategy was not a major consideration for the Council, as it was agreed that the Agency would stand by the UN partition plan at all costs. Defense was the great problem. While local strategy was left in the hands of Haganah's command, the Council considered means of recruiting the emergency support of overseas Jewry. As for the disintegration and chaos of the British administration and the complementary growth of Jewish self-government, the Council judged the time appropriate to set up a provisional Jewish cabinet of thirteen and Council of thirty-seven in accordance with UN decisions, with Ben-Gurion at the head. The Cabinet was a very broad coalition of the Zionist parties—United Workers party, Mapai, Aliyah Hadashah, General Zionists,

Mizrachi, Sephardim, and Agudas Israel. Some of the Cabinet members at once assumed those departmental duties which were the most urgent and vital, such as food control, supply, imports, finance, defense, etc.

Jewish State Proclaimed

When the British mandatory regime expired on May 15, and the British High Commissioner departed, an organic body of autonomous Jewish government had developed based on the daily needs of the Yishuv. In mid-May the only question which remained to be decided was whether this self-government should be declared sovereign in Jewish territory, or be subject to a superior organization, as proposed by the United States to the latest UN special session of the General Assembly. In spite of reports from America that Secretary Marshall had threatened economic sanctions if the sovereign Jewish state would be declared, public opinion in Palestine held the Jewish state supreme and insisted that delay in the declaration of independence might forfeit the efforts of decades just at the moment when independence was closest.

The provisional cabinet therefore decided on May 12 that the sovereign Jewish state would be declared. As May 15, the end of British rule, fell on a Sabbath, and it had been agreed that the foundation of the Jewish state should not involve a desecration of religious observance, the foundation ceremony took place on Sabbath eve, May 14, 1948, at 4 P. M. in Tel Aviv. In a short and simple, but most impressive ceremony, Ben-Gurion read to the assembled Government Council (Parliament) the Declaration of the Foundation of the Jewish State.¹

The provisional Cabinet was comprised as follows: David Ben-Gurion (Mapai), Prime Minister and Defense; David Remez (Mapai), Communications; Moshe Shertok (Mapai),

¹ The full text of the proclamation is contained in the Appendix to this article on p. 445.

Foreign Affairs; Eliezer Kaplan (Mapai), Finance; Aaron Zisling (United Workers), Agriculture; Mordecai Bentov (United Workers), Labor and Public Works; Fritz Bernstein (General Zionists), Trade, Industry and Supplies; Itzhak Gruenbaum (General Zionists), Interior; B. Shitrit (Sephardim), Minorities; Felix Rosenblueth (Aliyah Hadashah), Justice; Moshe Shapiro (Mizrachi), Immigration; Rabbi J. L. Fishman (Mizrachi), Religious; Rabbi I. M. Levin (Agudah), Social Welfare. On May 17, Chaim Weizmann was elected first President of the state of Israel by the Jewish Parliament.

Arab Invasion

From the first, the Jewish state was preoccupied with defending itself against well-backed and well-armed Arab aggressors from outside. On the night of the end of the Mandate about 12,000 troops of the regular armies of Trans-Jordan, Egypt, Syria, The Lebanon and Iraq marched into Palestine from east, south and north, heavily armed with the latest British tanks, planes and guns, and partly commanded by British officers—"in accordance with treaty obligations" (Bevin). The Prime Minister of Egypt declared on May 14 that the Arab states were "not attacking anybody" but were only "sending expeditions to keep order in Palestine and to suppress the dissident minority of Zionist terrorists."

The strategic plan was that King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan was to use the Anglo-Arab Legion, which the British had left behind in Palestine, to storm Jerusalem. As soon as Jerusalem had fallen—after three to four days at the most—Abdullah was to advance on Tel Aviv, and Egyptian armored columns to come north along the coast from Gaza to complete the occupation of the southern Jewish area. Meantime the Iraqi forces were to break out of the central mountain stronghold in Samaria, cutting the Yishuv in two. The Syrians, Lebanese and Iraqis would simultaneously invade Palestine from the north and across the Jordan, and converge on

Haifa, where they could link up with the British army in evacuation.

However, the entire Arab blitzkrieg plan collapsed. Abdullah did not overrun Jerusalem. After twelve days, on May 28, he succeeded only in conquering the Old City, a quarter cut off from the rest of Jerusalem and never regarded as militarily tenable. In a heroic battle, many young Jewish fighters went down, and with them many synagogues and ancient and holy Jewish shrines. The modern city of Jerusalem contained and repelled Abdullah, turning his lightning assault into a slow and costly war of attrition. Under unspeakable hardships, cut off from food supplies, and living on emergency rations, with no fresh water and no electricity, Jewish Jerusalem withstood the bombardment for four whole weeks, and thereby frustrated the entire Arab plan of conquest. The Arab invasion plan lacked elasticity. Arab and British commanders lacked *élan* and their troops were of very poor quality. For that reason alone the invasion never got beyond its starting point. The Egyptians split their armor in two in order to compete with Abdullah for the expected occupation of Jerusalem, and were consequently slow in their drive to Tel Aviv. The Iraqis were beaten by the Jews inside their mountain stronghold when Jenin was attacked on June 5. The token Lebanese army was beaten in battle and Lebanese territory was invaded by the Jews. The Syrians never registered a single success. When the truce negotiated by Count Bernadotte, the UN Mediator, came into force on June 11, the inferior Arab troops had been badly mauled and their heavy equipment well attacked; but the Jews held almost all Jewish land assigned by the partition plan, and some important stretches of the proposed Arab state, as well.

The four weeks' war ended in a military stalemate, in which each side felt superior and neither was ready to make any concessions in the negotiations of Count Bernadotte for a new "settlement of the Palestine issue."¹

¹For an account of later Palestine developments, see article on Palestine and the United Nations, pp. 264-266.

MIDDLE EAST

Jewry in the Oriental countries was in a vastly different position from that in Palestine. After decades in which they had lived in uneasy toleration by the Moslems and complete neglect by world Jewry, Oriental Jews suddenly became one of the major charges of the Jewish people: Oppression and persecution settled down upon them, and unlike their brethren in the new state of Israel, they did not fight back.

Oriental Jewry, stretching over the Near and Middle East, comprised 900,000–1,000,000 Jews who lived in the countries of Islam. Some of these countries were Arabic-speaking, others were not. Some of them were under direct foreign rule, such as Algiers and Morocco. The rest recently gained their independence out of the dissolution of the former Ottoman Empire. A number of the states were members of the Arab League. Two countries, Saudi Arabia and Trans-Jordan, had no Jewish population.

Although Oriental Jewry was by no means a homogeneous whole, its principal component being Sephardic Jewry — in addition to Yemenite Jews in Yemen, Berber Jews in North Africa, and several thousand Karaites in Egypt — the political divisions of modern times were scarcely real or important. The life of the Orient was one, dominated by the rules of Islam. And so the life of Oriental Jewry was one, too. It was a tolerable life until the modern problems of social unrest and national awakening found their negative expression in the persecution of the Jewish populations.

The Arab League

The Arab League added to Jewish problems in 1947 by one of the decisions on Palestine arrived at during the Bludan conference of Arab rulers. That decision was to bring extreme pressure to bear on Oriental Jews by the means of expropriation and persecution. A later aim was to divert Arab public attention from the military defeats in Palestine by encouraging anti-Semitism. Any review of Oriental Jewry in 1947–48 is therefore a story of Arab League anti-Semitism.

The modern Jewish problem of the Orient first found serious expression in the wake of the anti-Zionist commercial boycott, which the Arab League declared in 1946. The step from anti-Zionist boycott to anti-Zionist persecution was as short and easy as the later step from anti-Zionist persecution to anti-Jewish persecution. Thus, whereas in 1946 only the Jews of Palestine and their goods were the object of Arab League discrimination, in 1947-48 the Jews of the Arab states and their property became the objects of that discrimination. Throughout the summer of 1947, Jews in Arab League countries lived in fear of the next moves of their governments. Indeed, many Jews who could emigrate to Palestine and overseas did so. But they were a section of the more fortunate and wealthy minority. Most Jews were drawn further into the clutches of chauvinist governments, who had learned well the methods of anti-Semitic diversion culminating in Nazism.

IRAQ

Of Iraq's 90,000 Jews, most lived in Baghdad where their settlement dated back some 2,500 years, and the rest lived in Mosul, Basra and Diala. Although Iraq gave international minority guarantees upon attaining its independence in 1932, and even set up a special "Jewish spiritual council" to administer the four communities, in practice it never treated its Jews well. Zionism was suppressed in Iraq, and this suppression brought in its wake a xenophobic persecution of everything Hebrew. In 1947-48 this wave gained momentum as the Palestine issue loomed large on the Arab political horizon. In addition, Iraq's position at the crossroads of Russian and Western influences made her the target for conflicting propaganda from Russian sources on the one hand, and American and British on the other. Whenever these cross-currents resulted in student demonstrations, strikes or even the fall of a government, as in January, 1948, the Jews were the first to be endangered by the restless elements.

As a result of the growing economic discrimination against Jews, a number of them emigrated from Iraq, and many went

to Palestine, usually illegally. The Arab League boycott of "Zionist goods," in which Iraq had already distinguished itself in 1946, furnished a ready pretext for commercial discrimination. The boycott was against all goods coming from and via Palestine. Typical of the stupidly blind fanaticism was a case reported in October, 1947, when Swiss goods arriving in Baghdad by an airplane which had landed at a Palestinian airport were confiscated and burned at once. Balfour Day, which was an annual provocation for anti-Jewish excesses, passed singularly quietly in 1947, as, pending the Palestine decision of the United Nations General Assembly, the Iraqi government made a special effort to show that the Jews had nothing to fear under Arab rule.

When the UN partition decision was announced, however, a storm broke out in Iraq as in all other Arab states.

Nevertheless, the Iraqi government did not allow any serious bloodshed or pillage to develop. It contented itself with nonviolent economic pressure. To protect Iraqi Jews, Chief Rabbi Sassoon Kedmi of Baghdad was compelled to declare to the Iraqi press the "complete solidarity of Iraqi Jews with other Iraqis in the denunciation of Zionism and in their determination to continue living in brotherly Iraq, as they have lived for hundreds of years."

However, the fury had been let loose. After December 1, 1947, no Jews were permitted to leave Iraq, and those who had not yet left could not now escape. At first the Iraqi assault on local Jewry was financial, Jews being forced to contribute large sums to the fighting fund for the Palestinian Arabs. From January to May, 1948, life in Iraq was extremely unpleasant. Anti-Jewish feeling ran high, especially as Iraqi troops were defeated and the Arab refugees began arriving from Palestine. However, there was an outward calm. There were no pogroms in Iraq then, at least none that received any publicity abroad.

The storm really broke on May 15. Then, Jews were treated in Iraq as enemies within the gate, spies, *agents provocateurs*. Iraqi Jewry's only hope for the future lay in emigration.

IRAN (PERSIA)

The 50,000 Jews of Iran, distributed in ghettos in Teheran, Meshed, Yezd and Isfahan, had always lived under extremely poor conditions, and had never attained the position, riches and distinction of Baghdad Jewry. This status did not improve in 1947-48, although Western wartime influence was still felt in places like Teheran. On the other hand, Iranian Jewry did not undergo the violent and fearful oppression over the Palestine issue which the Arab League staged elsewhere. On the whole, Iranian Jewry's poverty, plight and medieval ghetto life remained unchanged. But there was danger that imported social unrest and nascent Arab nationalism might seize Iran too, and completely undermine her Jewish community.

AFGHANISTAN

There were only 3,000 to 4,000 Jews left in the town of Kabul, Afghanistan, where fifteen years earlier there were 12,000 to 15,000 Jews, and Afghanistan Jews were probably the most forgotten of all Jewries. The barring of Jews from almost all trades which began with the new regime in 1933 continued in 1947, although by then hardly a Jew was left in commerce. Although emigration was very severely punishable, every year hundreds made the hazardous journey from the Afghan mountain plateau into India where thousands were living a miserable life as refugees, awaiting permission to go to Palestine or to America.

YEMEN

Yemen has for hundreds of years been the home of a special branch of the Jewish people. The Yemenite Jews have a strong Judaism of their own which has been preserved throughout the centuries. Until World War I, Yemenite Jewry had been unknown to the outside world. But by then persecutions in the Yemen had become so intolerable that the Zionists began organizing a Yemenite immigration into Palestine

which has continued ever since. In recent years the situation eased a little, as Yehia, the eighty-year-old Imam (ruler) of Yemen maintained a regime of benevolent despotism. This state of affairs was threatened when Imam Yehia was assassinated in February, 1948, and El Wazir crowned himself Imam of Yemen. Yehia's son and heir, Ahmed, fled the capital, but organized an army which soon overthrew the usurping king and restored the throne to himself. The Arab League, of which Yemen was a member, sent out an inquiry committee, which however discontinued its investigations owing to its preoccupation with the Palestine problem.

At the time of this writing, the coup d'etat and the change of rulers had had no effect on the position of Yemenite Jewry.

ADEN

Aden, Yemen's biggest port and a British protectorate, had for a long time been the first refuge from Arabian persecution and a gateway for emigration to Palestine. It had always been a quiet spot, until early in December, 1947, when a riot suddenly broke out which took a toll of seventy-five Jewish and thirty-four Arab dead. Upon hearing of the UN partition decision, a native mob of instigated Arabs began attacking the Jewish quarter, killing, injuring, burning, pillaging and raping in most brutal pogrom fashion. The native police did not intervene. As the port was understaffed with British troops, the pogrom ran amok for two whole days, until Royal Marines were sent in, and strong British reinforcements from the Suez Canal zone restored order.

An Anglo-Jewish investigator, who subsequently went to Aden, reported that Jewish property exceeding two million dollars was destroyed, and that 900 Jews who had been in a separate camp in the city were saved from murder thanks to their speedy evacuation by the British. Quiet, however, was not restored at once. On December 21, the Jewish community cabled British Prime Minister Attlee: "Jewish community in danger, attacks renewed. Rush help, S. O. S." After January,

1948, Aden became quiet, as more vigilance was being exercised by the Government. But the Jews continued to fear a recurrence of that pogrom.

SYRIA

Syria, Palestine's northern neighbor, had a Jewish population of 9,000 to 10,000. Once a much larger community, its Jews were steadily emigrating to Palestine and America, as well as to half-Christian Lebanon, in order to escape the rising wave of anti-Semitism which the new independence of that formerly French-mandated territory brought with it. The majority, 5,000, lived in Aleppo, which once contained 14,000 Jews; 2,000 were still left in Damascus.

In September, October and November, 1947, Jewish employees were dismissed from many positions, Jewish goods were boycotted and Syrian deputies frequently introduced anti-Semitic measures in Parliament. After the UN partition decision, a very serious pogrom was staged in Aleppo by the notorious Moslem Brotherhood. In this pogrom 150 houses, 50 shops and 5 Jewish schools were destroyed or damaged. Even the local French school was attacked. Twelve synagogues were destroyed, and the famous ancient *Mustaribah* synagogue was completely gutted by fire. After the pogrom, 2,000 of Aleppo's Jews fled to Lebanon for shelter. But the Syrian government, which had done nothing to stop the pogrom, at once summoned the Jewish leaders of Aleppo and told them to halt the Jewish exodus.

In Damascus, the capital, the situation was quieter. In demonstrations following the declaration of the Jewish state on May 15, one Jew was killed by a "student" mob, and the United States legation was attacked.

LEBANON

Lebanon, Syria's sister state in the Levant, always had a very large Christian Arab population. The Jews, therefore, enjoyed greater liberty in the Lebanon than in Syria, although

the ruling faction of the Lebanese Christians was always anxious to prove its Arab loyalty. This was particularly true in 1947-48. Lebanese Jewry, of course, had much contact with Palestine and derived much inspiration from the Yishuv. This alone exposed Lebanese Jewry the more to attacks from Arab fanatics. But on the whole, the position there was even now much better than in Iraq and Syria.

Although the present government in Lebanon was Moslem, the influential Christian minority and the leaders of the Maronite Christian Church saw their salvation in a strong Jewish state, and were secretly striving to that end. So long, however, as they had no assured contact with the leaders of Palestinian Jewry, they left the rule to the Lebanese Moslems, who sought to be more Arab than the Arab League. Lebanese Jewry was in a very precarious position, constantly exposed to the threats of the rowdy Moslem Brotherhood and of fascist elements.

EGYPT

Egypt's 75,000 Jews were overtaken by the most catastrophic fate in 1947-48. Whereas in 1946 the Jewish Agency could inform the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine that "the general position of Jews in Egypt is beyond comparison better than in any of the other Oriental countries," in 1948 the Jews of Egypt were the object of the most brutal persecution and oppression. The era of free development and westernization, which Egypt had experienced since World War I, and in which local and foreign born Jews had played a leading part, came to a rapid end after World War II. Once again, the rising tide of chauvinism, led by the infamous Moslem Brotherhood and fascist "Young Egypt," combined with the surge of social unrest to move the Government to canalize popular feeling against foreigners and Jews. Americans and Britons, too, became victims of discrimination. The Palestine issue figured as a large pretext for that oppression, not least because the seat of the Arab League was in Cairo, which thus became the focus of all Oriental religious and nationalist fanaticism.

The insecurity of Egyptian Jewry in the face of persecution and discrimination was due principally to the fact that of the 75,000 Jews at least two thirds were foreign born, not Egyptian nationals. This became tragically significant at the end of 1947 when the Egyptian government enforced two anti-alien laws: the first restricted employment of foreign nationals in any one firm or business to a very small percentage of the number of employees; the other put all foreigners under police surveillance, and forced them to show cause "why their stay in Egypt was justifiable." In addition to Jews, 200,000 other foreigners, French, British, American and Italian, were affected by these laws.

As for specific anti-Jewish legislation, a bill was introduced in the Egyptian Chamber of Deputies making it an offense punishable with a life sentence to establish or assist in establishing a "Zionist organization." "Zionist" was defined as "any attempt to transfer Jewish immigrants to Palestine, or any attempt to establish a Jewish state there or to obstruct measures to fight such [an] attempt." In addition, a proposal was put to the Arab League Council in December to name all Middle-Eastern Jews enemies, to intern them as political prisoners and to freeze their bank accounts.

Actually, the anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish discrimination, which had been growing in 1946-47, was temporarily halted because of Egyptian preoccupation with the great cholera epidemic. In their fanaticism, however, the Egyptians even rejected an offer of anticholera serum from the Hebrew University laboratories in Jerusalem. No sooner had the epidemic abated, than an apocalyptic storm swept over Egypt's Jews.

The immediate cause was the UN partition decision, which was a tremendous political defeat for the Arab League. In Cairo and Alexandria the usual mob was whipped up, joined by vociferous gangs of student hooligans, and attacks on Jews, Jewish property and businesses took place. In the course of the attacks, the mob also tried to attack the French High School in Cairo and the American University. It was significant in determining the origin of the riot that Azzam Pasha,

Secretary General of the Arab League, protested to Premier Nokrashi Pasha against the police's stopping of the rioting, declaring, "The populace must be allowed to vent their true feelings." This was only the beginning of anti-Jewish pogroms. On December 22 the Arab League met in Cairo to consider its defeat at the UN. Vast demonstrations took place in which mobs and "students" carried streamers prepared by the Moslem Brotherhood, reading: "Islam is the religion of the country." The hint against the Jews was obvious. During December and January, hundreds of wealthy Jews in Cairo and Alexandria received anonymous blackmail letters demanding vast sums. In addition, with Government support tremendous contributions were extorted from the Jews of Egypt to fight the Jews of Palestine. Blackmail became so much the fashion that the government issued a communique, declaring: "No funds should be given to individual collectors (*scil.*, blackmailers); a central committee is being formed to collect funds for Palestine." Other rich foreigners were blackmailed for money. The Jews were also subject to particularly heavy administrative taxes.

During the winter and spring of 1948, Egyptian Jewry thus felt the first real fury of modern persecution. Many rich Jews left Egypt during those months. All this, however, reached a climax when the Arab League suffered its second defeat in Palestine with the creation of a Jewish state on May 15, 1948. When the Arab armies invaded Palestine, Nokrashi Pasha declared a countrywide state of siege and arrogated to himself special emergency powers. At once a regime of terror set in: A general round-up of Jews took place and many thousands were thrown into concentration camps "for the safety of the country in wartime." Many Jewish offices, shops and dwellings were occupied and looted by the Egyptian police and by the fascist gangs. Those Jews who remained free lived in constant fear and danger. Frequently, Jews were attacked on the street, in cafes, shops and in their homes; they were robbed, beaten and injured. Several times bombs were thrown into the Cairo Jewish quarter and at Jewish shops. Egyptians denounced certain Jews to the police as spies, and

these were taken to concentration camps without trial. There were reports from strictly censored Egypt in August, 1948, that 150 Jews had been murdered in a particularly violent pogrom, in which three rabbis were killed in Cairo's slaughter-house. The resemblance these occurrences bore to Nazi brutality was unmistakable. The intervention of the U. S. Minister in Cairo was of no avail.

LIBYA

The 30,000 Jews in Libya had an uneventful year. Formerly an Italian colony, Libya was subjected to Arab League influence, and anti-Semitism was felt inside the country. But the British military administration maintained a tolerable state of calm between the Jews and their incitable Moslem neighbors, and kept explosive incidents to a minimum. However, the Jews of Tripoli, Benghazi and smaller places continued to live in the shadow of pogroms staged by Egyptian instigators, such as had occurred in 1945 and 1946. They saw little future for themselves in Libya so long as Arab League influence prevailed, and preferred a return to Italian administration.

APPENDIX

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF ISRAEL

MAY 14, 1948

The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish People. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish People remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain statehood. In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed a wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages and established a vigorous and ever growing community, with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace, yet were ever prepared to defend themselves. They brought blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country.

In the year 1897 the First Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodore Herzl's vision of a Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish People to a national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of Nov. 2, 1917, and reaffirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish People with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their national home.

The Nazi holocaust which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe proved anew the urgency of the re-establishment of the Jewish State, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish People to equality in the family of nations.

Survivors of the European catastrophe, as well as Jews from other lands, claiming their right to a life of dignity, freedom and labor, and undeterred by hazards, hardships and obstacles, have tried unceasingly to enter Palestine.

In the Second World War, the Jewish People in Palestine made a full contribution in the struggle of freedom-loving nations against the Nazi evil. The sacrifices of their soldiers and efforts of their workers gained them title to rank with the people who founded the United Nations. On Nov. 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution for re-establishment of an independent Jewish State in Palestine and called upon inhabitants of the country to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put the plan into effect.

This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish People to establish their independent state may not be revoked. It is, moreover, the self-evident right of the Jewish People to be a nation, as all other nations, in its own sovereign state.

Accordingly we, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish People in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly by virtue of the natural and historic right of Jewish People and of resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Israel.

We hereby declare that as from the termination of the Mandate at midnight this night of the 14th to 15th of May, 1948, and until the setting up of duly elected bodies of the state in accordance with a Constitution to be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948, the present National Council shall act as the Provisional State Council and its executive organ, the National Administration, shall constitute the Provisional Government of the State of Israel.

The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of shrines and holy places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The State of Israel will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementations of the Resolution of Nov. 29, 1947 and will take steps to bring about an economic union over the whole of Palestine.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its state and admit Israel into the family of nations.

In the midst of wanton aggression we call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the state, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions, provisional or permanent.

We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all. The State of Israel is ready to contribute its full share to the peaceful progress and reconstitution of the Middle East.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfilment of the dream of generations—the redemption of Israel.

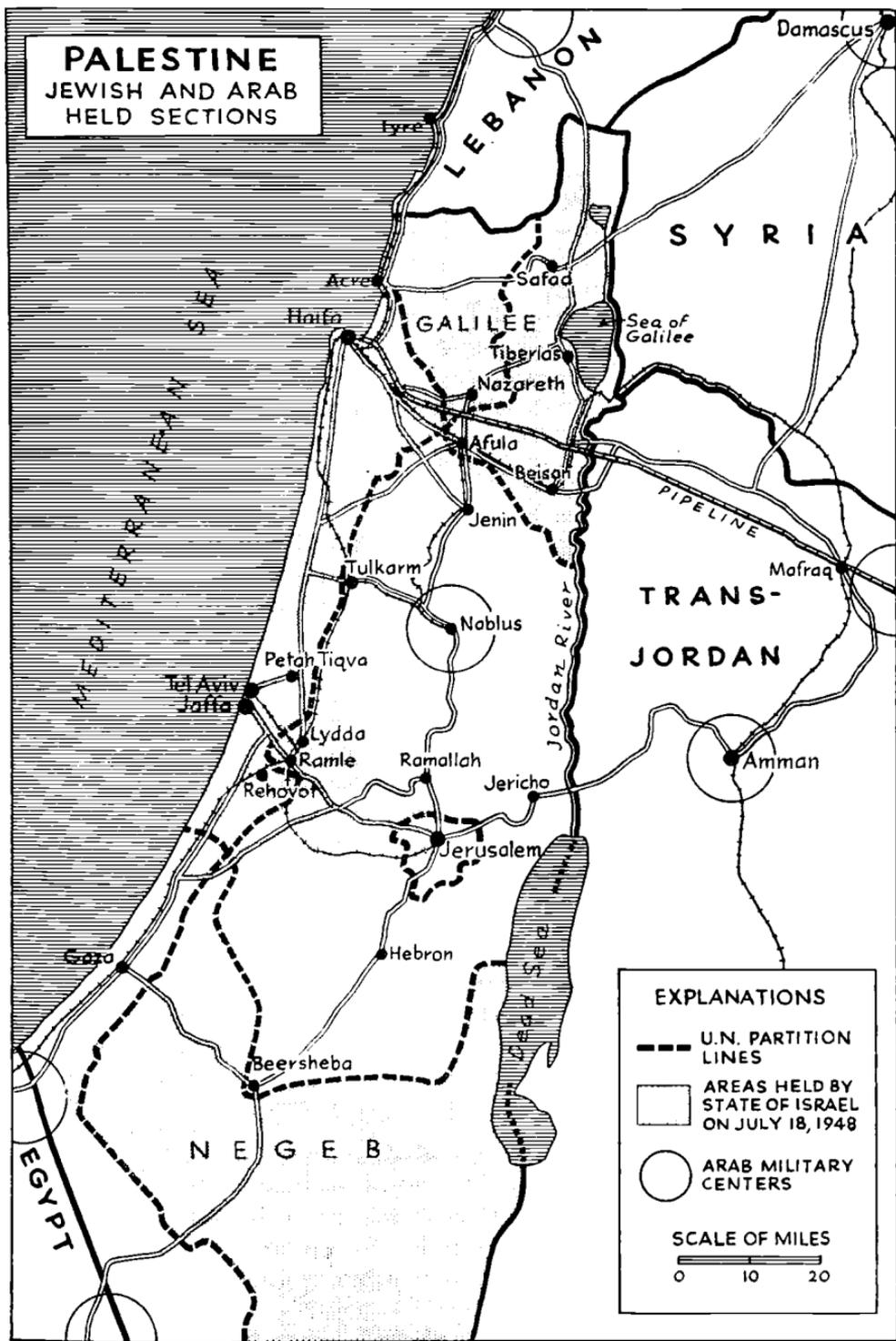
With trust in Almighty God, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948.

(signed)

David Ben-Gurion	Abraham Granovsky
Moshe Shertok	Rahel Kagan
Eliezer Kaplan	Kalman Kahane
Isaac Gruenbaum	Moshe Kalodni
Moshe Shapiro	Abraham Katzenelson
Aron Zisling	Saadi Kubashi
Juda Leib Fishman	Meir David Levenstein
Fritz Bernstein	Zvi Lurie
Behor Shitrit	Golda Meyerson
Felix Rosenblueth	Nahum Nir
Mordecai Bentov	David Zvi Pinkas
I. M. Levin	Berl Repetur
David Remez	Zvi Segal
Daniel Auster	Mordecai Shatner
Isaac Benzvi	Zorah Warhaftig
Eliahu Berligne	Benzion Sternberg
Eliahu Dobkin	Herzl Vardi
Wolf Gold	Meir Vilner-Kovner
Meir Grabovsky	

PALESTINE

JEWISH AND ARAB HELD SECTIONS



EXPLANATIONS

-  U.N. PARTITION LINES
-  AREAS HELD BY STATE OF ISRAEL ON JULY 18, 1948
-  ARAB MILITARY CENTERS

SCALE OF MILES

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