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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE

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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING (PUBLIC)

Held at the Y.M.C.A. Building  
Jerusalem, Palestine  
Sunday, 13 July 1947, at 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

- CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sandstrom (Sweden)
- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Mr. Hood            | (Australia)      |
| Mr. Rand            | (Canada)         |
| Mr. Lisicky         | (Czechoslovakia) |
| Mr. Garcia Granados | (Guatemala)      |
| Sir Abdur Rahman    | (India)          |
| Mr. Entezam         | (Iran)           |
| Mr. Blom            | (Netherlands)    |
| Mr. Garcia Salazar  | (Peru)           |
| Mr. Fabregat        | (Uruguay)        |
| Mr. Brilej          | (Yugoslavia)     |
- SECRETARIAT: Mr. Hoo (Assistant Secretary-General)  
Mr. Garcia Robles (Secretary)

CHAIRMAN: I call the meeting to order. The agenda for today's hearing contains two items: Public Hearings of Representatives of the Communist Party of Palestine, and the request of the Ashkenasic Jewish Community to postpone their hearing until one day next week. Do you adopt this agenda?

(No objection)

CHAIRMAN: The agenda is adopted. I understand that for the Communist Party of Palestine the following are going to speak: Mr. Mikunis, Dr. Ehrlich, and Mr. Vilner. Will these gentlemen please come up to the platform.

(At this point, Mr. Mikunis, Dr. Ehrlich, and Mr. Vilner, Representatives of the Communist Party of Palestine, took their

seats at the table).

CHAIRMAN: I recognize Mr. Mikunis.

Mr. Samuel MIKUNIS (Secretary of the Communist Party of Palestine):

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Commission, many Inquiry Commissions have visited our country since the British occupation at the end of the First World War. With every new commission, the trust of the inhabitants of this country in their usefulness diminished, till they were no longer taken seriously. In the meantime, the political and economic situation in Palestine went from bad to worse, until matters reached the present climax.

The reason for this changing attitude on the part of the peoples of Palestine is to be found in the fact that all these commissions were biased commissions - commissions set up by British Imperialism. Their task was not to advise and assist our country and its enslaved peoples towards liberation; their task consisted in investigating and proposing measures to the British Government to consolidate its rule and strengthen its strategic and economic positions in Palestine. More than that - their task consisted in increasing, by the methods of their work and proposals, the political tension and furthering the Imperialist policy of "divide and rule".

Since the end of the Second World War, with the smashing of the fortress of German-Japanese Fascism and Imperialism on the field of battle, with the powerful growth of the forces of democracy and peace throughout the world and the strengthening of the national liberation movement in the colonies, conditions have changed.

Owing to the pressing claims of the peoples of Palestine for freedom, the British Government was no longer in a position to continue unaided its "investigations" and the further

consolidation of its position in Palestine. It was compelled to call for American assistance. Thus, the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission was called to life at the end of 1945 - behind the back of UNO. This Commission was the expression of the political as well as economic penetration of the USA into Palestine. This was a common Inquiry Commission of the two principal Imperialist Powers, and the role it played was therefore similar to that played by the various British Commissions preceding it. Its recommendations, in consequence, were also rejected by Jews and Arabs alike, as they did not contain even the shred of a just solution of the Palestine problem.

In a different spirit altogether you, the UNSCOP, are welcomed by us. The masses of this country, struggling for freedom and independence, are welcoming you with open hearts. You have been sent by the highest world organization - by the UNO to whom all freedom-loving peoples in the world over turn their eyes in the hope that it will give a lasting basis to the peace and freedom for which millions shed their blood in the Great Anti-Fascist War. Already your presence in this country, as the representatives of the UNO, is an achievement for us, the peoples of Palestine; it signifies a higher stage in our struggle for the solution of our problem by the only internationally authorized body. Your presence symbolizes that the endeavours of the Jewish and Arab masses to take their problem out of the hands of Imperialism have to some extent succeeded.

The Communist Party of Palestine has the right to state before this forum that it has had a considerable part in this development towards the intervention of UNO in our problem. We were the first and most consistent fighters in this country for the mobilization of the masses of the people in the struggle for the transfer of the Palestine problem to the UNO. In this we had the assistance of world forces striving for peace and democracy.

This does not imply that we have failed to notice, or have failed to warn the people of this country of the dangers of the many intrigues carried on inside and outside the UNO, of the Imperialist endeavours to detract from your importance by declarations reserving beforehand the right of acceptance or non-acceptance of your proposals. And the most significant success of these Imperialist intrigues has been the staying away of the representatives of the Arab people of Palestine from the internationally constituted forum.

But we, the peoples of Palestine, are going forward, forward - in spite of everything. And firm is the resolution of our peoples to keep up the struggle until the full realization of independence and the freedom of our country will come true.

We regret that for Imperialist reasons - namely, to prevent the participation of the Soviet Union in this Commission - the Governments of Britain and the USA have, at the UNO session of May 1947, brought to fall the proposal to include the big powers in the present Commission.

This has rendered your task more difficult. But we can assure you that with some measure of good-will on the part of all concerned - above all, on the part of the Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine - the way for a just solution will be found. For you should not forget that the peoples of our country do expect from your work and your decisions the outcome of a just and final solution at the September session of UNO.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Commission, British Imperialism has maintained its hold over Palestine for 30 years, ruling our country on the lines of a Crown Colony. These have been years of oppression, of political, economic and military domination over the entire population of Palestine - Arab and Jewish alike. Years of misery, unemployment, outrages by Army and Police Forces, planned and conscious effort by Imperialism

to preserve the economic, social and cultural backwardness of our country.

These have been years of terror and oppression directed against the upsurging National Liberation Movement and the peasantry, against anti-Imperialist and patriotic forces; years of imprisonments and deportations, collective fines, police terror and martial law. A bloodstained colonial regime of oppression, of encouraging and preserving tension and antagonism between Arabs and Jews, denial of elementary civil liberties and of exploitation of the people. Poverty in agricultural areas, sweated labour in towns and villages, poor conditions in citrus plantations, an appalling housing situation with no efforts on the part of the Government to clear the slums at the outskirts of the major towns and villages. Prisons instead of schools, concentration camps instead of hospitals!

During World War I, the British posed as liberators of the Arab peoples, promising independence to all Arab countries - Palestine included. At the same time they were making promises to Zionist circles for the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish People. Since then, nearly 20 different committees have visited our country.

The Anglo-American Commission marked a "new" phase of combined Anglo-American action in favour of continuing the colonial rule, based on the "fact" of Arab-Jewish antagonism, presenting the problem of Palestine not as a problem of the liberation and independence of the country from foreign domination, but as a problem of Arab-Jewish rivalry.

*Wasson July* This was followed by a committee of experts, whose recommendations were rejected by the British Government. Then - the Morrison Plan, or the Federal Plan, or the fourfold partition of Palestine, and afterwards the Bevin Plan for Cantonization under British rule, called "Trusteeship" - all these plans mark

only additional steps in the general plan to perpetuate Imperialist rule. After all these Committees and Declarations one thing has remained - British rule and Arab and Jewish enslavement.

Though Palestine is but a small country in the geographic sense, it is of sufficient strategic and economic importance for British Imperialism to have made it into a formidable military base. This base is directed not only against the inhabitants of Palestine, but against all the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the Middle East.

But the huge military base which the British Government has been building up in Palestine greatly surpasses any needs even of a colonial army of oppression directed against the people of Palestine and the colonial and semi-colonial countries of the Middle East.

The British manoeuvres, held some time ago in the desert adjoining Palestine, where troops were made to fight an imaginary Red Army that had invaded the Middle East, give a clear indication against whom British reactionary circles intend to direct these military preparations in Palestine.

About the intentions of British Imperialism regarding the future of Palestine, information can be gathered from the book "Great Britain and Palestine", published in 1946 by the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London. There it says: "whatever be the regime in Palestine, from the point of view of the British Imperial lines of communication, it is as important as Egypt. From the strategic standpoint this is an advanced position in the East against any potential threat to the Suez Canal. It is the terminus of the oil pipe line from Kirkuk; it is a landing on the international air route to India and farther on, and the starting-point of the high road through the desert to Iraq".

The vast resources of oil in the Middle East are obviously one of the principal reasons why the imperialist powers wish to retain their hold over the countries of the Middle East.

Palestine occupies a key position as an outlet of oil pipelines and as the place of one of the largest refineries in the Middle East. Palestine is also of the highest importance for the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea. In addition to this it offers an attractive market for the exporting industries of Britain and the USA.

To retain its hold over a freedom-seeking population, the British Government has introduced a military and police rule in our country, so ruthless as in few other colonial countries of the world.

Military and police forces in Palestine have been increased to such an extent that there is now one soldier or policeman to every 13 citizens; yet, with the increase of the so-called "security measures", insecurity has increased.

According to official Government figures, expenditure on the "Maintenance of Law and Order" for the period 1920-1945 amounted to LP 43 million while expenditure on all other services totalled LP 96 million including LP 22 million expenditure on special measures arising out of the war. According to the budget for the year 1947-48, estimated expenditure will be about LP 24.5 million. Of this, the principal item of expenditure refers to Police and Prisons, and amounts to LP 7 million or 30 per cent of the total budget.

The police and military rule in Palestine is expressed not only by the magnitude of police and prison establishments, but also by the orders and regulations giving every policeman and soldier nearly unlimited power over every citizen. The Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945, published in the Supplement to

the Official Gazette of 27.9.45, have abolished the last remnants of personal freedom, freedom of conscience, speech, press and assembly.

The methods of such "Defence" rule have made the citizens of Palestine completely defenceless against police cruelty. Special British squads are reported to have kidnapped Rubowitz and nothing has been heard further of the victim. Our comrade, Sjoma Mironjanski, has not been seen again after he fell into the hands of the police on 7 July, 1941. Before the war anti-fascist political refugees were deported to fascist countries on suspicion of being communists.

Court Martial against soldiers who have committed murder or robbery, if they are taken up at all, usually end with the acquittal of the accused.

It is obvious that, in the circumstances described above, there is no such thing as civil rights existing in Palestine. The inhabitants of Palestine take no part in responsible governmental work. "The senior officials both in the central departments and in the districts were British" - says the Peel Report.

Jews and Arabs alike are barred from any legislative work of the Government. Censorship of the press was imposed from the beginning and renewed from time to time. Press Ordinance 1933 prohibited even the keeping of a printing press without a permit.

The political life of Palestine, after twenty-nine years of British rule, is characterized by the absence of all democratic legislative or executive institutions. British rule has prevented the democratization of the country, sabotaging even the most elementary initial measures.

Even the Advisory Council established in 1936 is comprised exclusively of British officials.

All power is vested in the High Commissioner. The system introduced by the British military administration after the conquest



of Palestine is still in force today.

The executive is composed entirely of colonial officials. Likewise, all higher government posts in the central as well as in the district administrations are filled by officers of the Colonial Administrative Service. ~~Palestinians~~ are excluded from all higher administrative posts.

Nor are the municipal and local council areas governed democratically. The franchise is subject to various qualifications, including rate-paying requirements; in the majority of municipal and local council areas, the right to vote in the election of councillors is vested solely in the propertied classes - at the last Jerusalem elections held in 1935 only approximately 7,000 out of 70,000 adults had the right to vote. In Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa and in almost all smaller towns and villages, women are disfranchised.

The High Commissioner may appoint mayors and deputy mayors from among the councillors against the majority vote of the Municipal Council - as has been done in Tel-Aviv. The High Commissioner is free to dismiss a mayor, a deputy mayor, or a whole elective municipal council - as has been done in the case of Jerusalem and nine other municipalities.

Existing municipal, local, and village councils have very limited powers. They are not allowed to expend even the smallest item without the written consent of the British District Commissioner.

Elections to municipal councils are postponed by the Government time and again in order to keep reactionary majorities in power; in most municipalities no elections have taken place for the last twelve years.

Only recently a further retrogressive measure in the administration of Arab rural communities was introduced by the Village Administration Ordinance of 1944, abolishing council elections.

as in any colonial country within the Empire, the British Government uses the people and resources of Palestine as objects of the grossest exploitation. The principal economic positions of the country are in British hands, such as the Dead Sea and electricity concessions, oil refineries and pipelines, insurance companies, large banks.

The mineral wealth of the Dead Sea - the most important raw material of Palestine - instead of being used to finance the improvement of the conditions of the people of Palestine, their health, education and standard of living, is extracted solely for the benefit of the British shareholders of the Palestine Potash Company. No tax is levied on the Company, nor has the Company to pay customs duties on imports. Major control in the Palestine Potash Company is in the hands of I.C.I.

The oil refinery at Haifa (The Consolidated Refineries Limited) is a foreign concern exempted from all payment of customs duties.

Monopoly concessions have been granted to the Iraq Petroleum Company and to the Trans-arabian Oil Company. These concessions include the right - free of royalties, taxes, import duties or other payments, charges or compensations - to lay pipelines through any part of the country, to expropriate land, to seize any wood, stone, water and other local materials required, to import cheap labour regardless of existing immigration laws, to pass freely the border of Palestine, to build and use their own harbours, railroads, aerodromes and wireless stations, to exact port taxes for harbouring and loading, and to keep their own police force. The population of Palestine does not derive even cheaper oil and petrol from these concessions, granted by the Government without any consultation of the people.

Monopolistic concessions have been granted to two foreign concerns for the supply of electricity in Palestine. The

concessionaries have the right - without payment of any royalties and taxes - to exploit the water power of Palestine and to fix exorbitant rates. They have to pay no import duties on machinery, nor any other import duties until a tax-free dividend of eight per cent is secured to their shareholders. No steps are taken by the government against them, when failing in their obligations to supply the public with electricity - as in Jerusalem.

The power of foreign monopoly capital can be gauged from the fact that in 1943 two companies, the Palestine Electric Corporation and the Palestine Potash Company, owned over forty per cent of the total industrial capital investments in Palestine.

The British Government uses Palestine as a market for British goods and, in the interests of British trade, it hinders the development of competitive local industries.

war conditions compel the Government to permit an expansion of certain local industries within the limits of war requirements. But since the end of the war, the Government does everything in its power to strangle industrial development through an import and control policy maintaining inflationary conditions in this country which heavily burden the masses of the consumers. The means employed towards this end are:

(1) Restrictions on the import of modern machinery. For example, during 1946 out of total imports amounting to LP 70 million, only three millions were spent on machinery.

(2) Restriction on the import of raw materials, combined with a licensing policy directing the purchase of raw materials for Palestinian industries towards the most expensive sources. An outstanding example is offered by the present crisis in the textile industry. It emanates from the high cost of production, the causes of which can be traced to a great extent to the high prices of raw materials allocated to Palestine. When a bundle of yarn costing LP 40 in Italy reaches this country, its

price comes to LP 130 - that is, over three times the export price.

(3) Maintenance of a high cost of living by a policy restricting imports of cheap foodstuffs from so-called hard currency areas, closing of cheap Empire sources of foodstuffs to Palestine consumers. Maintaining a purchase monopoly for certain foodstuffs from countries with inflationary price levels; restricting the import of cheap building materials with the purpose of creating a high level of rents for workers' flats and industrial premises; and enforcing a large number of unsocial measures burdening the masses of the population.

A few examples illustrate the supply policy of the Government. Wheat flour has been bought by Government at a price of LP 68 per ton, while similar flour is obtainable from Australia at LP 27 per ton.

Sugar is sold at exorbitant prices. In Australia jam manufacturers pay LP 16-18 for one ton of sugar; in Britain, LP 20-20.5, while the Palestine Government sells sugar to jam manufacturers for LP 64 per ton. But even this price is only on paper; actually, the black market price at which most of the sugar is sold has reached LP 300 per ton, that is, five times the official maximum price. This fact also illustrates the lack of effective price control on the part of Government.

All these facts can lead to but one conclusion, namely, that Government has no intention whatsoever to import low-priced goods into Palestine, which would reduce local prices, but is interested in an inflationary price level that will ensure an open market for British export goods.

The importance of the agrarian problem in Palestine is indicated by the fact that the majority of its inhabitants live on and from the land.

as in other colonial and semi-colonial countries under

British rule the British Government in Palestine does not support the development of a well-balanced agricultural economy, supplying the requirements of the local market, but directs its policy towards an excessive expansion of a mono-cultural product - citrus - which renders the country dependent on the metropolitan market, and the large planters subservient to British interest. The complete neglect of general agriculture is illustrated by the allocation for agriculture of a mere 4 per cent of the total budgetary expenditure.

During the thirty years of British domination, the Department of Survey has not "succeeded" in completing its work and in presenting a clear picture of the land conditions in Palestine. This is in line with the policy of the Government to conceal the gloomy picture of the life of the broad masses of the peasantry; to conceal its agrarian policy of preserving the backward agrarian system in Palestine, thus enabling exploitation and eviction of the tenants.

No legislation exists for the protection of tenants against eviction. No institutions of assistance for agriculture, for obtaining interest-free loans (among Arabs, interests on loans amount to 30 per cent; among Jews, to 11 per cent,) modern equipment, fertilizers (chemical fertilizers cost 2 1/2 times more in Palestine than abroad), and means of irrigation. All these problems of the daily life of the village are as burning today as they were before the war.

The large banks - Barclays', Anglo-Palestine and other institutes representing foreign banking interests - heavily burden local agriculture with exorbitant interest rates. Through this policy, the Government has strengthened the position of usurers in their dealings with tenants and small farmers.

The Government does not support any irrigation schemes.

The import of modern agricultural machinery is restricted by an

unsympathetic import policy. During the war, the import of fodder was handed over to a private monopolist who drew huge profits from poultry and dairy farmers. There are no Government laboratories for undertaking research in agricultural problems.

The Budget, dictated by the Government without consultation of the population, is characteristic of the colonial policy of exploitation and repression - as regards both revenue and expenditure.

More than 50 per cent of the revenue is obtained by indirect taxation, such as customs duties for imported articles and excise duties on local products. From year to year, indirect taxes are growing relatively and absolutely, burdening the masses of the population. Only a quarter of the total revenue is derived from direct taxation.

Capital taxation or death duties to be borne by the propertied classes do not exist, while on the other hand such taxes as animal tax are still in force.

Income tax - only recently introduced - burdens particularly the small taxpayer, since inflation of prices has drawn a large number of workers and employees into the orbit of income tax payment, while the large incomes are relatively little affected. The huge incomes of the foreign concessionaries, extracted from the resources of the country, are not subject to income or other taxes and duties. Local companies pay a flat rate of 25 per cent on declared profits.

Of the huge sums extorted from the masses of the people of Palestine, hardly anything is spent towards economic, social, educational, or hygienic improvement. Over 30 per cent of the total expenditure is used to finance the oppression of the people - police and prisons.

On education, health, and other social services, the Government spends about 8 per cent of the total budget. The disgraceful state of education in Palestine illustrates this side of

colonial policy.

Among the Arab population, only 32 per cent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 are accommodated in schools. 23,000 bedouin children do not receive any schooling at all. After 30 years of British rule in Palestine, 70 per cent of the Arab population are completely illiterate.

Even among the Jewish community, which greatly contributes towards its own educational system, about 10,000 children do not receive any school education. 30 per cent of children at the age of 10 years, 40 per cent at the age of 11 years, 55 per cent at the age of 12 years, and 65 per cent at the age of 13 years do not attend school.

The small number of professional schools and agricultural institutions existing in Palestine, have been established by private means without Government assistance.

Only 445 beds in seven hospitals serve the Arab population. 800 Arab villages have only 21 Government clinics, 41 sanitary clinics and 30 infant and temporary welfare centres -- that is all for the Arab population. The Jews have two beds for every thousand of the population, while in England there are 8 beds for every thousand.

The non-existence of a progressive labour legislation in Palestine, which seriously affected workers in the past, has made itself felt even more during the last few years, when owing to the industrial development during the war, the working class greatly increased in numbers.

The few laws for the protection of women and children introduced in 1927, and the amendments of 1944-45, are insufficient, all the more as they have remained on paper, the Government having taken no steps to enforce them.

Elementary rights, such as the right of forming trade unions, the recognition of trade unions, the right of assembly and strike, the limitation of working hours, minimum wages, compensation in case of discharge, payment for absence due to sickness, annual leave and leave on public holidays, are not even mentioned in the labour legislation of the country.

In many industries and factories child labour is still common. The Government itself employs children from the age of 10 on at extremely low wages in road-making, building, etc., especially in Arab districts in southern Palestine.

It is clear that such a foreign policy state could not be run against the united will of the two peoples of Palestine.

Therefore the British Government has made every effort to divert the attention of the peoples from the main problem of their oppression and arouse and strengthen chauvinistic demands against one another. While extreme nationalist propaganda was never suppressed in Palestine by the C.I.D. created for "Law and Order", efforts of Arab-Jewish rapprochement were either eliminated behind the screen or openly destroyed.

In June 1930, a society called "Workers' Brotherhood" was founded in



Palestine with the object of organising Jewish and Arab workers in common trade unions. The manifest of this society was signed by Arab and Jewish workers and progressive Zionist intellectuals. (One of the last mentioned, Dr. Bergman, was the Director of the Hebrew National Library). The paper of this society and the society itself was suppressed and prohibited.

The Government reaps its political fruits from the policy of "Divide and Rule" and its support from reactionary forces among both Arabs and Jews in that it has not to face a united struggle of the Arabs and Jews in Palestine for the abolition of colonial rule, independence and democratisation of the country; instead, the Government has succeeded in fomenting hostilities on national lines around such problems as immigration, fear of national domination, purchase of land, employment in Government service and public works, import policy, industrial and agricultural development, taxation, education and health services.

A striking example of this policy is the keeping of Jewish quarters on the common border of Jaffa-Tel-Aviv in the Jaffa Municipality, thus inciting Jews against Arabs, and at the same time inciting the Arabs against the Jews by including an Arab village in the Tel-Aviv Municipal area.

The Government has succeeded in making the reciprocal boycott propaganda of the Jewish and Arab reactionary leadership a characteristic feature of the political and economic life in Palestine, thereby furthering not only its own political end, but also the sale of British products to the detriment of local production.

The boycott called by the Arab League in Cairo against goods of Jewish production has lasted for nearly two years. During this period the initiators and executors have helped considerably to incite the political atmosphere and deepen national antagonism in the country. Throughout this period the Government has not lifted a finger in an attempt at prohibiting racial propaganda and activities and has not interfered in the Arab boycott, just as previously the Government did not put an end to the Jewish boycott of Arab foods and labour.

Until the declaration of boycott on Jewish industrial products on the part of the Arab League, followed by the reaction of the Association for Jewish Products calling on a counter-boycott on Arab agricultural products, economic relations between Jews and Arabs were normal and satisfactory. The Jews

offered an important market to Arab agricultural production. In 1945, Jewish purchases from Arabs amounted to LP.2.5 million, or three times as much as in 1936. On the other hand, Arabs purchased from Jews industrial products to the amount of LP.850,000 in 1935, and LP. 3 million in 1943.

Government agents encourage the mutual boycott which results in an increased volume of British exports to the Middle East, as illustrated by the record of the British Food Ministry which states that in 1946 British exports to the Middle East increased five-fold. During January-September 1946, British exports to Syria and the Lebanon rose from LP.686,726 in 1945 to LP.3.518,199. The above facts clearly show who derives the benefit from the deterioration of economic relations between Jews and Arabs.

Here is another example of the "Divide and Rule" policy. A few weeks ago the High Commissioner delivered a speech at Lydda, declaring that his words were "not political". Nevertheless, he found it necessary to devote the crux of his speech to communal provocation by stating that 70 per cent of the Government income came from Jewish pockets, whereas 69 per cent of the expenditure was directed for the benefit of the Arabs.

With these words the High Commissioner revealed his real aim of increasing national tension during the visit of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to this country. Thus he tried to conceal the simple truth that the majority of taxes flow from both Jewish and Arab pockets into the Government Treasury, to be spent on building prisons, promoting police activities and strengthening the British strategic bases in this country.

The Government's latest intrigue is the Benzine Tax. The tax imposed on benzine in the beginning of July 1947 is the latest example of Government's policy of "divide and rule". This tax is intended to provide Arab reaction with material for anti-Jewish provocation -- "Jews blow up and Arabs pay" -- and Jewish reaction with material for anti-Arab provocation -- "the surplus income will be spent on developing Arab areas at the expense of the Jews". The truth is, that from the material point of view, both the Jewish and Arab masses have to bear the cost of the tax, since they are forced to pay higher prices for benzine, while the Government, together with its partners among the oil company owners, derives material as well as political benefit from the large sums extracted from the population, and from the communal antagonism being fostered and intensified.

Before concluding this part of my address, I deem it necessary to add a few words about the question of immigration into Palestine. Imperialism has greatly exploited the people's interest in this question. This is one of its important "secret weapons" to divert the peoples of this country from their fight for freedom and incite them instead against each other.

Imperialism well knew when to allow a certain amount of immigration to serve its purpose and when to stop it altogether. In the first instance, Imperialism incited the Arabs against the Jews, in the second, the Jews against the Arabs. Imperialism knew to exploit for its own purpose both the disaster of persecuted Jews, and the misery of the oppressed Arabs, both of which people desire nothing but peace and freedom. Imperialism was assisted in this game by reactionary forces among the Jews and the Arabs.

It must be plainly understood that the overwhelming majority of the Jews who immigrated into Palestine, did not come to find an easy and comfortable life in this country - this is not to be found here - neither did they come for political reasons. They came to this country, as well as to other countries, as a result of anti-semitic and fascist persecutions. Without the policy of Imperialism and that of "conquest of the country" of the Jewish Agency, the question of immigration would never have acquired its present character.

Everybody knows that for long periods there has not existed any hatred or rivalry between Jews and Arabs and we are confident that the two free peoples - the Jews and the Arabs - in a free independent Palestine will find a just and democratic way to offer fraternal help and a home to persecuted persons, as befits free peoples.

However, even under the particular circumstances of today, Imperialism endeavours to use and utilize the immigration problem for its own ends. On the one hand, it is Imperialism that is responsible for the detention of hundreds of thousands of displaced Jews in camps, preventing them from entering other countries and finding there a new life, home and hope. On the other...

18 the other hand, the Government tracks down those who come to the shores  
19 of this country, and deports them to Cyprus.

The terrible tragedy of the Jewish people is generally known. Millions of persons of different nations have been annihilated by the fascist criminals. But there is no people whose blood has been shed so much as that of the Jewish people. However, a quarter of a million of those who have survived this horrible destruction, is still pining away - two years after the end of the war - in camps under terrible conditions. This fact in itself, is a disgrace and a mark of Cain on the forehead of those who like to talk so much about "Western Culture" and who open the door of their countries wide to fascists and nazi collaborators, while they keep them firmly shut before the Jewish victims of fascism.

While Jews in Eastern Europe take their part in a normal and productive life, they are, in the British and American zones of Germany, detained in camps as Displaced Persons.

Nobody can think of the plight of the Jewish people without burning memories of <sup>My</sup> Maidanek and Belsen arising in his mind, without a feeling of profound horror at the crimes committed by the fascists against European Jewry. It is imperative to liquidate the camps in Western Germany, Austria, Italy and Cyprus, where hundreds of thousands of Jewish victims of fascism are still suffering.

It is an urgent duty of the United Nations Organization to provide every help and opportunity to those displaced Jews, to enable them to live a normal and productive life. Immediate liquidation of the camps is an absolute necessity.

The United Nations Organization should provide every facility to displaced Jews desirous to return to their countries of origin where democratic regimes have been established, as well as to those interested in emigration to other countries including Palestine, taking into consideration the desire to join relatives. This is the way to solve this urgent problem, and  
/to eliminate

to eliminate the "Divide and Rule" speculations of imperialism.

To sum up: this is, in short, the history of the British Mandate, a history of colonial oppression and exploitation. This is the picture of Imperialist interests in Palestine and of the constant endeavour to subjugate the Arab and Jewish peoples of our country to serve its purpose. This is the history of military and police terror, of colonial administration and economic strangulation. This is the gloomy picture of the manner in which the "Divide and Rule" policy has been applied in the specific conditions of our so much suffering country. It is a self-explanatory history covering about thirty years. It is the severe accusation put before you by both peoples - Arabs and Jews alike - against the Mandate, against its Imperialist patrons!

British Imperialism had to face the resistance of the masses of the people against its domination, from the very beginning. The Arab and Jewish masses have never submitted to the yoke of dependency and foreign rule. They have struggled - on many occasions and in many ways - for the removal of the Imperialist domination and for their national freedom. During disturbances or open revolts, as well as in the tense intervals, the masses of the people have been doggedly fighting for their independence and peace.

All British Commissions tried to underline and to emphasize the Arab-Jewish animosity, making it a cause, instead of an outcome of the Mandate policy. The Mandatory tried always to distort the problem of Palestine, representing it as an Arab-Jewish rivalry and not as a struggle of Arabs and Jews for their liberation from Imperialist rule.

But, of course, the integrity of this "theory" is doubtful, as the working masses of the Arab and Jewish peoples have been undermining it periodically. The striking facts of Arab-Jewish co-operation in the economic as well as in the political fields - intensified during the last two years in spite of unfavourable political tension - have created a serious gap in this Imperialist front of traditional argument:

/Both peoples...

Both peoples of our country - Arabs and Jews - claim the abolition of the Mandate and the termination of British rule!

The demand for the evacuation of the British Army from Palestine is a common demand of both the Arab and Jewish masses.

People understand now very well that those two demands are but one, as nothing is gained by the abolition of the Mandate, if foreign troops remain in our country. Both the Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine fight for their just elementary rights for national independence, for an independent, free and democratic Arab-Jewish Palestine. This just and elementary demand must be fulfilled.

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Committee: various sides have tried to present the relations between the Arabs and Jews in the worst possible light. Too many prominent leaders - Arabs and Jews - the so-called traditional leaders, advocate a theory that Arab and Jewish aspirations could not be reconciled. This would, of course, be in line with the Imperialist interest in the partition of Palestine.

Nothing can be further from the truth than such a theory. History, even that of recent years, teaches us that many peoples living in one country can very well march together and co-operate, provided there is no foreign domination and intervention creating division and antagonism. As an example we may take the new Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, etc.

Put an end to the Mandate, evacuate the British troops, proclaim the independence of Palestine and the two peoples of our country will unite and work together for the realisation of a prosperous Arab-Jewish democratic state.

We emphatically reject the idea of partition, as it is contrary to the economic and political interests of the two peoples. We advocate the plan that Palestine should be constituted as an independent, democratic, bi-unitarian state, which means, a single state inhabited and governed by the two peoples, Jews and Arabs, having equal rights.

The termination of British rule and evacuation of troops will create the preliminary conditions, essential for free negotiations between the two free peoples, in order to arrive at a decision on the future political structure of the country in their best interests. Under such conditions of free Arab-Jewish collaboration and removal of the artificial obstacles from the way of the democratic forces, Arabs and Jews will be free to decide on the character of the independent state, built on a bi-national or a federative settlement.

Only the abolition of the Imperialist Mandate, the complete evacuation of the British Army and the opportunity for Palestine of free economic development, the setting up of democratic governing institutions, hand in hand with social reform, and the consolidation of the national and civil democratic rights of the peoples - Arab and Jewish - will secure the complete independence of Palestine.

I come now to our Requests for immediate action.

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Committee: The British policy is fraught with great danger for the peace of Palestine. The situation is grave. You are commissioned by a world authority of great importance, by the United Nations Organization. And all of us, the peoples of Palestine and world public opinion, are justified in expecting your assistance to release the tense situation of Palestine.

We raise our voice of protest against the colonial terror and lawlessness maintained by the British Police and Army of oppression. And we present our requests, which are the requests of the masses of the people whose immediate implementation the United Nations Organization should demand from the Mandatory Government:

1. To give back and extend the civil liberties of which we are being robbed;
2. To abolish all Emergency Regulations;
3. To abolish capital punishment and refrain from carrying out the death sentences recently passed;

4. To abolish the system of banishment of Palestinian inhabitants from the country, irrespective of their nationality and their political views;
5. To promulgate laws for the recognition of the rights of Trade Unions.

We call upon you, upon all progressive forces in the world, to assist our peoples in their just struggle for liberation. We are part of a world-wide front, striving for peace and freedom, for national liberation, social advance, and democracy.

And again - you should not forget that the Arab and Jewish peoples of this country expect from your work and your decision the outcome of a just and final solution at the September session of the United Nations Organization.

Thank you!

Mr. EHRLICH (Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Palestine): Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Committee, having visited so many parts of the country, you must have seen the huge police fortresses dominating villages and towns, security zones in the cities, barbed wire and dragon teeth, tanks and armoured cars racing over roads and streets, one military camp close to the other, armed soldiers and policemen everywhere. Though you have been accommodated by the Government in the Kadimah Flats and other out-of-the-way places, you will have felt the tension, the insecurity and instability reigning in the country; you will have seen the expression of hatred with which the people, Jews and Arabs, look upon the tanks and carloads of soldiers rumbling through the streets. You should know that during this month much has been improved for your benefit. This YMCA Building has been removed from the Security Zone. For long months Jerusalem was subjected to intermittent curfews and martial law. For long months soldiers have not shown the restraint they now assume. The intensity of oppression has fluctuated. There were periods of open terror and there were periods when some illusions of freedom were created. More than that: there were periods when the main weight of oppression was directed against the Arab population and periods when the main weight of oppression was directed against the Jews - so that the other community should appear as "privileged". In this way, the direction of



oppressive measures was exploited as an instrument of "divide and rule"

On the whole, oppression has been steadily on the increase. Take the figures published by Government on the maintenance of "Law and Order". It started with less than LP 400,000 annually, reached nearly LP 5 million in 1944-1945 and this year, according to the statement by the Financial Secretary of 4 June 1947, it will be about LP 7 million; yet these figures do not include expenditure for the Army. These LP 7 million represent 30 per cent of the budget of LP 24-1/2 million. In the same statement, the Government explained that the "Security" budget has made it impossible to provide adequately for education, health and social services. But in the years before the Second World War, when the Government surplus amounted to not less than LP 6.3 million, those services were not better provided for.

When the Communist Party appeared before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946, we stated that there was then in Palestine one policeman or soldier for every eighteen inhabitants, a figure that has since been widely quoted abroad. In the meantime, the figure has been reduced to less than thirteen inhabitants for every policeman and soldier, 150,000 policemen and soldiers being actually stationed in a country of 1,900,000 inhabitants.

You have heard the argument of the Government. This huge army is deemed necessary to defend the so-called Law and Order and to protect one community against the other. This is a traditional and well worn-out Imperialist argument that cannot be taken seriously by anybody. Even the Government Survey submitted to you says: "Since the British occupation, there have been but few intervals when the problem of internal security has not been a major preoccupation of the Administration of Palestine", and that means insecurity came to Palestine with the British occupation and has become the main feature of the life of the country for the last thirty years.

You will have observed that the Police and Army are not guarding the buildings of Arab or Jewish leaders or the houses or institutions of these communities but their own strongholds and military and civil establishments.

In Transjordan where there are no Jews or Arabs to protect from each other, you will nevertheless find a large British Army and military bases. All this proves that the British are not here to safeguard Law and Order or to protect the Jews and Arabs from the so-called "threat" of mutual attacks. If the Army and Police are not needed to protect one people from the other, what are they really needed for?

Their only task is to maintain and strengthen their strategic bases, directed against the freedom of Palestine and the forces of peace in the Middle East and the world at large. Army and police actions against the people of Palestine are based on a system of dictatorial laws issued by the British Government. Already in 1933 various regulations for the prevention of crime gave unlimited power to the police authorities, so that the consent and sentence of a court are made illusory. Such methods developed from stage to stage, starting with the military administration, through the Collective Punishment Ordinances as early as 1926, until it created the situation described by the Anglo-American Committee in the following terms:

"In 1936... the Government issued regulations authorizing seizure and use of buildings and road transport, the imposition of curfews, the censorship of the press, the deportation of undesirables, and unusual privileges of arrest, search and collective fines."

What was the situation in 1946, according to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry?:- "Recently...the Government has again taken extensive recourse to emergency regulations, some of them newly issued and revised in 1945 and 1946. Orders of detention may be issued against any citizen on the authority of an Area Commander, and these orders are not reviewable by any court of law."

This system of oppression is now being carried out on the strength of the so-called Emergency (Defence) Regulations of 1945 which have lately been amended so as to deprive the population of the last remnants of liberty. It is a pity that the bulky Survey and Supplement submitted to you by Government do not contain the text of these regulations. The reason is not far to seek.

According to the "Law" of Palestine, there is no personal freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of press, or freedom of assembly. Any person may be placed under police supervision, banished, detained or deported from the country. We have submitted to you a petition by Jerusalem citizens, calling on you to intervene in the case of their sons and daughters who, without trial or indictment are detained in prison camps for months and years. Young people may be whipped, and many cases of flogging have been officially reported; requests for writs of Habeas Corpus have been rejected by the judiciary with the argument that the District Commissioner's powers under these Regulations are absolute and that he is not obliged to give reasons when he acts under the Regulations.

The description of the Emergency Regulations of 1945 should not lead to the impression that before that date colonial oppression in Palestine was mild. There were long years, culminating in 1941, when terror was exerted against the progressive forces of the country and especially against the Communist Party of Palestine.

I want again to say a few words not contained in my written speech. The Shaw Commission (1930) declared itself against "the policy of reducing the garrison in Palestine" and encouraged "the creation of an adequate Intelligence Service" against "every form of subversive activity in Palestine". Sir Herbert Dowbiggin, Inspector General of Police, Ceylon, proposed in the same year, 1930, "a new Criminal Investigation Department". The Criminal Investigation Department, characteristically, had very little to do with ordinary crimes. It was "re-organized" in 1932, as the Peel Report says with satisfaction for political repression and persecution of the people, against "political movements, particularly communism" to "arrange deportations" and the like.

Communists were arrested, several hundred deported and the remainder detained in the prisons of Palestine. The slightest suspicion of sympathy with anti-imperialist aims or any, even private, connections with a party

member, were deemed sufficient reason for an order of detention. In 1936 the refusal to grant the detainees the rights of political prisoners caused the hunger strike that lasted 19 days and was widely supported by the population. During those years, the import of progressive literature or any books or periodicals regarded by the authorities as Left-Wing, was prohibited.

The Government regards the police as a panacea which can cure all difficulties it encounters. To quote an example: Last winter a severe drought affected the Beersheba district and the people cried for help. The Government did help - it appointed a few hundred temporary constables as a measure against unemployment.

Allow me to say a few words as a citizen of Jerusalem. What have they done to our city? Hundreds of families have been evicted from flats, shops and offices. We were given 48 hours to leave and take our belongings wherever we could. The quarters from which the people were evicted are wired in. There are four so-called security zones which cut the two main roads of the town. Armed camps have been established in the midst of our ancient city, a striking example of military occupation. Security zone passports are issued, with the "race" of the bearer inscribed often with the letter "J", standing for Jew, in the same way as the Nazis marked the passports of German Jews. For weeks night curfews were imposed, and for many days day curfews as well. Curfews in Palestine are imposed as collective punishment, without moral or legal justification.

Martial law was imposed on an important part of Jerusalem, on Tel-Aviv, Ramath Gan and Petar-Tikva. For three weeks in March 1947, the Army suspended essential public services, including post, telephones and telegraphs, the transport of passengers and goods, and the entire apparatus of civilian administration and law courts. Martial law affected hospitals, physicians and emergency cases. Workers were cut off from their places of work, factories had to close down, 15,000 workers became unemployed in Tel-Aviv, 1,650 at Ramath Gan, 6,000 in Jerusalem. Total martial law unemployment at one time

reached the figure of 25,000. Workers had to walk several miles a day in order to reach workshops under the constant danger of being shot during the hours of darkness. Work in the Tel-Aviv Port ceased; one million cases of citrus fruit went to waste in the port areas. In the coastal districts citrus remained unpicked in an area of 15,000 dunums, or 15 square kilometres. At Tel-Aviv all places of entertainment had to close down by 10 p.m. In Jerusalem, the martial law area was under curfew for 21 hours a day, later for 17 hours. On 10 April 1947, the Government published new Emergency Regulations for "Controlled Areas". According to these Regulations, in the Areas to be placed under control, all Government Offices, including railway stations, would be closed, all - except police stations. No business would be transacted. Civil courts would be closed; there would be exclusive jurisdiction of military courts, even for offences committed before the imposition of Control, even for pending proceedings. No telephone, telegraph or postal services would be allowed. There would be no entry into, or exit from Controlled Areas without special permit, for person, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or thing. The authorities would have power to remove persons from the Area and power to requisition.

But, to be clear, even without the imposition of these special measures most of the powers mentioned have already been, always and everywhere, vested in the authorities. For all practical purposes the whole of Palestine is a controlled area with no rights for the inhabitants.

Immigration into Palestine has been exploited by the British Government for a whole series of provocations. Unarmed refugees are received here by the British Navy and Army with battleships and tanks. Tear-gas has been used against them; on numerous occasions they have been fired at and several were shot or beaten to death. The rest are put into cages and interned behind double rows of barbed wire in Cyprus.

In spite of a flood of laws and orders, law and order do not prevail. Security measures have reached their peak and security has vanished completely. The Government Memorandum on the Administration of Palestine under

the Mandate speaks of the paramountcy of law and of the liberal regime - but actually the law is regulated lawlessly and the regime is liberal only towards its high officials and towards the soldiers, who may act at their pleasure.

The soldier who was stationed in Palestine during the anti-fascist war was friendly towards the people and the people were friendly towards him. Today, soldiers stationed in Palestine are systematically trained in the spirit of racialism, and the spirit of an Army of Occupation in enemy territory. They have been fed on the poison of anti-semitism. General Barker, the former Officer Commanding, instructed his soldiers in a secret order: "Strike the Jew on the sole place where he feels it, on his pocket".

It is a strange understatement when Ben Gurion told you "that it was a matter of surprise that the unofficial assaults were so few". There were only too many, and they comprise murder, rape and pillage.

Let us start with murder. On 30 June 1946, the curfew imposed on Tel-Aviv was lifted at midnight. Ten minutes past midnight Amram Rosenberg, walking with his sister in Ben Yoduda Street, was shot by a British officer in the back and killed. The officer confessing to the murder was merely sentenced to be discharged from the Army.

On 24 April 1946, a soldier, Carson by name, was on guard on the Jaffa-Tel-Aviv border, when a group of six Arabs approached, one wearing two wrist watches. The soldier demanded one of them, and when the Arab replied that it belonged to a friend, Carson killed him and robbed him of his watch. There were many eye-witnesses but the soldier's claim that the bullet had escaped his rifle was accepted by the British Court and Carson was set free.

On 8 April 1947, Moshe Cohen, a Jerusalem merchant, 43 years of age, was shot dead by an Army patrol on his way home.

Estrer Tobi was shot dead while waiting at a bus station. Aboud Mizrahi was shot dead on his way home accompanied by his daughter; Kati Shalom, a 4-year old girl, was shot dead while standing on the balcony. Ismail Ibn Mahmud, a young Arab boy, was killed near the bridge at Hertzelia. When  
/his mother...

his mother hurried to his assistance she was beaten, kicked and trampled on by the soldiers. The murder of 16-year old Alexander Rubowitz who was kidnapped by a British terror squad under Major Farran is known to you from the press. During the disturbances of 1936-39 a British constable was injured. Thereupon a British patrol picked three youngsters at random in the nearest village, Gilat el Harithiya, and murdered them in the village yard.

Neither the Army nor the Police show any regard for the citizens' homes or property. Flats have been entered by day and by night, for checks and searches, with destruction of property and robbery. People used to say "Don't leave any valuables at home - there may be searches". During the disturbances of 1936-39 large scale destruction of property was caused in Arab villages - in some cases by bombing from the air; fourteen houses were destroyed at Masmiya Village in the Gaza District. Last year, houses, store-rooms and stables were destroyed at the searches of agricultural settlements, such as Doroith and Ruhama.

Women and girls have been molested and have been raped.

There was a night in Tel-Aviv - the inhabitants called it the Night of Horror - the night of 8 March 1947 - when soldiers fired with machine guns from armoured cars, killing 4 and injuring 15. There were days of pogroms committed by the soldiery in Tel-Aviv and Nethanya.

It is a sombre picture, but the knowledge of those facts is essential for the understanding of the gravity of our situation and of the criminal nature of the activities of the Army and Police apparatus in Palestine. Until today, the British Government which has confessed to the failure of the Mandate, has not confessed to the crimes committed in our country.

In the British Government's policy of "Divide and Rule", the Army plays an important part. Jews and Arabs in uniform are put in action for objectives and in areas and quarters where this in itself must contribute to national hatred. The Transjordan Frontier Force, for instance, was employed against the Jewish settlement of Kfar Giladi in a way that placed responsibility not on the British officers but on the Arab soldiers.

Already in the Spring of 1946, when the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was here, the facts were so obvious that the Committee was compelled to state that Palestine is an armed camp and to admit that even from the point of view of the budget, Palestine has become a Police State. Today the situation is still worse than a year ago.

To sum up: Whichever political proposals your Committee will recommend, they should clearly and unequivocally include the demand for the evacuation of the British armed forces from Palestine. This is the common demand of the Jewish and Arab masses of Palestine. The feeling of the masses you may judge from the 27,000 picture cards sent to you by the people of Palestine demanding evacuation of the British army - although the censor has forbidden the publication of these pictures in our newspaper, Kol Ha'am. The posters displaying the pictures were torn down from the walls in Jerusalem, and in Haifa on the day of your visit, by the military.

The evacuation of British troops from Palestine is imperative for the peace and development of the country. It is one of the most important and most urgent steps to be taken to free the inhabitants of this country from the instrument of colonial oppression, and to make Palestine independent.

The evacuation of British troops from Palestine is imperative for the peaceful development of the Middle East. The Police-State built up in Palestine is also a threat to the neighbouring countries.

For the sake of the peace in this country, for the sake of its free development and democratic cooperation between the peoples, for the sake of the maintenance of international peace and security, Palestine must be freed and cease to serve as a military camp for the Imperialist army. In the name of the wide masses of both peoples of this country, we appeal to you and through you to the United Nations who have, in their Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small, to direct the British Government to withdraw its troops.

To quit Palestine!



Mr. VILNER (Secretary of the Communist Party of Palestine): In my testimony I shall have the honour to acquaint you in a more detailed form than has been done in the memorandum submitted to you with the plan of the Communist Party for the solution of the problem of this country in a just and democratic way.

Before laying this plan before you, I shall take the liberty to clarify some of the fundamental premises serving as a basis to this plan and to analyse and reject those other plans which in our opinion are not in the interests of the inhabitants of this country and of world peace.

Let us take The Problem of Independence.

In the period after the Second World War, when the democratic forces in the world grew in power and vigour and when the struggle of the colonial peoples for national liberation and for independence reached a new peak, Imperialism began to adapt its tactics to these new conditions, without changing its policy and its objects even one whit.

One of the methods the British Government has been using in its colonial policy after the war is the distortion of the conception of independence. The classical example thereof is Transjordan. In order to prevent a discussion on this mandated territory before the United Nations Organisation, the British Government concluded a so-called agreement with one of its agents, the Emir Abdullah, according to which Transjordan has been proclaimed an independent country and Emir Abdullah its King. But everyone will understand that there is nothing but deceit and hypocrisy in all this. Transjordan, allegedly "independent" now according to the Treaty with Great Britain, serves as one of the mighty military bases of the British in the Middle East. A strong British army and air force dominate little Transjordan. This Transjordanian State is therefore in effect a British colony and an important strategic center. Its alleged independence is nothing but an illusion proclaimed in order to block the fight for the real independence of Transjordan.

/In the same

In the same way British Imperialism has attempted to "solve" the Palestine question. In the autumn of 1946 it convened the official representatives of the Jews and the Arabs in order to solve the problem of our country according to the Transjordan pattern, behind the back of the UNO, so as to place this organisation before a fait accompli. The Government of the USA publicly demonstrated by its participation in the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission that it is hand in glove with Great Britain in the imperialist intrigues in the Middle East and in the undermining of the authority of UNO, which is the sole international body competent to deal with the problem of Palestine. This, because Palestine is first, a mandated territory, and second, because it is an important strategic area which under the present circumstances is serving as one of the points where the preparation for a new world war is being carried out by the Anglo-American imperialists.

The London Conference, an Anglo-American imperialist intrigue, was a complete failure on account of the Anglo-American rivalry which goes hand in hand with collaboration, and on account of the contradictory attitudes of the Jewish and Arab official leaders. Only after this failure was Britain forced to transfer the Palestine problem to UNO. The official leaders of the Arabs as well as of the Jews appeared at Lake Success only after Mr. Bevin had already arrived there.

The negotiations in London and the plans that were presented there by Britain have proved that the real objects of the British Government were to grant the country an "independence" a la Transjordan; it is to turn Palestine into a British military base "by agreement".

In view of these designs of British Imperialism, we regard it as necessary to stress the following: When speaking of the independence of Palestine we have in mind no fictitious independence, but full and true independence, the meaning of which is -- evacuation of the British Army and Police from Palestine and the removal of the British military bases; independence which further means removal of the economic subjugation

of the country by foreign monopolies, a subjugation brought about with the help and collusion of the British civil and military authorities.

The abrogation of the British Mandate and the evacuation of the British Army from Palestine are pre-conditions for any solution. No plan for the independence of Palestine can possibly be realised while British rule continues and the foreign army remains on the territory of Palestine.

Let us take The Morrison Plan.

One of the proposals of the British Government in the recent past is the so-called "Morrison Plan". According to this plan an "Arab province" is to be established in 38 per cent of the country, a "Jewish country" in 17 per cent, while the Negeb and Jerusalem are to remain British reserves. The most interesting point, however, is that the central rule is to be vested in a government appointed by Britain. We have here before us one of the most instructive examples for the real stand of the British Government. The British Government proposes again and again new schemes, which do not grant even a bit of real independence to the country and which are designed only to incite Jews and Arabs against each other.

According to the Morrison Plan which is incorrectly called a Federation Plan, all real power remains in the hands of the Central British Government. The High Commissioner would be empowered to intervene in all matters of the so-called "autonomous regions", the Jewish as well as the Arab, in addition to the direct rule over the districts remaining under British rule.

Military, Police, Courts, Foreign Affairs, Customs, Transport -- all these would remain in the hands of the British Central Government. It thus becomes obvious that the British plan does not weaken in the slightest degree the present imperialist rule and only creates new points of friction between Jews and Arabs on questions of boundaries and the size of the territories in the so-called "Jewish" or "Arab" districts.

The British Government is here behaving in the same way as the cunning fox in the ancient legend. The fox saw two monkeys quarreling

between themselves over the division of a piece of cheese they had found. He offered his mediation and brought a pair of scales. Then he divided the cheese into two parts and put them on the scales. Naturally one piece was heavier than the other and since each of the two monkeys was keeping strict watch that the other should receive no more than his share, the fox bit a piece off the larger part; of course enough to make the other part heavier so that he had again to bite a piece off that one; and since the two monkeys were so intent only on seeing that the other did not receive more than his due, they let the fox continue his mediation work until all the cheese had gone, eaten up by the third party.

Such a plan of foxy cunning is the Morrison Plan. We do not oppose it on account of the federation idea it contains. We are against it because it does not remove British rule in Palestine and is not construed on the basis of Palestine independence and its liberation from foreign political, military and economic subjugation.

The Morrison Plan is one of the outstanding examples of how British Imperialism is searching for means to maintain the colonial rule over Palestine by new constitutional forms which do not affect the foreign rule and which are calculated to evoke clashes between Jews and Arabs.

Let us now take The Bevin Plan.

On 7 February 1947 the British Government proclaimed a "new" plan. This plan is built upon the creation of Jewish and Arab cantons in Palestine; but it too starts from the imperialist principle that the foreign rule must be maintained. The British High Commissioner will be the "guardian" of the minorities in the different cantons. The Central Government would be appointed by Britain. In the hands of the High Commissioner will remain the supreme legislative and executive power. This regime, which was to continue for five years, is called "Trusteeship". After that period there was to be transition to independence provided that Jews and Arabs agree to a new constitution.

This plan is thus built upon the idea of a transition period to independence, but in fact it is only apparently so: the British Government

is the main factor interested in a split between Jews and Arabs in order to prevent a joint fight of both people against it for liberation. The whole policy of the British Government in this country is based, as in other British colonies (India, Ceylon, etc.) on the fostering of national and religious antagonisms, in accordance with the Imperialist principle of "Divide and Rule". A "transition period" under the protection of Imperialism cannot bring nearer the independence of Palestine and peace between the peoples. It can, on the contrary, be directed only towards the gaining of time for the consolidation of the foreign rule and the fostering of new national antagonisms. In reality the British "Mandate" in Palestine should have been a transition period towards independence. But in fact it is known that Great Britain, the Mandatory on behalf of the League of Nations, not only did not foster independence but did everything possible to prevent such a development. And thus after thirty years of British rule we are witness to the fact that the Mandatory system has gone completely bankrupt and not only that Palestine has not become independent, but the most elementary democratic rights, and even security of life, have been robbed from the inhabitants of the country.

To sum up: the plans of Morrison and Bevin have one thing in common, namely the tendency to create new points of friction between Jews and Arabs on the basis of a fight about imaginary boundaries of districts with illusory self-government, while over all the "cantons" and "federative districts" hover uninvited peace angels -- the British aeroplanes -- for the protection of oil, the military bases and the superprofits of monopoly capital.

The plan for partition of Palestine is the plan of the British Foreign Office, kept in reserve for the event that "Federation Plan" a la Morrison and "Cantonisation" a la Bevin fail. The British Partition Plan is founded upon the conception of increasing the split between Jews and Arabs and perpetuating British rule. The intention underlying it is to divide Palestine into three parts, one Jewish, one Arab and the third

British. The Arab and Jewish parts are to enjoy an imaginary independence on the lines of Transjordan. The intention is to camouflage the British military bases through fixing formal political boundaries which in reality would not change in the slightest degree the actual state of affairs. For there is no independence if British districts are maintained in Palestine. There is no independence without the evacuation of the foreign army.

The Partition Plan was first proposed by the Peel Commission in 1937. According to this plan there were to be established a "Jewish State", an "Arab State", and in addition a British "enclave" or corridor extending from Jerusalem to Jaffa.

The afore-mentioned Partition Plan drawn up by the Peel Commission of 1937, proposed the creation of a "Jewish State" more than one third of whose inhabitants would have been Arabs. The report itself says:--

"It is, of course, too much to hope that after partition there will be no friction between Arabs and Jews, no 'incidents', no recriminations, keeping open the wound which partition must inflict... the question of the minorities must be boldly faced and firmly dealt with".

In partitioned Palestine there will be no peace between Jews and Arabs, but suspicion and the wish for revenge and territorial extension. The latest proposal of Mr. Ben Gurion for retention of the Mandate in the Arab part of the partitioned Palestine, can leave no doubt as to the intentions of the advocates of partition.

The whole scheme will only strengthen foreign imperialist rule in all parts of Palestine. Whether or not parts of the country will remain under direct imperialist administration, there can be no doubt that imperialist control will be the overriding force in every part of Palestine. The sections of the country will compete for imperialist assistance, for "protection of minorities", for expansion, for loans, for weapons, offering strategic basis, exploitation of raw materials and economic key positions.

The struggle for genuine independence will become more difficult in the divided parts owing to the fostered antagonism between Arabs and Jews and the newly created minorities.

The partition of Palestine is advocated by Abdullah, King of Transjordan, who, with the help of some politicians in other Arab countries, tries to organise a bloc of Arab countries. This scheme, known as the "Greater Syria" plan, provides for the creation of a state which would include the Arab part of Palestine and which would serve as a cordon sanitaire and a strategic base for Anglo-American Imperialism under a Hashemite crown. Advocates of partition within the Zionist camp regard a "Jewish State" in part of Palestine under imperialist "protection" as an instrument for future conquest of the remaining part of the country while Right-Wing Zionist groups want to include Transjordan in the future Jewish State.

Economically partition would be disastrous for both the Arab and Jewish peoples in Palestine. There is no natural frontier cutting Palestine into two sections. The partition of the country would entirely and arbitrarily destroy the economic unity of Palestine. Arabs and Jews are in general not living in clearly separated areas.

The important mineral deposits of the Dead Sea which form the basic natural wealth of Palestine would, in a partitioned country, only serve sectional interests.

For any development scheme involving the vital plans of major irrigation throughout Palestine, the waters of the Jordan are essential.

Partition would cut the railway system of Palestine into several sections. The main railway line of Palestine, that connecting Gaza and Haifa, crosses the frontiers proposed by the Peel Report not less than five times. The main roads carrying the major portion of Palestine's passenger and freight traffic, would be similarly affected.

Industries are mostly concentrated in Haifa Bay and the industrial belt of the Tel Aviv area. In the partitioned Palestine, the industrial zones would be cut off from the mainly agricultural parts of the country.

TO SUM UP: Partition would not solve the problem of Palestine. It would be a catastrophe for the economy of the country and would retard social and

economic progress for a long time to come. It would increase the antagonism between Arabs and Jews and block the way to freedom of both peoples; it would strengthen the domination of imperialism and local reactionaries and would ease considerably the unbuilding of the Anglo-American bastion against the movements for National Liberation in the Middle East and against peace.

It may also be that the British Government will try to carry on with its colonial oppression and the retention of the military bases by changing the word "Mandate" into the word "Trusteeship" without altering the contents of these terms and without in the least abandoning its positions. It is also possible that it will attempt to reach an agreement with the U.S.A. regarding a joint Anglo-American trusteeship. The Arab and Jewish masses of Palestine will oppose British or Anglo-American trusteeship, as a camouflaged colonial rule.

Why are all plans of the British Government based on the denial of the possibility of fraternity between peoples and upon the "necessity" to retain the British regime and armed forces allegedly to guard the peace between Jews and Arabs. The reason is neither accidental nor does it affect Palestine alone. It is a direct consequence of the general international policies of Britain and the inherent oppressive nature of Imperialism.

In this country the large-scale construction of military bases is under way. The military preparations of the colonial rule are actually as feverish as in war time.

Tens of thousands of workers are in the employment of the Army. Palestine is turning into one of the main British military bases in this part of the world. Strategic and oil interests. They are guiding British policy in Palestine.

The political programme of the Jewish Agency as it has just been proclaimed before you is a plan for the establishment of a Jewish State. From the answers of Mr. Ben Gurion it became clear that the Jewish Agency are willing to consider Partition.

In reality the plan of the Jewish Agency is the same as that of

/Dr. Weizmann,



Dr. Weizmann, the only difference being that Dr. Weizmann clearly and openly says what he wants, while the Agency wants to retain the possibility of bargaining and fear that if they propose partition publicly and outrightly their chances or bargaining in ensuing discussions will be reduced. In particular, the Agency do not dare to appear openly in favour of Partition, because this solution is not at all popular among the Jewish masses. The vigorous opposition of the Agency to a bi-national state originates above all in their opposition to Jewish-Arab cooperation and an agreement which would take into account the just national aspirations of both peoples of Palestine and would guarantee them equality of rights.

The Agency has proclaimed for the first time that they do not support the continuation of the British Mandate. Even if this proclamation was made only in order to comply with the sentiments and anger of the masses of the Yishuv against Imperialism, it does express the feelings of the Yishuv with the exception of a small group of miserable servants of Imperialism.

All the Yishuv is united in its view that the status quo can no longer be continued. The masses have had more than enough of the British rule of oppression.

Likewise, the overwhelming majority of the Yishuv is opposed to the partition plan of the Jewish Agency and of Dr. Weizmann. Workers' parties such as the Hashomer Hatzair, the Ahdut Avoda and Poale Zion Party, which vehemently protest against the partition of this country have been forbidden by the Agency to appear before you and to give testimony. Among many sections of the middle class too there is opposition to partition on economic grounds. When the Jewish Agency demand the partition of Palestine, they do not express the public opinion<sup>of</sup> the Yishuv.

It is also known that the Arabs of Palestine are united in their opposition to Partition. They regard it, and quite rightly, as an obstruction to the possibilities for the achievement of national liberation and as a consolidation of the position of the foreign rule in the whole country. Those British agents - of the kind of King Abdullah of Transjordan - who

demand partition of Palestine, out of their subservience to the British strategic schemes in the Middle East, do not express the opinion of the Arabs of this country nor of their own countries.

The Arab Higher Committee has not appeared before you, but its political programme is, as known, the establishment of a Palestinian State, by which is meant an exclusively Arab State, while conferring minority rights upon those Jews who already were in the country in 1918 and to their descendants. This programme disregards the reality, the existence of two peoples in Palestine. The programme is only playing into the hands of the foreign rule to divide between Jews and Arabs - a plan of domination which can serve no one but the imperialists.

The democratic forces among the Arab people which have grown considerably during recent years and have an especially decisive influence among the Arab workers, are opposed to this reactionary attitude to the Jews in Palestine.

To the vital question "Is Jewish-Arab cooperation possible" we reply clearly and unequivocally in the affirmative. Even under the present conditions of colonial incitement cooperation is on the increase. So much the more will it be possible in an independent and democratic Palestine.

I shall now give some examples of identity of interests and co-operation between the Jews and the Arabs.

In spite of all efforts by very influential element in Palestine to antagonize the Jewish and Arab workers, cooperation between them is increasing and embracing more and more workers of both peoples in the common struggle for the protection of their rights and the achievement of improved wages and working conditions, as illustrated by the increase in the number of joint strikes of Jews and Arabs during the years 1943-1947.

There were three such strikes in 1943; one in Jaffa, where 130 municipal sanitary workers, Jews and Arabs, struck for higher wages, cost of living allowances and improved social conditions. In Jerusalem, there were two common strikes of municipal workers: 385 Jews and Arabs struck

for improved conditions and the right to acquire permanency in their jobs. These strikes amounted to a total of 2282 working days.

In 1944 the number of participants increased from the previous year's 515 to 1300. In Haifa about 1250 Arabs, Jewish and Armenian railway workers struck for higher wages and improved social conditions. In Jaffa, Jewish and Arab industrial workers struck against unjust lay-offs and for improved conditions. The total of this year was 5640 working days of common strikes only.

In 1945, 1300 Jewish and Arab workers in a military labour camp struck in opposition to arbitrary dismissals and for the recognition of the workers' organization. (Up to date the Government has not yet recognized the workers' committees and trade unions of military camps' workers). This strike lasted a full week and was accompanied by common meetings and demonstrations which were received with great sympathy by the population. Again 130 Jewish and Arab telephone workers struck for improved conditions. The strike lasted three days and resulted in success. In Haifa, 1100 workers employed at the railway repair shops stopped work in complete discipline and solidarity. Total participants in common strikes during 1945 were 2530, involving 8500 working days of common striking.

In 1946 the strike wave of Government workers reached a peak. Employees of the Department of Posts and Telegraph, Wireless, Civil Servants (Second Division) and Railway Workers, engaged in a strike which completely paralyzed the entire Government machinery. The number of Jewish and Arab strikers amounted to 30,000. Political and religious leaders, as well as influential newspapermen of all sides, were mobilized for the purpose of breaking the strike. Provocative rumours were spread and all means were used, but the strikers remained united and maintained their solidarity and were thus able to realize the major portion of their demands. Only by false promises the Government succeeded in preventing a widening of the strike to include the 45,000 military camp workers and thousands of oil workers, who were on the verge of participation.

/In addition

In addition to the many common meetings, a number of joint demonstrations took place in all parts of the country, and especially in the large cities, carrying slogans of "Unity of Arab and Jewish Workers means Victory". These demonstrations were received with sympathy and support by the general Jewish and Arab population.

In May 1947, following a period of common strikes in the oil companies such as Shell, Mantacheff and Socony Vacuum, the three large trade union organizations - the Histadruth, the Congress of Arab Workers, and the Arab Workers' Society - for the first time in the history of the Palestinian working class arrived at an agreement to organize a warning strike of military camp workers. The strike took place on 20 May, 1947 and passed in complete unity and solidarity. The participants numbered 40,000 Arab and Jewish workers.

It is significant to emphasize that these common strikes took place in times of severe national tension inflamed by the Government and its supporters among Jews and Arabs.

These common strikes and the solidarity expressed by Arab and Jewish workers, have grown beyond the limits of a purely economic struggle, and have become a manifestation of political struggle and a demonstration against the colonial administration and chauvinistic incitement.

As an instance of how the common man views the question of cooperation, I quote the words of an Arab villager during a joint anti-locust action covering 2,500 dunums in the Sharon Valley. He said, according to the paper "Haaretz": "If the locusts will lay their eggs in the earth of the 'combania' (as the Arabs call the Jewish collective settlements) naturally in two weeks the insects will invade my fields too and eat of my crops. It is a chain, and Jews and Arabs are links in equal measure in this chain."

It was inspiring to see the Arab and Jewish villagers intermingled going forward shoulder to shoulder in long lines to combat the common enemy.

In addition to the common actions which express the cooperation of the Jewish and Arab toiling masses, there were further examples of Arab-

Jewish cooperation. In its memorandum to the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission, the Government was forced to state a number of typical examples of successful cooperation among Jews and Arabs. The memorandum said:

"The General Agriculture Council which contained equal numbers of Arab and Jewish members, had unbroken existence of over 10 years and came to an end only because its main functions passed into other hands. The most significant example is perhaps in the Citrus Control & Marketing Board, established by law in 1940 and 1941 respectively. Both contain equal numbers of Arabs and Jews and have continued to maintain a singleness of purpose in dealing with the affairs of the citrus industry which has been most refreshing. A joint Transport Advisory Board was successfully formed. The mixed Haifa Municipal Commission has successfully remained in operation since its appointment."

The numerous facts of economic collaboration in common working places, in mixed municipal councils and on various occasions between Jewish and Arab neighbours have emerged beyond the limits of pure economical interests and become a political demonstration directed against the desire of the Government to provoke quarrels and sow division between the two peoples.

In addition to these facts a long series of attempts, made by Jews and Arabs, to come to a political agreement, may be recorded.

In view of the importance of these attempts, some instructive examples will show how various circles of Jews and Arabs worked unceasingly for a political agreement.

In the beginning of 1922, a Pan-Arabian Congress was convened in Cairo. At this Congress proposals were discussed for a Jewish-Arab agreement and political and economic collaboration between the two peoples.

Negotiations were opened between the representatives of the Arabs and Dr. Eder, member of the Zionist Executive Committee. Mr. Saphir from Jerusalem was the mediator. Dr. Weizmann was kept informed of the course of the discussions, and approved of them. But the negotiations were interrupted after Dr. Weizmann informed the British Government about them. The officials of the British Government demanded to "postpone" all negotiations in view of the fact that the approval of the Mandate was on the agenda.

(Medzini: "Ten Years of Zionist Policy" )

Dr Magnes revealed before the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission that in the negotiations between Arab Leaders and the Jewish Agency in 1936 the former agreed to considerable Jewish immigration. The number of Jews in this country was to reach 800,000 in 1946 or 40 per cent of the total population.

Why did this agreement not come off? Moshe Shertok revealed this on 26 March, 1946, before the same Anglo-American Inquiry Commission, where he stated:

"There were Arab leaders who were inclined to give their consent to a very considerable Jewish immigration, but they made conditions that could not possibly be accepted. It was impossible for the Jews to agree to the immediate liquidation of British Mandatory rule; that was not their function and in those days, they were not enthusiastic about such an eventuality."

These few examples show that:

1. During the years of British occupation the Government has directly or indirectly disturbed all attempts at a Jewish-Arab agreement.
2. There have existed and still exist Jewish and Arab circles who desire and are ready to come to a political agreement.
3. The problem of immigration did not present an unsurmountable obstacle to mutual understanding.
4. On the basis of joint struggle against colonial rule and for complete equal rights between Jews and Arabs, political agreement is possible.
5. The numerous common actions which have found their expression in the solidarity strikes of thousands of Arab and Jewish workers, prove the strong desire of the masses of the people for a peaceful life and mutual understanding.
6. The abolition of the colonial rule will create the conditions for the achievement of peace and brotherhood between Jews and Arabs.

The problem of Palestine is not the Jewish-Arab antagonism. The Palestine question is the question of a colonial country subjugated by foreign rule and thirsting for freedom. The real issue of the Palestine question lies in the clash of interests between British Imperialism and the population of this country, Arabs and Jews alike.

The tension which exists between Jews and Arabs is no justification whatsoever for British rule and for British troops being stationed in our country. On the contrary the reverse is true: 30 years of British rule in our country is the main reason for the present relationship between Jews and Arabs. The colonial rule is the main source of the national antagonism existing in our country. The abolition of the British Mandate, the evacuation of the British Army from our country, and the setting up of a democratic and independent Arab-Jewish State - is the only solution to the Palestine question.

The reactionary plans of the Arab Higher Committee and of the Jewish Agency do not express the real feelings and opinions of the Arab and Jewish masses at the present juncture. Ask the ordinary Jew, the ordinary Arab in the street and they will tell you how far away the masses are from the schemes of domination hatched by their reactionary leaders. You will then convince yourselves how strong the desire is for the establishment of friendly relations between Jews and Arabs based on peace and equality; how both peoples yearn for liberation from the foreign yoke.

The proposals of the Communist Party express these demands of the masses and of the common Jew and of the common Arab. The Communist Party holds that any political solution to be acceptable to the broad masses of both peoples in Palestine to fulfil their just national aspirations and to correspond to their common interests, must be founded on the following two principles:

- 1) Full independence of Palestine, that is,
  - (a) abrogation of the Mandate
  - (b) evacuation of the foreign armies.



(c) abolition of the economic domination of foreign monopolies;

and

2) recognition of the right of both peoples to independence in a single free and democratic Palestine, based on the principle of full equality of civil, national and political rights.

We submit the following plan for the realization of our independence:

(1). As a first step, the UNO should proclaim the independence of Palestine and the abrogation of the Mandate. The UNO should fix a date at the shortest possible time for the evacuation of the British Army and Police from our country.

(2). The Security Council of the UNO should appoint a Commission to carry out the appropriate decisions taken by the UNO and to restore the democratic liberties of which the inhabitants of Palestine have been deprived. The UNO Commission to be appointed should convene representatives of both peoples of Palestine democratically elected who are to determine the future regime of this country on the principle of two free peoples with full equality of rights. Jews and Arabs, freed of foreign pressure, will decide of their own free will whether independent Palestine should have a bi-national or federative structure.

The restoration of democratic liberties and the abolition of the Imperialist terror regime are pre-conditions for the free expression of the will of the two peoples, for the growth of the foundations of their brotherhood. You should not forget that the British Government, during the 30 years of its rule, has suppressed all forces struggling for Arab-Jewish friendship. Until 1942 the Communist Party of Palestine was illegal, hundreds of its members were deported, hundreds more thrown into prison

and concentration camps, accused of mobilizing the Jewish and Arab masses for the struggle against colonial oppression and for friendship between the peoples.

During all these years the British Administration has encouraged the chauvinistic forces among Arabs and Jews in order to prevent the common fight of both peoples against the foreign domination.

To put the question as to whether there will be peace between Jews and Arabs after the evacuation of the British Army, is to put the cart before the horse. It is British rule which is the main source of the national antagonism. For many years the two Semitic peoples have lived in peace and brotherhood; they have had periods of common happiness and progress, of cooperation and brotherhood. Again and again British Imperialism has done its utmost to incite both peoples against each other.

The Greek philosopher Archimedes once said: "Give me a fixed point and I shall move the earth".

We say: "Give freedom to Palestine and the Jewish and Arab masses will find the way to cooperation".

No doubt, the British Government will try to sabotage your work and recommendations in order to prevent a final and speedy solution. But the Arab and Jewish masses are united in their demands for the immediate termination of the regime of colonial oppression.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Commission:

If you will help the Arab and Jewish peoples of Palestine in their struggle for freedom, you will lay the basis for peace not only in Palestine but in the whole Middle East. You will make an important contribution to the cause of international cooperation, to the cause of world peace.

(A brief recess was called by the Chairman at this point).

CHAIRMAN : I call the meeting to order. Will the representatives of the Communist Party of Palestine please come up to the platform.

Will you please give us the number of the members of the Communist Party ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : The Communist Party in Palestine works under very difficult conditions. That is why our membership is a membership of militants. Our militant membership is 1,400. In addition, we have thousands of supporters of our daily paper and of other different enterprises of the Party.

CHAIRMAN : How many copies of your paper are produced ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : Five thousand copies.

CHAIRMAN : Do they all go to the public ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : Yes.

CHAIRMAN : So when you speak of the wishes of the masses of the Palestinian population, you do not found yourself on your high membership ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : No, but we know the mood, we know the desires and the wishes of the Arab and Jewish masses.

CHAIRMAN : Does the Communist Party embrace both the Jewish and the Arab sections ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : It does not.

CHAIRMAN : Does it embrace only the Jews ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : Yes, only the Jews-- the Arab Communists work in the League for National Liberation.

CHAIRMAN : Why have you not succeeded in cooperation between the Jews and the Arabs in the Communist Party ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : It has nothing to do with this. The matter  
/is that in all

is that in all basic problems of Palestine, the Communist Party of Palestine and the League for National Liberation are of the same opinion. It means our common fight for independence, for a democratic state, for an abrogation of the Mandate, for evacuation of the troops and against partition of the country.

As for the second part of your question, it is a question of organization which has nothing to do with the success or lack of success in cooperation.

CHAIRMAN : You mean it does not show unwillingness on the part of the Arabs towards cooperation with the Jews in this political organization ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : It does not show anything of the kind. It is a question of internal organization of both the Communist Party and the League for National Liberation.

CHAIRMAN : On the economic data you gave, I should like to put only a few questions. You speak of the interest that Jewish and Arab landowners have to pay on land.

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Mr. MIKUNIS : The peasants.

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CHAIRMAN : Yes, the peasants. You made us understand that interests are very high, that is, usury interests. Now I wonder if the indebtedness is great. Is the indebtedness great ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : Yes.

CHAIRMAN : You quote, in your memorandum that was handed in some time ago, the figure for the indebtedness of the Jewish landowners as LP 14,000,000, and I understand that the indebtedness to a large extent, perhaps to the largest extent, is an indebtedness towards Jewish organizations, and that perhaps the bigger part of that indebtedness will be written off.

/Mr. MIKUNIS

Mr. MIKUNIS : In our memorandum we state a figure of LP 14,000,000, that being only for the communal Jewish settlements. As statistics for the Arab tenants and peasants are not available, we judge only from the Jewish debt how large and enormous the sums of indebtedness of Arab peasantry to the usurers or the landowners or to banks can be.

CHAIRMAN : But has not the tendency during the war rather been that the Arab peasants have had great profits and paid off their debts ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : The situation during the war was that very poor peasants and tenants, the part of them who could not continue on the land, left to find employment in the military camps, and the general picture during the war was certain strata in the village became richer. It does not mean that they could pay all their debts, or even fifty per cent of their debts, because we judge by the communal Jewish settlements which during the war could not pay even fifty or fifty-five per cent of their debts.

CHAIRMAN : As to the Jewish settlements, we can understand that, because what we have heard is that they paid very high prices for the land, but the Arabs who owned their land, I suppose, have not paid these high prices ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : No. The debts of the Jewish communal settlements are not due to the high prices of land. They obtained their land mainly from the Jewish National Fund for ninety-nine years, and they paid very little for it. Their debts are a result of the economic system which the British Government introduced in this country. It means the high prices of the necessary raw materials, the inflationary system and the monopolistic companies - they are mainly responsible for all these

/heavy debts

heavy debts on the Arabs and the Jews alike.

CHAIRMAN : To go to another matter now : do you think that Jewish immigration should be favoured and go on ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : In my address I spoke about the problem of Jewish immigration, and I concentrated on the burning question and on the burning matter of these days, and the burning need is to solve the problem of the Jewish victims of Fascism concentrated in the camps for displaced persons. I have shown that this must be the concern of the United Nations Organization, to close the camps, to liquidate them, and to enable those of the displaced Jews who want to emigrate to other countries to do so - to other new countries, including Palestine, on the basis of relatives, because there are many Jews who have relatives in Palestine. That is how we regard this question today.

CHAIRMAN : What, in your opinion, represents the reaction from the Arab side with regard to an increased Jewish immigration ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : It is that the Arabs have shown during the last years more understanding for the major issue of Palestine. They understand that the major issue of Palestine is the independence of the country, and my comrades here have shown also that during the last twenty years there were many influential Arab sections and leaders who understood that the major issue of Palestine is not immigration, - which is used by Imperialism to divide and rule - but to fight for the independence of the country, because it is quite natural that, in the free independent country of two peoples with equal rights, two peoples are willing to solve all their questions, including questions of immigration, like other free peoples, like other free countries.

So in respect of the terrific sufferings of the Jews in Europe, we think and we are confident, - if this is not turned into a major issue of Palestine, as many reactionary circles are interested in making it - it will be a normal matter that Palestine should share in solving this problem, and there will be no difficulties on the Arab side.

CHAIRMAN : If there were formed here, right now, an independent Palestine state on ordinary democratic lines, I suppose the first question to come up for decision would be the immigration question. What decision do you think would be taken in such a state if the Arabs held the majority ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : I am confident that the preoccupation of a free, independent Palestine will be, first of all, to guarantee this independence and democracy. The first preoccupation of the peoples of Palestine will be to create conditions against any foreign intervention in this independent and democratic Palestine. We are also confident that on the basis of the past which we have shown you, on the basis of the past, there will be no difficulties between the Jews and Arabs in settling in common vital questions of Palestine, settling also on a democratic and just basis the problem of immigration, and that a free Palestine and two free peoples will offer refuge to victims of Fascism or other persecutions like other free countries and other free peoples in the world.

CHAIRMAN : But is that opinion of yours based upon what you know about prevailing opinions in Palestine ? You think that Arabs would vote for Jewish immigration ?

Mr. MIKUNIS : We know that the Arabs fight for the independence of Palestine, and we know that the Jews fight for the independence of Palestine. We know, in addition, that two free peoples in an

peoples in an independent state will find, like other peoples, - and our people are not worse than others - will find a common way for cooperation and for the solution of all problems concerning those peoples in Palestine.

CHAIRMAN : Is it not right, then, that Arabs are against immigration ?

Mr. VILNER : I should like to add something on this question, and if my English is not so good, or, rather, bad, you will excuse me.

First of all, in our proposals we have not suggested a simple independent democratic Palestine. We have suggested a democratic independent Palestine based on the recognition of the existence of two peoples in Palestine, two peoples with equal rights. What does it mean ? That in either one or another constitutional form leading towards the future structure of Palestine, both peoples will have in each case the same right in determining the questions of Palestine. In other words, we assume that the situation now in Palestine is not what it was before the war. We have stressed in our addresses that both Arabs and Jews are ready for agreement, are ready for cooperation, and this readiness will express itself also, among others, in the question of immigration.

Secondly, the question of immigration was never a question isolated from the other problems of Palestine. I have not heard that Arabs were opposed to immigration because of immigration. I have not heard this. They were opposed to

/immigration on



immigration on political grounds. It is not a question of immigration isolated from the other points. It is a political question on the ground of independence, on the ground of equality of rights, on the ground of eliminating foreign intervention. We have no doubt that, as experience also teaches us, - negotiations between Dr. Magnes and Arab leaders, and other experiences - we are sure that only foreign intervention made the question of immigration so difficult in the past, but in new conditions this will not be an obstacle to independence or cooperation between the two peoples. It is a political question connected with all the Palestine problems.

CHAIRMAN : But do you think you can separate this political aspect of the question from other aspects ?

/Mr. VILNER

Mr. VILNER: I have not said we can separate it. I have said that we cannot separate this question. It has a common solution, which the Jews and Arabs will also find; the question of immigration can and will be solved.

CHAIRMAN: But if you are wrong in your supposition and if the Arabs still oppose immigration, as they have done hitherto, and you further assume that the Jews and Arabs in a democratic state which was going to be formed would have equal rights, who would then decide the question? Would there not be a deadlock?

Mr. VILNER: No, we think that both Arabs and Jews are willing to be independent, and that they will both oppose any foreign intervention in any question. They are not interested and they will not be interested in intervention by foreign rule. The question of immigration, as I said before, can be solved on the basis of an independent Palestine which would guarantee the real and just national aspirations of both peoples. Of course, the question of immigration cannot be solved outside the problem of independence. But the agreement between the two peoples, as we proposed, after the United Nations Organization will decide upon the termination of the Mandate, will, in and of itself, create a new situation in Palestine. The masses will know that from then on they will have no foreign intervention. Then the problem for them will be one of calling in the foreign imperialist again, or of solving the questions among themselves. We are sure they will decide to solve the questions among themselves. You have heard before about Balkanization. It meant a fight between the people in the Balkan States. All the difficult questions were and are solved. I think that the same situation will be true in Palestine.

/CHAIRMAN ....

CHAIRMAN: But I must point out that all my questions were put under the assumption that there would be a free and independent Palestine, and that there would be built up here a free and democratic state. I assume also that there would be no intervention from the outside in your life as a state. Therefore, my question remains, and I understand you mean that the Jews and Arabs could agree on immigration; is that right?

Mr. VILNER: Yes, I think so. In fact, I am sure.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): Mr. Chairman, if I understand him correctly, does he want the new state, after it is formed, to decide the question of immigration?

CHAIRMAN: I have taken it to be so.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): Is it correct that he wants the new state after it has come into existence to decide the question of immigration?

Mr. VILNER: That is right, but that is only one part of the question. We have stressed that we see a special urgent question of displaced Jews which must be immediately solved by the United Nations Organization on the basis of international arrangements, including immigration for those who are interested in immigration into new countries, including Palestine.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): Would you kindly say whether when you say "equal rights" you mean equal votes for the Arabs and for the Jews. I do not understand the words "equal rights"? Are all the rights and civil liberties guaranteed to both without any difference of votes? I do not understand what you mean by the words "equal rights" to the Jews and the Arabs?

Mr. VILNER: "Equal rights" in two meanings: "equal rights" for every citizen, and "equal rights" for both peoples.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): Equal numbers?

Mr. VILNER: It is not a question of numbers. It is a question of rights. I think that the constitution may be in this or that form, and we think that the question of a detailed

constitution will be actual after the decision of the United Nations Organization to bring an end to the British rule. The principles which we have laid down in our addresses and in the memorandum are equal citizen's rights for every citizen, and equal national rights for both peoples as peoples. It may assume various forms in the conditions of Palestine, which we stressed are special conditions. We cannot find another example in other countries.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): When we find that the present position is that the two communities, Arabs and Jews, are not equal in numbers today, what should we, according to you, recommend to the United Nations General Assembly as to the form of Government -- whether they should have parity, equal rights and equal votes, or they should not have these things?

Mr. VILNER: Our proposal is that irrespective of numbers both peoples must have equal rights.

CHAIRMAN: I understand from what you said in your statement that you mean a kind of bi-national or federative state should be made; is that so?

Mr. VILNER: Perhaps I can add something to the statement which will make it clearer. We are for a solution that will guarantee full independence, the greatest agreement and the greatest unity of the two peoples and of the country. Our party advocates a unitarian bi-national solution, but under the conditions of full independence. A federative solution agreed upon by the two peoples of Palestine will also, in our opinion, meet their common interests and national aspirations. I think that is quite clear.

CHAIRMAN: Well, if you speak of equal rights between the two groups, I suppose you must envisage that even in an independent Palestinian state there would be various opinions

/on the questions..

on the questions to be solved. In this state with equal rights for the two sections, who would decide the differences of opinion?

Mr. VILNER: I think that the members would decide that for themselves. The problem would be for them either to call in foreign rule to decide, or to decide their differences among themselves. And I think that every Arab and every Jew would not be interested in foreign, military and police rule, as they have experienced in the past, and as they are experiencing now.

CHAIRMAN: But we are discussing now entirely on the basis that there is an independent Palestine, no foreign Mandatory or anything of the kind. Do you think there would be dissension between the two groups?

Mr. VILNER: I think there would be also other dissensions between employers, workers and others -- not only on a national basis. All the difficulties will be solved by the people, -- by the institutions of the country themselves. In other words, we suppose and we are sure that of the two possibilities we will be faced with, either foreign rule or settling the difficulties between the peoples themselves, we are sure that no people will be interested in foreign rule. They will find the way. We are asking the United Nations Organization to give us that chance: give the peoples of Palestine the chance to be free. Declare the abolition of the Mandate. Declare the evacuation of troops. Then, call the newly-elected representatives of those peoples to come to an agreement -- of course, to an agreement on the constitution and on the difficulties of an independent Palestinian State. In these conditions, the independence of Palestine will be assured as an outcome of an Arab-Jewish cooperation and

/understanding...

understanding, provided foreign intervention is <sup>to be</sup> abolished and finished.

Mr. ENTEZAM (Iran). (Interpretation from French):

Mr. Chairman, my question is the same type of question which has been put here. I see in the speech of Mr. Mikunis that they are not in favour of a partition of Palestine; that they proposed a bi-unitarian state. It is the same question which you, Mr. Chairman, and Sir Abdur Rahman have put. I understand your idea, of course, Mr. Mikunis. You want to end the Mandate and you want to create an independent Palestine which would not be subject to any foreign influence. Suppose, for instance, that we were to solve that problem that way -- that there were no Mandate in Palestine any more and that Palestine were independent. You would then be faced with the problem of creating a Government, and as you say, "a democratic Government." If you had not said that you wanted equal rights, I would understand your proposition, because you would then be faced with the task of finding a form of Government for this country. But you have already prejudged the case. You have already decided upon the Government you want. You said you wanted a democratic government, and an independent Palestine, with equal rights for Jews and Arabs. Now, if you want an equal state, that presupposes that you will have majority and minority problems, and the principle of majority and minority rule, and you must accept it. If not, and you simply say that you want equal rights on the basis of equal rights for Jews and Arabs, then what will result will be a bi-national state. If this is your solution, then you must find some solution for problems on which such a bi-national state may not agree. Therefore, I do not want this problem to go any further. In general, I might say that I am sympathetic with your proposal. But, I would like to ask you this question:

What do you mean by equal rights, and how do you expect to reconcile problems on which there may be a division of opinion and disagreement in the bi-national state which you proposed? How will you reconcile the ideas of equal rights and the principle of majority and minority rule?

Mr. MIKUNIS: What is significant in our programme is that our programme reflects exactly the realities in this country. You are hearing us after your visits in the country, and you must have noticed that Palestine is not a question of numbers of a minority or of a majority. You can see that the Jews and the Arabs contributed very much to the economic and cultural development of this country. It means that there was no question of a nation dominating the country and a certain minority, but you could see two peoples working, trying to create their homes. Yes, and it means that our programme, speaking about two peoples in Palestine with equal rights, reflects realities in Palestine. You think in terms of majority

But the problem of Palestine is not a problem of minority and majority and minority. The reactionary forces are interested in speculating on this question for their purpose of domination. The slogan of the Jewish Agency of turning Palestine as a whole into a Jewish State is certainly a slogan of domination of one people over the other. The programme of the Arab Higher Committee to erect a national -- that means to say a Palestinian-Arab State with rights for the Jews in Palestine, is also the same slogan of domination -- of one people over another people. We want, in the interests of the peoples, and in the interest of peace, to avoid such a solution of domination -- of one people over another. That is why from this viewpoint, which is a democratic and just viewpoint, and taking into consideration the reality of Palestine, which is a country of two peoples who are equally important for the development and future of this country, we build our programme.

on the basis that this must be a bi-unitarian state. What does bi-unitarian state mean? It means a single undivided state of both peoples, or two peoples, having equal rights. We do not approach this question from the arithmetic point of view. It is not a question of arithmetics meaning that as we will achieve independence, the vote will show an Arab majority and a Jewish minority. The arithmetic approach must bring as a consequence that the majority will dominate the minority. It means you are back where you were thirty years ago. We want to finish with this question of foreign intervention, in order to finish with the prevailing conditions in Palestine as you have seen them, and as we have seen them for the last thirty years. In order to finish with this trouble, we came to the conclusion that Palestine must not be partitioned. Palestine must be a democratic, single state. Palestine is inhabited by two peoples contributing very much to the present development of the country and to its future, as we hope. And that is why the two peoples not only inhabit Palestine, but they, themselves, should govern Palestine, as peoples with equal rights as regards their cultural development, common economic development, and national development. Equal rights and equal opportunities mean to enable us to raise the standard of life of the Arab masses to that of the Jewish masses in order to march together as equal peoples to a better, a more prosperous future. That is why when we put our programme of a single Palestine governed by two peoples we say with this that our programme reflects the reality in Palestine. It eliminates a possibility of domination of one people over another. It eliminates the possibility of foreign intervention. And we are confident, as I told you before, that the Arab and Jewish people are in any case not worse than other peoples. There were troubles



in Yugoslavia and slaughter of peoples because of foreign intervention and because the reactionaries, the social strata of this intervention ruled the country. When all these people were faced with the danger of occupation by Nazi Germany they united and fought together for their future. So they created the conditions for their common life. In the case of these peoples you hear nothing about differences. Why? Because as there are four or five peoples, autonomous regions in Yugoslavia, the democratic constitution was built on the same lines, providing equality of rights for all peoples, be they big or small, poor or rich, intelligent or unintelligent. It is not a question of size. It is not a question of numbers.

Democratic principles envisage equality of rights for every people. That is why in order to arrive at a solution of independence in Palestine we must not have an arithmetic approach, but an approach which is an outgrowth of the realities in this country. And the realities are one country, two equal peoples. It is not a question of numbers.

These two peoples must govern the country together. And I think that liberation, independence and opportunity which will be given to these people to govern themselves will be much stronger than any difference which would arise between Jews and Arabs. I will tell you another secret which is well-known to you. If there are forces in the parliament which will try to continue division between Jews and Arabs, the Jewish and Arab masses will find their way and withdraw these so-called representatives, replacing them with popular democratic representatives who will understand and find the proper and just solutions for any differences in order to preserve the independent and democratic state in Palestine.

CHAIRMAN: Are you thinking of a one party idea?

Mr. MIKUNIS: Of a what?

CHAIRMAN: Are you thinking of a one party system?

Mr. MIKUNIS: No, we are against a one party system. We are for a democratic state which reflects the realities of a country.

Mr. ENTEZAM (Iran): (Interpretation from French): Mr. Chairman,

/after this

after this explanation I think I understand that what they mean by equal rights is equal power to realize their national aspirations for both peoples in the country, and not equality of rights in participation in government. Thus, if a democratic government is achieved in this country they expect to find collaboration between Jews and Arabs on that basis without arithmetic coming into play at all. I repeat again, what they mean by equal rights apparently is equal power to realize national aspirations, and not equal rights in participation in government.

CHAIRMAN: We are not opposing you. We only want you to develop one particular detail of your proposal. For instance, I am thinking of a possible division in the parliament about a question, whether it be the immigration question or another question. The parliament, I suppose, ought to contain, according to your views, an equal number of representatives for the Jewish and Arab communities. Am I right that this is what you mean?

Mr. MIKUNIS: No, we mean a parliament on the basis of proportional representation, not on a communal basis.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): I would just like to have an explanation. If civil and religious rights are safeguarded by the constitution, the government would still have to be run by some persons. How are they to be elected? Are they to be equal in number?

Mr. MIKUNIS: I don't quite understand.

Sir Abdur RAHMAN (India): If the civil and religious rights are to be safeguarded by the constitution which we recommend to the United Nations, still the government will have to come into existence. How are those persons who form that government to be elected? Are they to be elected in

equal numbers by both the communities, or are they to be elected by a majority and a minority?

Mr. MIKUNIS: Again you introduce a question of majority and minority. Our plan envisages the guarantee not only of civil and religious rights and freedom, but also the guarantee of equality of national rights for those peoples. The question as to how the Government would be formed is a question of the future -- of the near future. The government must not necessarily be built on the basis of parity as between Jews and Arabs. The history of the last years teaches us that parity does not exist in a country which achieves independence. But the guarantee of equality, of religious and civil and national rights is the people. The democratic forces of most people are interested in preserving their independence, but during the last thirty years enormous efforts have been made by the British Government to put obstacles in the way of democratic forces in Palestine. And yet there were possibilities and there were conditions for common Arab-Jewish strikes and different actions, which have been strengthened during the last two years due to the growing consciousness of the Arab and Jewish masses after what they have learned in the last twenty-five years since the First World War. In conditions of independence, in conditions of non-intervention by foreign rule, we are confident that the democratic forces of the Arabs and the Jews will find their best way, in the best interests of the people, for the parliament, and for the creation of a government and for the constituent assembly which must outline the first constitution of the first independent democratic Palestinian State. Everything will be decided according to prevailing conditions in Palestine.

stressed before - and we underline it now - the people of Palestine will never be ready to sacrifice their independence, to sacrifice an historic opportunity of a democratic independent state for any differences which can arise in the course of the first stages of development of an independent Palestine. We are confident, on the basis of history, on the basis of the development in different countries in recent years, we are confident that when you give us a chance of abrogating the Mandate or evacuating troops, both our peoples will show that they are ripe for such an independent and democratic state, and they will find their own, and the best, way for the solution of all their problems and differences.

CHAIRMAN: It is two o'clock now, and we shall have to continue the questioning tomorrow. I shall be obliged if you will be here then.

The meeting is adjourned until nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

(The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.)