The Historical Journal, 19, 3 (1976), pp. 727–758
Printed in Great Britain

THE BRITISH WHITE PAPER ON PALESTINE, MAY 1939.[1] PART II: THE TESTING OF A POLICY, 1942–1945

MICHAEL J. COHEN
Bar-Ilan University

I

The 1939 White Paper remained the basis of British rule in Palestine during the first three years of war. The military crises that erupted in the Middle East between 1940 and 1942 did not permit consideration of any alternatives – if only because Britain could not be certain that it would still be in the area at the end of the war. Since his appointment to the War Cabinet in September 1939, Churchill had tried, in vain, to halt the implementation of the White Paper. In February 1940, when the Land Transfers clause of the White Paper was promulgated, Churchill had had to be content with having his opposition recorded in the cabinet minutes.[2] But even when Churchill became prime minister he had not felt free to impose pro-Zionist measures against the opinions of those ministers involved directly with Palestine, backed as they were by powerful departmental bureaucracies. Nor did he feel able, during the years

[1] The May White Paper was a statement of British policy which was intended to regulate British rule in Palestine for the next ten years. Issued with the intention of appeasing Arab feelings over Palestine, it severely restricted the growth of the Jewish National Home in Palestine; immigration was to be restricted to 75,000 over the coming five years, after which Arab consent would be needed to further Jewish immigration; purchase of land in Palestine by Jews was to be severely curtailed and supervised; the first steps towards local self-government were to be taken as soon as peace and stability reigned in Palestine and the establishment of an independent state in Palestine was contemplated after ten years. See Cmd. 6019, May 1939.

The author's first article on this document appears in *The Historical Journal*, XVI, 3 (1973). This article was written under the auspices of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

[2] The Land Transfers Bill was seen by the Zionists – and indeed intended by the Colonial Office – to be an attempt to restrict Jewish settlement in Palestine to those areas which might one day become a 'token' Jewish state. Under the new regulations, the High Commissioner assumed control of all land transfers in Palestine except for those within a coastal strip between Tantura (near Haifa) and a point just south of Tel Aviv – an area already heavily populated with Jews – and in all municipal areas. All the hill country, together with the Gaza and Beersheba sub-districts were prohibited to Jewish purchasers. In the areas of the Plains of Esdraelon and Jezreel, in Eastern Galilee and the Negev, the High Commissioner would permit land transfers to Jews only in those cases where they consolidated plots already held. For terms of the Regulations, see Cmd. 6180; for the cabinet discussion of, on 12 Feb. 1940, see CAB 65/5; for further analysis of, see J. Hurevitz, *The Struggle for Palestine*, (New York, 1950), pp. 134–8.

of military crisis in the Middle East, to oppose the opinions of the civil and military administrations in the Middle East which almost unanimously warned against the dire consequences of not proceeding along the lines of declared government policy.[3]

Until 1942 the Zionists' political efforts concentrated on their campaign for a Jewish Army. They wanted it, first, for self-defence in Palestine, secondly, in order to take part in the war against Nazism, and, last but not least, because they calculated that military achievements might be translated later into political gains at the Peace Conference.

The winter of 1942–3 was a turning-point in many senses. It was clear that once the military threat to Britain's position in the Middle East was repulsed, long-term proposals that had been held up by the military situation would be actively canvassed by the various parties that saw their future in the area. Particularly embarrassing for London was the publicity campaign waged by the Zionists in the United States since the previous winter. Zionist demands – at first for a Jewish Army, and later for a Jewish State – attracted the public support of central figures in an Administration that was relatively new to the Middle East. American sympathy for the Zionist cause increased when in the autumn of 1942 the first authentic reports of Nazi mass exterminations filtered through to the West.

Zionist activities in the United States did not go unnoticed in the Arab States. In December 1942 Nuri Said instructed his ambassador at Washington to protest at a statement published recently in the *New York Times* over the signatures of Senators Hoover and Stimson.[4] Nuri expressed to London his fear that such public declarations by American notabilities might commit the United States to a pro-Zionist policy.[5]

London was agitated further by Weizmann's statements in America, quoting Churchill as the sponsor of a scheme by which, in negotiations between the Zionists and Ibn Saud, Palestine was to be turned into a Jewish State.[6] Weizmann had kept London abreast of developments on

[3] For a fuller analysis of the interplay of departmental influence on the evolution of the government's policy in Palestine, see the author's 'Direction of Policy', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, October, 1975, v. 11/3.

[4] Senator Stimson was Secretary of State for War.

[5] See Lampson–Eden, 4 Jan. 1943, in E443/87/31, F.O. 371/35031. Sir Miles Lampson (later Lord Killearn) was British ambassador to Egypt from 1936–46.

[6] This scheme was in fact initiated by St John Abdullah Philby, for many years a close adviser to Ibn Saud. At meetings with Dr Weizmann in London in September and October 1939 Philby had claimed that Ibn Saud was prepared to agree to a Jewish State in all of Western Palestine, provided the Arabs in other lands of the Middle East gained their independence, and in return for Jewish financial aid. Weizmann told Philby that he would be able to raise an amount in the region of £10–20 million. When Philby reported back to Ibn Saud, in January 1940 the latter had raised no objections, but had sworn Philby to secrecy and proposed that the scheme be 'imposed' upon him by Britain and the United States. When Philby reported back to Weizmann, the latter raised the idea with Churchill, in March 1942. Churchill advised the Zionist leader to mobilize the support of President Roosevelt, so that the scheme might be implemented after the war. Weizmann discussed the scheme at the State Department, in January and in March 1943. In July 1943 Roosevelt

this issue, by his reports to the British Embassy at Washington.[7] Sumner Welles apparently believed that Ibn Saud would settle with the Zionists, in return for a substantial loan or contribution, and proposed on 26 January 1943 that Weizmann visit Saudi Arabia to confer with the Arab leader. Weizmann reported that Welles had seemed to accept the official Zionist programme, 'Jewish State and all'. Weizmann's report included the information that the suggestion to negotiate with Ibn Saud had originated with Churchill, and that he, Weizmann, was prepared to go, provided he received the blessing of Churchill and Roosevelt and their respective governments.

The Foreign Office was appalled at the Embassy report:

> On the one hand, the policy of H.M.G. *approved* by Parliament – the White Paper. On the other, Dr Weizmann is discussing with the State Department another policy, described apparently by the State Department themselves as 'Mr. Churchill's idea'.[8]

The Foreign Office officials thought the scheme unrealistic, and advised that the State Department be told that what the British prime minister said off the record should not be accepted even as an unofficial proposal from the British government. Just prior to Churchill's departure on a visit to the United States in March 1943, Eden brought to his attention Weizmann's statements on the 'Ibn Saud' scheme, and asked Churchill what he really had said to the Zionist leader. Churchill replied that, while Weizmann had no authority to speak for him, it was 'sufficiently well known that the views which Weizmann expressed were in fact substantially those of Mr. Churchill'.[9]

The Department decided that it could not, on the grounds of Churchill's reply, issue any *démenti* in Washington, and that, in view of 'the dangerous inter-action between Zionist propaganda and rising Arab unrest', it should draw up a cabinet paper which, if nothing else, would serve as a warning. The department's anxieties were only increased by further pronouncements from Churchill.

sent an expert on Middle Eastern affairs, Colonel Hoskins, to broach the scheme with Ibn Saud himself. The Arab leader, perhaps embarrassed by the many leakages that had occurred, now completely disowned it, and refused to negotiate with Weizmann, for whom he expressed a personal hatred for having impugned his honour with the suggestion that he, Ibn Saud, might be bribed over Palestine. On this curious episode, see Y. Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance* (Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 224–7; G. Kirk, *Survey of International Affairs, 1939–1946, The Middle East in the War* (London, 1952), pp. 312–14; for Weizmann's meetings at the State Department, see minutes of 19 Jan. and 3 Mar. 1943 at the Weizmann Archives, Rehovot (hereafter cited as W.A.); for Hoskins' report on his visit to Ibn Saud, see his memorandum of 3 Nov. 1943, in E6945/87/31, F.O. 371/35041. See also Elizabeth Monroe, *Philby of Arabia* (London, 1973), pp. 221–5.

[7] See for instance note of Weizmann's interview with Isaiah Berlin (attached to the British Embassy at Washington) of 26 Jan. 1943, in E815/87/31. F.O. 371/35031.

[8] Minute by H. A. Caccia, 17 Feb, 1943, in E826/87/31, ibid.

[9] Minute by Sir Maurice Peterson (head of the Middle Eastern Department at the Foreign Office), 25 Mar. 1943, in E1196/506/65, F.O. 371/34955.

In April 1943 Weizmann wrote to Churchill[10] protesting about recent ministerial speeches in parliament, which had referred to the White Paper as 'the firmly established established policy' of the government.[11] At Jerusalem also, claimed Weizmann, the authorities missed no opportunity to 'nail down the White Paper as permanent and immutable'. The White Paper, Weizmann claimed, was the application to Palestine of the unhappy principle of appeasement, and expressed the hope that with the abandonment of that principle, and the recent accretion of British strength and prestige, the Allies might deal 'boldly and generously' with the Jewish problem, by assigning Palestine to the Jews.

The letter evidently served as a prick to Churchill's conscience, and he warned his colleagues that he would soon circulate it to the cabinet:

> I cannot agree that the White Paper is 'the firmly established policy' of the present government. I have always regarded it as a gross breach of faith committed by the Chamberlain government in respect of obligations to which I personally was a party...it runs until it is superseded.[12]

This was a clear warning that the political status quo in Palestine was not sacrosanct for Churchill. It was also a blow to the sensibilities of those ministers whom Churchill had kept on from the Chamberlain government,[13] who were now clearly informed that their retention under Churchill had not signified the latter's acquiescence in their Palestine policy.

As promised, Churchill elaborated on his views on the White Paper before the cabinet, emphasizing that he personally remained a supporter of the Balfour Declaration, as modified by 'his own' White Paper of 1922.[14] Churchill expected full American support for a new policy on Palestine, to be declared after the war. He advocated an investigation into the possibility of making Eritrea and Tripolitania into Jewish colonies that might be affiliated to the Jewish National Home. As for Arab claims, Churchill asserted that, apart from the loyal Ibn Saud and Emir Abdulla, the Arabs had been virtually of no use to the allies in the present war. The only fighting they had done was against the British, in Iraq. Unlike after the First World War, the Arabs would have no claims on the victorious allies.

The Foreign Office, already engaged in drafting a cabinet paper on this subject, reacted sharply to Churchill's views which, they believed, missed the whole point:

[10] Weizmann–Churchill, 2 Apr. 1943, in E2340/87/31, F.O. 371/35033.

[11] Lord Cranborne, (former Colonial Secretary, at the time Lord Privy Seal), had spoken in this sense during a debate on Jewish refugees from Nazi atrocities on 23 Mar. 1943. See Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 5th Series, col. 850.

[12] Churchill minute of 18 Apr. 1943, in E2340/87/31, F.O. 371/34955.

[13] Colonel Stanley in particular, the current colonial secretary and minister at the Board of Trade in May, 1939, took personal offence.

[14] For this and following, see Churchill's memorandum of 28 Apr. 1943, in W.P. (43)178, in CAB 66/36. It included Weizmann's letter as an annexe.

The question is...not whether we owe the Arabs a debt of gratitude, but whether we have important interests centering in the Arab world. The answer must be emphatically that we have; and in particular our oil interests.[15]

In view of British interests in the area, the Foreign Office was opposed to giving to the Jews in Palestine any more than already offered under the 1939 White Paper. The Middle Eastern section of the department wanted a new, public declaration reaffirming the aims of the White Paper as Britain's post-war objective. But this was vetoed by warnings from the American section about American sensibilities. The Foreign Office, which blamed the American Administration for most of the recent agitation over Palestine, proposed that the government convey a warning that American indiscretions might prejudice the allied war effort.[16]

Viscount Cranborne, taking a more balanced view, pointed to the dilemma in the situation. The government had to face the fact that in March 1944 the immigration provisions of the White Paper would come to an end and, even if the long-term settlement was left over until after the war, some provision would have to be made for the Jewish future:

...If Jewish immigration is not brought to an end next year, wide sections of Arab opinion are likely to charge Great Britain with a breech of faith. On the other hand, it is surely impossible, especially in view of the unhappy situation of the Jews of Europe, to close one of their main channels of escape during the war....[17]

Cranborne's advice was that, pending the long-term solution, the government should seek to 'freeze' the status quo, so that Jewish immigration might continue at the permitted rate, beyond the five-year period allowed for by the White Paper. He agreed with the prime minister that the government could not in the long term maintain a policy of 'absolute cessation of immigration into Palestine at the discretion of the Arab minority'.[18]

Added to this complex situation were the danger signs from Palestine itself.[19] The Palestine Administration reported that the Zionists had been engaged for some years in actively alienating the Jews of Palestine from the Mandatory, with the objective of securing the abandonment of the White Paper policy. The Zionists had adopted a maximalist programme, which aimed at gaining Jewish Agency control over immigration, in order to create a Jewish majority in the country. This in turn had led to counter-claims, equally maximalist and nationalist, by the Palestinian Arabs, supported – for whatever motives – by Arabs in neighbouring

[15] Minute by Sir M. Peterson, 1 May 1943, in E2341/87/31. F.O. 371/35033.
[16] See W.P. (43)200 of 10 May, 1943 in CAB 66/36.
[17] See Cranborne memorandum of 4 May 1943, W.P. (43)187, in CAB 66/36.
[18] Ibid.
[19] See report of 1 May 1943 prepared for a meeting of the Middle East War Council on 10 May 1943 in E3577/2551/65, F.O. 371/34975.

countries. This situation, concluded the Administration, was likely to erupt in armed disorders, unless (*a*) something were done to remove the danger of a direct clash between Jews and Arabs or (*b*) if any substantial concession were made to either of the parties.

The Administration expected these disorders either at or near the end of the war – but in any event the crucial period would occur at the end of the Spring of 1944, when the White Paper's time-limit for immigration elapsed. Before that date, the government must make both communities understand that it would not grant the maximalist demands of either, and that their differences would have to be settled by mutual compromise and partnership. The Middle East War Council endorsed the Administration's report, adding that 'any deviation from the White Paper principles would almost inevitably provoke an outbreak'. The Council recommended a public reaffirmation of the White Paper policy, supported if possible by the United States Government.[20]

To all these warnings was added that of the Minister of State Resident at Cairo:

> Every informed observer...is convinced...that the country is heading for the most serious outbreak of disorder and violence which it has yet seen, and that the explosion is timed to go off as soon as the war ends, or possibly a few months earlier.[21]

Casey proposed that the United Nations should grant Great Britain a new mandate, for the safeguarding of the entire Middle East area, including the Levant States. Britain would guarantee that the White Paper policy would be upheld in Palestine, and that France would be turned out of the Levant. This idea was predictably ruled out by the Foreign Office. A string of British military establishments throughout the Middle East could only harm the British image, while a United Nations Trusteeship would appear to derogate from the nominal independence already enjoyed by some Arab states. The Foreign Office aimed at placating the Arab states by stopping short of making Palestine a Jewish State, and by reducing the French position in the Levant to one corresponding to Britain's own position in Iraq.[22]

II

This then was the background to the cabinet's consideration of the Palestine question, when it finally came up for discussion in July 1943.[23] The cabinet agreed that, in the short term, Jewish immigration should

[20] For minutes of the Council's meetings between 10 and 13 May 1943, see E3234/2551/65, ibid.; also W.P. (43)247 of 17 June 1943 in CAB 66/37.

[21] For this and following, see memorandum by R. G. Casey (minister of State at Cairo, March 1942–January 1944), W.P. (43)246 of 17 June 1943, in CAB 66/37.

[22] Minute by Sir M. Peterson, 25 June 1943, in E4081/2551/65, F.O. 371/34975.

[23] For meeting of 2 July 1943, see CAB 65/39.

be permitted beyond the White Paper's termination point of 31 March 1944 – up to the 75,000 limit stipulated by that document. With regard to the long term, Churchill reiterated his view that his government was not tied to the White Paper and that, when the time arrived, the government would continue to carry out its solemn undertakings towards the Jewish National Home. Attlee agreed that it would be impolitic to reopen the question for the present, but thought it important to begin consideration of long-term policy without delay, in order to be in a position to implement it immediately after the war. The cabinet agreed on this point, and decided to set up a sub-committee, 'to consider and report to the War Cabinet on the long-term policy for Palestine'. The Committee was asked to take the Peel Commission's plan of partition as its starting point, and to consider whether it, or some variant of it, could now be adopted.[24] Membership of the Committee was left to Churchill's discretion.

Churchill's choice caused pessimism at the Foreign Office:

...I am absolutely certain that we won't be able to get the Foreign Office view through this particular Committee. Every single member of it, with the exception of the Colonial Secretary (and they could hardly keep him out) voted against the White Paper in 1939.[25]

Dissatisfied with the Committee's leanings,[26] Eden attempted to have the pro-Zionist Amery removed, but was rebuffed by Churchill:

...it is quite true that he has my way of thinking on this point, which is no doubt to be deplored, but he has great knowledge and mental energy...anyway, the Report is only for the Cabinet to consider.[27]

Eden later attempted to console his officials:

...there is going to be much trouble on this subject, internal as well as external before we are through. It is a comfort to reflect that Mr. Amery has never been right on any subject that I can recollect from Palestine to the League of Nations...[28]

[24] The Peel Commission's partition plan, published in July 1937, attempted to divide Palestine into a Jewish and Arab State based respectively on already-existent Jewish and Arab settlement concentrations, as well as setting aside 'strategic' areas that would remain under Mandate. One of the most contentious aspects of the Peel plan was the proposal that mainly Arab-populated Galilee should be allotted to the Jewish State. The narrow mandated strip that was to run from Jerusalem to Jaffa (taking in the strategic Lydda airfield and Sarafand army complex) was castigated by Lord Samuel in the Lords as another 'Danzig corridor'. The Peel Commission's Report was published as Cmd. 5479. See Map 1.

[25] Minute by R. K. Law (Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office), 10 Aug. 1943, in E4336/87/31. F.O. 371/35036.

[26] Churchill appointed the following: H. Morrison (home secretary), Chairman; L. Amery (secretary of State for India); Colonel Stanley (colonial secretary); A. Sinclair (secretary of State for Air); and after a special appeal by Eden himself, R. K. Law on behalf of the Foreign Office.

[27] Churchill–Eden, 11 July 1943, in M458/3. Premier (Prem.) 4/52/1.

[28] Eden minute of 6 Sept. 1943, in E5697/87/31, F.O. 371/35038.

The Committee's secretariat was bombarded with a variety of memoranda, arguing – as stated in the Committee's terms of reference – the feasibility of partition, based on the Peel plan. The main advocate of partition was Amery, intimately involved with the subject since 1937.[29] He argued that partition had been rejected in 1938 for the wrong reasons. The Peel Commission had based its scheme on those areas in which Arabs and Jews already preponderated, whereas fulfilment of the Mandate would necessitate assigning to the Jews an area large enough to allow substantial immigration. The Woodhead Commission, continued Amery, had taken their instructions, 'to include the fewest possible Arabs and Arab enterprises in the Jewish area, and vice-versa', to mean in effect that the Jewish area was to include nothing beyond the area covered by existing Jewish settlements. The Woodhead Commission had further taken their instruction 'to delineate self-supporting Arab and Jewish States' as implying that the 'self-supporting Arab State' must continue to enjoy those amenities that Jewish enterprise and taxation had brought to undivided Palestine. Under these assumptions, of course no scheme had been found practicable.

Amery himself believed that the area assigned to the Jews by the Peel Commission – including most of inland and predominantly Arab Galilee – was less suitable than a mainly coastal area extending down to the Egyptian border, which would include the Negev, with access to the Dead Sea and to the Gulf of Akaba. The Arabs would then have all of northern Galilee, and most of the inland, hilly Samaria and Jerusalem districts.

Yet Amery was alone in advocating such a clearcut solution. Opposition to any 'generous' scheme of partition came from a surprising quarter, from Victor Cazalet, a Zionist sympathiser and confidant of Weizmann.[30] Cazalet reported on his own personal experience of 'the intense unpopularity of the Jews, and in particular of the Zionist Organisation that prevails over the whole Middle East'. Cazalet put forward two alternatives. First, that Britain, together with the United States, should 'take over and run Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan for an indefinite period – until the Jews, Arabs and Lebanese were prepared to form a federation between them, with or without our help'. Secondly, if this proved impossible, Cazalet advocated offering the Jews a token state, smaller than the Peel scheme, together with another territory elsewhere, as a refuge for the Jews. This latter proposal was really a gesture of despair, for Cazalet concluded 'there is no scheme you could offer them unless we are prepared to give them the whole of Palestine'.

[29] For following, see his memorandum of 31 July 1943, P(M) (43)3, in CAB 95/14. Amery, a confidant of the Zionist leaders, had himself been colonial secretary from 1924 to 1929.

[30] For following, see memorandum of 2 Aug. 1943, in CO 733/444 PT.1 – it was evidently written some time before and circulated posthumously, for Cazalet, British liaison officer to General Sikorski, had perished with the latter in an air crash on 4 July 1943.

The predominant tone of the Cabinet Committee's first meeting was pro-partitionist.[31] The colonial secretary opened discussion by stating that they would have to accept the fact that the Arabs and Jews would not, at least for a generation, be able to live together peaceably in Palestine. This left two alternatives: (*a*) continued British administration over the whole country under some form of colonial system, or (*b*) partition. Colonel Stanley agreed with Amery that partition would have to be considered now on principles other than those that had guided the Peel Commission. Areas now predominantly Jewish or Arab would not necessarily remain so, and the Jews would have to have unfettered control over immigration into their area. Morrison proposed that they extend their inquiry to include Transjordan.

The Foreign Office, which had reserved its opinion until the various plans for partition were put forward, was alarmed at the 'one-sidedness' of the Committee's deliberations:

> ...this one meeting has served to get the Zionist case off to a flying start. All the papers so far presented to the Committee have been either factual or strongly pro-Zionist....[32]

The Department was particularly concerned that certain ministers were 'leaking' the news that partition was again under consideration.[33] This was in contrast to cabinet instructions that they dissuade Nuri Said from accompanying the Regent of Iraq on a visit to London – expressly in order to avoid discussion of Palestine.[34]

On 25 October 1943 Weizmann was received by Churchill in London, with Attlee also present. Churchill informed Weizmann that he had been thinking about partition, that he did not credit all the information that he received from the Near East, although he would not be able to say in public what he was telling the Zionist leader now. As if to make up to Weizmann for the behaviour of his own Conservative colleagues, Churchill assured Weizmann that Attlee and the Labour party were committed to partition – to which Attlee nodded his agreement. The prime minister also took this occasion to inform Weizmann – two weeks before the official announcement in the Commons – that the balance of immigration certificates would be carried over past the White Paper deadline in March 1944.[35] Churchill's warnings not to expect his public

[31] For minutes of first meeting on 4 Aug. 1943, see CAB 95/14.

[32] Minute by Sir M. Peterson, 5 Sept. 1943, in E5697/87/31, F.O. 371/35038.

[33] The Foreign Office suspected, with justice, Amery and Stanley; Weizmann had been told by Amery on 2 Sept. that the scheme of partition then under discussion would include the Negev (southern desert) and Akaba, and the whole coastline up to the Lebanon, with the exception of Acre – see record of their meeting in Z4/302/27, in Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter, C.Z.A.).

[34] Minute by Sir M. Peterson, 5 Sept. 1943, in E5697/87/31, F.O. 371/35038.

[35] See note of meeting of 25 Oct. 1943, in W.A. The extension was announced in the Commons on 10 Nov. 1943.

support for the Zionist cause, did not prevent Weizmann using his name in the United States later on. The Foreign Office later complained that ministerial remarks were being 'bandied about in Washington as gossip', and that the prime minister was being widely committed to a pro-Zionist change of policy as regards Palestine.[36]

The Cabinet Committee did not meet again until November 1943. In the interim, the Foreign Office, among others, prepared its attack on Amery's plan of partition.[37] Criticism focused especially on the assignment of the Negev to the Jews, for three reasons: (*a*) a Jewish-held Negev, combined with the Gulf of Akaba, would interpose a barrier between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world; (*b*) reports indicated that the Negev was hopeless from an agricultural point of view; and (*c*) to give to the Jews so large an area would be bound to cause a reaction among the Arabs against any new proposals for a Palestine settlement. In short, 'why go out of the way to invite trouble, when the advantage, from the Jewish point of view, seemed negligible?'.

In reply, Amery argued that there was no reason to suppose that Egypt and Syria were worried about physical continguity.[38] On the contrary, Amery argued that the nearer the Jews were brought to the Canal the better – so as to secure in that area a developed state bound to Britain by ties of gratitude and, even more, by practical interest. The reason for giving the Negev to the Jews was not so much for its agricultural value (though he did not rule this out) but for the access it gave to the Dead Sea minerals and their export via Akaba. Amery concluded with a direct jibe at the Foreign Office:

> ...if we are precluded from doing anything which could in any way offend Arab susceptibilities...then surely our enquiry is superfluous.[39]

But it was exactly on this premise that the Foreign Office prepared – as it had done in 1937 – its main attack on the very principle of partition:

> ...the solution to the Palestine question should be capable of fitting in with our general Middle Eastern policy. Any suggestion that...(it)should be determined solely on the basis of world sympathy with the sufferings of the Jews, as contrasted with the alleged failure of the Arabs to assist the war effort, is to be deprecated....[40]

British policy in the future, continued the memorandum, could not be based on expected gratitude from the Arabs for having defeated the Axis. On the debit side of Britain's account with the Arabs would be the failure

[36] Minute by R. M. A. Hankey, 5 Feb. 1944, in E724/67/31, F.O. 371/40129.

[37] For following, see memorandum by R. K. Law of 12 Aug. 1943, P.(M) (43)7, in CAB 95/14.

[38] See Amery memorandum of 25 Aug. 1943, P.(M) (43), in ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] For this and following, see Foreign Office memorandum of 1 Nov. 1943, P.(M) (43)16, in CAB 95/14.

to remove the French from the Levant, the increased demands for military facilities that would have to be made from Iraq (to guard the Persian Gulf), and probably from Egypt. All this would outweigh any credit balance and, '*to put extra strain by the Palestine problem, would endanger the stability of our Middle East policy*'.[41]

Yet, unlike in 1937, the Foreign Office had to take into account the weight of opinion inside the Cabinet Committee in favour of partition, and the influence of the prime minister himself. Therefore, while arguing with all its power against partition and the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine, the Department pleaded that 'if Jewish State there must be, it should be confined to a 'token' state considerably less extensive than the Peel plan'.

The minister of State at Cairo, while accepting that it would be in Britain's own best interest to adhere to the White Paper, conceded that, in the changed political context brought about by war, this would clearly be impossible.[42] The government was therefore thrown back on partition, faute de mieux. The minister's scheme of partition was contrived from an idiosyncratically British sense of logic:

> Partition, on any conceivable terms to us, is acceptable to neither party. . .Should be possible to draw a boundary which, while not acceptable to either party, would not be so utterly unacceptable as to involve us in the strife and bitterness of the past twenty-five years. . . .[43]

Such a scheme, believed Casey, would have to follow the narrow lines of Woodhead, rather than the generous ones of Amery. He therefore proposed to exclude from the proposed Jewish State most of Galilee – including the fertile, settled areas of the Beisan-Nazareth-Tiberias triangle – together with the Huleh valley; Jaffa, with 66,000 Arabs as against 26,000 Jews, should remain an Arab port, even if this meant adopting the clumsy expedient of a corridor to Arab territories in the interior.

The colonial secretary had come closer to the Foreign Office line since the summer. He reverted to the 'Peel' principle of drawing the partition lines according to extant Jewish and Arab settlements.[44] Reports from the Middle East during the summer had drawn his attention to the 'fact' that even the moderate plan of partition recommended by Peel had led to an Arab revolt. Since then, Arab national aspirations had been stimulated by promises made in the White Paper. Stanley now asserted that, if Britain were to go back on her undertakings, it could be only on the basis of a partition somewhat resembling the Woodhead Committee's plan 'B'. This would give the Jews the fertile plains of Esdraelon and Beisan running east from Haifa, and the coastal plain from Haifa to a point south of Tel Aviv, including Jaffa. In this state, the Colonial Office

[41] Ibid. my emphasis.
[42] Memorandum by Casey, 2 Nov. 1943, P.(M) (43), in CAB 95/14.
[43] Ibid.
[44] For following, see memorandum by Stanley of 1 Nov. 1943, P.(M) (43)14, in CAB 95/14.

calculated that the Jews would enjoy a bare majority, 386,000 to 306,000 Arabs. Under Stanley's modified plan, the Arabs would retain all of Galilee (given to the Jews by Peel), including the Huleh salient, and the hilly 'spine' of Palestine – the Samaria, Ramallah and Hebron sub-districts; also the northern Negev, including the Gaza and Beersheba districts. Stanley proposed that the question of the main area of the Negev be left open until experts had shown whether development was practicable or not. The Colonial Office scheme would give the Jewish State 80 per cent of the Jewish population, and 78 per cent of the Jewish-owned land of Palestine; also the major towns of Tel Aviv, Jaffa and Haifa (with its important industrial area), and all the Jewish industries, except for the Dead Sea Potash works.

A new element was introduced by the deputy minister of State at Cairo.[45] Lord Moyne, while in agreement that such a 'reduced' partition plan might be practicable, believed it would have no chance of success unless both the Jewish and Arab areas were linked to a Greater Syria. Lord Moyne proposed the creation of four 'Levant' states – Greater Syria (to comprise Syria, Transjordan and the Arab areas of the Lebanon and Palestine), Christian Lebanon, the Jewish state and a British-protected Jerusalem state.

The second meeting of the Cabinet Committee[46] witnessed general support for the Colonial Office scheme, from Casey, Moyne and the Palestine administration. The colonial secretary, summing up the principles that had guided him, claimed that, as no reasonable scheme would be acceptable to either party, the government would have to impose its own, equitable scheme – one that would be practicable, and not lead to lasting resentment. Such preconditions meant conforming as far as possible to the existing demographic patterns of Palestine.

The Foreign Office concentrated its efforts at this stage on making the proposed Jewish State – if one must be created – as 'palatable' as possible for the Arabs. Its objections to even the modified Colonial Office scheme were based on three points: (*a*) the Jewish State would have as many Arabs as Jews – in itself a provocation; (*b*) the plan concentrated all the best land and industry in the Jewish State; and (*c*) the Arab hinterland was to be deprived of any port facilities south of Acre, unless or until a new port could be built at Gaza.[47]

At the Cabinet Committee meeting, Law therefore asked for the exclusion from the Jewish State of the Beisan-Nazareth-Tiberias triangle, the Huleh salient, and Jaffa – all predominantly Arab in population. Stanley pointed out that this would involve the transfer to the Arab State of the important Jordan Hydro-Electric Works, that supplied all Palestine with its electricity. Law retorted that the Jewish State would still be

[45] See memorandum by Lord Moyne of 1 Nov. 1943, P.(M) (43)15, ibid.
[46] For minutes of meeting of 4 Nov. 1943, see CAB 95/14.
[47] See minute of 18 Oct. 1943, in E6616/87/31, F.O. 371/35040.

left with most of Palestine's industry and 80 per cent of its citrus area. But the Committee decided to leave the triangle in the Jewish State, on account of the 24,000 Jewish settlers already there. The Committee also rejected Law's proposal to transfer Jaffa to the Arab State, but instead agreed to guarantee reasonable port facilities to the Arabs. Against Law's objections, the Huleh salient (an area of projected Jewish development) was also left in the projected Jewish state – although its inclusion was now made dependent upon the agreement of the Palestine administration. Decision on the Negev was left over to the next meeting.

At its third meeting, the Committee concentrated on the two outstanding points – the Huleh salient, and the Negev.[48] The predisposition of the Committee became evident when, despite warnings of disturbances or even civil war conveyed in the meantime by the High Commissioner of Palestine, and over the objections of Law and Stanley, the Committee nevertheless confirmed the inclusion of the Huleh in the Jewish State. There was no clearcut consensus concerning the Negev. Stanley advocated that it remain under the Mandate, until its economic potential was examined. Cranborne suggested it remain permanently mandated, while Moyne advocated that it go to the Arab State, though he added that MacMichael should be asked what effect the exclusion of the Negev from their state would have on the Palestinian Arabs. Law expressed the opinion that the effect of partition on the Arabs outside Palestine might be less serious if the Negev remained under Mandate. The Committee finally agreed that – subject to MacMichael's agreement – the Negev would remain provisionally under Mandate until an impartial committee reported on its economic potential. Meanwhile, there would be no announcement on its allocation to either state, although development rights might be given to a chartered company.

The Committee also gave its general agreement to Moyne's scheme for the creation of a Greater Syria although, if necessary, partition was to proceed without it. The Committee decided to press ahead with working out the details of the scheme, in order to have it ready for implementation at the right psychological moment. This would be preferably after the defeat of Germany, although Moyne warned that it might have to be earlier, as one of the means by which to persuade the French to reduce their own rights in the Levant.

Having failed in its attempt to 'modify' the extent of the proposed Jewish State, the Foreign Office reverted to its original policy of outright opposition to partition, in principle. The Department expected violent Arab opposition to the new partition scheme because (*a*) it now allowed for unlimited immigration, whereas the 1939 White Paper had established the principle that the Jewish population of Palestine would remain at 33 per cent of the total; (*b*) the scheme was similar to plan 'B' of the Peel Report, and, even if Galilee was now excluded from the Jewish State, Jaffa

[48] See minutes of meeting of 16 Nov. 1943, in CAB 95/14.

and other Arab lands were not; (*c*) the whole scheme rested on the principle that every possible area, except those wholly or almost wholly Arab in respect of population and land, was to be given to the Jews; and (*d*) for the Arabs, the scheme was a breach of good faith:

> When we wanted to keep them quiet, in 1939, we produced the White Paper, but when, after the war, our international difficulties were eased, we decided to betray Arab interests by reverting to our original ideas of partition...[49]

The Department remained adamant in its opposition to leaving the Negev indefinitely under Mandate, which would only arouse Jewish hopes and Arab fears – and therefore proposed that the Negev be allotted to the projected Greater Syrian State. The Department also opposed the cession of the Huleh salient to the Jews, merely on the grounds of the concession granted them. In Jewish hands, the Huleh would form a barrier between Arab Galilee and Greater Syria, and create vulnerable frontiers.

But the Committee was by its very composition weighted against the traditional Foreign Office line, and at its fourth meeting – against Foreign Office objections – decided by majority on its Report, which summarized the conclusions of its previous meeting.[50] Casey registered his dissent from the main report in a separate paper,[51] advocating, like the Foreign Office, that the Huleh salient, the Beisan-Nazareth-Tiberias triangle, and the Negev should go to the projected Arab State. Cairo's opposition to the Jews' receipt of the Negev might have been connected with growing fears of the Jewish military potential, and its proximity to the Canal.

The prime minister expressed his approval of the Committee's report, even in the face of added opposition from the Chiefs of Staff.[52] But there was a general consensus that no announcement would be made before the successful conclusion of the war with Germany. Again, as in 1937, the Foreign Office was granted an interval between a policy decision and its execution, in which to work for the reversion of the original decision.

III

In view of the fact that its traditional objections had been overruled, the Foreign Office did consider for a time a 'secondary' line of attack, on the question of the effects, legal and social, of the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine upon those Jews resident outside that State.[53] The Department was testing the 'weak link' in the Zionist case – the anxieties of those well-established Jewish communities who, as had happened in 1917, might fear for their own well-being in their present country of residence.

[49] Minute by Baxter of 7 Dec. 1943, in E7847/87/31, F.O. 371/35042.
[50] See minutes of meeting of 10 Dec. 1943, in CAB 95/14.
[51] See P.(M) (43)28 of 10 Dec. 1943, ibid.
[52] See below, p. 741.
[53] For following see draft memorandum of 23 Dec. 1943, in E8176/87/31, F.O. 371/35042.

The department surmised that those Jews remaining outside the new State might be faced either with expulsion, or the loss of their existing nationality. Even in Britain and in the United States – the most 'tolerant' of nations – the possibility of anti-semitism could not be ruled out, for the Jews might be regarded primarily as nationals of the Jewish State, rather than British or American. As nationality was usually based upon residence, the creation of a Jewish State would probably place most Jews in the dilemma of having to opt for one or the other. The large majority of Jews who remained outside the Jewish State would probably be frustrated, and might prefer that there should be no Jewish State, rather than one of which they would not be citizens. The Foreign Office might explain the position to 'responsible' bodies in the United States and in Britain, in a published statement, and invite those bodies to ascertain their feelings.

Such a statement would have bordered on the limits of being an actual warning, if not a veiled threat as to the consequences of the establishment of a Jewish State. Eden advised the department not to go ahead with the idea until he had spoken with Morrison, the Chairman of the Palestine Committee. The author has found no record of that consultation, but, after the cabinet's endorsement of partition in January, Eden apparently rejected this line, reverting once more to the tactic that had worked so well in 1937–8 – the mobilization of British officialdom in the Middle East.

The cabinet gave its general endorsement to the Committee's report – 'as good as any that could be devised'.[54] The meeting agreed that any scheme would meet with strong protests and that, once the government had taken a decision in favour of a particular solution, it should not allow itself to be deflected by opposition. The objections of the Chiefs of Staff were overruled, although all agreed that the scheme be kept secret until the defeat of Germany. Eden asked for a suspension of any final decision, pending reports from his Middle East ambassadors on the consequences of the Report.

Churchill himself was convinced of the need to delay any decision on Palestine, not only until the successful conclusion of the European war but, more specifically, at least until after the American Presidential elections due to be held in November 1944.[55] It seems that Amery was the only one who saw, as he had in 1937, the danger in delay. He discerned the need for swift, decisive action on what he regarded as an 'irreducible minimum', and argued allegorically:

> The one thing that can make a Solomon's judgement possible is the swift and clean cut. What we cannot afford to do is to saw slowly away at a squealing infant in the presence of two hysterical mothers and amid the ululations of a chorus of equally hysterical relatives in the Arab and Jewish world.[56]

[54] See minutes of meeting of 25 Jan. 1944, in CAB 65/45.
[55] Churchill minute of 16 Jan. 1944, in Prem. 4/52/1.
[56] Amery–Churchill, 22 Jan. 1944, in ibid.

The ambassadors' verdicts on partition were not hard to predict, especially in view of the lead given by Eden:

> You may be surprised that the Committee, in the light of their past knowledge of the history of Palestine, should have recommended what is essentially a return to the Peel plan, which was responsible for so much opposition and bloodshed in the years before the war...[57]

Eden himself felt the shift in government policy was due to two factors: first, the change in the political balance of the cabinet effected by Churchill. Many ministers, and several of those on the Cabinet Committee, had voted against the White Paper in 1939, and remained committed against any policy that would leave the Jews as a permanent minority in Palestine. Secondly, he saw the difficulty in carrying out the latter stages of the White Paper provisions in a world radically changed from that of 1939. By March, 1944, the government had to decide whether to 'close the doors' of Palestine to further Jewish immigration, or not. If it did not – and American opinion made ministers all the more reluctant to do so – then the White Paper could be regarded as defunct. The question then became whether to 'return to the old pernicious system of absorptive capacity', or to return to the partition of Palestine – which would at least place the responsibility for future Jewish immigration on the Jews themselves. The Jews' suffering during the war had strengthened their case for establishing a Jewish State somewhere, and it could hardly be other than in Palestine. The Cabinet Committee had felt, explained Eden, that if partition was accompanied by an offer to terminate the mandates for Palestine and Transjordan and to facilitate the creation of a Greater Syria, this might be regarded as a 'new contribution' to offset any detrimental effects.

Eden asked the ambassadors specifically whether Arab opposition – if expected – would be materially reduced by giving the Huleh salient to the Arabs instead of to the Jews, or if the Negev were definitely promised to the Arabs, or if the plan were linked to the creation of a Greater Syria. Although Eden's enquiry referred to the details, rather than to the principle of partition, the Ambassadors' replies addressed themselves first and foremost to warnings as to the consequences of partition per se.

Lord Killearn[58] in Cairo forecast bitter opposition from Egypt, which currently aimed at the leadership of the Arab States. The creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine would be regarded as a 'torpedo' to that dream. He did not believe the inclusion or exclusion of the areas mentioned would mitigate Arab opposition, though, if partition did go through, he would advocate the inclusion of the Huleh in the Arab State,

[57] For this and following, see Eden to Middle East Ambassadors, 1 Feb. 1944, ibid.
[58] Killearn–Eden, 16 Feb. 1944, ibid.

on the grounds of contiguity between Galilee and the rest of the Arab State. Killearn's own proposal was brutally simple: he

> ...would scrap the White Paper and Mandate and come out boldly with a decision to keep Palestine ourselves as a vital link in our defence system...our physical control should be definite and unlimited...both sides would squeal... but would eventually submit to *force majeure*....

This advice was not only contrary to Britain's supposed concern for its international obligations – but it also made nonsense of the ambassador's oft-repeated warnings about the repercussions in the Arab world of British policy in Palestine. Killearn's attitude can perhaps be understood in the context of British military strength in the Middle East at that period, and the readiness with which Killearn himself was willing to display it.

Cornwallis, the ambassador at Baghdad, was not quite so unequivocal.[59] He believed that the announcement of partition was unlikely to produce any immediate violent reaction, provided sufficient force was shown. However, the Jewish State would become the *terra irredenta* of the Arabs, to be recovered when a favourable moment presented itself. Iraq itself would regard the abrogation of the White Paper as a gross breach of faith, and the establishment of a Jewish State as a betrayal. If there were riots in Palestine, one might expect hostile demonstrations in Iraq, attacks on Jews and possibly on individual British subjects. At the very least, 'Iraq would leave the list of countries in which Britain had friendly interest', and the maintenance of British oil and other interests would become precarious. Cornwallis did not believe that the creation of a Greater Syria would 'soften the blow' – the Arab leaders already took such a development for granted. As for the details of the scheme, he was against the cession of the Huleh to the Jews, as that area, largely populated by Arabs, might then be expected to become the source of a special grievance. He also warned against Britain acting alone, without the backing of her Allies. If she did, their influence would rise, as hers fell.

During this period a new proposal, emanating from Roosevelt, was conveyed to London by his emissary to the Middle East, Colonel Hoskins.[60] Roosevelt advocated that Palestine be turned into a Permanent Trustee State, administered by a High Commissioner responsible to the United Nations, guided by a Council representing Jews, Christians and Moslems. Jewish immigration might continue, but within the limits of a fixed ratio to the Arab population.

The scheme – later resurrected by Eden – was ably disposed of for the moment by the colonial secretary.[61] Under Trusteeship, claimed Colonel

[59] Cornwallis (ambassador at Baghdad)–Eden, 24 Feb. 1944, ibid.

[60] For the following, see Eden–Middle East ambassadors, 1 Feb. 1944, ibid.; for the American documents relative to the Trusteeship idea, see F.R.U.S. 1945, vol. VIII (Washington, 1969), pp. 683–7.

[61] See Stanley–Churchill, 10 June 1944, in Prem. 4/52/1.

Stanley, Palestine would be left for ever under a Mandatory system, with all the attendant evils inherent in it prior to the war. The scheme would shatter for ever Jewish hopes of nationhood; control of their own immigration would be denied them; and the Jews of Palestine would remain doomed to permanent minority status. On the other hand, the plan satisfied none of the Arab demands – independence, closer union with neighbouring Moslem countries, and the complete stoppage of Jewish immigration. It did not even have the advantage of partition, which ensured that in the future a large portion of Palestine would form part of an independent Arab State. Churchill agreed with Stanley, and repeated his determination to abide by the pledges given to the Jews by past British governments.[62]

Additional support for partition now came from an unexpected quarter – from MacMichael. In his final dispatch before leaving Palestine for good, the High Commissioner also advocated partition, faute de mieux.[63] He had come to the conclusion, from his own experience, that the government would not, and probably could not, effectively control Jewish immigration which, if it continued on any considerable scale into an undivided Palestine, would be 'disastrous for British imperial interests, to the security of the Middle East, to the Arabs, whose fear of a Jewish deluge is not without justification, and to the Jews themselves, for whom a process of gradual percolation in an atmosphere of qualified receptivity offers a far brighter future than does the attempt to obtain by force what is not theirs to take nor ours to give'. Under partition, Jewish immigration, being confined to a limited area, would lose much of its terror for the Arab, and much of its attraction for the Jew.

Thus, with the exception of MacMichael, all British representatives in the Middle East warned against the consequences of partitioning Palestine. Such warnings had been expected, even solicited, by the Foreign Office. But not even the Colonial Office, nor the pro-partitionists on the Cabinet Committee, could fail to be impressed.

IV

In August 1944 the cabinet agreed that consideration of the Palestine problem should be resumed at an early date, and deputed the Colonial and Foreign Offices to collaborate in working out a final scheme.[64] But whereas the Colonial Office produced a document entitled 'possible modifications to the partition scheme', the Foreign Office put 'The Case against Partition'.

The colonial secretary reported back to the Cabinet Committee on the objections of the ambassadors at Cairo and Baghdad, and the opposition expressed by Middle East representatives (apart from MacMichael) at a

[62] Churchill–Stanley, 24 June 1944, ibid.
[63] MacMichael's dispatch of July 1944 is to be found in W.O. 216/121.
[64] See minutes of meeting of 9 Aug. 1944, in CAB 65/47.

conference called by Lord Moyne at Cairo, on his return from London.[65] The conference had advised against proceeding with Moyne's Greater Syria scheme for the time being, but had recommended the initial creation of a Greater Transjordan, to be known as Southern Syria – comprising Transjordan and Arab Palestine. Military representatives in the Middle East had made it clear that a policy of bi-nationalism in an undivided Palestine under British rule was preferable to the creation of independent states. The Chiefs of Staff had been asked for their opinions of the proposed frontiers.

But Stanley thought it inadvisable to suspend further action until the report of the Chiefs of Staff. He believed that no strategically defensible frontier was possible, but that partition should nevertheless proceed along the lines of the principle already agreed upon – on the basis of existing Jewish settlement, and by avoiding the inclusion of too large an Arab element in the Jewish State.

The 'modifications' proposed by Stanley were minor. With the postponement of the Greater Syria scheme, it was now proposed that Galilee should form part of the new 'Southern Syria', to be administered from Amman. Special prominence would be given to the Jerusalem State, in which the High Commissioner would be personally responsible for the Holy Places.[66] Some minor border rectifications were proposed (probably after consultation with the Palestine Administration), the most notable of which was the exclusion of Mount Tabor – the traditional site of the Transfiguration – from the Jewish State; as also of the potash works at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

The Foreign Office rejected the thesis that partition would make for a final settlement in the area and predicted that:

> ...The Zionists will not be deterred by the small size of the Jewish State from filling it up with immigrants beyond its capacity. They will think of the Jewish State merely as a stepping-stone towards the realisation of their wider hopes for a larger Jewish State covering the whole of Palestine and Transjordan. The Arabs will be kept in a continual state of tension. There will continually be disorders and blood shed....[67]

Eden accused the Committee of making four major errors; (*a*) in underestimating the upheaval that would be caused in the Middle East by the creation of a Jewish State in any part of Palestine; (*b*) in placing too much emphasis on American opinion, when that opinion could not properly be assessed; (*c*) in giving undue consideration to the opinion of the Jewish

[65] See Colonial Office memorandum of 11 Sept. 1944, in CAB 95/14.

[66] Of the Jerusalem State, the Committee had the following to say: 'The creation of this new State, which will safeguard for ever the Holy City, preserve its associations and guarantee freedom of access to the adherents of all those creeds which hold it sacred deserves in our opinion, pride of place in a project which is otherwise one of expediency.' The report is in CAB 95/14.

[67] See Eden memorandum of 15 Sept. 1944, P.(M) (44)11, in CAB 95/14.

extremists, whose views might not be endorsed by the bulk of their co-religionists outside Palestine; and (*d*) in believing that partition would bring finality, when in effect it would only transfer control from the Colonial to the Foreign Office and Service Departments.

The Foreign Office now took up Roosevelt's proposal to create a new Palestinian state, under the aegis of the United Nations, with executive powers devolving on to a British High Commissioner or Governor. The Department feared that any policy embarked upon by Britain alone, especially if it were partition, would involve the grave risk of ceding British pre-eminence to the United States. In contrast to its opinion of partition, the Department believed that the statute constituting the new state *would* be definitive, rendering Jewish immigration possible 'perhaps to within 100,000 of the Arab population', which would mean a further 300,000–400,000 Jews. The memorandum was a poorly patched-up motley of alarms and wishful thinking.

At the first of the second series of Cabinet Committee meetings,[68] Amery and Stanley opposed the Foreign Office attempt to re-open discussion on the issue of partition itself, and advocated adherance to the December scheme. Morrison agreed to defer discussion until Eden, then abroad, returned.

For the first time, Eden himself attended the next Committee meeting,[69] in order to put the Foreign Office case against partition. Amery, in his ministerial capacity, sympathized with Eden's case – any alteration to the White Paper policy would greatly affect the Moslems of India, and he was certain that the Viceroy of India would oppose partition. But, in Amery's opinion, this view did not take into account the fact that unless the problem were handled decisively the position would grow worse, and both sides might commit themselves irrevocably to extremist policies. The Foreign Office scheme meant permanent denial of the self-government that both Arabs and Jews were determined to have. Amery also rejected the Foreign Office theory on 'Jewish expansionism'. When responsible for their own state, the Jews would be wary of the dangers arising from over-population, and would themselves take measures to control it.

Stanley asserted that the Foreign Office objections applied equally to any departure from the White Paper. The dangers risked by partition were a matter of opinion – his own advisers considered the risks less than those of any other alternative. Stanley, as in 1943, did not believe that an Anglo-American condominium held out any better prospect than did partition, whereas any scheme that envisaged a further immigration of 400,000 Jews would constitute a more serious departure from the White Paper than partition. The plan would be no more welcome to the Jews, since it ruled out a Jewish majority, a Jewish State, and self-government. No responsibility would be accepted by the United States or Soviet

[68] For minutes of meeting of 19 Sept. 1944, see CAB 95/14.
[69] For minutes of meeting of 26 Sep. 1944, see ibid.

governments; and, in the end, it would be left to Britain alone to implement the plan.

The Foreign Office attempted to put the argument that European governments might bring pressure to bear on their Jews to migrate to the Jewish State, but this was countered by the view that the creation of a Jewish State might in fact have a stabilising effect on the Jews who, without any need for political agitation, might become more welcome in those countries where they were.

Morrison summed up: the majority of the Committee clearly saw no reason to depart from the broad principles of its first Report, and saw partition as the lesser of two evils. Eden gave notice that he would continue his opposition in cabinet.

What in fact were the differences between the Committee's first and second reports, and what were the motivations behind the modifications proposed?[70] The linking of partition to the plan for a Greater Syria had been dropped, and the Greater Syria scheme postponed. Any such scheme would have to await the clarification of the French position in the Levant. Also, London's obligations to Abdullah precluded the attachment of Transjordan to Syria against his will – and Abdullah would not agree to such an amalgamation unless he himself were the ruler, which the Syrians in their turn would not accept.

The second Report stressed the importance of the Jerusalem State, which would justify British presence in Palestine, as guardian of the city sacred to three religions. Minor frontier rectifications had removed some 42,000 acres from the Jewish State, though this was compensated for by not taking – as had been intended at one time – 48,000 acres from the Huleh area. On the two major points of contention, Galilee and the Negev, the Committee had swung towards the Arab interest. Galilee was now to go to Southern Syria. Whereas the future of the Negev was left open, its norther border was to be adjusted, so as to transfer the potash works at the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Southern Syrian State. On the latter issue, no difficulties of transit were envisaged for the Jewish operating company.

On 6 November 1944, three days after the secretary to the cabinet prepared the Committee's report for cabinet discussion, Lord Moyne – Minister Resident in the Middle East, and close friend of Churchill – was assassinated at Cairo. Churchill issued a stiff personal warning to the Zionists in the House of Commons:

> If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently in the past....[71]

[70] For the following, see *The Second Report of the Palestine Committee*, P.(M) (44)14, ibid.; also minute by Sir Edward Bridges (secretary to the cabinet) of 3 Nov. 1944, in Prem. 4/52/1. See Map 2.

[71] See report of Churchill's speech of 17 Nov. 1944, in *The Times* of the next day.

Churchill gave instructions that cabinet discussion on the Committee's report should be held over, it being impossible to discuss plans for the future of Palestine while such outrages continued.[72]

There is some irony in the fact that an offshoot of the Revisionists – whose campaign for a Jewish Army in the United States had been so material in prompting British re-consideration of the White Paper policy – was now responsible for the delay of government measures that would have displaced the White Paper principles as the basis for British policy in Palestine.

Zionist leaders appreciated the damage done, even if they remained unaware of how close they had been to securing a change in British policy. The Jewish Agency agreed, for the first time, to co-operate actively with the British authorities in stamping out terrorist groups, although the Stern Group – responsible for Moyne's murder – ceased activity of its own accord, until the summer of 1945.[73]

In February 1945, as the White Paper immigration quota gradually exhausted itself,[74] the need for some government decision became urgent. Stanley urged Morrisson, as chairman of the Cabinet Committee, to convene a further meeting, to reach a decision as soon as possible.[75] The Colonial Office linked the decision on future immigration with that on partition.[76] The White Paper quota was not expected to last out beyond September, which meant that some new policy must be published, by June at the latest. Stanley appreciated that, as usual, time had not worked in favour of partition: the recent conference of foreign ministers of the Arab States at Cairo had not improved prospects; nor did the fact that Dr Weizmann, following his visit to Palestine, was allegedly moving away from partition, towards full support of the Biltmore programme.[77] The colonial secretary's strongest argument in favour of partition was simply that it remained the only one in the field. He therefore challenged the cabinet: it must choose partition, unless presented with a suitable alternative. In the meantime, he accepted the proposal made by the new Minister Resident at Cairo, Sir Edward Grigg, and allegedly supported by Nuri Said as well, that a monthly quota of 2,000 immigrants (or a compromise figure of 1,500 if necessary) be allowed, pending the final settlement of the Palestine question at the Peace Conference.

But the balance of forces had now tipped in favour of the anti-partitionists. The Second Report of the Partition Committee had enjoyed

[72] See Morrison–Churchill, 26 Feb. 1945, in Prem. 4/51/2.

[73] See Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, pp. 323–31.

[74] In his Commons announcement of 10 Nov. 1943, Stanley had announced that there remained some 31,078 of the 75,000 immigration certificates provided for under the 1939 White Paper.

[75] See Morrison–Churchill, 26 Feb. 1945, in Prem. 4/51/2.

[76] For following, see memorandum by Stanley of 30 Mar. 1945, P.(M) (45)1, in CAB 95/14.

[77] The Biltmore programme, which became official Zionist policy in 1942, demanded Jewish Agency control of immigration into Palestine, and progress towards the establishment of Western Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth.

the support of both the Minister Resident at Cairo and of the High Commissioner in Palestine. The new incumbents of both posts – Sir Edward Grigg and Viscount Gort respectively – now added their opposition to partition, to that of the other British representatives in the Middle East.

Sir Edward Grigg produced his own proposal, a revision of the existing Mandate that would remove those defects that had brought about the current situation.[78] Grigg claimed that the constitution of the Arab League since the cabinet decision of the previous September, had fundamentally altered the prospects for partition, which the new body could now be expected to resist à outrance. Furthermore, as Mandatory of the new Jerusalem State, Britain would have greater military and financial commitments than during the previous twenty-five years in mandated Palestine as a whole. Grigg therefore proposed that the International Body, which the Committee had intended to set up to supervise and guarantee the three new states in Palestine, should instead be entrusted with framing a new Mandate or Trust for an undivided Palestine, with Britain retaining its present responsibility for the administration and security of Palestine as a whole – but on new terms, which she herself would propose. In outlining these terms, Grigg made a profound analysis of the problems built in to the Mandatory constitution.

Grigg pinpointed three defects. First, Britain bore sole responsibility for deciding on Jewish immigration. This was exploited in agitation in the United States, it embroiled Britain with the Arabs and had driven her to the surrender involved in the White Paper. Immigration, proposed Grigg, should in future be decided upon by a suitable international body, in which a balance might be struck between Jewish pressure and Arab resistance. The second defect was the recognition of the Jewish Agency on terms that, combined with the weakness of the Mandatory Power, had enabled the Jews to set up a 'shadow' government with its own armed forces; the main purpose of the new Trusteeship over Palestine would be to institute a single system of government which would promote the development of both races, and make the two peoples responsible in due course for their own government. Thirdly, some way would have to be found for financing Palestine for the benefit of both races, under official control – without discouraging Jewish capital; Grigg proposed that Britain and America set up a 'Palestine Development Fund', with an initial capital of £20 million.

Grigg's recommendations aimed at bringing the administration of Palestine within the frame of developing Anglo-American relations, and accordingly he recommended that responsibility pass from the Colonial to the Foreign Office.

Stanley, consistently against any 'internationalising' of the problem, was not over-impressed with Grigg's scheme:

[78] For this and following, see memorandum by Grigg of 4 Apr. 1945, W.P. (45)214, in CAB 66/64.

...in essence he recommends a return to the White Paper, except that the immigration policy for which we will have to take executive responsibility will now be decided by an International Commission....[79]

Stanley proposed that Grigg be asked to return to London as soon as possible, where the cabinet should then decide between the two alternatives before it. If no final decision was arrived at by September, the Minister Resident, together with the High Commissioner, should take steps to secure the temporary, indefinite continuation of Jewish immigration, pending the final, long-term decision.

Before the cabinet had the opportunity to consider the Palestine question again, the war with Germany was brought to a successful conclusion,[80] and Churchill formed a 'caretaker' Conservative Ministry, pending the General Election. Some two months later, on 27 July 1945, after a landslide electoral victory, Clement Attlee formed the first Labour Cabinet for fourteen years.

V

On 22 August Attlee re-constituted the Cabinet Committee on Palestine, this time giving better representation to the great departments directly involved in the Middle East.[81] Despite the Labour party's numerous pro-Zionist declarations during the war,[82] the Labour cabinet's committee was less 'pro-partition' than its Coalition predecessor. Gone was Amery, the 'Gentile-Zionist',[83] upon whose participation in the Committee Churchill had insisted, and from whom Churchill had received his regular reports. Gone was Colonel Stanley, if not an enthusiastic Zionist, then at least a reasonably unprejudiced minister who had – under the influence of his long-serving High Commissioner – come to see in partition the best way out of a bad situation. Gone also was Sinclair, a member of that small circle of opposition Parliamentarians who, in 1937 had been converted to partition by the Zionists. Yet above all, there was the loss of the éminence grise behind the Committee's proceedings, Churchill himself. Churchill had hand-picked his Committee, and was prepared – and capable – of backing their findings against the combined bureaucracies of the great Departments involved, and personally against the

[79] See memorandum by Stanley of 16 May 1945, W.P. (45)306, in CAB 66/65.

[80] 'V.E.' Day was on 8 May 1945.

[81] Bevin, the new foreign secretary, sat in person on the Committee, as did Lawson (secretary of State for War) and Viscount Stansgate (secretary of State for Air).

[82] As late as May 1945, at the Party's Election Conference, the Labour Party National Executive had reaffirmed the Party's 'Palestine plank' enunciated the previous year, which called for the abrogation of the White Paper, unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine and Arab emigration from there, and the extension of Palestine's territory. Quoted by Hurevitz, *Struggle for Palestine*, p. 227.

[83] For a description of 'gentile zionism', see Norman Rose, *The Gentile Zionists* (London, 1973), especially, pp. 5, 123, 132.

views of the Chiefs of Staff. Perhaps only a Churchill, with his vast experience of the 'corridors of power', and with such a close interest in the Jewish National Home, could have overcome the dead weight of established Palestine policy.

The men who succeeded Churchill possessed none of his qualities. Bevin at times regarded the Arab-Jewish conflict as just another problem that required the sort of negotiating skill that had made him such a powerful Labour leader. Although Labour's 'Big Three', Attlee, Bevin and Morrison, as members of the cabinet since 1940, had had continuous access to all cabinet papers regarding the Middle East, none of them had had direct ministerial contact with the Middle East, or with the direct conduct of the war. It remains doubtful whether the Labour ministers in Churchill's Coalition felt the full responsibility for the decisions of the cabinet in which they sat. Party and personal frictions survived the exigencies of war. Attlee was among that group of ministers whose 'wisdom' Churchill respected, but whom the latter would not choose as a 'boon companion'. Churchill could never really bring himself to like Morrison – though he greatly preferred him to Dr Dalton.[84] Some Labour ministers felt that their Conservative colleagues unduly interfered in their ministries, and Dalton complained to Attlee that 'unless Labour ministers were better treated each must consider his position'.[85]

Such frictions might explain the anomaly that successive Conferences of the Labour party passed resolutions against the White Paper policy of the government in which its own leaders sat.

Before 1945 no Labour minister was exposed to the direct influence and pressure of the 'Middle Eastern' departments' bureaucracies. Within a few months of his entry into the Foreign Office the previously neutral Bevin was turning against the Zionist cause. The new Labour cabinet was immediately overwhelmed by domestic and foreign post-war problems, and the cabinet – unable to agree upon the principles of a new Palestine policy – tended to rely more and more on Bevin's faculty for improvisation.[86]

The change from 'Churchillian' to Labour government was critical for the cause of Zionism, as became evident from the first proceedings of the newly-composed Cabinet Committee on Palestine. A clear distinction was now made between short- and long-term policies, as the government attempted to find formulae that would tide it over in times of crisis, rather than ultimate solutions that would involve additional British commit-

[84] See memoir by John Colville, in *Action This Day, Working with Churchill*, ed. J. Wheeler-Bennett (London, 1968), p. 105.

[85] See *Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945*, ed. D. Dilks (New York, 1972), which on p. 384 quotes Dalton–Attlee, 25 Sept. 1941, from the Dalton Papers, held at the London School of Economics.

[86] The aforegoing section on the attitudes of Labour Ministers to Zionism, leans heavily on R. Crossman, *Palestine Mission: A Personal Record* (New York, 1947); also on the Creech-Jones papers held in the Rhodes House collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in particular, file ACJ 33/2.

ment. The new colonial secretary accepted without question the warnings of the Chiefs of Staff on the need to delay any proposed new announcement on Palestine.[87] He proposed that the Committee consider the steps to be taken in Palestine during the 'many months' before any permanent policy could be put into effect:

> ...I consider that the balance of advantage lies in the temporary adherence to the White Paper policy during the interval until a new long-term policy can be formulated. Every effort would be made to get the Arab States to agree to a ...Jewish immigration of about 1500 per month during this interval....

He considered it preferable to risk the serious reaction likely from the Jews – especially in the United States – rather than to 'endanger our whole situation in the Middle East and court trouble in India'.

Grigg's [now Lord Altrincham] plan for the internationalization of the immigration problem was still on the agenda, joined now by a third proposal – to divide Palestine into two autonomous provinces. This latter plan had the advantage that it could be rapidly effected, without any alteration in the Mandate.

The new Committee held its first meeting on 6 September 1945.[88] Morrison summarized the war-time proceedings of the Committee as 'the dilemma between giving due weight to the advice of diplomatic and military representatives in the Middle East and in India and, on the other hand to the marked sympathy shown for Jewish claims in the United States'. Hall reserved his comments for the short-term problem of immigration. There remained only 3,000 out of the White Paper quota of 75,000 immigration certificates, and these were likely to run out by November. Hall proposed the 'compromise' of adherence to the White Paper quota, while trying to persuade the Arabs – despite the exhaustion of the immigration quota – to agree to further Jewish immigration at the rate of 1,500 per month, pending the formulation of long-term policy.

Bevin echoed the warnings voiced on many previous occasions by his predecessor, about 'going it alone':

> We ran the risk of doing the work while other countries remained free, on the one hand to criticise, and on the other hand, to take advantage of the favourable conditions we had created to develop their trade in Palestine. We must not overlook the crucial importance of the United States...[it] *should be our aim to associate the United States with our long-term policy in Palestine.*[89]

Bevin disagreed only with the phraseology of Hall's short-term proposals, preferring to refer to the 'continuing' of the White Paper policy, rather than to 'adherence'. As for the long term, Bevin mentioned in passing

[87] For following, see memorandum by G. Hall of 1 Sept. 1945, in P.(M) (45)10, in CAB 95/14.

[88] See minutes in CAB 95/14; present were Morrison (again Chairman), Bevin, Lord Pethwick-Lawrence (secretary of State for India), Lawson, Stansgate and Dalton (chancellor of the exchequer).

[89] Ibid. my emphasis.

that he was considering the idea of a 'Federation of Palestine and Transjordan' in which Palestine would have an Arab and a Jewish unit, while Transjordan remained essentially Arab.

During all the Committee's deliberations, there was no mention of the word 'partition'. The only word of reservation, though not opposition, came from Hugh Dalton, author of the pro-Zionist planks in the Labour party's platform. He expressed his 'great sympathy' for the Jews, and regret that their settlement in Palestine – occasioned largely by the sufferings of European Jewry – which had achieved so much in such a short time, should be held up now merely by 'the intransigence of a backward local population'. But these sentiments were a luxury even for Dalton, now responsible for Britain's post-war finances. He was quick to add that he 'quite recognised at the same time the need for taking into account Arab feeling and the importance of avoiding serious civil outbreaks in Palestine'.

Partition had been forgotten, by a government that was not sure how it was to maintain an Empire, even in the short term. The Committee endorsed the colonial secretary's proposals, and asked him – together with Bevin – to discuss the association of long-term policy in Palestine with the United Nations. As a result of their consultations, Bevin later proposed the appointment of an Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry, first to examine the current position of European Jewry, and secondly to examine political and economic conditions in Palestine.[90]

The terms of reference of the Commission were on the one hand a tactical victory for Zionism, which had for decades tried in vain to establish the link between those Jewish communities outside, and that living in, Palestine. The new British proposal tacitly reversed the Foreign Office doctrine of the late 1930s that the construction of the Jewish National Home was in effect complete, and that Britain had thereby fulfilled its obligations under the Balfour Declaration.

On the other hand, however, the appointment of the Anglo-American Commission served two *British* purposes. First, it was a convenient delaying tactic for a war-weary country, as yet militarily unprepared for any local conflict in the Middle East. Secondly, Bevin initially intended that future policy in Palestine would depend largely on the nature of the recommendations of the Commission, and that the United States would thus be forced to bear a share of the responsibility for it.'[91] The United States would then no longer be able to play the part of 'irresponsible critic'.[92] It seems to have been Bevin's original intention to rely on the new Commission to inaugurate a new era of Anglo-American

[90] See memorandum by Bevin, of 9 Oct. 1945, P.(M) (45)15, in CAB 95/14.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Bevin was furious when on 24 Sept. 1945, Truman had publicly requested – following his expert's report that there remained some 100,000 stateless European Jews outside the Russian zone of occupation – that Britain make an immediate grant of 100,000 immigration certificates for Palestine.

cooperation in the Middle East. At a reception he gave in London to the departing members of the Commission, Bevin gave the impression that he had an open mind and was willing for the Commission to make it up for him, and that, if they turned in a unanimous report, he would implement it.[93]

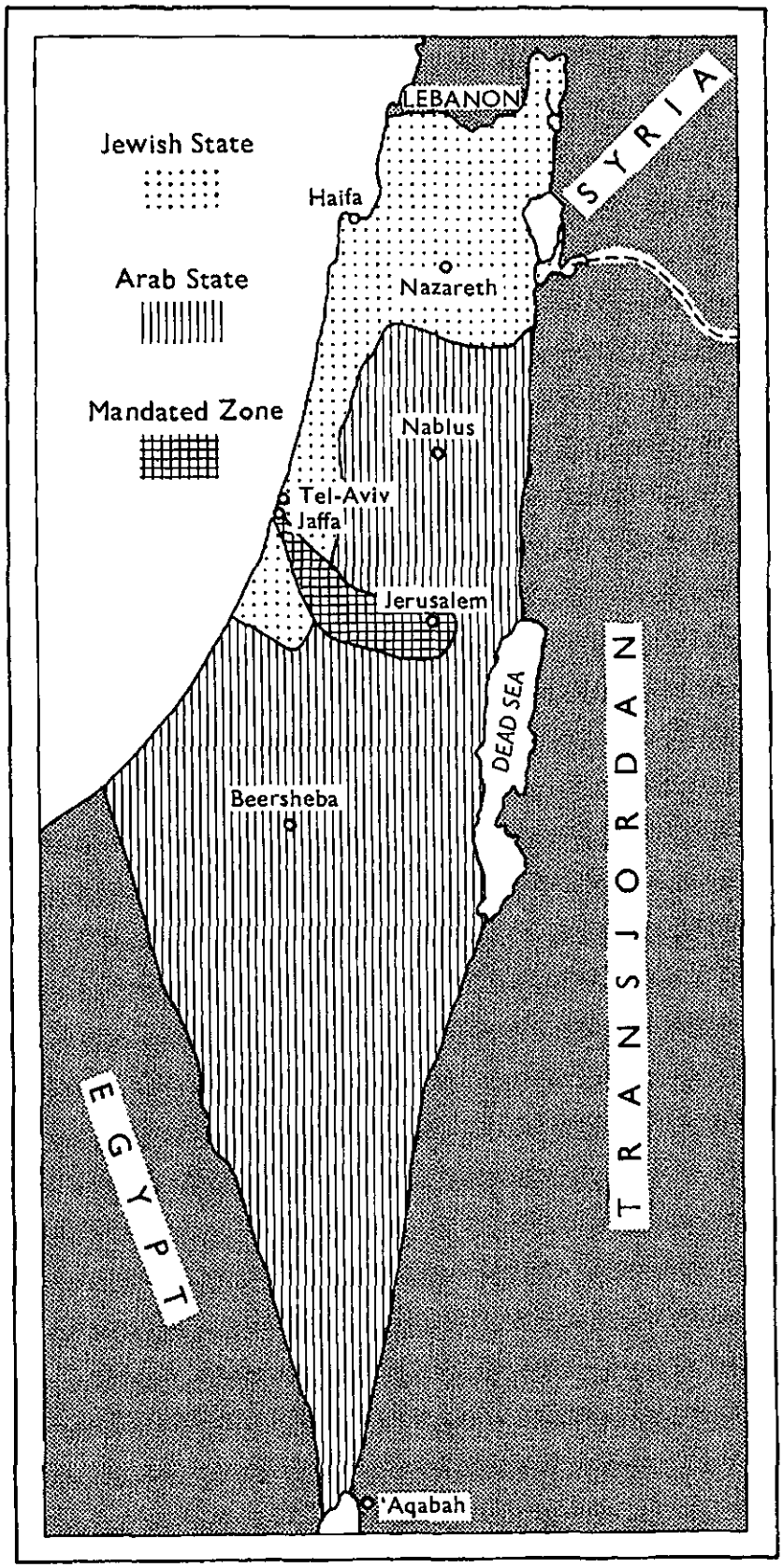
But Truman and Attlee were unable to achieve the close understanding on Palestine attained by their predecessors. Bevin's dream of involving America in Palestine was shattered by her refusal to become militarily committed in the Middle East. Britain was left to limp on alone for another two years, before finally jettisoning Palestine, by then an intolerable burden.

It must remain a matter for conjecture whether Churchill's government would have in fact ultimately revoked the May White Paper and imposed partition once the war was over. It is a matter of historical fact that Foreign Office doctrine on Palestine was seriously challenged by Churchill and those who shared his views (primarily Amery) during the war. It seems at least probable that his cabinet were in September 1944 about to prepare the machinery to establish the three new states in Palestine. The cynics might assert that the assassination of Lord Moyne in November 1944 in fact provided a welcome pretext for shelving a policy which, according to all the officials and experts would have been harmful to British interests in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the formation of the Arab League at this juncture introduced an added and consequential dimension into Arab–British relations. Yet, if Britain herself no longer dared to take personal responsibility for partitioning Palestine, the reasoning of the Peel Commission in 1937 remained true in its essentials – the conflict of two national movements in Palestine made partition the only feasible, peaceful solution.

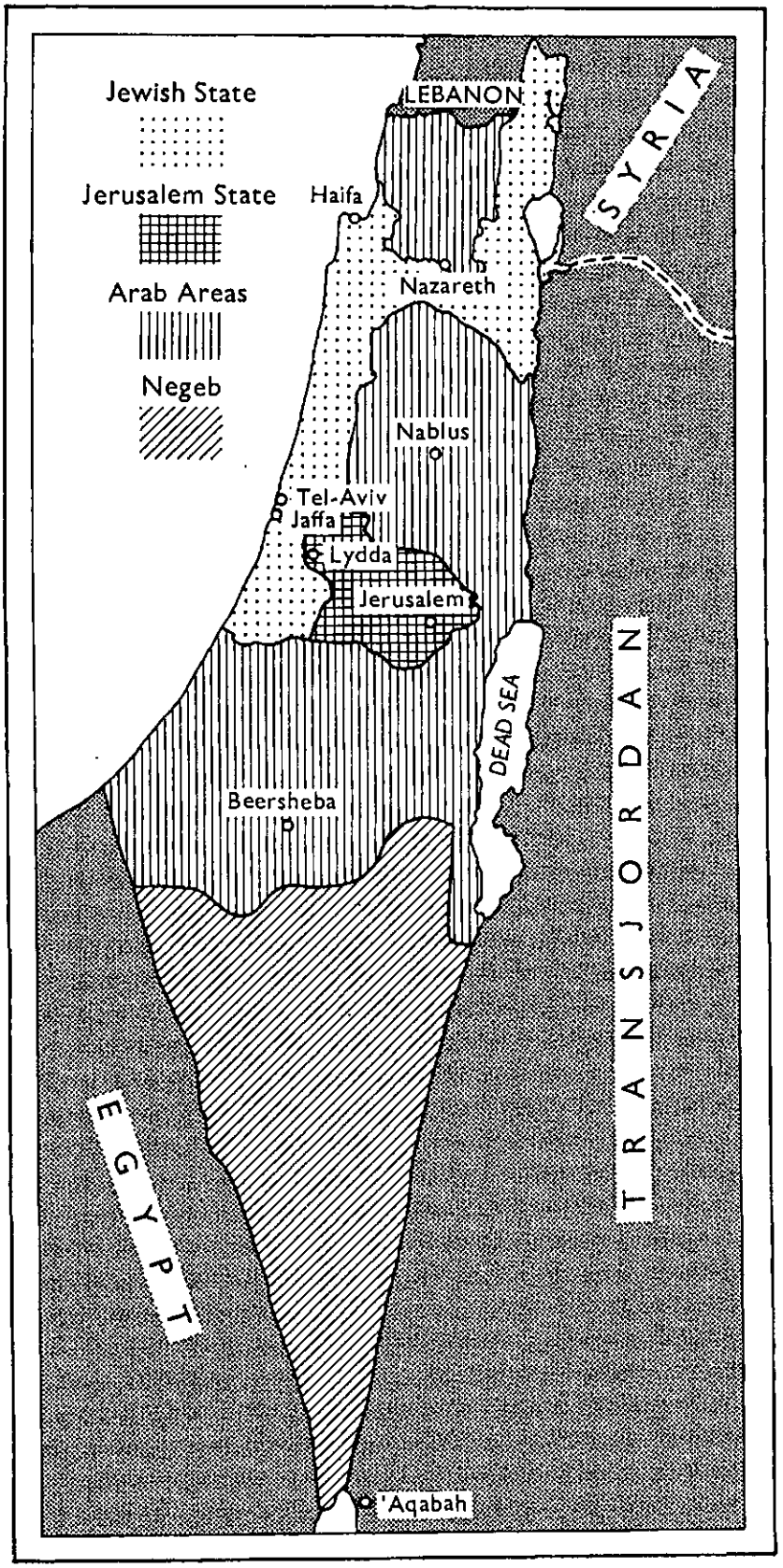
Appendix

The three main proposals for the partition of Palestine between 1937 and 1947 are illustrated in the following maps: (1) the Peel commission proposals of 1937; (2) the cabinet committee proposals of 1944; and (3) the U.N. Assembly proposals of 1947. These last, it will be noted, corresponded closely with those of 1944 in adhering to the principle of establishing the states according to the demographic distribution of Jews and Arabs. The Peel commission also applied this principle except in the case of Galilee, which it proposed to give to the Jews. This aberration was corrected by the later plans.

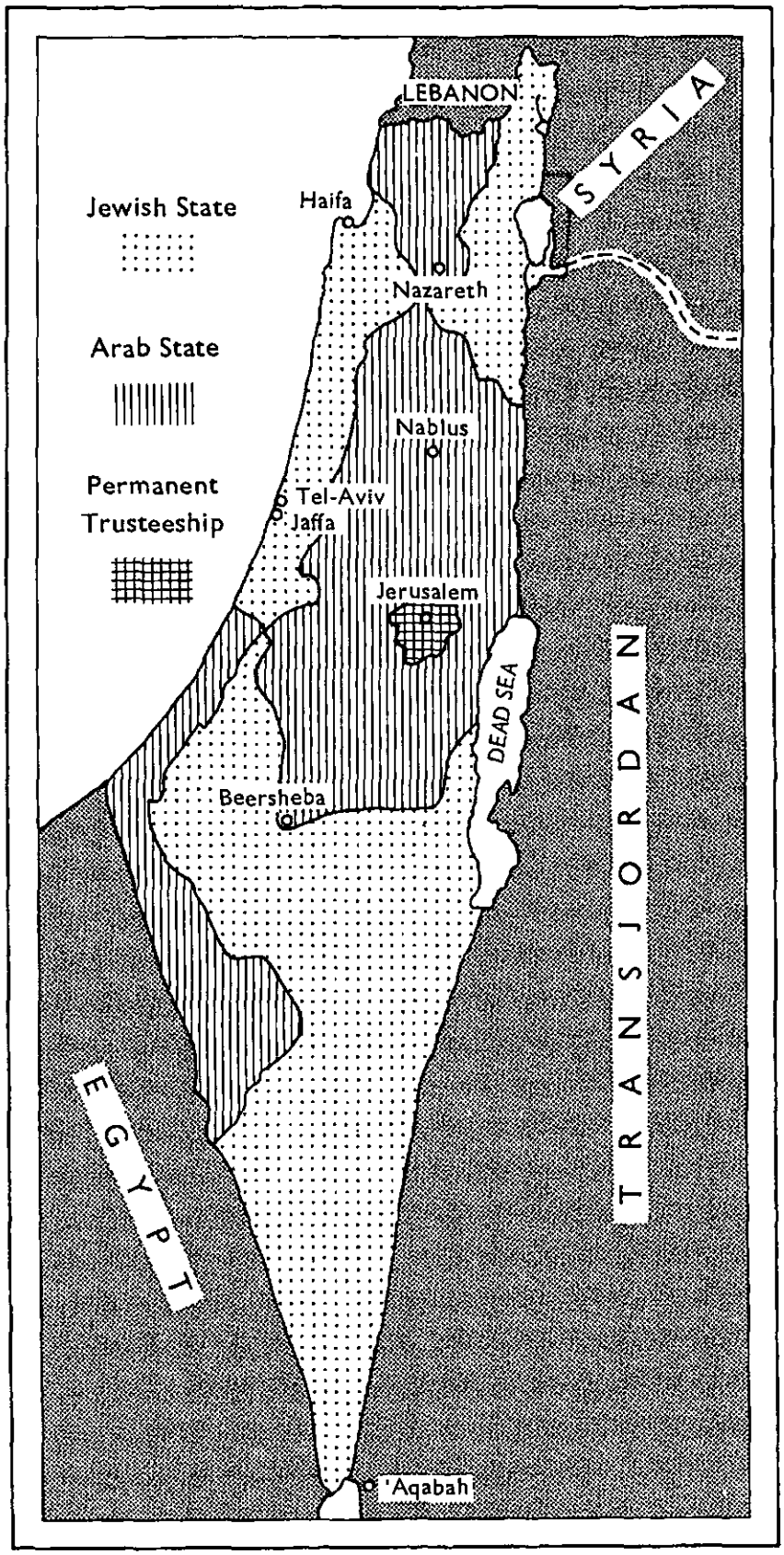
[93] Crossman, op. cit. p. 66.



1. The Peel Commission's proposal of partition, 1937.



2. The Cabinet committee's proposal of partition, 1944.



3. The U.N. General Assembly's proposal of partition, 1947.