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NEW ZEALAND'S INVOLVEMENT IN

THE PARTITIONING OF PALESTINE

AND THE CREATION OF ISRAEL

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A Thesis submitted for the degree
Master of Arts in History at the
University of Otago, Dunedin, New
Zealand.

January 1982
When the fate of Palestine was placed in the hands of the United Nations General Assembly in April 1947, the New Zealand Government became actively involved in the search for a solution to this seemingly intractable problem.

New Zealand's policy on the Palestine problem evolved from the interaction of three principal concerns: New Zealand's commitment to the United Nations and desire to see it develop as a successful agency for preserving international peace and security and promoting co-operation in economic and social matters; the desire to fulfill Commonwealth responsibilities and obligations by assisting Britain to obtain relief from the increasing burden of maintaining law and order in Palestine; and interest in the humanitarian issues involved in creating a Jewish Homeland in Palestine while paying due regard to the civil and religious rights of the Arab population.

New Zealand's initial optimism rapidly dissipated. Misgivings at the provisions made for the Special Committee on Palestine during the Assembly's first special session increased following the submission of the Committee's report and its proposal for a solution. The Assembly's discussions narrowed in focus, concentrating on the choice between the federal-state and partition proposals. How either solution was to be implemented received cursory attention only and the crucial issue of enforcement was ignored despite attempts by New Zealand and a handful of other states to make all members confront their responsibilities to the United Nations and the peoples of Palestine.

After recording its concern at the failure to consider enforcing the plan, New Zealand voted in favour of the partition resolution of November 1947. Fighting between Arabs and Jews in Palestine escalated and the United Nations responded, not by making belated provision for enforcement, but by meeting to discuss a United States proposal to set aside the November resolution and make Palestine an international trusteeship. New Zealand led the
defence of partition only to see supervision of the United Nations' involvement in Palestine move inexorably from the General Assembly to the Security Council as Palestine moved from the 'problem' category to a 'breach of the peace'.

The United Nations' involvement in Palestine demonstrated to New Zealand that the bulk of member-nations were no more willing to act collectively to preserve peace and prevent aggression than had been the case with the League of Nations. The simultaneous onset of the Cold War revealed the temporary and illusory nature of Allied war-time unity even more dramatically. New Zealand was forced to accept that the United Nations was an ineffectual agency for collective security and that the tensions between the two 'super powers' and their allies made it unlikely that the United Nations would ever fulfil the role in world affairs that New Zealand had hoped for. The organization had much to contribute in the social and economic fields but in the increasingly hostile international atmosphere of the late 1940s New Zealand sought to guarantee its security through more traditional arrangements, reaffirming its commitment to the defence of the British Commonwealth and regarding regional alliances with more favour.
PREFAE

I would like to record my thanks to a number of people who helped me in the course of preparing this thesis for submission. Paul Edmonds and Tom Breize of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made their time and the Ministry's files generously available during my trips to Wellington. The staff of the National Archives, in particular David and Margaret Reiter, Frances Lavelle and Jonathan Adams, assisted my research and handled my enquiries promptly and efficiently.

Rob Eaddy and Paul Voight gave me the benefit of their own research in related fields, gently pointing out the inadequacies of some of my more scatterbrained initial hypotheses. The staff of the History Department, Otago University expressed interest in, and eventually concern at, my progress while my supervisors, Associate Professor Erik Olsen and Dr Tom Brooking, offered advice and encouragement, slowly pulling the disparate strands of my thesis into a more coherent whole.

I would also like to thank Judith Sanders for her speedy and accurate typing and Hunter Gillies for his invaluable assistance in the daunting task of proof-reading. Any errors that remain are the result of my own incompetence.

Finally, my thanks to my family and friends for their affection and tolerant support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Palestine Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand and the 'Jewish Question' Prior to 1947</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Three:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-War initiatives in New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy and the United Nations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Special Session on Palestine</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Evolution of New Zealand Policy June - November 1947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'What the World needs today is not resolutions, it is Resolution.' New Zealand's Defence of Partition</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Six:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand's Recognition of the State of Israel</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Seven:</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bibliography                  | 293  |
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives

CAB Cabinet Office Records

GAOR Official Records of the General Assembly of the United Nations

NZPD New Zealand Parliamentary Debates

NZJC New Zealand Jewish Chronicle

ODT Otago Daily Times

P.M. Files of the Prime Minister's Office: External Affairs

UNSCOP United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
INTRODUCTION

New Zealand is a small, sparsely populated country with a narrow base to its economy, without the military capability to guarantee its own security and conscious of its geographical isolation from the source of its political, social and cultural traditions. The sense of its vulnerability in the face of actual or perceived threat has ensured that the search for means to prevent or counter such threats has been a consistent preoccupation in New Zealand's foreign policy.

For almost the first century of New Zealand's political existence its imperial connections were unquestioningly regarded as the ultimate guarantee of New Zealand's security. Britain's Royal Navy protected New Zealand's trade links and shielded the country from external attack. New Zealand responded with loyal affection and a concern with imperial interests often surpassing Britain's own.

The election of the First Labour Government in 1935 introduced a new direction and a new ideological dimension into New Zealand's foreign policy. The concern with 'social justice' - the belief that the weak should be protected from hardship and exploitation and social and economic problems solved co-operatively for the benefit of all - which Labour's domestic policy demonstrated through measures such as the State Housing scheme and the Social Security Act, also influenced the new government's world view. Recognizing the limitations imposed by New Zealand's status as a small nation and the limited resources for the conduct of foreign policy which were at its disposal, Labour attempted to compensate by placing unprecedented emphasis on New Zealand's participation in the League of Nations.

Labour's internationalism was based on its commitment to the principle of collective security. It opposed the use of force in international affairs and sought a firm commitment to impose punitive sanctions and even employ combined military force against aggressors from the League and its members. If such a stand were taken by the international community, Labour predicted that a
new era of diplomacy based upon peaceful consultation and co-operation would replace the suspicions and divisions inherent in the old balance of power style of diplomacy. As the nations gained experience and confidence in the process of consultation and collective action real benefits in economic and social as well as political affairs would result, improving the condition of all mankind.

New Zealand's traditional Commonwealth ties and interests were not abandoned in the pursuit of this brave new ideology, although they were accorded a less dominant position. This reassessment proved temporary, however. As the 1930s drew to an end and the League of Nations proved unwilling and unable to resist the multiplying incidents of aggression, New Zealand again turned to Britain to guarantee its security.

Labour's faith in internationalism and collective security survived the failure of the League and the outbreak of the Second World War to re-emerge when the Government began to formulate its policy on the new world organization which the major allies had pledged to establish. New Zealand's policy was co-ordinated with Australia's. Persuaded to consult extensively for the first time by the common threat they faced during the war years, the two countries had established that they shared a community of interest in post-war settlements out of this had evolved a common approach to the structure and role of the new world organization.

Both countries were convinced that the League had failed because its members had been able to avoid accepting any responsibility to act in defence of the principles contained in the Covenant of the League. At the San Francisco Conference they strove to ensure that the charter of the new organization imposed firm and binding obligations upon its members. Their efforts to include a clear prohibition on aggression in the United Nations Charter were unsuccessful. They were also unable to prevent the Security Council from dominating the discussion of issues affecting international security and exercising exclusive
control over the application of provisions for collective security. Nor were they able to prevent the inclusion of the permanent members' right of veto in the Security Council.

While considering this last provision a significant and possibly fatal weakness in the United Nations Organization, both New Zealand and Australia saw the new body as a significant improvement on the League of Nations. It suggested that the international community had recognized some of the lessons of the Second World War and its prelude. Moreover, it offered hope that, as the members discussed and made recommendations on the issues and problems placed before them, they would create a body of precedents which gave practical expression to the principles and purposes of the Charter.

The submission of the Palestine problem to the General Assembly in 1947 appeared to offer the first opportunity for all the members of the United Nations to participate in the discussion of a problem threatening the maintenance of international peace and to share in determining a solution. New Zealand, conscious of the humanitarian issues involved and awake to the possibilities Palestine offered for creating a precedent for combined action in support of a General Assembly resolution, prepared to make the most of the opportunity.

The events between the submission of the Palestine problem to the United Nations and the extension of de facto recognition to the state of Israel by the New Zealand Government took place within twenty one months. Although these events constitute the primary focus of this thesis, they did not occur within a vacuum. To set them, and New Zealand's response, more firmly in their context it has been necessary to extend the scope of the discussion. This is most obvious in the two lengthy background chapters which precede discussion of New Zealand's participation in the United Nations discussions.
The complexity of the issues involved in the Palestine problem and the violent emotions it aroused—and continues to arouse—needed some explanation if the inadequacy of the Assembly's plan for partition and the comparative sanity of New Zealand's insistence on enforcement were to be clearly demonstrated. Examining the evolution of the Palestine problem prior to the active involvement of the United Nations in a separate chapter allowed later chapters to pick up themes it introduces and refer to aspects it discusses in some detail without the need for frequently intrusive and possibly repetitive discussions.

The specific details of New Zealand's policy on Palestine between 2 April 1947 and 29 January 1949 were decided by a small and intimate group made up of Peter Fraser, Sir Carl Berendt and other senior members of the External Affairs Department. Even in a country like New Zealand where foreign policy has rarely attracted public attention, however, politicians and planners do not exercise absolute freedom in introducing foreign policy initiatives. They must take heed of established national interests, the national tradition and the social consensus. The strategic, humanitarian and imperial issues involved in the Palestine problem, the Middle East region and the 'Jewish question' predated the submission of the fate of Palestine to the United Nations. The development of these issues and their significance in foreign and domestic affairs is, again, assessed in a separate chapter.

The main body of the thesis follows a simple chronological order, centred around the successive United Nations discussions and the issue of recognition. The emphasis duplicates the emphasis given by the New Zealand Government. Thus from the Assembly's first special session to the second special session New Zealand's response to the Palestine problem is seen predominantly in terms of its importance as a test case for the United Nations. The Commonwealth aspects of the problem remain a secondary consideration until the discussion of New
Zealand recognition of Israel. The disillusioning effect of the progress of the United Nations involvement in Palestine is highlighted together with the effect of the contemporary incidents of localized confrontation between East and West which heralded the onset of the Cold War.

The thesis concludes with New Zealand conceding that in the prevailing climate of world tension the United Nations could play only a marginal role in promoting world peace. It attempts to relate the United Nations failure in Palestine to the other events of late 1948 and 1949 which finally prompted New Zealand to discard the bold idealism of universal collective security for the more definite guarantees of regional interests and arrangements.

Because the thesis focuses upon the First Labour Government's involvement in the Palestine problem in terms of its hopes and expectations of the United Nations and its support for the Jewish state, those aspects of the problem which emerged as separate issues late in 1948 and persisted into the next decade have received only general and 'open-ended' treatment. While the Labour Government did respond quickly and generously to the desperate plight of the Palestinian refugees and was interested in the question of when and how an international régime for Jerusalem could be established, these concerns were accorded lesser priority in their policy than ensuring the survival of the Jewish state, created and then abandoned by the General Assembly.
CHAPTER ONE: THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

On 25 April 1920 the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers assigned the Mandate for Palestine to Great Britain. The legal niceties progressed one step further with the confirmation of the mandate by the Council of the League of Nations on 24 July 1922 and were completed when it entered into force formally on 29 September 1923. This elongated process of international recognition provided the seal of approval for the de facto control the United Kingdom had exercised through the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration since British and Commonwealth troops, aided by an Arab rebellion, had seized Palestine from the Turks in 1917-1918.

With the ancient right to rule by conquest given legal substance and moral respectability by the international organisation set up to express the new world spirit of peace, harmony and justice born from the savage destruction of the First World War, the British administration embarked on a confused and tragic journey through a maze of their own construction. The prize, sought to further the strategic concerns of the Empire, was ultimately to be handed, after a second even more shattering world conflict, to the United Nations. This successor to the ill-fated League was to find that British policy, or rather a succession of British policies, had so polarized attitudes and entrenched animosities that compromise was impossible. If the United Nations Organisation was to fulfil the ambitious ideals of its founders, it was vital that a solution to the problem of Palestine be found. Any solution settled upon, however, would necessarily be at the expense of one or both of the irreconcilable claimants to the disputed land. It was an impossible situation, and responsibility for the creation of the dilemma must be largely assigned to the series of British politicians who administered the Mandate of Palestine with indifference and expediency.

** ** ** ** ** ** **
While formally committed to administering the Mandate under international supervision and acceptance of the ideal of self-determination contained in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, Britain's interest in Palestine arose out of and was dominated by Imperial policies rooted firmly in the nineteenth century. The First World War had forced Britain to reassess some of the assumptions that those policies were based on, but the essential concerns remained.

Although Britain had begun acquiring Eastern dependencies in the eighteenth century, an 'Ottoman policy' had not been formulated until the 1830s when the Greek Revolution threatened to destabilize the region. Even then the policy was primarily motivated by British concern with the balance of power in Europe. Determining Russian and French designs on the Ottoman Empire Palmerston was forced to make a definite decision as to Britain's policy towards the possible expansion of rival European powers in the Middle East. The result was the beginning of the doctrine of the "independence and integrity" of the Ottoman Empire.

This doctrine remained at the foundation of British policy until 1914, providing 'the most cogent and most durable doctrine about the Middle East that Europe has known in modern times'.(1) In essence it sought to protect Britain's position in the Mediterranean and safeguard communications with India while providing a convenient defence against Russian and French ambitions in the region. By attempting to ensure the survival of the Ottoman Empire British policy conferred a considerable additional benefit in that it prevented the inheritance of the Ottoman domains and possession of Constantinople causing contention between European powers.(2)


The outbreak of the First World War forced reassessment of the traditional assumptions. British planners and imperialists began to accept the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire as inevitable and, as they redefined their policy in light of the fundamental changes in the balance of power in the region that would result, Palestine occupied an important place in their considerations. Palestine's importance lay in its location. It was apparent that there were distinct strategic advantages for Britain if a friendly state, preferably under direct British control, could be established. Such a state would provide a buffer for Egypt, the Suez Canal and, of course, the route to India.

Cabinet deliberations on the matter were anything but tardy. War was declared against Turkey on 5 November 1914 and on 9 November the British Cabinet discussed a variety of future possibilities for Ottoman possessions. The 'ultimate destiny' of Palestine featured in the discussions, the issues involved being discussed at some length. Although no firm policy was agreed by the Cabinet, immediately after the meeting Sir Herbert Samuel discussed the possible creation of a Jewish state in Palestine with the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey.

For Samuel, Turkey's entry into the war marked a watershed in his personal life and public career. A Jew, he had previously taken only an academic interest in the Zionist movement and considered Herzl's doctrine of restricted appeal and to have only a distant chance of realization. The events of November transformed his view. With the Ottoman Empire at war with Britain it appeared to him that

'If Palestine was to be given a new destiny, Great Britain with her important strategic interests in the Middle East, was directly concerned. The question who was to succeed the Turk in controlling the country that bordered on the Suez Canal was one to which our Government
would have to give serious consideration'. (3)

The issue was also of personal significance to Samuel. 'The first member of the Jewish community to ever sit in a British Cabinet', (4) he felt obliged to familiarize himself with the aims and achievements of the Zionist movement. Publications sent to him by Chaim Weizmann increased his enthusiasm. He was impressed by 'the spiritual influences that evidently animated the movement', the sacrifices and successes of the Jewish settlers and the agricultural and industrial possibilities he felt the country offered. The strategic importance of the region to Britain remained central in his thoughts however, and he believed 'If Palestine, as were likely, were to be separated from Turkey, for it to fall under the control of any of the great Continental Powers would be a danger'. (5)

It was this belief that prompted Samuel to approach Grey, presenting an impressive array of reasons why Britain should support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and assuring the Foreign Secretary of the benefits he felt sure would be Britain's if the policy was adopted.

Great Power rivalries, Samuel told Grey, would make it difficult to assign the country to any one of them. A Jewish state would solve this problem. Russian support for such a proposal would be a distinct possibility. Russia already had a large Jewish population and its conquest of German and Austrian Poland would increase the Jewish concentration. It was unlikely that the Russia population would accept any attempt by their Government to give equal rights to Russian Jews. The same held true for Poland. If, however, Russia took part in the re-establishment of the Jewish state this would have a positive effect on Jewish attitudes to Russia, minimising the potential for disaffection and disruption. (6)

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(4) Samuel, Memoirs p. 139. Disraeli had been withdrawn from the Jewish community by his father when still a child and had become an Anglican.
(5) Ibid., p. 140.
(6) Ibid., p. 140.
This seems a rather overstated argument in view of the repressed status of Jews in both Russia and Poland. There is an unspoken implication in Samuel's argument that cannot have escaped his analytical mind; Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to the new state would provide Jews with an additional refuge from the prejudice and ill-treatment of their homelands. That such a possibility should not be expressly stated is hardly surprising: Russian and Polish Jews were well represented in the entrepreneurial and professional classes despite official barriers and were thus of significant importance to the economies of those nations. Any suggestion that these 'useful' Jews might be tempted to emigrate en masse was unlikely to arouse Russian enthusiasm.

France's expectations, in Samuel's view, were unlikely to pose significant problems. The logical area of French interest was Syria and any plan involving this region would not necessarily be inconsistent with the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Indeed, separation of the two territories was preferable for 'such places as Beyrout (sic) and Damascus' contained large non-Jewish populations 'which could not be assimilated' with a Jewish state.

Samuel stressed that British influence must play a significant part in the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine because the territory's proximity to Egypt and the Suez Canal 'would render its goodwill to England a matter of importance to the British Empire'. He also suggested that the enterprise should be led by English and American Jews. German Jews should be discouraged 'under the circumstances' and the French and Italian communities were not sufficiently influential to challenge Anglo-American leadership. (7) This latter statement contains a number of interesting implications especially when examined together with Samuel's plan for financing.

(7) Viscount Samuel, Memoirs, p. 141.
the establishment of the new state and his expectations of its effect on
the international Jewish population.

Samuel proposed that funds for the new state be raised by appealing
to Jewish communities throughout the world. Monies raised would be used
to purchase the 'existing rights of individuals' and to build roads, rail-
ways, harbours and irrigation schemes which would hasten the development
of the state's economic resources. Immigration would have to be restricted.
Palestine was too small to contain the world-wide Jewish population and
precautions would also have to be taken to admit the 'right' immigrants
and avoid creating a community of petty traders. The end result, Samuel
believed, would be a vigorous Jewish state, raising the aspirations of the
Jewish people and giving them hope for the future;

'If they could see men of their kin achieving great things it would
have a profound influence on their outlook, and by raising their
character would add to their usefulness to the peoples among whom
they lived'.(8)

The new Jewish state as described by Samuel appeared a curious amalgam of
Zionist ideals and traditional colonial practices leavened by English
Liberal economic and social assumptions. Led by English and American
'assimilated' Jews, the state would augment its necessarily agrarian base
with developmental projects in the best traditions of industrial capitalist
involvement in colonial economies. As the majority of the immigrants would
be Jews from Eastern Europe, the leaders of the state would assume the
role and responsibilities of an enlightened elite, ensuring emancipation,
raising expectations and providing opportunities for social mobility to
prove Jewish capabilities to the world at large and raise the hopes of Jews
outside Palestine.

(8) Ibid, p.141.
The significance of the inclusion of American Jews in Samuel's scheme had a more immediate dimension which was not lost on Grey. The United States had rejected the appeals of the opposing alliances to become involved in the First World War and had officially proclaimed itself a neutral power. Members of the Jewish community in the United States enjoyed considerable influence, however, and while they were no more willing than their compatriots at large to see the United States enter the conflict, the pro-British sentiments that support for a Jewish state in Palestine would undoubtedly generate amongst this community could have significant diplomatic advantages for Britain.

Samuel could be satisfied with the result of his discussion with Grey. He had earlier been assured by David Lloyd George that he desired to see a Jewish state established (9) and he now received a favourable response from the Foreign Secretary, together with Grey's promise to work for the proposal 'if the opportunity arose'. (10)

Despite the presence of an undoubted degree of sympathy for the Jewish claim on Palestine amongst some members of the British Cabinet, the scheme was not without its opponents who saw more immediate strategic and political benefits in alternative policies. The British Empire and its defence remained the principal consideration and while idealistic and humanitarian concerns were not rejected out of hand, they had to justify themselves in terms of real political advantage before they gained wide acceptance. The future of Palestine could not be considered in isolation. It was only one element in the new British policy towards the Middle East which was gradually formulated as the First World War progressed.

(9) Viscount Samuel, Memoirs, p. 142.
(10) Ibid., p. 141.
The War Cabinet debated the future of the Middle East at length on 10 March 1915 and, as the options were assessed, the divisions of opinion became more clearly defined. Winston Churchill, Admiral Sir John Fisher and Lord Kitchener proposed that Britain's strategic and political interests would best be served by securing the city of Alexandretta, the Mediterranean terminus of the Baghdad Railway and a vital railway link to the Persian Gulf. They argued that this move would safeguard Egypt, the Suez Canal, India and Mesopotamia, balance anticipated Russian, French and Italian acquisitions, provide a naval base to offset French and Russian power in the Mediterranean and provide a potentially valuable terminal for oil exports.

Their analysis was rejected by Lloyd George, Grey, H.H. Asquith and Arthur Balfour who argued that Russian and Italian interests lay in the northern areas of the Ottoman Empire and the neighbouring Austro-Hungarian Empire, specifically in the future disposition of Trentino, Trieste, Bulgaria and Constantinople. France and her intentions were the obvious source of concern yet the Alexandretta proposal left potential for the extension of French influence from Syria to Suez and possibly even into the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. While France was a wartime ally, she was also Britain's major post-war rival in the Middle East. As such France should be excluded from Palestine and satisfied elsewhere. (11)

The associated question of whether Britain should grant Mohammedanism political as well as religious recognition was raised by Grey. On 19 March the War Council declared itself in favour both of such recognition and the guarantee to Arab leaders of a future state which would include Arabia but

with its precise boundaries and status to be defined by later negotiation. \(12\)

Against this typically vague recognition of the political expectations of the Arab people must be set the pro-Zionist sympathies not only of Samuel but of Lloyd George, whose contacts with Zionism went back over a decade. In 1903 Lloyd George had assisted Herzl's abortive attempt to establish a Jewish colony in Uganda and, the following year, had publicly declared that he favoured offering land in East Africa to the Zionists, providing confrontation with the native people could be avoided. In 1906 he had again sought to further the Zionist cause, acting as an intermediary between L.J. Greenburg, a British-born Jew, and Grey, on a scheme to establish a Jewish settlement in the Sinai Peninsula. The scheme had foundered on Egyptian objections and Grey's lack of interest, but Lloyd George had done enough to be recognised as an early and valuable supporter of Zionism.

This interest in Zionism was rekindled by the war and Lloyd George's contributions to the debates of 10 and 19 March 1915 were confined essentially to the future of Palestine.\(13\) It is not enough to subscribe this interest to his fundamentalist religious beliefs, romantic sympathy with Zionism or previous personal involvement with the movement, although these undoubtedly played their part. Running through all his deliberations and statements on Palestine were hard headed assessments of wartime and post-war strategy and the principal concerns were the prestige and security of the Empire. Lloyd George consistently sought, in Michael Fry's phrase, 'Britain's advantage and God's purpose, in that order'.\(14\) In this he shared the basic policy premise of his colleagues: the future interests of the British Empire must be furthered by any Allied agreement on the

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\(12\) Ibid., p. 257.

\(13\) Ibid., p. 258.

\(14\) Ibid., p. 258.
governing of the Middle East. An important secondary consideration, also shared, was that those interests must be safeguarded without Britain having to assume unmanageable responsibilities. It is one of the more tragic ironies of history that the very premises upon which British policy toward the Middle East was based ensured that the responsibilities so begrudgingly assumed would become unmanageable with breathtaking rapidity.

By the end of March 1915 the broad outlines of British plans for the future of the Middle East had thus been determined. The region was of little intrinsic value to Britain but the possibility of a rival European power gaining control of the former Ottoman possessions was unacceptable to British strategists. Britain's long-term world interests demanded that the region should be subject to British influence. In this respect Palestine appeared the best option. It would provide a buffer state, excluding French influence from the vitally important Suez Canal zone and would link British interests in Iraq and the Persian Gulf with the Mediterranean through the port of Haifa. The Alexandretta scheme was discarded and efforts were directed towards ensuring that British claims to Palestine gained sufficient foundation to be presented to any post-war parcelling out of rewards amongst the victors as a virtual fait accompli.

At the war's end Britain had won the right to rule Palestine by military conquest and any territorial settlement of the Middle East thus had to give full weight to Britain's aims and intentions. The initial Turkish advance into Sinai in mid-July 1916 had been halted in early August - largely by the efforts of the Anzac Mounted Division - at Romani, less than 50 kilometres from the Suez Canal. (15) This victory ensured Egypt's security and placed the initiative firmly in the hands of the British forces. The subsequent British advance faltered at the end of

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March 1917 when Turkish forces repulsed a British attack on Gaza.(16) A new campaign under a new commander, General Allenby, was launched in October. The pace of the British advance in late 1917 and throughout 1918 was impressive in any terms, but in comparison to the bloody stalemate of the Western Front it was doubly spectacular. The Turkish retreat became a rout and on 30 October 1918, after Allenby's forces had reached Aleppo in Syria, the Turks signed an armistice.(17)

Britain had also waged an extensive diplomatic campaign on a number of fronts. By 1918 the British Government had given three separate undertakings concerning the future of Middle Eastern territories seized from the Turks. These agreements, reached with the Arabs, the French, and the Zionists in turn, were, in the best traditions of British diplomacy, vague, open to widely divergent interpretations and, on some vital issues, mutually exclusive.(18)

In the winter of 1915-1916 a series of letters were exchanged between Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt, and Sherif Husayn, emir of Mecca. On behalf of the British Government McMahon promised recognition and support for Arab independence in return for Arab support in the war against Turkey. The borders of the proposed Arab zone were loosely defined. The areas of the southeast (principally the present Gulf states) where Britain already had special treaty relations with local rulers and the coastal strip west of Damascus, extending northward to the Anatolian frontier (the area with which Britain hoped to appease French expectations),


(17) Ibid., pp. 133-138 passim.

(18) The McMahon-Husayn correspondence, the Sykes-Picot agreement, and the Balfour Declaration respectively. 'Zionist' is used throughout in its political and ideological sense and is not synonymous with 'Jewish'. As the discussion of Zionism which follows will endeavour to make clear, not all Jews were Zionists and large numbers of Jews had little sympathy for Zionist aims - at least, until the Holocaust.
were specifically excluded. Despite misgivings about these restrictions on
the limit of the future Arab zone, Husayn accepted the proposals in prin-
ciple and his sons led the Arab revolt against Turkish rule.(19)

Palestine, Jerusalem or the Jews were not mentioned specifically in
any of the letters exchanged by McMahon and Husayn. While the borders of
the zone were only vaguely defined, the explicit exclusion of other areas
in this context makes the Arab expectation that Palestine would form part
of the new Arab-controlled areas understandable and justifiable. Arab
dismay at subsequent British actions must also be seen in these terms.

At about the same time as the McMahon correspondence was ensuring
Arab support for Britain's struggle against Turkey, negotiations were pro-
ceeding between Sir Mark Sykes, Secretary to the British Cabinet and
M. Georges Picot, the French plenipotentiary. The secret agreement that
resulted divided most of the Ottoman Empire into zones of influence for
Britain, France and Russia - Russian influence was to be focused in the
north, while Britain and France would share Turkey's former Arab provinces
between them.

Under the terms of this agreement France was to take over Lebanon
and enjoy hegemony over Syria while Britain would receive Iraq and Trans-
jordan. Palestine, because of the special European interest in its Christian
holy places, was to be placed under an 'international administration',(20)
apart from an enclave consisting of Acre, Haifa and their immediate environs
which Britain would rule. The most backward parts of the Arab world, the
present states of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, were to be granted independent

Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, (Bloomington & London, 1975),
p. 27; Anne Mosley Iesch, Arab Politics in Palestine 1917-1939,

(20) "International Administration", in terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement,
meant administration by Britain, France and Russia, although the
details of how this system would operate were, typically, undefined.
statehood. (21)

The agreement is, on the whole, more cynical than ironical. The imperial powers were simply exercising their historic predeliction for rearranging world boundaries to suit their own purposes; France receiving dominion over the Catholic Levant, Russian designs on Constantinople receiving an important boost and Britain moving closer to the fulfilment of all the strategic and political objectives that had been determined in March 1915.

The extent to which the Sykes-Picot agreement fulfilled British aims is worth more detailed examination. Not only did the agreement seemingly avoid the possibility of Great Power disputes over the Ottoman inheritance but Britain's own responsibilities had also been usefully decreased by designating Palestine as an internationally administered zone. British control of the areas between Palestine, the Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal, together with the Acre-Haifa enclave ensured that Britain would still dominate the region.

British diplomats and politicians had not yet finished making promises however. In December 1916 Asquith resigned. Lloyd George became Prime Minister, Balfour Foreign Secretary, and Milner a member of the War Cabinet. These three, together with Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Foreign Secretary, were sympathetically disposed towards the aims of Zionism.

The change of government coincided with a military offensive in the Middle East and, as the events of 1917 gradually made British occupation of Palestine a reality, the Sykes-Picot agreement's provision for the internationalisation of Palestine was discarded in favour of a British Palestine. Directing much effort to that end, in 1917

'the British climbed on the shoulders of the Zionists in order to get a British Palestine, issued the Balfour Declaration, began to set aside the Sykes-Picot agreement and to make promises that were incompatible beyond remedy'. (22)

From the beginning of the year much time and energy was expended to determine exactly what territorial concessions would constitute the minimum condition for ending the war. In a memorandum circulated amongst members of the Imperial War Cabinet in March L.S. Amery, Secretary to the Inter-departmental Committee on Territorial Change, stressed that the principle objective of British policy must be, as it had been since the time of Pitt, security. The major threat to that security lay, in his opinion, in German expansion and aggression. To secure the future of the southern half of the British Empire(23) it was necessary to ensure that the region's seas were 'kept clear of all hostile naval bases, that potential armies of invasion should be kept as far away as possible and that intercommunication by railway and by air as well as by sea between the different portions of the Empire ... should be as fully developed as possible'. (24)

The means of securing this end lay in the retention of German East Africa, Palestine, Mesopotamia and the German Pacific colonies.

The Subcommittee on Territorial Desiderata set up in April under Lord Curzon's chairmanship proved even more imperialistically-minded. The underlying assumption which directed the discussions of the Curzon Committee was that the war would be ended by negotiated settlement rather than clear-

(22) Elizabeth Monroe, Britain's Moment in the Middle East, (London, 1963), p.38

(23) i.e. South Africa, East Africa, Egypt, India, Australia and New Zealand.

cut victory for either side. The Committee, which included representatives of the rest of the Empire(25), set high demands as Britain's price for a negotiated settlement; demands which were designed to ensure the considerations stressed in Amery's memorandum were fully realised.

The Committee clearly viewed Palestine as a territory of utmost importance to the future security and well-being of the British Empire and demanded that it be included in the British sphere in any negotiated settlement. The Sykes-Picot agreement had left the status of Palestine undetermined, but the only acceptable settlement would be one which placed the territory in British hands. British control of Palestine and Mesopotamia would cover the approach to the East while protecting Egypt and the Persian Gulf. The British Government should seek a clear definition of Britain's position in Palestine, securing 'such modification of the Agreement with France of May 1916 as would give Great Britain definite and exclusive control over Palestine and would take the frontier of the British sphere of control to the river Leontes and North of Hauran'.(26)

These proposals were closely allied to the attitude of the Cabinet which had already reached consensus on the impracticability of the Sykes-Picot agreement's provisions for placing Palestine under international control. Yet the time was not yet ripe for Britain to pursue the matter and while accepting that 'sooner or later' the agreement would have to be reconsidered by Britain and her allies, no action was planned for the present.(27)

Persistent lobbying of the British Government by Chaim Weizmann ensured that the Zionist cause was consistently a factor in British considerations.

(25) The Dominions and India. India's representative was Sir Satyendra Prassanna Sinha, the only Indian on the Viceroy's Executive Council.


(27) Ibid., p. 136.
Within six months of its discussion of the findings of the Curzon Committee, Cabinet agreed to issue a declaration to bind the Zionists to Britain's plans for Palestine.

This statement, the Balfour Declaration, aroused considerable enthusiasm amongst Zionists, some of whom saw it as the final realisation of their aims. When seen in its full diplomatic and political context, however, it is apparent that any assertion that the British had been won over by the dream of Zion is untenably simplistic. Britain was 'ready to be seduced by any Zionist of stature' (28) and sought more concrete and immediate benefits than any moral or emotional satisfaction.

The Declaration was primarily a wartime measure to meet wartime needs. Balfour told his colleagues immediately before issuing the document that

'... from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as indeed all over the world, now appeared to be favourable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America'. (29)

France, Italy and the Vatican had already given assurances of sympathy to the Zionists and it was generally known that President Wilson was also sympathetic. A British declaration, therefore, was justifiable as an expression of Entente solidarity. There were other pressing reasons why such a declaration should be made as rapidly as possible. It was rumoured that Germany was preparing to adopt the Zionist cause and extract concessions from Turkey. This was a cause of considerable concern for it

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threatened to divide Zionist feeling which, it was felt, should be on the side of the Allies. The implicit assumption of the unity and power of Jewish opinion which permeated British discussions on the proposed declaration can again be seen in the later argument that Britain's positive stance on the issue would help dissuade the Bolsheviks, many of whom were Jewish, from siding with Germany. (30)

These pressing political and diplomatic considerations overcame, at least temporarily, all significant opposition to the proposed declaration. The cabinet meeting of 31 October 1917 left open the question of whether the Jewish 'national home', the adopted formula, would be a British or an American protectorate, or whether some other arrangement would be sought, but authorised Balfour to convey the British declaration of sympathy to Lord Rothschild and, through him, to the Zionist Federation. In a letter dated 2 November 1917, the British Foreign Secretary assured Lord Rothschild:

"His Majesty's government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country". (31)

News of the Declaration was made public on 8 November. Naturally enough it was greeted with jubilation by the Jewish community in England and American and Russian Jewry responded as the cabinet had hoped. British


newspapers assumed that it paved the way for a Jewish state and deemed the measure just and wise. Even German Zionists lauded the move and increased their attempts to extract similar declarations from Germany and Turkey although both states, despite Britain's suspicions, were decidedly reluctant to aid the Zionists. The latter fact was of considerable benefit to British designs on Palestine for with the war's end the 'central power' Zionists lost much of their influence and prestige in the movement which was increasingly dominated by British and American Zionists. (32)

The Balfour Declaration excited little interest amongst the British public however. The war dominated the public consciousness and the general release of the Declaration occurred on the same day as reports from Petrograd about the Bolshevik revolution were published, and news of Allenby's capture of Gaza was received. (33)

The response from Britain's allies was less than enthusiastic. Italy had preferred the idea of an international regime in Palestine rather than a British protectorate and it took six months of sustained lobbying by the Zionist Federation to extract a statement supporting the establishment of a Hebrew national centre in Palestine. Even then the question of the protectorate was studiously avoided. Although President Wilson had informally supported the Declaration, he was advised by Robert Lansing, his Secretary of State, not to commit himself publicly. Ten months passed before Rabbi Stephen Wise was able to persuade Wilson to declare his support for the Zionist movement.

Russia, under the new Bolshevik government, showed little enthusiasm. Lenin and Trotsky were too preoccupied with establishing their authority to

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(33) Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment*, p. 43
assign any immediate significance to the future of Palestine. Their eventual response to the Balfour Declaration was predictable;

'it was an imperialist intrigue, part of an overall network of anti-Soviet schemes, arranged to strengthen British imperialist interests against the world revolution'. (34)

France initially chose to ignore the Declaration and, in an official statement after the fall of Jerusalem in December 1917, announced that Palestine was to be internationalized. Two months later the French Government stated that they were in complete agreement with their British counterparts on matters concerning the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But the issue appears to have been of no great consequence to France and there was a subsequent retreat from this profession of goodwill. (35)

A large part of the reason for the begrudging acceptance of the Balfour Declaration by the French Government can be found in the rift with Britain that began to emerge in December. After the success of the British offensive in Palestine and with preparations for the post-war peace conference already underway, British diplomats and militarists were determined that Britain should receive the full rewards of victory. After all, Britain had borne the burden of the military campaign in the Middle East and alone had backed the Arab Revolt of 1916. Furthermore, the Russian Revolution and the entry of America into the war had radically altered the situation in which the Sykes-Picot agreement had been made. The agreement was now anachronistic, irreconcilable with British war aims and should be abrogated. The French should be excluded from the region which would be constituted as a British-sponsored pan-Arab kingdom and a British protectorate of Palestine. Thus

(34) Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism, p. 200
(35) Ibid., p. 200
Britain could meet her pledges to the Jews and Arabs. (36)

As a result of Allenby's conquest of Jerusalem and the establishment of a British military government in Palestine in December 1917 the questions raised by the contradictory pledges forced a reassessment of British policy in the Middle East. Accepting the desirability of excluding France from the region the British set about reconciling Arabs and Jews to prevent their disagreements being exploited at the peace conference and prejudicing Britain's attempts to dominate the Middle East.

Initially attempts to realise this policy took the form of a planned Arab-Zionist entente. To this end the British Government sent a Zionist Commission headed by Weizmann to Palestine in the early months of 1918 to allay Arab fears of Zionism while at the same time assessing the prospects for the development of the Jewish homeland. At the same time Britain sought to strengthen the position of the Sherifffian faction in the Arab nationalist movement. This was a natural case of favouritism on the part of Britain, being already under some obligation to the Sherifffian cause by virtue of the McMahon-Husayn correspondence and the Sherifffian-led Arab Revolt. Later events proved these attempts a dismal failure.

The Sherifffians proved responsive to both British and Zionist overtures. In March 1918 Sir Mark Sykes wrote to Emir Faisal, the military leader of the Sherifffians, seeking his support for Zionism. A 'positive though vague' response was subsequently published in the Sherifffian newspaper in Mecca:

'The Jews knew that that country was for its original sons, sacred and beloved homeland ... the return of the exiles to that homeland will provide, both materially and spiritually an experimental school for their brethren whose life is bound up with theirs in agriculture,'

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(36) Simha Flapan, Zionism and the Palestinians, (London, 1979, pp. 33-34; p. 41.)
trade, manufacture, and all aspects of labour and employment'.

At the same time officials of the British Military Government were imploring Weizmann and the newly arrived Zionist Commission not to demand too much too soon and to avoid mentioning that Zionism implied a Jewish state. Their concern was understandable. Only southern Palestine as far as Jerusalem was in British hands while the Turks still held the north. The Bolsheviks had published the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Turks had quickly capitalised on its propaganda value, using it to arouse anti-British feelings amongst Arabs throughout the Fertile Crescent. In central and northern Palestine supposed changes in Jewish status were also used to great effect. Stories were circulated to convince the local population that Britain had sold out to the Zionists for money and that Jews in British-held areas were now in control of the land, treating Arabs with contempt. These stories gained a large degree of credibility amongst the inhabitants of these regions and the resulting bitterness was an important factor in the formation of anti-Zionist attitudes amongst the Palestinian Arabs.

Arab hostility towards the Balfour Declaration and suspicion of British war aims concerned the British Administration, especially in view of the skill with which the Turks were exploiting the wide spread resentment for their own ends. As a consequence of this concern the Law of War in captured enemy territory was applied to southern Palestine. This meant that the policy was to preserve the status quo.

This policy, designed to placate the Arabs, aroused the concern of the Jewish community in Palestine who had anticipated the immediate ful-

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(37) Al-Qibla, 23 March 1918, quoted ibid, p. 36.

filment of Zionist aspirations in the wake of the Balfour Declaration. Weizmann warned that it would lead to disillusionment and prejudice hopes that the Jewish community would co-operate with Britain. Brigadier-General Clayton, Chief Political Officer of the Administration, shared Weizmann's misgivings, warning the British Government that unless application of the laws of war was sufficiently flexible to permit the gradual and reasonable realisation of the aims behind the Balfour Declaration, Britain risked losing Zionist support for a British Palestine at the Peace Conference and the Zionists might be forced to turn to America or even Germany for support. (39)

With British rule in Palestine less than six months old, the local Administration and the Imperial Government were rudely confronted with the realities of the situation in the territory they so avidly sought to control. The fundamental contradictions between the expectations of the Arab and Jewish communities and the impossibility of achieving a workable reconciliation should have been apparent yet in the period between the military conquest of Palestine and the granting of the mandate British diplomacy stumbled from compromise to compromise, ensuring by the expedient ease with which all things were promised to all parties that the eventual destiny of Palestine would remain a source of bitter contention.

The roots of this confusion and profusion of policies lay in the anachronistic assumptions and practices which directed British diplomacy. Drawing inspiration from nineteenth century imperialism, Britain proved unable or unwilling to accept or understand the essentially nationalistic demands of both Zionists and Arabs and the full implications of the principles of self-determination that featured in so many of the promises and

(39) Simha Flapan, Zionism and the Palestinians, pp. 36-37.
assurances that were given.

The Balfour Declaration was, as stated earlier, essentially a wartime measure to meet wartime needs, but it was also in line with the traditional practice of protecting European minorities in the East by preferential treaties. As such it was an anachronism in the twentieth century. The rapid development of nationalist movements amongst non-European peoples under European domination in the inter-war years rapidly undermined any possibility of maintaining reservations to the principle of nationally homogeneous states. (40) The implications of the Balfour Declaration, particularly as they related to the imposition on the native population of a foreign, European population holding sufficiently coherent religious, cultural and political beliefs to be regarded as a distinct cultural entity, must be seen in terms of nineteenth century colonialism. (41)

A defence can be offered for the British politicians and diplomats. At the time when policy options on the future of Palestine and the Arab world as a whole were being formulated, Arab nationalist movements were numerically weak and claims to lead Arab opinion were hotly disputed amongst a number of quarreling factions. (42)

As a result Arab nationalism appeared ill-defined and politically

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(40) F.S. Northedge, Descent from Power, p. 103. In the years between the First and Second World Wars nationalist movements of varying effectiveness sprang up throughout the Middle East region.

(41) Fuller discussions of the colonial aspects of the Jewish immigrations can be found in Maxine Rodinsin, Israel: A Colonial Settler State? (New York, 1973), Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries, (London, 1979), and Anne Mosely Leach, Arab Politics in Palestine 1917-1939.

(42) Y. Porath, The Emergence of the Palestinian—Arab National Movement 1918-1929, p. 20, puts total membership of Arab nationalist societies on the eve of the First World War at 126. A further 30 joined during the war. 24 of these were Palestinians according to Porath although C. Ernest Dawn, 'The Rise of Arabism in Syria', Middle East Journal, 16 (1962) pp. 145-168, gives a figure of 32 Palestinians as active members of nationalist societies. (See Y. Porath, ibid., p. 20). The disputes over leadership of Arab opinion were essentially between Feisal's Sheriffian supporters and the Syrian politicians although other leaders, notably the Mufti of Jerusalem, could claim some popular support.
naive in comparison to the Zionist movement which, playing on commonly held assumptions of Jewish unity and power and its European intellectual and cultural origins, was able to present itself as a distinct, coherent, and, to many, preferable alternative.

Zionism, or more correctly political Zionism, was the culmination of the Jewish national revival which took place in the nineteenth century. It drew upon the traditional attachment of the Jews to Zion encapsulated in the blessing "Next year in Jerusalem" and enshrined in Jewish liturgy and literature. (43) To this traditional basis, however, were added elements which gave the movement respectability and concerns which were readily understandable to the Western Europeans to whom the Zionists looked for support. The French Revolution and the subsequent rise of nationalism provided the intellectual origins and its political philosophy drew upon eighteenth century liberalism with its doctrines of civil, political, religious and economic freedom and advocacy of the rights of racial and religious minorities.

A further impetus was given to the Zionist movement by a deep feeling of impending danger which was shared and articulated by many Jews. Theodor Herzl, playwright, journalist and a perfect example of an "assimilated" Jew became 'the father of (political) Zionism' through the impact of his Der Judenstaat published in Vienna, 1896. Having left his native Hungary where anti-semitism (44) was still rabidly expressed in sporadic pogroms and ritual-murder trials, Herzl had settled in Vienna only to find his career hampered by more refined but ultimately no less oppressing, anti-Jewish...


(44) 'Anti-semitism' used in a European context should be seen as referring specifically to anti-Jewish sentiments. Despite this misuse of the term, the consistency of its application to Jews by Europeans justifies its adoption in this discussion. In an Arabian context however, the more precise term 'anti-Jewish' is adopted.
sentiments. Herzl's complete disillusionment and subsequent rejection of all ideas of complete assimilation into gentile society ironically sprung from the career opportunity which saw him appointed Paris correspondent for the Vienna newspaper Neue Freie Presse in 1891. In this capacity he covered both the Panama Scandal and the Dreyfus Affair. Alarmed by the resurgence of anti-semitism which followed these events in France and spread rapidly to other European countries, Herzl became increasingly preoccupied with finding a solution to the so-called Jewish Question. Ultimately he became convinced that anti-semitism, while not necessarily endemic to gentile society, was so pervasive that any hope of its erosion under present circumstances must be long term. A Jewish state was needed by the world, he argued, and not merely by the Jews. It would allow those Jews who wished to remain recognizably Jewish to live free from persecution and make their own unique contribution to civilization. Jews who wished to become fully assimilated would benefit, as would their home-lands, by the emigration of the overtly Jewish elements of the population. This would assist the rapid dissipation of anti-semitism. Given two generations of peace, Herzl felt, and those Jews who wished could perhaps be completely assimilated into the societies of their choice.(45)

Herzl's analysis was attacked by many of his contemporaries, Jew and gentile, as exaggerated, alarmist and semi-hysterical.(46) His opponents argued that the traditional religious bases of anti-semitism had been, and continued to be, weakened by the advance of reason, enlightenment and social justice in Western Europe. Jews themselves had experienced the loosening of the ties of tradition and the benefits of the climate of liberalism

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(45) Adapted from Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism pp. 87-92.

(46) Ibid., p.91.
which had slowly but surely spread since the French Revolution had brought
civil emancipation to French Jews. To criticise in the terms adopted by
Herzl, they claimed, was unwarranted and needlessly risked a backlash by
offended gentiles.

Subsequent events were to prove Herzl's analysis too optimistic.
Anti-semitism itself was responding to the climate of the times. In com-
mon with all variants of European racism its original religious character
had been progressively secularized since the age of Enlightenment. Race
myths were increasingly bolstered by scientific, anthropological, and his-
torical 'evidence', quantative and qualitative differences were noted and
charted and simplistic stereotypes emerged. The old myths, cloaked in a
new respectability, were used more and more readily to 'explain' the
origins of political, economic and social problems and direct expression
of tensions away from the actual causes to identifiable but mysterious
enemies. (47)

This reinvigoration of European anti-semitism was part of the rising
tide of nationalism which had played such an important part in the re-
awakening of the desire to see Zion redeemed amongst so many Jews. The
volatile emotions released by the revival of national spirit and patrio-
tism led to the often violent expression of anti-foreigner and anti-
minority sentiments. Jews, historically vulnerable to identification as
disloyal outsiders and social pariahs, suffered accordingly. The sporadic
processes of pogrom and expulsion of the Jewish populations in Eastern
Europe burst forth afresh and in Western countries that had previously been

(47) The most blatant example of this political dimension with regard to
anti-semitism can be seen in the notorious Protocols of the Elders of
Zion, 'the climax and the synthesis' of the myth of the Jewish con-
spicacy for world domination. This 'document' was forged in France,
with the assistance of the Russian secret police, probably between
1894 and 1899. It provided the French Right with a document to link
Dreyfus to the supposed conspiracy of his race and the Russian secret
police with a justification for Czarist anti-Jewish policies. See
George L. Mosse, Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism
(London, 1978); Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide (London, 1967)
regarded by Jews as safe refuges anti-semitism gained increasing popular support. (48)

Yet the rise of nationalism was a fundamental inspiration to modern Zionism and amongst the concepts most avidly assumed was the national and spiritual revival of the Jews both as individuals and as a people. As with its counterparts amongst European nationalist movements, in attempting to promote this aim Zionism ensured the adoption of attitudes of racial exclusiveness and superiority, generating the same potentially violent emotions that Jews found themselves victimised by.

Associated with the revivalist rhetoric was the Zionist perception of Jewish history as a succession of inferiorities, defects and fatal flaws. Jews were enslaved by their history;

'The Jewish people were scattered, stateless, persecuted, passive, demoralized, assimilated, segregated and sunk in an abnormal economic existence. They lacked a common language and were plagued by dark psychologies: by masochism, by love of suffering and by rationalizing some kind of divine mission to explain their vulnerable existence and miserable way of life'. (49)

Zionism would liberate the Jews from their subjugation by providing a state, a focus for Jewish energies where their revitalised national and cultural identity could freely develop.

After an initial flirtation with the Uganda Plan proposed by Joseph Chamberlain, which aroused considerable controversy within the movement,
Zionists focused on the colonization of Palestine itself. This new exclusivism was supported by Chaim Weizmann who took over direction of the political activities of the movement following Herzl's death in 1904. A new strategy was evolved. Jewish settlement in Palestine was to be fostered and its growth would provide Zionist aspirations with more political muscle.

This new orientation, which came to be termed Practical Zionism, stressed the principle of self-help through the development of autonomous and voluntary organisations which would direct resources to every area of life from health and education to agriculture and irrigation. The scheme inspired deep dedication and ideological commitment. The methods were different, but the aim was the same—hamedinah shebaderekh (the state on the way). The obvious determination of Jewish settlers to make the concept a reality together with the tangible advances they were able to point to by 1917 were valuable allies to Weizmann's lobbying abilities and the issuing of the Balfour Declaration. (50)

The pursuit of this new direction brought Zionism into increasing conflict with a contending nationalism. The development of Arab nationalism effectively dates from the Young Turk coup d'état in July 1908 in the wake of which Arabs were permitted to organize politically and disseminate their views through political parties, newspapers, and the parliament.

The nationalist movements in this initial stage of development were typically small, membership consisting of young, educated Arabs. As a result their calls for reforms, in particular decentralization, were rejected as being representative only of a negligible element in society. The majority of Arabs under Ottoman rule remained loyal if not always content until the actual occupation of the Arab provinces by British troops in 1917 and 1918.

While some resentment of Turkish domination did exist as a result of the policy of Turkification of 1909, which made Turkish the sole administrative, judicial and educational language in Arab provinces, Muslim rule was generally preferred to the possibility of Christian rule.\(^{(51)}\)

In Palestine itself the initial cause of concern to Arab nationalists was the increasing European influence in the Levant. Exploiting the decline in Ottoman power and the privileges granted them under the Capitulations\(^{(52)}\), European powers, particularly Russia, France, Germany and Britain claimed wide ranging rights of extra-territoriality, extending their protection variously to Orthodox, Latin, Uniate, Druze, Coptic and Jewish populations. Early Zionist immigrants to Palestine, largely of European origin, were viewed by Palestinian nationalists as yet a further attempt by European powers to promote their imperialist interests in the region.\(^{(53)}\)

Estimates of the size of the Jewish and Arab populations in Palestine between 1882, the accepted date for the beginning of Zionist-inspired immigration, and the outbreak of war in 1914 are widely divergent. The most authoritative cite an increase in the Jewish community from some 25,000 in 1882 to 85,000 in 1914 with the Arab population increasing from just over 500,000 to approximately 600,000.\(^{(54)}\)


\(^{(52)}\) The Capitulations: Originally limited rights granted by the Sultan to small groups of European merchants permitting them to trade with the Ottoman Empire, they were interpreted with increased liberality by European powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they manoeuvred to gain advantage from the weakening of the Ottoman Empire.


The increase in the number of immigrants was accompanied by a change in the character of the Jewish community in Palestine. Before 1882 there were two broad categories of Jews in Palestine. The smaller of the two groups were the Sephardic (Oriental) Jews, generally Ottoman subjects and Arabic-speaking, who enjoyed a degree of internal autonomy in running their own religious affairs and could count many artisans, merchants and professional men amongst their numbers. The larger group of Ashkenazi Jews were generally European subjects drawn to Palestine by their piety and living in ghetto communities in the Holy Cities of Safed, Tiberias, Jerusalem and Hebron - uninterested, even actively opposed to Zionism, this group was dependent upon alms given by their co-religionists outside Palestine. (55)

After 1882, while numbers of Jews still came from Europe to join the old, pious communities, there were increasing numbers of Jewish nationalists arriving with different intentions and in response to physical threat rather than spiritual needs. Following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 a series of pogroms, backed up by increased economic discrimination, had been unleashed against Russian Jews. Jewish emigration from Russia increased dramatically and while most headed for America, significant numbers, influenced by the idea of Jewish nationalism which had recently been spreading amongst Russian, Rumanian and Austro-Hungarian Jews, headed for Palestine with the aim of promoting the practicality of a re-established Jewish state. These immigrants constituted the first aliyah (ascent) of 1882-1903. No longer was European Jewish settlement to remain restricted to the Holy Cities. Increasing numbers settled in Jaffa and Haifa, and agricultural colonies, often hiring Arabs as labourers and guards, were established.

The second aliya immigrants, who arrived between 1903 and 1914 were more robust in their nationalism. Influenced by the self-help ideology of Practical Zionism and professing a policy of socialist egalitarianism they insisted on exclusively Jewish labour in the agricultural settlements. While a justifiable policy in terms of a Jewish national revival, by discouraging the employment of Arab neighbours the new settlers increased their isolation from the indigenous people. Conflict arose over the boundaries of the lands these newcomers claimed to control and their consistent unwillingness to allow neighbouring villagers and bedouin tribes customary pasture rights on their lands. Arab fears that their position and rights in their homeland were being usurped grew. (56)

Opposition to Zionist immigration proved a powerful stimulus to Palestinian-Arab nationalism. As early as 1891 Muslim and Christian notables in Jerusalem sent a telegram to the Ottoman Government asking it to halt Jewish immigration and end land sales to Jews. The government complied and while unable to effectively limit Jewish immigration in the face of European opposition, did manage to radically curtail land purchases between 1891 and 1900, when the policy was revised. After the 1908 coup Arabs expressed their opposition to Zionism in the newly liberated press and their deputies raised the issue in the new parliament. By 1914 the essentials of Arab opposition to Zionism had been determined and small anti-Zionist societies had been formed in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Nablus, Haifa, Beirut, Constantinople and Cairo. (57)

Palestinian-Arab nationalism on the eve of the First World War cannot be seen as a mass movement. Those who articulated the nationalist aspira-

(57) Ibid., p. 28; Neville Mandel, The Arabs and Zionism ..., p. xviii.
tions of the Palestinian people at this stage were the small but dominant group of urban notables who by the turn of the century controlled the country's political, economic and intellectual life, filling the key religious posts in the country and essential to local administration. The majority of the people, the fellahin (peasants) living in villages, working the land, largely illiterate and generally poor, did not have the time or the education to respond to this new ideology. The rise of anti-Zionist sentiments amongst this group was due to more immediate stimuli. Jewish land purchases coupled with the increasingly exclusivist practices of the Zionist settlers constituted a direct economic threat to local peasants and their response was immediate and violent. Between 1886 and 1914 eleven Jewish agricultural settlements were attacked by Arab bands. (58) The tradition of sporadic anti-Jewish popular violence was established. The Ottoman Government proved incapable and essentially unwilling to prevent such outbursts, just as their British successors would be, and the pattern for the progressive degeneration of Arab-Jewish relations was set. The incompatibility of Zionist and Arab aspirations for Palestine had been established and later developments would conform to that pattern although the scale of the conflict would increase.

Britain, through the complex series of arrangements she had entered into, was able to prevent the tensions between the contending nationalisms preventing the realisation of her imperial designs on Palestine. This was largely a matter of luck, although later developments would suggest that whether this luck was good or bad is highly debatable.

While successful in preventing the tensions from allowing a European competitor to intervene, the British through their Military Administration

proved unable to prevent the increase of tensions within Palestine. The process described by a member of the Administration was one of 'the steady worsening of relations between Jews and Arabs, and between Jews and the Administration.' The decisions of the San Remo conference in April 1920 placed Palestine under British mandate and gave authority to the civil administration which replaced military rule on 1 July of that year. At the same time as the territory's future was being placed firmly in British hands by the Peace Conference, Arab frustration boiled over and anti-Jewish rioting in Upper Galilee and Jerusalem throughout March and April claimed a number of Jewish lives.

The arrival in July of Sir Herbert Samuel, who had been appointed the first British High Commissioner to the newly mandated territory set the scene for a period of vigorous administration and significant advance for Palestine. Samuel had a clear conception of his task; to build 'from the very beginning' a modern state. He did not anticipate that this would be an easy or a sudden transformation in a country so recently ravaged by war. There were many problems;

'Great armies had fought over it (Palestine); many of its villages had been destroyed, trees cut down wholesale, orange-groves neglected, live-stock depleted; there was a general air of poverty and depression. Brigandage was rife in many districts, and the Bedu (sic) had been raiding across the eastern border. The capital had lately been the scene of a serious racial riot.'

The outward appearance of Palestine in the early years of the British Mandate seemed a glowing testimony to enlightened European rule. Samuel's and his Civil Secretary, Brigadier-General Wyndham Deedes, a sympathizer


with Zionism and close friend of Weizmann, constructed their government carefully ensuring that both pro and anti-Zionist views were represented. Samuels, typically, had a clear perception of the role of his office:

'to administer the country not for the benefit of one section of the population only, but for all; not commissioned by the Zionists but in the name of the King'. (62)

The Civil Administration, as a consequence, followed a deliberately passive policy with regard to the establishment of the Jewish National Home. The role of the Government of Palestine on this issue was simply to create the political, legal and economic conditions under which the Zionists could pursue their aims. Jewish immigration and settlement were to be facilitated, rather than encouraged or directed. (63) Although this policy had short-term disadvantages for the Zionists who were forced to attempt to realise the opportunity offered by the Balfour Declaration on their own generally inadequate resources, the long-term advantages were, however, vitally important. By fostering the self-reliance of the Jewish community Samuel's passive policy assisted the establishment of a state within the state, fuelling Jewish nationalism and amplifying demands for self-government.

The Samuel's administration's policy towards the Arab population was similarly benevolent while, in view of the different problems they faced, more active. Samuel's concern was not only that the Arabs should receive scrupulously just consideration in matters relating to the establishment of the Jewish National Home but also that their well-being and social advancement should be effectively promoted. The introduction of measures to benefit the Arabs should proceed as if there was no Zionist question involved.

(62) Ibid., p. 168.

(63) Bernard Wasserstein, The British in Palestine, p. 87.
just as in any other part of the Empire. This undeniably liberal policy was not entirely altruistic, however, for Samuels argued that this approach was central to his broad strategy of reconciling the Palestinian Arabs to the implementation of the Zionist programme.(64)

Significant advances were made in these early years and Palestine enjoyed a prosperity it had not seen for centuries. Administration programmes in the fields of agriculture, afforestation, industry and trade began to make progress. The infrastructure was rapidly upgraded as large road-building schemes were undertaken, all railways were brought under Government ownership and the service rationalised, and a new harbour was developed at Haifa. The new Public Health Department had significant successes in the control of malaria and the reduction of the incidence of endemic disease, particularly eye diseases, amongst the Arab population. The standard and availability of education increased, especially amongst the Arab population which received, according to Samuel, more assistance than the Jewish population who were able to draw on the resources of their own community.(65)

Economic prosperity was shortlived however and hopes of Arab resignation to the influx of Jewish immigrants proved illusory. The Third (1918-1923), Fourth (1924-1928) and Fifth (1929-1939) Aliyahs increased the Jewish population in Palestine by in excess of 250,000 so that by 1939 the Jewish proportion of the total population had risen sharply to 27.2 percent.(66)

Arab-Jewish tensions erupted into violence on 1 May 1921 forcing the British to impose martial law. When order was effectively restored a week

(64) Ibid., pp. 87-88.

(65) Viscount Samuels, Memoirs, pp. 161-162; Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 41.

later, 47 Jews had been killed and 146 wounded, largely by Arab rioters, and 48 Arabs killed and 73 wounded, largely by British security forces. (67) All the immediate indications pointed to Jewish immigration as the primary cause of the riots and Samuel responded by immediately suspending immigration. His previously cordial relations with the Zionist Commission deteriorated rapidly as a result. Nor did his actions immediately calm Arab feeling. Sporadic attacks on Jewish colonies continued for some time after the announcement and tensions remained high long after the violence abated.

Britain expended considerable energy on an attempt to achieve a compromise between Arabs and Jews. A series of talks between the Colonial Office, now under Winston Churchill, and an Arab delegation sought to establish the bases for representative institutions under a Palestine Constitution. Discussions foundered on the steadfast refusal of the Arabs to accept the provisions of the Balfour Declaration and their insistence on national independence in accordance with their interpretation of the McMahon pledge. (68)

The growing realisation of the self-contradictory nature and practical difficulties of their policy spread amongst British officials and was reflected in the White Paper of June 1922 which formed the basis of British policy in Palestine for the rest of the decade. Zionists were assured that the British commitment to their cause remained while Palestinian Arabs were assured that British support for the Zionists would not result in the political, economic or social domination of Arab by Jew. In September of the same year the area available for Jewish settlement was reduced to ten


thousand square miles when the League of Nations, in confirming the British Mandate, accepted the unilateral revision by which Britain had given the territory to the east of the Jordan River to Emir Abdullah as the kingdom of Trans-Jordan to rule as her client.

These concessions to the rising Arab nationalism were followed by several years of apparent calm. This appearance was deceptive, however. Britain had failed to satisfy either the Palestinian nationalists or the Zionists and had demonstrated her own vulnerability in the process. Having assumed responsibility for Palestine in response to considerations of Imperial defence, Britain had no desire to become embroiled in conflict in the region. The concessions of 1921 and 1922 had resulted from an unorganised and brief outburst of mass violence. The moral was obvious to both claimants to the territory and from 1929 onwards Britain's incapacity to effectively deal with the twin tactics of civil disobedience and terrorism plunged the Mandate further and further into anarchy.

In the interim attitudes hardened and tension increased. Haj Amin al-Husseini, appointed Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Moslem Council by Herbert Samuel in 1921, used the political and religious power at his disposal to increase his family's dominance of the Palestinian Arab national movement at the expense of the rival Nashashibi family. The Mufti combined strong nationalistic aims with rabid anti-Zionism and had proven his abilities at fermenting disorder in the riots of 1921. His skillful exploitation of Arab suspicion of Jewish designs upon the Dome of the Rock and Aqsa Mosque (69) added a powerful religious dimension to the social discontent and nationalism which fed Arab anti-Zionism. In August 1929 the simmering emotion and hatred found expression in a series of riots.

(69) The Wailing Wall (surviving foundation of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem) forms part of the base of these two principal holy places of the Moslems.
which spread from Jerusalem throughout Palestine, hitting the isolated orthodox Jewish community at Hebron most severely. (70)

The riots sealed the Mufti's leadership of the Palestinian Arabs and revitalized the Arab nationalist movement. The reasons for this dramatic impact are not hard to determine. The British Government's White Paper of 1930 attempted a significant shift away from the Balfour Declaration, recommending a temporary end to Jewish land settlement in Palestine and severely limited immigration. Zionist influence in London managed to extract a further shift in policy by 1931 with an assurance being given by the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in a public letter to Chaim Weizmann, that the promise of 1917 would be adhered to and Jewish immigration would be limited only by Palestine's economic capacity to absorb them. (71)

As a consequence the inadequacies of British policy became glaringly apparent to both communities. Lacking any clear direction and without sufficient comprehension of the contending forces between which it found itself mediating, British policy was a reed bending before continually shifting winds. From 1931 the initiative in Palestine was contested between Arabs and Jews with British politicians, both within the Mandate Administration and in Britain itself, wallowing along in their wake.

On 30 January 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. In response to the laws which progressively excluded them from participation in the civic and economic life of their homeland, German Jews, previously only sparsely represented amongst immigrants to Palestine, arrived in ever-

(70) J. Bowyer Bell, Terror out of Zion, pp. 1-7.
increasing numbers. (72) The overall increase in immigration from 1933, peaking at 61,844 in 1935, the year of the Nuremberg laws, caused alarm amongst the Arabs of Palestine. They feared they were to be expelled from their own land or, at best, become a minority community of no consequence. The influx of Jewish labour and the high prices being paid for Arab land posed direct threats to Arab tenant farmers. At the same time Arab leaders saw an opportunity to lead their people in a national struggle against the Jews and the British. Their calculations were based on the implications of recent international developments. The strategic implications that Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia held for Britain were not lost on them nor was Germany’s reoccupation of the Rhineland and the very real chance of a European war. (73) In 1936 they acted.

Rioting broke out in Jaffa in mid-April. Unlike the violence of 1920 and 1929 this was not a spontaneous response to an immediate grievance but the first round of a planned and co-ordinated attempt to force Britain to accept various demands. A General Strike followed and, although the Arabs themselves suffered most from the economic disruption engendered by this new tactic, was maintained until October 1936. (74)

The collapse of the General Strike did not mean the restoration of order in Palestine, however. It merely signified the end of the first stage of the Arab Revolt which was to rage unabated until early 1939.

(72) Even so, German Jews constituted the majority of immigrants to Palestine in only one year between 1932 and 1938; i.e. 1938, 6,733 German Jews arrived in Palestine, 52% of that year's total. In all other years they were outnumbered by Polish Jews who left their homeland for similar reasons. See R. Malka, 'Nazi Germany and the Palestine Question', Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 3, 1969, p. 230.
(74) The success of the Zionist programme of self-reliance meant that Jews were largely unaffected.
A Royal Commission headed by Earl Peel was sent to Palestine to attempt a solution in November 1936. In its report to Cabinet in June 1937 the Peel Commission stressed its conclusion that the best hope of a permanent solution to the Palestine problem lay in partition. Although favoured by the Colonial Office, the detailed plan contained in the report was rejected by the Foreign Office. Opposed both by Zionists and Arabs, the chances of success for the partition plan were obviously non-existent.

Nevertheless, Britain had no intention of giving the policy up easily, at least not in public where she might appear to be pandering too closely to national groups who were, after all, under British control. A new Commission, known rather aptly as the Woodhead Commission, was dispatched in 1938 to examine the technical feasibility of partition. At Foreign Office insistence it was empowered not only to examine alternative schemes but also to reject the idea of partition completely if it seemed to pose too many problems – this at a time when the Cabinet had ostensibly decided to go ahead with the partition proposal. In fact the Cabinet seems to have been relieved when the Commission's report found that it was unable to recommend boundaries for self-supporting Arab and Jewish states and that, upon a strict interpretation of its terms of reference, partition was not feasible. The Commission's report together with a Government White Paper rejecting partition were published on 7 November 1938 and in an attempt to stave off the inevitable outcry from one or both of the affected parties, a proposal to convene an Arab-Jewish Conference to, once more, search for a solution to the Palestine problem was made. (75)

The resultant St. James' Conference held in London in February and

March 1939 proved to be as singularly unsuccessful as the British Government had expected. Britain was about to discard its previous policy of attempting to achieve some sort of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. It was now accepted that any conclusion must result in either a charge of a breach of faith with the Jews, or perpetuate anti-British sentiment amongst the Arabs of Palestine and the neighbouring states. In view of the deteriorating world situation and Britain's strategic interests, the first option appeared the lesser of the two evils. (76)

Following the cessation of the St. James' Conference a series of Anglo-Arab negotiations were held and these formed the basis of yet another White Paper on Palestine published in London on 17 May 1939. Promising to establish an independent Palestinian State in treaty relations with Britain within ten years, the British Government stated categorically that it was not their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish state. While 75,000 Jewish immigrants would be admitted over the next five years, after that no more would be granted entry without Arab permission. Sales of land would also be strictly regulated. (77) Thus the 1939 White Paper reflected a dramatic change from prior British policy in the area, in particular from the British attitude towards the Zionists, which previously had been at worst bureaucratically neutral and at best openly sympathetic. The White Paper was the result of diminishing options in the Arab Middle East on the eve of war and of a growing recognition of, if not respect for, the growth of a militant and increasingly anti-British brand of Arab nationalism in Palestine. The White Paper aimed at preventing it from becoming contagious. (78)

(76) For the British Government's expectations see Michael J. Cohen, Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate, p. 73.


(78) Michael J. Cohen, Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate, p. 87.
As a means of ending the Arab Revolt the British volte-face was a successful manoeuvre. As a solution to the Palestine problem, however, it was a complete failure. The Zionist response to Britain's expedient rejection of her obligations to their cause was immediate and violent, assiduously refuting the analyses of Sir Harold MacMichael, the High Commissioner, and General Haining, G.O.C. Palestine that, on past experience, the Jews were unlikely to bring about serious disorder in Palestine. (79) Such claims exemplified the total inability of the British Administration in Palestine to sense developments around them and pose serious doubts about the competence of the intelligence-gathering organs of both the army and the police.

Following the anti-Jewish riots of 1929 and the demonstrated inability of the British security forces to guarantee the safety of Jews, militants within the existing Hebraic Defence Organization in Palestine (Haganah) had grown increasingly convinced of the necessity for more hard-line measures to be adopted to impress upon potential Arab attackers that the Jewish community was not defenceless. Haganah was, and remained, essentially an officially unrecognized citizens militia designed to defend settlements that found themselves under Arab attack until the police or army arrived. Haganah leaders refused to accept that the organization should assume the offensive despite the claims of the militants that the emergency of 1929 had proved Haganah tactics too passive to offer effective protection. They shared, with the majority of Palestinian Zionists, the belief that co-operation with the Mandate Administration was both desirable in terms of the objectives of Zionism, and inevitable in view of the widely disparate strengths of the Jewish community and the British authorities. (80)


The differences in tactical perception also had an ideological dimension. The Revisionist or Militant Zionist movement, dominated by the Russian-born Vladimir Jabotinsky until his death in 1940, berated the weakness and lack of initiative of Weizmann and the Jewish Agency. Militant and maximalist, the Revisionists demanded the transformation of Palestine, including Transjordan, into a self-governing commonwealth under the control of an established Jewish majority. Finding authority for their demands in the Balfour Declaration, they pledged to build an 'iron wall' between Zionists and those Arabs who perversely resisted the superior moral claim of the Jews to Palestine. (81)

An associated concept with important nationalist overtones was that of the rebirth of 'the fighting Jew'. Just as Political Zionism and Practical Zionism had proposed their own programme for the national revitalization of Jews, so Militant Zionism offered its own path to the regeneration of confident and proud Jewishness; the Jew must resist his oppressor and regain his freedom and pride, not through the benevolence of enlightened Gentiles, but through the force of his own effort. The basic sentiment was pithily expressed by one of the most dedicated followers of this philosophy;

'The world does not pity the slaughtered. It only respects those who fight... All the peoples of the world knew this grim truth except the Jews. That is why our enemies were able to trap us and shed our blood at will'. (82)

From a split in Haganah ranks in 1936 emerged the first and the strongest of the new militant groups; Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization). In August 1937 the Irgun began undertaking reprisal operations

in response to the Arab Revolt. The campaign of bombings and ambushes continued despite the British reinforcements sent to Palestine to restore order, and underground presses were set up to publicize the Irgun's aims, activities and achievements. By the time the 1939 White Paper was released the Irgun was an established and effective organization in the forefront of the tide of militancy that swept through the Jewish community in response to the ominous change in the direction of British policy.

The outbreak of the Second World War in September postponed the possibility of a widespread Jewish revolt. The Jewish Agency called for Jews to co-operate fully with the British and lend their complete support to the war effort. In this way those Jews fortunate enough to have reached Palestine could best ensure the liberation of their fellows still victimized by European racism. An additional reason for co-operating with Hitler's most effective enemy also had a powerful influence on Zionist opinion. If the Jews assisted Britain to victory surely their loyalty and support would add greater weight to their demands for statehood. Despite their grievances the Jews of Palestine, including the Irgun, responded to the Jewish Agency's call.

This policy of restraint and co-operation faltered as British authorities steadfastly refused to allow the miserable trickle of Jewish refugees that managed to escape from Europe to enter Palestine. The tension in Palestine was further increased by the rumours, and subsequent confirmation, of the fate of European Jewry trapped in countries under Nazi control.

During the second half of 1942 a growing body of evidence indicated that the Nazis were pursuing a policy aimed at the extermination of every Jew and all other 'undesirables' that could be rounded up. The reliability of the increasingly detailed newspaper reports was confirmed by Anthony Eden in the British House of Commons on 17 December and the House rose to
observe two minutes silence before proceeding to other business. (83)

In 1943 Britain and the United States set up a War Crimes Commission as concrete evidence of their commitment to see all those responsible for atrocities of any sort brought to justice. Yet any real opportunity to aid or rescue persecuted Jews was rejected. In their concern to avoid any action which might be interpreted as aiding the enemy, hindering the war effort, or, worst of all, giving apparent proof of Nazi propaganda claims that the Allies were pawns of the conspiracy of international Jewry, the Allies assisted the Nazi atrocities by default.

Zionists were unable to accept the callous reasoning that doomed their co-religionists. The Jewish Agency lobbied incessantly in a futile attempt to persuade Allied governments to discard military priorities, even temporarily, for the sake of humanitarian concerns. The Jewish military and terrorist organizations in Palestine, their anti-British sentiments overlaid with frustrated desperation, launched the revolt - a combination of civil disobedience and armed violence - that was to continue with increasing effectiveness throughout the closing years of the British mandate.

For the Jews in Palestine 1943 marked the complete rejection of Britain's authority to determine their future. From that point onwards all effort was directed towards the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. By the end of the war the Zionist dream which owed so much to the dark forebodings of Theodor Herzl was well on the way to reality.

As knowledge of the horrific efficiency of the Nazi exterminations was publicised following the end of the war in Europe, there was an outpouring of sympathy for the Jewish people, particularly amongst the nations of Western Europe. This was undoubtedly intensified by the shared guilt that

arose from the certain knowledge that their quiescent attitude and unwillingness to accept Jewish refugees in the pre-war years had contributed to, even encouraged, the Nazi crimes; Goebbels himself had said as much in 1943:

'What will be the solution of the Jewish question? Whether a Jewish state will one day be created in some territory remains to be seen. But it is curious to note that the countries where public opinion is rising in favour of the Jews refuse to accept them from us. They call them the pioneers of a new civilization, geniuses of philosophy and artistic creation, but when anybody wants them to accept these geniuses, they close their borders... It seems to me to be the only case in world history where people have refused to accept geniuses'. (84)

Whatever the dubious origins of this newfound concern, the Jewish Agency was quick to recognize it and exploit it to place pressure on Britain not only to permit the survivors of European Jewry to emigrate to Palestine but also to set in motion plans to establish the Jewish state. (85)

On 27 July 1945 a landslide victory at the polls brought Clement Attlee's Labour Government into power in Britain and on 22 August a meeting of the new Cabinet Committee on Palestine was held to consider the options. Zionist hopes were high in view of the numerous pro-Zionist declarations Labour

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(85) It is ironic that Britain should be caste in the role of oppressor of the Jews so soon after the end of the war. Despite the questionable nature of her policy towards the Jews during the war years, Britain could claim with good reason that her record on Jewish issues compared most favourably with those of her critics. Britain, after all, had accepted the principle and assisted in the formation of the Jewish Home in Palestine and her pre-war record on the admission of Jewish refugees had been relatively generous; between 1933 and 1939 some 50,000 refugees from Nazi controlled territories had been admitted to Britain and a further 53,000 had entered Palestine. During the same period 57,000 were admitted to the U.S.A.; 40,000 to France; 25,000 to Belgium and 10,000 to Switzerland. Bernard Wasserstein, Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945, p. 7.
politicians had made during the war. The new Cabinet, however, proved un-
able to agree upon the fundamental principles that should direct a new
policy on Palestine. Beset by domestic and international post-war problems,
the Cabinet opted for a Commission of Enquiry into Palestine in an attempt
to gain some respite.(86)

The fundamental problem lay in the radically different conceptions of
the importance of the Palestine question held by the Zionists and the British
Government. To the Zionists it was simply a question of Jewish survival and
the fulfilling of British promises. For the British Government, however,
Palestine had to be seen as one element of the wider considerations of
Empire.

Britain was increasingly aware of the disparity between her existing
resources and the requirements of Empire. The war had drained British
strength and in view of the emerging new world order, there were real
doubts that future competition from her present American and Russian allies
could be met. Of immediate concern to British interests in the Middle
East was the emerging Arab unity. Palestinian-Arab nationalism might remain
quietscent as it had been since the beginning of the Second World War and
the Mufti of Jerusalem's association with Nazism might negate any possi-
bility of his arousing anything other than regional support(87), but a Jewish
state in Palestine would undoubtedly be opposed by the Arab states. The
attendant risks to British influence and prestige, and British oil supplies


(87) This pro-Nazi disposition had been shared by Arab politicians through-
out the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and in Egypt. While the Arab
governments had been able to salvage prestige and ensure post-war
bargaining power by declaring war on the Axis powers once the inevit-
ability of Allied victory had become apparent, the Mufti did not have
this advantage. His prestige suffered as a result of this tactical
terror, depriving the Palestinian Arabs of credible post-war leadership.
Simha Flapan, Zionism and the Palestinians, p. 275.
and investments, in the region could not be accepted.

The problem, it seemed to the British Government, was beyond rational solution. Zionist demands could not be met without prejudicing Britain's position in the Middle East while Arab demands for an independent Arab state in Palestine would require the abandonment of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees in Europe awaiting repatriation. The latter move would also subject Britain to international condemnation. With no acceptable option apparent, Britain's Palestine policy drifted aimlessly, intensifying the deterioration of the situation within the Mandate.

In the face of British intransigence on the admission of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, the Jewish Agency, through its para-military organization, Haganah, began running ship-loads of immigrants through the Royal Navy's blockade. The practice was more effective as a means of publicizing the plight of Jewish refugees and protesting British policy than circumventing it. Britain was cast firmly in the role of villain, arresting the immigrant ships and dispatching their wretched cargoes to internment camps in Cyprus. International opinion was suitably outraged, showing a concern with Jewish human rights that had been notably absent before 1945.

The terrorist Lehi (Stern Gang) and Irgun groups intensified their activities, forcing the British authorities to pursue a policy of suppression which again drew world-wide criticism. By November 1946 the 80,000 strong British security forces were powerless to prevent the steadily accelerating tempo of terrorist activity. The state of martial law which they enforced selectively amounted, in Jewish eyes, to an undeclared war against the Jewish population. Area searches, random body searches of men, women and children, large-scale internments and the particularly repellent practice of trying suspected terrorists, who were denied either prisoner-of-war status or full civil rights, before military tribunals served only to strengthen the resolve of the terrorists and increase their support amongst the Jewish community.
while lowering British morale. (88)

The combination of blockade-breaking and terrorist war with the heavy-handed British responses finally destroyed the legitimacy of the British administration in the eyes of the Palestinian Jews. Their support was given with progressively less reservation to the representatives of Zionist organizations, whether political or militant. As the British were forced to cling to a semblance of control by undisguised coercion they once more felt the scorn of international opinion. The costs and casualties mounted and the British public came to question with increasing frequency the necessity of maintaining such an unpopular and expensive policy.

It was vital that a solution be found. The increasing American interest in the Palestine problem seemed to offer a new opportunity and the British Government sought to turn this interest into some more definite involvement through the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine which was formed in November 1945. The initial hope was that the Joint Commission would divert some of the criticism which was resulting from Britain's handling of the refugee problem and the British attempted to have the Commission deal exclusively with this problem by suggesting that it examine the possibility of absorbing the refugees in Europe, the British Dominions, the United States or anywhere else, except Palestine. (89)

The United States opposed such a restricted scope of inquiry. While President Truman still officially followed the line which had been taken by Franklin D. Roosevelt which held that no decision should be taken with respect to the basic situation in Palestine without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews, he had become concerned about the plight of Jewish refugees. In August he had told a press conference that American policy

(88) J. Bowyer Bell, Terror out of Zion, pp. 140-202 details the struggle.
(89) Michael J. Cohen, Retreat from the Mandate, p. 184.
was 'to let as many Jews into Palestine as it is possible to get into that country'. (90) Although advised by the State Department that support for large-scale immigration would inevitably offend the Arabs, Truman stood by his statement and when the Anglo-American Committee was instituted extracted Britain's agreement that the first task should be to examine the possibility of Palestine absorbing the Jewish refugees. He also received the assurances of the British Government that they would accept any reasonable proposal for solving the problem that might emerge. (91)

The report that emerged in April 1946, after nearly four months of investigation in Europe and the Middle East, found that few countries were prepared to provide 'substantial assistance in finding homes for Jews wishing or impelled to leave Europe'. Palestine appeared to be the only refuge presently available. As it could not alone meet the immigration needs of European Jews, however, the search for alternatives had to be undertaken with some urgency.

The report then turned its attention exclusively to Palestine. It insisted that 100,000 certificates should be immediately authorized for the admission of European Jews to Palestine and that these immigrants should be admitted 'as rapidly as conditions will allow'. The administration of Palestine, while mindful of its duty under the mandate to ensure that the rights and position of other sectors of the population were not prejudiced, should facilitate further Jewish immigration 'under suitable conditions'. These conditions could be promoted through agricultural and industrial development, the reform of Arab and Jewish education, and the abolition of

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(90) Quoted in John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel* (Stanford, California, 1974), p. 17.

exclusivity of employment. At the same time restrictions on the purchase of land by Jews which had been instituted under the 1939 White Paper should be removed and replaced by a policy of freedom in the sale, lease, and use of land irrespective of race, community or creed.

The exclusive claims of Jews and Arabs to Palestine should be disposed of, 'once and for all' by a statement which set forth the following principles:

I. That Jew shall not dominate Arab and Arab shall not dominate Jew.
II. That Palestine shall be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state.
III. That the form of government ultimately to be established, shall, under international guarantees, fully protect and preserve the interests in the Holy Land of Christendom and of the Moslem and Jewish faiths'.

The report confidently asserted that;

'Palestine must ultimately become a state which guards the rights and interests of Moslems, Jews and Christians alike; and accords to the inhabitants, as a whole, the fullest measure of self-government, consistent with the three paramount principles set forth above'.

Nevertheless, because of the likelihood that the present 'difficulties' in Palestine would continue, any form of independence was impractical and the country should be administered under its present mandate, 'pending the execution of a trusteeship agreement under the United Nations'.(92)

Previous British reports had on numerous occasions displayed insensitivity and incomprehension of the underlying causes of the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, but the recommendations of the Anglo-American

Committee set new standards of absurdity. It displayed total ignorance of the depth of both Jewish and Arab nationalism and, as the United States had studiously avoided accepting any of the military or administrative responsibilities implicit in the recommendations, suggested nothing more than an extension of the British mandate with an increase in all the factors which had intensified the conflicts of the past. The report offered no reasonable proposals which could be realistically applied and was quickly shelved by the British Government.

A further series of Palestine Conferences in London failed to produce any new solution or to achieve any agreement between Britain, the Arab States, the Zionists or the reactivated Palestinian Arab nationalists, led once more by the Mufti of Jerusalem. By February 1947 the British were no longer able to maintain a semblance of interest in the torturous proceedings and made little effort to prevent the Conference breaking up. Finally convinced that the mandate was unworkable, the British accepted that they had no alternative but to place the future of Palestine in the hands of the United Nations.

Britain's difficulties in Palestine had been largely of her own making. Determined to gain control of the region to further the interests of the British Empire, Britain's officials had promised all things to all parties without any consideration of the consequences. Having achieved hegemony of the region, the British administration was immediately confronted by problems it could not solve arising from forces it did not understand. Unable to formulate consistent or successful policies, the self-interested motives which had inspired British involvement prevented withdrawal. The Palestinian situation inevitably became a drain on money, manpower and resources and Britain's ability to sustain its own policy progressively
diminished. Britain's depleted state at the end of the Second World War made Palestine a costly imperial luxury that it was increasingly eager to be quit of.

By mid-1947 Palestine was of diminishing importance to Britain's interests in the East. The Indian settlement removed much of Palestine's strategic significance. More importantly for a Britain seeking to reduce the cost of its global commitments, the issuing of the Truman Doctrine with its promise of American military and economic aid to states threatened by communism, and the subsequent United States involvement in Greece and Turkey, offered the chance to reduce the British presence in the Middle East without providing for Russian expansion.

On 2 April 1947 Sir Alexander Cadogan, head of the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations, presented the Secretary General with his government's request that the question of Palestine be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its next regular annual session. The Secretary-General's attention was drawn to

'the desirability of an early settlement in Palestine and to the risk that the General Assembly might not be able to decide upon its recommendations at its next regular session unless some preliminary study of the question had previously been made under the auspices of the United Nations'.

The British Government requested that a special session of the Assembly be summoned as soon as possible to constitute and instruct a special committee which would prepare the question for discussion. It was further requested that the Assembly make recommendations concerning the future government of Palestine to the Security Council as authorized under Article 10 of the United Nations Charter. (93)

Having decided to extract themselves from the Palestinian tangle the British Government wished the process to be accomplished with minimal delay. They were not prepared to allow international opinion to necessarily have the final say however. As a Permanent Member of the Security Council, Britain would be involved in the process of determining what, if any, action would be taken by the United Nations. There seemed adequate opportunity to ensure that British feelings and interests were taken into account.
CHAPTER TWO: NEW ZEALAND AND THE "JEWISH QUESTION" PRIOR TO 1947

Following the submission of the problem of Palestine to the United Nations in April 1947, the issue of the provision of a Jewish homeland assumed new importance in New Zealand's foreign policy. To Peter Fraser, New Zealand's Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, it was not a question of whether a Jewish homeland should be established in Palestine but of how the homeland could best be provided for. Under his direction New Zealand's representatives at the New York discussions struggled to ensure that the General Assembly arrived at an equitable and practical settlement which offered the chance of peace and prosperity to the peoples of Palestine while demonstrating the ability of the United Nations to solve seemingly intractable territorial and political disputes.

There is a certain irony in the energy with which New Zealand became involved in the search for a solution to a problem which, thirty years earlier, it had been peripherally involved in creating, but the new enthusiasm was underpinned by a confluence of identifiable ideals and interests. Later chapters will discuss and assess the significance of the Palestine problem in relation to the post-war initiatives in New Zealand's foreign policy pursued by Fraser and his advisors. This chapter, however, will concern itself with outlining longer-term traditions, trends, and assumptions, setting the response to the developments of, and after, 1947 in the broader context of the emergent social, political and cultural patterns of New Zealand.

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The 'Jewish Question' was given its first political airing in New Zealand on 30 July 1891 when Sir George Grey rose to propose to the House of Representatives that New Zealand take 'for the first time a place amongst
the nations of the world, in moving a question which is of common interest to all mankind', and 'formally recognise that it is the duty of the New Zealand nation, however small or however great it may be, to do all the good it possibly can for people in all parts of the world'.

He then placed before the House a motion:

'That a memorial be addressed to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, respectfully praying that all exceptional and restrictive laws which afflict his Jewish subjects may be repealed, and that equal rights with those enjoyed by the rest of His Majesty's subjects may be conferred upon them. That the said memorial be signed by the Speaker, and be by him transmitted to His Majesty'.

Joseph Ward seconded the motion which passed unanimously. (1) Grey's resolution was undoubtedly motivated by the liberal ideology he subscribed to and, in its underlying assumptions, expressed the attitude of contemporary British liberalism which sought the solution to the 'Jewish Question' in assimilation. The perceived organisation and social behaviour of Jews were deemed to display admirable empathy with capitalism. By removing antiquated discriminatory measures Jews would be brought more closely into the service of the state and the nation, contributing in their supposedly unique way to the smooth and efficient functioning of the existing social system. (2) This belief, as dependent upon stereotyped concepts of Jewish racial characteristics and abilities as any anti-Jewish doctrine, had been given concrete expression in the political emancipation of British Jewry by the Promissory Oaths Act of 1871 but became increasingly anachronistic as the Zionist movement fostered nationalist sentiments amongst growing numbers of Jews.

(1) NZFD, vol. 72, pp. 631-632, 30 July 1891.

In accordance with his instructions the Speaker of the House of Representatives, W.J. Steward, dispatched the resolution - in the form of an illuminated address - on 20 August 1891. In his covering letter Steward stressed that 'in soliciting for the Jews in Russia His Majesty's generous consideration', the New Zealand House was influenced 'by no political or religious considerations'. (3) New Zealand was, after all, predominantly Christian and there was no domestic Jewish bloc-vote to be won. It can safely be assumed therefore that humanitarian considerations played a dominant role in the unanimous approval of Grey's memorial although the apprehension with which New Zealand governments in the last half of the nineteenth century regarded Russian ambitions in the Pacific may have enhanced the appeal of this opportunity to register disapproval of the Tsar's domestic policies. (4)

The resolution was returned early the following year by the Tsar's Aide-de-camp for the Reception of Petitions who pointed out that as he was 'not authorised to receive petitions or addresses from representatives of foreign countries concerning questions which relate to the internal policy of Russia', he found himself 'obliged to return ... forthwith the address... without submitting it to His Majesty the Emperor'. (5)

In practical terms the resolution may have been little more than a grand but futile gesture which cost little to make and, once made, was not followed up but Grey's initiative had persuaded his colleagues to express

(3) NZPD, vol. 75, p. 4, 23 June 1892.


(5) NZPD, vol. 75, p. 4, 23 June 1892.
their concern at the denial of civil rights to an oppressed minority, to record their moral outrage at the domestic policies of a regime with which New Zealand had no direct contacts.

Russian Jews remained subject to the 'exceptional and restrictive laws' which had been the object of New Zealand's protest until they were emancipated in the wake of the Revolution of 1917, but from the early 1890s there was a general decline in the vigour with which they were persecuted. New Zealand's concern dissipated accordingly. It was not until some fifty years later, when confirmation of the systematic extermination of European Jewry by a tyranny whose ruthless brutality far exceeded that of tsarist Russia was received, that New Zealand once more actively sought to take its 'place amongst the nations of the world' in addressing this 'question... of common interest to all mankind'. (6)

The 'Jewish Question', in one or another of its related aspects, continued to surface sporadically in the interim. It was primarily associated with issues of domestic or imperial significance however and the added weight of pragmatic and patriotic considerations meant that the high-minded principles and ideals expressed in July 1891 were correspondingly muted.

The uneasy relationship - and unequal contest - between humanitarian ideals and political realities seems to have first become apparent in the issue of Jewish immigration to New Zealand.

In 1893, according to L.M. Goldman, rumours in the colony that Jewish authorities in London intended to send some 500 destitute Russian Jews to New Zealand brought an immediate and hostile response from a variety of groups;

'Protests arrived from all over the country expressing fear of racial

(6) NZPD, vol. 72, p. 631, 30 July 1891.
difficulties and of competition. Trades and labour councils passed strong resolutions protesting against the admittance of foreign Jews, laying stress upon their destitution and poverty and pauperism of quality'.

Premier Seddon sympathised and responded by cabling the Agent-General in London and instructing him to use all possible means to prevent the Russian Jews from embarking for New Zealand.(7)

The sequence of events is eminently plausible. Anglo-Jewry, conscious of the relationship between the inflow of Jewish immigrants and the increase in anti-Jewish sentiment, did encourage large numbers of their co-religionists to regard Britain as merely a temporary refuge. Most had needed little persuasion to move on, the vast majority settling in the United States, although some made the long journey to Australia and New Zealand.

In 1891 the United States enacted its 'first effective law restricting immigration' which, significantly, sought to exclude paupers and assisted immigrants.(8) By 1893 both Australia and New Zealand were attempting to frame similarly restrictive legislation. Such developments caused considerable concern in Anglo-Jewish organisations such as the Jewish Board of Guardians and the Russian Jewish Committee. They had had little success in discouraging immigration from Europe to Britain and now their attempts to divert the flow towards the United States and the colonies were under direct threat.(9)

It is clear that any plan to send 500 destitute Russian Jews to New Zealand would have required the participation - and resources - of either or

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both of the Anglo-Jewish organisations. (10) It is equally clear that
rumours of such an influx would have aroused considerable concern in official
and unofficial quarters in New Zealand. Yet at a time when immigration
policy in general was of great interest to politicians and political and
social pressure groups, and when philosophies and attitudes that were
tangibly racist were proudly proclaimed, there is an absence of public
reference to the rumoured arrival of the Russian Jews.

It is unlikely that the colony's Agent-General in London would have
required specific instruction to attempt to prevent the embarkation of the
Russian Jews. There had been official reluctance to admit destitute immi-
grants, at least since 1879. (11) By 1892 the Government was expressing a
clear preference for 'small farmers with capital' who would be required to
'show that they were possessed of some means, and to produce some form of
guarantee as to the amount of capital owned by them' as well as providing
evidence as to their 'character and general suitableness' before receiving
any assistance to emigrate. (12) Unassisted immigration had also become a
cause for concern by mid-1893 and on 9 June Premier Seddon cabled his
counterparts in the Australian colonies requesting them to make public the
New Zealand Government's concern that new arrivals in the colony would be

(10) The two organisations had formed a conjoint committee in 1881. Chaim
Berman, op. cit., p. 180. Apart from the discussion in L.M. Goldman,
op. cit., p. 141, and a rather cryptic reference to 'a campaign to
prevent the admission of Jews to New Zealand' in A.H. McLintock, (ed.)
An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, (Wellington, 1966), vol. 2, p. 189, I
have been unable to find more information on the incident or trace of
its source.

Minister for Immigration, 7 April 1879.

(12) AJHR, 1893, D.7, p. 3, The Hon. the Premier to the Agent-General, 16
June 1892.
unable to find employment and, 'with winter approaching, persons without means that come here will only come to endure hardship and privation'. (13)

This concern indicates the harsh economic and social realities of 1893. New Zealand was suffering from a long and acute economic depression caused by the decline in the prices of primary products on the world market and aggravated by the reduced output from goldmining. Declining opportunities, debt and the threat of bankruptcy had forced many to leave New Zealand to search for something better. Others had sought protection by banding together as the vulnerability of wage and salary earners had become readily apparent and the growth of organised labour had been further encouraged by the widespread shock and anger that followed the public revelations of the extent of 'sweated' labour in New Zealand in 1888. The collapse of the great maritime strike in 1890 had spelt the failure of direct action but a Liberal-Labour alliance had taken office in 1891. The trades and labour councilshad strong motives for pressing for the restriction, even the suspension, of additional immigration and potential competition for employment, while the Government had equally strong political motives for acting on their behalf.

It is scarcely surprising that the arguments presented to justify restricted immigration in New Zealand echoed the arguments which had emerged in Britain in the 1880s in response to the influx of Jewish refugees. But, while these arguments could have been applied to demand the restriction of Jewish immigrants under the circumstances outlined by Goldman, they were primarily directed against those groups perceived as posing the greatest

(13) AHR, 1893, D-21, 'Australian Emigration to New Zealand'. 
threat to New Zealand labour: the 'Asiatics'.

The sudden increase in the numbers of Russian Jews seeking refuge from tsarist persecution by gaining admission to Britain had coincided with a trade depression. The new arrivals, it was claimed, had aggravated 'certain social problems' in the areas where they congregated, notably Leeds, Manchester and, especially, the East End of London. Opponents of the immigrants argued that they constituted a 'residuum', weakening the bargaining power of labour while sustaining the exploitative sectors of the economy - an emotive charge in view of the heated debate taking place over sweated industries. There were associated charges: Jews were held to compete economically and accept lower(5,10),(991,986)
are chiefly responsible for the sweating system and the grave evils which are flowing from it...'. (16)

while radicals saw in 'the Jew';

'the nearest approach to the ideal 'economic' man, the 'fittest' person to survive in trade competition. Admirable in domestic morality and an orderly citizen, he is almost devoid of social morality. No compunction or consideration for his fellow worker will keep him from underselling and overreaching them; he acquires a thorough mastery of all the dishonourable tricks of trade which are difficult to restrain by law; the superior calculating intellect, which is a national heritage, is used unsparingly to enable him to take advantage of every weakness, folly and vice of the society in which he lives'. (17)

Although Jewish entry into Britain gave rise to heated debate and encouraged the dissemination of anti-semitism, the chief cause of contention was immigration policy in general. Attempts to defend free entry by reference to the 'logic of free trade' and the right of asylum were greeted with derision by the advocates of more restrictive immigration laws. Critics, both of the right and the left, demanded 'Britain for the British'.

The emphases varied in accordance with each group's particular position on the political spectrum but the general assumptions consistently stressed that 'the scarce resources of British society should reside in those who might be labelled 'British' and that there was a British culture and way of


life which was worth preserving'. (18)

It was inevitable that such concerns and attitudes should be adopted and adapted in New Zealand in the 1890s. Like the 'Mother Country', the colony was attempting to resolve the social and economic tensions generated by a depression and the debate on the future of immigration loomed large in the social consciousness. The desirability of particular types and groups of immigrants had occupied the minds of various sectors of New Zealand society since the beginnings of settlement but from 1880 onwards economic hardship gave new currency to the whole question and increasingly rigorous attempts were made to exclude 'undesirables'.

The vast majority of New Zealand's European population was of British origin and while identification with the traditions and interests of the United Kingdom was articulated most strongly by New Zealand's social and political elites, the doctrines of Empire and the inherent superiority of the British race and culture over all others were widely held. As was the case in Britain, these articles of faith were reinforced by more prosaic fears. New Zealand's working class feared that the unrestricted admission of cheap labour would intensify competition for employment and depress living standards. These fears were shared by elements of the middle-class, particularly those in retailing. (19) There were also generally held fears that the admission of non-British immigrants would lead to moral and racial degeneracy. (20)


(19) 'Working class' and 'Middle class' are used here as indicators of economic relationships in their broadest sense. 'Working class' refers to wage-earners, particularly those with little job security, while those 'elements of the Middle class' referred to are primarily the small businessman, tradesmen and artisans who perceived themselves as particularly vulnerable to economic competition.

The prevention or at least, the severe restriction of the entry of Asians was the major concern of New Zealanders intent on preserving and promoting the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the colony. This concern had emerged in the late 1860s and had rapidly gained momentum. The admission of Asians, it was claimed, was 'degrading' the British race. 'Evidence' of how the Chinese in California, Hawaii, Queensland and Victoria had 'demoralized' local communities with their diseases, vices and secret societies was widely publicised and tales of opium dens, gambling, prostitution and the degradation and debauchment of young whites - especially innocent but adventurous girls - loomed large in the discussion. Such allegations, vicarious titillation masquerading as moral outrage, were marvellously effective in rousing in the public imagination spectres that no sober and reasoned assessment of the facts could exorcise. Although a Parliamentary Select Committee on Chinese Immigration found, in 1871, that 'there was nothing to indicate that the Chinese were carriers of contagious or loathsome diseases, a menace to public morals, or even an economic threat...'(21) the accusations continued to be levelled and to be widely believed for over another fifty years.(22)

The significance of the arguments used to demand the restriction of Asiatic immigration in relation to the principal concern of this discussion lies in the striking similarity of the accusations levelled against Asians

in New Zealand with those made against Jews in Britain during the same period. (23) This suggests that the British colonists brought to New Zealand a non-specific framework of prejudice which could be adapted with relative ease to justify opposition to the admission of any racial or ethnic group which was perceived as a threat. Robert A. Huttenback, an historian of British Colonial racism, describes the process as obeying a 'sort of Gresham's Law of racial and ethnic animosity' so that:

'in areas where there were men of color ... the white man directed his hatred almost exclusively against them. Only when all the inhabitants of a region were white were white minorities subjected to a high degree of disdain and the disadvantages associated with it'. (24)

There also appears to be a correlation between the numbers of a suspect group present in a society, the ease with which they are identifiable, and the extent of popular prejudice that is directed against them as is indicated by the successive agitations over Irish Catholic, Chinese, Indian and 'Assyrian' immigration.

Whereas Jewish immigrants arriving singularly or in family groups had previously generated little opposition rumours of the impending arrival of

(23) Compare, for example, the charges as outlined in Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, pp. 44-48; p. 56, with those discussed in Charles A. Price, The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888, (Canberra, 1974), pp. 217-20; pp. 242-3.

This same 'framework' was displayed with only minor changes in emphasis in regard to Irish immigrants who 'were suspect for their Catholicism, their inveterate poverty and consequent lack of social graces, their tradition of agrarian violence and lawlessness, their addiction to drink and the competitive advantages deriving from their low living standards'. Richard P. Davis, Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics 1868-1922, (Dunedin, 1974), p. 26.

(24) Robert A. Huttenback, Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910, (Ithaca, 1976), pp. 20-21. New Zealand's Maoris were not perceived as a threat - they lived in isolated rural communities and there was 'a widespread belief amongst Europeans that the Maori race was doomed to extinction'. Michael King, 'Between Two Worlds' in Oliver and Williams (eds.) The Oxford History of New Zealand, pp. 279-280.
500 Russian Jews - not only 'foreign' but 'destitute' as well - could be presumed to have drawn opposition. If this was the case then any anti-Jewish sentiment which was generated would appear to have evaporated with a rapidity which, in the context of the ongoing debate on the restriction of immigration, is rather remarkable. L.M. Goldman cites the trades and labour councils as leaders of the protest against the admission of Russian Jews (25) yet at the Fourth Trades and Labour Conference held at Auckland in March 1894,

'The Conference drew the attention of the Government to the necessity of restricting Asiatic and pauper labour. It agreed that the Poll Tax should be increased to £100 and Austrians (i.e. Dalmatians), Assyrians and Italians should also be discouraged from coming to New Zealand'. (26)

There was no explicit reference to Jewish, or even Russian or Polish, immigrants although the Conference would surely have provided a prime occasion for recounting and reinforcing so recent a success. Such an omission from the discussion on immigration was unlikely to have arisen from any regard for the sensibilities of racial or ethnic minorities and suggests that any opposition to the admission of Russian Jews arose from their 'pauper labour' status.

Although the energies of New Zealand ethno-centrists were principally directed at those minorities which appeared to pose more obvious and immediate threats, there was an under-current of anti-semitism in New Zealand society. Charles Brasch, referring to his father's experiences with anti-Jewish prejudice in Dunedin in the 1920s, observed that


'No one of Jewish birth should count on being accepted. Prejudice waited everywhere and might declare itself at any time, if not too blatantly'. (27)

A number of factors combined to help ensure that such prejudice remained predominantly cultural (28) — an inevitable legacy of New Zealand's European heritage — rather than political in origin.

Jews formed a very small proportion of New Zealand's population. The percentage of New Zealanders who professed the Hebrew religion declined from a 'high' of 0.34% in 1878 to a 'low' of 0.21% in 1906, hovering between 0.22% and 0.24% between 1910 and 1950. (29) Furthermore, the majority of New Zealand Jews were Western European, 'assimilated' Jews; their ethnic or racial origins were not immediately apparent, stereotypes notwithstanding. The absence of any large or distinct group against whom to foster resentment and ill-feeling forestalled the development of any general anti-semitic feeling. Even attempts to transplant the malevolent doctrines of political anti-semitism during the Great Depression of the 1930s failed to arouse significant public interest. (30)

The spread of the new Zionism to New Zealand was relatively rapid. By 1903, seven years after the publication of Herzl's *Judenstaat* (31), there was

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(28) E.g. The 'Shylock' stereotype which emphasizes the supposedly avaricious 'nature' of Jews.

(29) *New Zealand Yearbooks 1891-1950*. These figures, gleaned from the 'Population and Religion' tables, may not provide a totally accurate picture in view of the steadily increasing proportion of New Zealand's population who chose to object to stating their religion on their census forms, but the essential point — that Jews constituted a numerically tiny element in New Zealand society — is clear enough.

(30) See this chapter, below.

sufficient interest to enable small Zionist Societies to be formed in Auckland and Wellington. A third Zionist Society was formed in Dunedin in 1906. (32) As in the rest of the Jewish world, however, Zionism remained a minority movement amongst New Zealand Jewry.

The Zionist movement's initial appeal was to the Jews of Eastern Europe. To them it promised a haven free from persecution. To many of the emancipated Jews of Western Europe, on the other hand, the movement appeared to offer only distant, perhaps unrealistic rewards in return for risking all that had been gained. Amongst the latter group assimilation, and the slow growth of acceptance by their native or adoptive society, was widely believed to be 'the answer' to the Jewish question and some significant, albeit atypical progress could be cited. Zionism appeared to be the complete antithesis of this policy and, as such, was perceived to contain inherent dangers. By pressing for a separate Jewish state, many Jews feared they would be leaving themselves open to charges of disloyalty and provide new grounds for the periodic assertions of anti-Semites that Jews were 'eternal aliens'; an unabsorbable, untrustworthy and hostile element which should be eliminated from the host society.

The significance of such arguments would not have been lost on New Zealand Jews. They enjoyed a largely unequalled and certainly unsurpassed equality and acceptance in a society in which anti-semitism, although present, was subdued. But Jewish history abounded with occasions on which real or imagined transgressions against the accepted beliefs or standards of the host society had resulted in an unfortunate backlash. New Zealand's general commitment to the British Empire and 'all it stood for' made it a distinct possibility that any suspicion of disloyalty - or even divided loyalties -

could trigger a hostile reaction. (33)

Thus Zionism in New Zealand appears to have languished and made little headway after the initial flurry of interest until developments during the First World War reawakened interest.

In the course of the Great War significant numbers of New Zealand soldiers came into amicable contact with avowed Zionists, first on the slopes of Gallipoli and then in Palestine itself. The exploits of the New Zealand forces in Palestine as they took part in Allenby’s successful campaign against the Turks ensured that Palestine itself received unprecedented attention from the New Zealand press and public. The issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 was an event of even greater significance to New Zealand Jews. Now interest in Palestine and in the Jewish homeland had not only become synonymous, they were compatible with the broader interests of Empire and Zionism acquired new 'respectability' in New Zealand.

New Zealand troops, as part of the ANZAC force, were blooded in the debacle of Gallipoli. The first landings - the New Zealanders and Australians at Anzac Cove and the British at Cape Helles - took place on 25 April 1915. There were, of course, Jews amongst the ANZACs, but also participating were the men of the Zion Mule Corps.

Formed only on 23 March of that year and made up for the most part of Russian refugees in Palestine, the six officers and 240 men of the Corps, together with the Indian Mule Corp and Indian Mule Cart Corps, were largely responsible for the maintenance of the ANZAC supply lines. Despite the difficult and dangerous nature of their work the Zionists seem to have shared

(33) The Irish, especially Irish Catholics, had been and continued to be regarded with suspicion and hostility by many elements in New Zealand society due to the ongoing debate over Irish Home Rule. See Richard P. Davis, Irish Issues, pp. 11-24; 99-132; 144-162.
the same spirit as the ANZACs - a mixture of boyhood romance, bravado and fatalism. At every opportunity they rode their mules and were soon known as the 'allies cavalry' or 'Ally Sloper's cavalry'. In view of the fact that the Turks 'had the range to a yard of every landing stage, dump and roadway' this practice undoubtedly contributed to their casualties - 8 killed and 55 wounded. (34)

As a military venture Gallipoli was a failure, but for New Zealand and Australia the exploits of their troops were a source of national pride. Following the evacuation of the Peninsula in December 1915, the infantry, after reinforcement, were sent to France. The Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (with the exception of the Otago Mounted Rifles who also went to France) remained in Egypt as the Anzac Mounted Division. These troops played a vital role in the campaign that began in August 1916 and lasted until the Turks were defeated in Sinai and Palestine and sought an armistice on 30 October 1918. (35)

The Palestine campaign brought the soldiers into close contact with the local population. Gallipoli had been a virtually uninhabited peninsula and the ferocity of the Turkish defence had confined the invaders to their beachheads. Sinai, where the initial phase of Allenby's campaign took place, was sparsely populated, its inhabitants largely confined to settlements along the narrow strip of coastal plain. By February 1917 however, the Turkish army had been driven from the Sinai Peninsula and the Division moved into Palestine, meeting increasingly concentrated settlements of both Arabs and Jews. (36)

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The Anzacs’ dislike of the Arabs, which had developed in Egypt, intensified rapidly. C. Guy Powles, a brigade major in the New Zealand Mounted Rifles and author of New Zealand’s official history of the campaign, stated categorically that

'the Arab Mahomedan (sic) is without humour, sympathy or the elements of cleanliness; and his only smile is a smile of deceit'.(37)

This harsh judgement, expressed so off-handedly, typifies the Anzac’s attitude which, while undoubtedly drawing upon their belief in their inherent superiority as a race and as individuals, was exacerbated by Arab actions. The Arabs' reputation for theft and pillage was well founded. They attacked weakened patrols, stripped wounded men of their equipment and left them to die in the desert and, on more than one occasion, told the Turks of British plans, ensuring heavier Allied casualties. British policy, mindful of post-war objectives, was to encourage Arab allegiance.(38) To this end, little official action was taken even in proven cases of Arab treachery. Arab complaints against the Anzacs, on the other hand, were assiduously investigated, with judgement usually favouring the Arabs.(39)

The New Zealanders first came into contact with Jewish settlers after the capture of Gaza on 8 November 1917, and after the publication of the Balfour Declaration in Britain. On 14 November, after a victorious action at Ayun Kara where the Brigade forced a numerically superior Turkish force, intent on turning the left flank of the Allied advance, to abandon a strong natural defensive position, the New Zealanders came upon the Zionist colony of Rechoboth (Rehovot) where they were enthusiastically welcomed.

(37) Ibid., p. 121.

(38) See Chapter One, pp. 8-9, pp. 11-13.

The soldiers, for their part, were pleasantly surprised to encounter 'the first white civilised people since leaving Egypt'. The pleasure was undoubtedly enhanced by the produce of the local vineyards, a flagon of which was presented to the New Zealand commander by the mayor of Rehovot, 'From the Oldest Colony in the World to the Youngest'.(40)

C. Guy Powles interprets the message as an allusion to 'the Israelites in their colonization of the land of Canaan'(41) but it is possible that it was also meant as a cryptic reference to the new relationship between New Zealand and the Jewish settlements in Palestine.

General Allenby, concerned at the possible complications that knowledge of the Balfour Declaration might cause his campaign, forbade publication of the document in Palestine and resolved to apply the Laws of War in captured enemy territory, according no privileges to the Jewish community until the fate of the country had been settled. The generally poor state of communications in war-torn Palestine must have aided his intention but it proved impossible to prevent word seeping through.

The publication of the Balfour Declaration in Britain caused widespread celebration throughout the Zionist world. It was public knowledge in Germany by 12 November when German Zionists unsuccessfully sought a meeting with the German Foreign Minister in an attempt to persuade him to negate whatever propaganda value the Balfour Declaration possessed by issuing a similar declaration on behalf of the German government.(42) Of more significance in the context of the present discussion, Al-Mugattam, the

(40) Lieut-Col. C. Guy Powles, New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine, pp. 147-15
(41) Ibid., p. 154.
leading Arab newspaper in Cairo, published the text of Balfour's letter without comment - on 10 November. (43) Against this background it seems reasonable to assume that rumours, if not definite knowledge, of the Declaration and its significance for the Zionist movement had reached Rehovot by 14 November.

Although the text of the Balfour Declaration was not officially published in Palestine until Britain had received the territory under mandate in mid-1920, knowledge of the document was widespread amongst both the Jewish and the Arab communities by early 1918. During this year the New Zealanders spent three lengthy rest periods encamped near the Jewish settlement of Rishon le Zion. (44)

A close neighbour of Rehovot, Rishon had been founded during the 1880s and by 1918 was a thriving community of some 1500 settlers whose hospitality made a favourable impression on the New Zealanders. The colony's extensive orange orchards and plantations of mulberry trees were a welcome change from the desert of the Sinai and the more arid areas of Palestine in which the New Zealanders operated for most of the campaign. Rishon was also the centre of the Palestinian wine industry, possessing 'the most capacious wine cellar in the world'; a considerable asset in the soldiers' eyes. Some instruction in 'the art of modern sanitation', an apparent preoccupation of the New Zealand command, was deemed necessary but the colony and the colonists were held in considerable regard. (45)


(44) From 12 January to 17 February 1918 after action to the north of Jaffa to divert Turkish forces from the British advance on Jerusalem; from 26 February to 13 March after taking part in the capture of Jericho; from 14 October to 18 December 1918 when the Brigade began its withdrawal to Egypt. Lieut-Col. C. Guy Powles, New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine p. 283.

During the Brigade's last encampment at Rishon the anniversary of the battle of Ayun Kara was commemorated. A memorial service was held on the battlefield and the Jewish settlers provided materials for the construction of a Memorial Column and planted trees around the graves of the New Zealand dead, undertaking to tend the cemetery 'in the years to come'.(46)

The obviously cordial relations between the New Zealanders and the local Jewish inhabitants were in marked contrast to the Anzac-Arab tensions which reached a violent climax in December 1918 during this same encampment.

A New Zealand soldier was awakened by an Arab pilferer and, giving chase, was shot and killed. His comrades tracked the murderer to the nearby Arab village of Surafend which they picketed until the morning. They then demanded the surrender of the killer but the local sheik evaded their demands. As the day wore on, more groups of New Zealand and Australian troops arrived;

'All troops round Surafend had been suffering from the depredations of the Arabs and could get no redress. Many times our men suffered by being fired upon by the native inhabitants and ... the murder of this New Zealander was not the first that had been committed by the Arabs in this district. An Australian had been shot here only a short time before'.(47)

By nightfall the village was surrounded, the Arabs had not produced the murderer, the British staff - although informed of the situation that morning - had made no move to begin an official investigation, and the soldiers' patience was exhausted. After the women and children had been allowed to

(46) Ibid., p. 265 and illustration p. 264.

(47) Ibid., p. 266.
leave, the Anzacs fell upon the men, killing eleven and beating the others before putting both the village and a nearby nomadic camp to the torch.

The British staff were goaded into action by the atrocity that their previous inactivity had helped inspire. Their inquiries, not surprisingly, failed to establish the identities of the ringleaders. In fact they were unable to find anyone who would admit taking part in the 'disturbance' or who knew of anyone who had.

Allenby abused the Anzac Mounted Division as a whole and refused to forward the names of those officers and men of the units camped near Surafend who had been recommended for inclusion in the Peace Despatch by the Divisional Commander. Although Allenby subsequently relented sufficiently to include most names in a supplementary despatch, this display of pique, following the original reluctance of his staff to act to find the murderer of the New Zealander, aroused a sense of injustice and lasting resentment amongst the Anzacs. (48)

The Anzacs felt no remorse over the events at Surafend. On the contrary the soldiers' inherent prejudices against both Arabs and British staff officers were apparently confirmed. The now-established pattern was reproduced when, in a further display of British insensitivity, the Division was assigned police duty in Egypt in March 1919. The Anzacs were 'received in each village with fear' as, tired of war and resentful of their continued duties when their chief desire was to return home, they 'went about their work with a thoroughness that soon brought peace and quietness to a turbulent community'. The 'Surafend solution' was again applied, this time to an Egyptian village which refused to produce the murderer of a Gurkha soldier attached to the Australian Second Light Horse Brigade. (49)


(49) Lieut-Col. C. Guy Powles, New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine, p. 270; Bill Gammage, The Broken Years, p. 146.
After they returned to New Zealand and their units were disbanded, the ex-servicemen became preoccupied with the problems of settling down to civilian life. Concern with the provisions and administration of the Repatriation Act, finding employment and getting established in an increasingly hostile economic climate combined with the various other difficulties they faced in resuming a 'normal life' to ensure their attentions were focused on local and national issues. But, while there is no evidence to suggest that the vast majority of returned soldiers were any less uninterested in international affairs than other New Zealanders, it would be unrealistic to contend that their attitudes and values had not been modified by their experiences. Those who had been with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles in Palestine (50) must have retained memories of the enthusiasm and hospitality with which they had been received by the Yishuv (Palestinian Jewish community). It seems even more certain that their distinctly unfavourable impression of the Arabs was shared in its essentials by the much larger body of New Zealand soldiers who came into contact with the Arabs, including those whose fleeting contacts on the way to France were reinforced by the tales of the old hands. This latter view in particular became part of the 'national attitude'. It remained to colour the view of the next generation of New Zealanders engaged in the second great world conflagration. (51)

(50) The full strength of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles numbered 2,376 officers and men. (AJHR, 1917, H-19H, p.1). Casualties were in the region of 500 fatalities, 1,200 wounded. Even including reinforcements - for which I have been unable to find statistics - the total number of New Zealanders involved in the Palestine campaign is unlikely to have exceeded 4,000. In view of the fact that the killing-grounds of France had first call on reinforcements the figure was probably closer to 3,500. See also Michael King, New Zealanders at War, (Auckland, 1981), pp. 150-151

(51) 'The irritating ways of Egyptians have a lot to account for. To an occidental the habits of the oriental as seen in Egypt were often amusing, but just as often infuriating. The New Zealand soldier, spending the evening in Cairo or some other Egyptian town, would find dirt and noise, stupidity and dilatoriness, bad drink, blatant attempts to cheat until the point was reached when there would be an explosion, which at the worst might take the form of an attempt to wreck the place.' Major-General W.G. Stevens, Problems of 2NZEF, (Wellington, 1958) p. 217.
During the Second World War, more New Zealanders were able to visit Palestine on leave or to convalesce. By 1945 a significant number of New Zealanders could nod with affirmative sagacity at Zionist rhetoric about 'making the desert bloom' and contrast, from first hand observation, the energetic and industrious Jewish community in Palestine with the impoverished and 'primitive' Arab population.

The New Zealand Jewish community's interest in Zionism had been quickened by the Balfour Declaration. Funds were raised for the relief of Jewish colonists in war-ravaged Palestine and Louis Phillips, an Auckland solicitor who had been serving with the New Zealand forces in France, became New Zealand Jewry's first representative to an international Zionist gathering. Phillips attended the Inter-Allied Zionist Conference which met in London early in 1919 to formulate proposals on Palestine for the Paris Peace Conference and, upon his return to New Zealand, he travelled the country lecturing on the Zionist movement. (52)

This contact with and interest in the international Zionist movement underlines the increasing acceptance of Zionism's political dimension by many New Zealand Jews; an acceptance made all the easier by the timely convergence of Zionist ambitions for Palestine with Britain's territorial ambitions in the region.

The New Zealand delegation to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 gave full support to the Balfour Declaration's promise of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. Humanitarian considerations may have played their part in that support but, more importantly, the New Zealand Government was fully conversant

with the role British planners had assigned Palestine in post-war Imperial strategy.

The essence of New Zealand's stance in the international arena remained as it had been since the Anglo-Maori Wars, the maintenance of New Zealand's prosperity and security from external threat by unstinting support of Britain's world aims. Such disputes as had occurred were motivated by the need to remind the Mother Country of her responsibilities in this direction whenever it was felt that British enthusiasm for the pre-destined role of the Anglo-Saxon race as guardian and promoter of civilization was waning and that the perilous position of New Zealand, the most exposed outpost of that glorious Empire, was not being given due consideration. Accepting that she could not guarantee her own external security, New Zealand clung tenaciously to her British connections, offering encouragement and support wherever and whenever the British cause might be furthered. (53)

New Zealand's delegates to the Peace Conference, Prime Minister William Massey and Sir Joseph Ward, were keenly conscious of the interests of Empire. As Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1906 to 1911, Ward had pressed for the formation of an Imperial Council and greater consultation between Britain and the Dominions over the formulation of British foreign policy. This advocacy had not questioned the assumption that Britain's policy should be the Dominions', but expressed the wish that their opinions should be sought and considered in the creation of the policy they would ultimately follow.

Massey had participated in just such a consultative body. He had been New Zealand's representative in the Imperial War Cabinet 1917-18; an organ

(53) W. David McIntyre and W.J. Gardner (eds.), Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History, (London, 1971) 'Section 5: Colony into Nation, 1870 to 1948', pp. 234-296, provides a selection of statements illustrating the consistency of these themes in New Zealand's external relations prior to the Second World War.
which has been described as 'the peak of the whole history of efforts to merge the disparate units of the Empire into one effort and one body'. (54) He also served on Lord Curzon's Subcommittee on Territorial Desiderata. The subcommittee stressed Palestine's strategic location as a buffer, helping to cover the approaches to the Suez Canal, the Persian Gulf and the East, and that Britain should ensure it retain Palestine as part of the post-war settlement. Its recommendations helped persuade the British Cabinet to authorize the issuing of the Balfour Declaration. (55)

This firsthand knowledge of the strategic value Imperial analysts assigned to Palestine made New Zealand support for Britain's application for the mandate for Palestine a foregone conclusion. There was much of the 'dutiful daughter' in New Zealand's attitude but there was also a powerful element of self interest.

In the years between the First and Second World Wars planning for the defence of the Empire east of Suez was based on the Singapore strategy. This plan envisaged the creation of a large and properly defended naval base at Singapore. Any threat to British interests in the Pacific would then be countered by the dispatch of 'adequate' naval forces to this base. New Zealand and Australia were ardent supporters of the strategy, maintaining their faith in its possibilities as a solution to their defence problems and attempting to sustain Britain's interest despite successive delays and disappointments. (56)

Interest in events and issues affecting the Middle East was the inevitable


(56) I.C. McGibbon, Blue-Water Rationale, Chapter 5, pp. 93-114; Chapter 13, pp. 279-296, passim.
corollary of Australasian concern with Imperial defence in the Far East. The question of Anglo-Egyptian relations was of particular importance. In the absence of a Royal Navy battle-fleet permanently stationed in the Pacific, the forces crucial to the success of the Singapore strategy would have to be dispatched from the Mediterranean fleet or even the Home Fleet. As any avoidable delay in their arrival could spell disaster, continued British control of the Suez Canal was critical.

Massey told the 1921 Imperial Conference:

'I do not know of any country so important to the Empire as Egypt, with the exception of Britain itself. Even Australia and New Zealand might be parted with and the Empire would go on, but I do not think you could run the Empire without keeping control of the main artery...'(57)

William Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, was less prepared to suggest his country was dispensable but nevertheless shared Massey's conception of the importance of Egypt. He informed the Conference that

'Egypt is the gateway to the East: the safety of the Canal is vital to the safety of Australia...'(58)

This attitude proved persistent. Although Australia increasingly focused its attention on Asia and the Pacific after the Second World War, it was 1957 before New Zealand publicly reassessed its commitments. The Defence Review of that year studiously avoided any explicit indication of New Zealand interest in the Middle East - a politic move in the wake of the 1956 Suez crisis - declaring that it was now apparent that South East Asia was the area in which New Zealand's 'planned effort' could 'most effectively be made'.(59)

(57) Quoted ibid., p. 107.


On 23 August 1929 anti-Jewish rioting broke out in Jerusalem and quickly spread throughout Palestine. By the time order had been restored after a week of violence, 133 Jews and 116 Arabs had been killed. All but 6 of the Arabs had been killed by the British. Militant Jews, disgusted by the ineffectiveness of the Jewish community's plans for self-defence and angered by the apparent lack of urgency with which the British had come to their aid, began the search for new solutions which eventually led to the formation of a new and aggressive underground military organization, Irgun Zvai Leumi. (60)

The violence aroused considerable concern amongst New Zealand Jews. On 27 August N. Alfred Nathan, President of the Auckland Jewish Community, requested Sir Joseph Ward - once again Prime Minister - to cable the British Government informing them of

'the deep concern felt in New Zealand regarding the position in Palestine and expressing confidence that adequate measures will be taken to deal with the situation'. (61)

Ward's response to the request was to send a memorandum to the Governor-General;

'The Prime Minister presents his respectful compliments to His Excellency and begs that the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs may be advised by telegram that the Prime Minister has been requested by the Auckland Jewish community to advise His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of the deep concern felt in New Zealand regarding the position in Palestine and their confidence that adequate measures will be taken to deal with the situation'. (62)

(60) J. Bowyer Bell, Terror Out of Zion, p. 7; see also Chap. One pp. 37-38.

(61) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 1A; Personal Telegram, N. Alfred Nathan to Sir Joseph Ward, 27 August 1929.

(62) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 1A; Memorandum, Sir Joseph Ward to Governor-General, (Sir Charles Fergusson), 28 August 1929.
It should be noted that, while complying with Nathan's request, Ward was at obvious pains to point out that the communication was in response to the approach by the Auckland Jewish community and avoid giving any impression that the New Zealand Government itself was involved in anything other than an intermediary role. The distancing effect was heightened by the inclusion of the possessive pronoun 'their' in the final clause. The addition may have been inspired by grammatical considerations, but it also managed to further stress that the message was from the Jewish community, not the Government. The general expression of concern that Nathan's telegram appears to request was scrupulously avoided. Once the message had been passed on, the Government deemed its involvement finished and no further action was taken.

It should be remembered that Palestine was not a part of the British Empire. The mandate for Palestine had been granted to 'the Government of His Britannic Majesty' under the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and subject to terms defined by the League's Council. (63) As a class A mandate, Palestine's existence as an independent nation was provisionally recognized 'subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance' by the Mandatory. The Mandatory itself was required to 'render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge' until such time as Palestine was judged 'able to stand alone'. (64)

Thus, despite Palestine's important position in considerations of imperial strategy and although the administration of the mandate differed little in detail or effect from the administration of a British colonial possession, Palestine was the specific responsibility of the British Government and its internal affairs were, strictly speaking, outside the imperial orbit.


(64) Ibid., Annex 21, Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, cl. 4, cl. 7, p. 22.
Ward's circumspect approach to the British Government illustrates the quandary which Palestine must have posed for all New Zealand politicians between 1917 and 1947. Although prepared to be outspoken on imperial matters if the occasion seemed warranted New Zealand politicians displayed a traditional reluctance to appear to be offering unsolicited advice or meddling in matters of British policy not directly related to imperial concerns. In view of the considerable difficulties New Zealand was experiencing in its own mandate of Western Samoa, Ward may also have had a sympathetic appreciation of the problems rising nationalist sentiment was causing the British administration in Palestine. (65)

The 'Jewish Question' acquired new currency in New Zealand in the 1930s as the search for new political solutions to the social and economic dislocations caused or revealed by the Great Depression encouraged a dramatic increase in publicly expressed anti-semitism and the perennial debate over immigration was reinvigorated.

As was the case in Europe and America the tensions and fears generated by economic depression increased the appeal of febrile anti-semitic ideologies. The character of that appeal had, however, undergone sinister development. The old cultural stereotypes and suspicions of the past were now replaced by more overtly racist doctrines, citing 'scientific' corroboration, which sought to explain the upheavals of the recent past and the present difficulties as stages in a Jewish conspiracy to achieve world domination.

It has been claimed that the emergence of the new political anti-semitism in New Zealand was inspired by German propaganda disseminated by local Nazi sympathizers. (66) Although a precise evaluation of the influences on New Zealand anti-semites is made difficult by the scarcity of relevant journals


and pamphlets which appear to have survived, (67) such publications as are available provide no evidence of direct links with Nazism. The indications are that the ideological debts and much of the character of New Zealand anti-Semitism during this period derived from British links; any contact with German Nazism was second-hand.

In Auckland in 1933 a New Zealand edition of The Jewish Peril: Protocols of the Elders of Zion was published by the 'Plain Talk' Printing Company.

First published in Russia in 1903 The Protocols purported to consist of lectures, or notes for lectures, delivered to 'a Jewish Parliament' by a member of the secret Jewish government, the Elders of Zion, outlining their plan for achieving world domination. (68) The extent of the plot The Protocols revealed was staggering. The weapons at the call of the elders included the spread of liberalism, socialism, anarchism, darwinism and atheism, the fostering of contempt for authority and the precipitation of a world-wide financial crisis. These and other weapons would undermine their enemies' strength ultimately leaving all power in the hands of world Jewry assisted by a few Gentile millionaires whose greed would ensure their loyalty. Should the 'Goys' discover the plot and attempt to resist, the elders would

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(67) For example, Plain Talk, 'The Fearless National Fortnightly', was being published in Auckland during 1933 by the New Zealand publishers of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and, judging by its advertisement in the New Zealand edition of The Protocols, was primarily concerned with 'revealing' the 'Jewish threat'. The magazine does not appear in the Union List of Serials however, and presumably is not held by any New Zealand library.

(68) The tale of where the 'document' originated and how it came to light varies from edition to edition. The first edition states that it was taken from 'the Central Chancellory of Zion, in France'. Subsequent editions claim The Protocols were stolen from a leading French Freemason; presented by Herzl to the first Zionist Congress, Basle, 1897 (the congress being identified with the Elders); obtained by a Russian spy at Basle; stolen from Herzl's flat in Vienna. This list is indicative rather than exhaustive. See Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide, (London, 1967), pp. 67-71.
retaliate by putting in motion plans such as inoculating Gentiles with diseases and blowing up all the national capitals of the world by means of a soon to be completed network of underground tunnels. (69)

In short, The Protocols 'reflected every aspect of the modern world which the reactionaries feared so much'. (70) The hysterical tone of the work ensured that those susceptible to its appeal would rapidly achieve willing suspension of disbelief as their worst suspicions were more than confirmed.

The 'document's' authenticity had, of course, been questioned. The appearance of the first English translation - significantly entitled The Jewish Peril - in 1920 had received a particularly mixed reception. Conservative papers who reviewed it generally expressed cautious acceptance. The Spectator scathingly dismissed it as 'malignant lunacy', while The Times instituted enquiries into its origins and in a series of articles published in August 1920 exposed The Protocols as a 'careless and shameless' forgery. In the articles, reprinted in pamphlet form as The Truth About 'The Protocols', A Literary Forgery, it was revealed that the work was based upon the Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquiou et Machiavel which Maurice Joly, a French lawyer, had written as an attack upon what he saw as the 'cynical despotism' of Napoleon III. (71)

The revelations had little effect upon the spread of The Protocols. Displaying considerable reluctance to let the facts stand in the way of a good conspiracy theory subsequent editions went to considerable lengths to allay

(69) Adapted from The Jewish Peril: Protocols of the Elders of Zion, (Auckland, 1933). The turgid style and tortuous argument of the work make a satisfactory, concise summary of it impossible in the context of this thesis. See Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide, pp. 60-67. (Hereafter the New Zealand edition is referred to as The Jewish Peril, as distinct from The Protocols which refers to the 'document in general'.)


(71) Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, pp. 147-154; Norman Cohn Warrant for Genocide, pp. 71-76.
misgivings by pre-emptively addressing the issue. The Preface to the New Zealand edition, for example, claimed:

'We must recognise that it has been our own greed, selfishness and inhumanity which has made possible the secret exploitation of our people which this book reveals. Even if it were a forgery it would still be invaluable for the truths it reveals'. (72)

Presumably this provided a suitable test of a reader's credulity before confronting them with the plot-proper.

The New Zealand edition was a local imprint of the first English translation. The first edition to appear in London had been printed privately for its translator, George Shanks, by Eyre and Spottiswoode, (73) but Shanks had later entered an agreement with the Britons, a society dedicated to exposing 'the Jewish menace', and the subsequent editions were published under their auspices. Founded in 1919 the Britons were 'the major (British) organization associated with The Protocols'. Although defunct as a political organization by 1925, the Britons retained residual importance as publishers and distributors of anti-semitic literature. The Protocols remained the central item in the catalogue of the Britons' Publishing Society whose London address was thoughtfully provided in the Preface to the New Zealand edition of The Jewish Peril. (74)

Also listed was the contact address of the Imperial Fascist League (IFL)

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(72) The Jewish Peril, p. iv.

(73) Shanks, the Russian-born son of an English merchant and his Russian wife, chose his printers wisely. Eyre and Spottiswoode were a highly respectable firm - and His Majesty's Printing Office into the bargain. Although the translation of The Protocols was a private publication, their involvement lent initial credibility to the work. See Gisela C. Lebzelter, Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939, (London, 1978), p. 21; p. 184, n. 34.

founded by Arnold Leese in 1927, which had attracted many ex-members of the Britons. Leese's IFL built upon many of the loose political objectives of the Britons, placing much more emphasis upon fascism as the solution to the problems faced by Britain and the Empire. Although Leese claimed that fascism would awaken the people from their political apathy, his aims were reactionary not revolutionary;

"The goal was not a social and political upheaval but the awakening of historical thinking, the preservation of British character and British tradition, and a reversal of the unfortunate effects of democracy and liberalism in order to restore Britain's magnitude and glory". (75)

Both the Britons and the IFL maintained contacts with the German Nazi Party without any apparent uneasiness at the possibility of compromising their virulent imperialism and British nationalism. (76) Leese in particular enthusiastically embraced the Aryan ideology and expressed his hatred of Jews with feverish intensity. Through the IFL journal, Fascist, he persistently called for the solution of the Jewish question, usually by completely segregating them from the 'Aryan nations' but, on occasions, such as in February 1935, anticipating the Nazi's 'final solution' by advocating the extermination of the Jewish race 'by some humane method such as the lethal chamber'. (77)

The third organization recommended as a useful source of additional anti-semitic literature was the Boswell Printing Company. The company, founded by the Duke of Northumberland in 1921, published a number of works and

(76) Ibid., pp. 63-64; pp. 76-79.
(77) Quoted ibid., p. 81. This solution had also been proposed by the Britons see Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, p. 157.
a journal, the Patriot, all of which sought to publicize the perceived details of the Jewish conspiracy against the British Empire. In comparison with the Britons and the IFL, the Boswell Company's anti-semitism was of a more genteel, drawing-room nature, although ultimately just as insidious. The Patriot displayed consistent interest in 'the Jewish question', although taking considerable pains to point out that it did not oppose the Jewish community as a whole, only that section of it which rejected assimilation and engaged in 'undesirable political activity'. Underpinning this interest was 'the general advocacy of a High Tory, patriotic philosophy and a pronounced hatred of Socialism in any form'. (78)

If the Plain Talk Printing Company hoped to arouse widespread interest in those organizations and inspire the formation of a local mass movement based on the doctrines of political anti-semitism it was badly disappointed. Although copies of The Jewish Peril are said to have 'found their way into many homes', the publication did not unleash the same deep-seated and violent prejudices in New Zealand as had greeted the appearance of The Protocols in much of Europe. (79)

Apart from the enigmatic Plain Talk Printing Company itself, there is evidence of only one, even more obscure organization which attempted to base a political policy on anti-semitism; the Organization to Promote Dominion Prosperity and Strengthen Trade and Relations (the D and E organization). Despite the high aims proclaimed by its grandiose title the D and E organization appears, from the scant evidence which has survived, to have been

(78) Colin Holmes, Anti-Semitism in British Society, p. 207.

primarily concerned with 'illuminating' the Jewish conspiracy. An extract from one of the organization's weekly bulletins was reprinted in Tomorrow in December 1934:

'They (the Jews) owe allegiance to no one. They accept no moral law. They are Jews, and Jews only. Just survey international history over the last few years. Who ruined Russia and took control and caused a very bloody revolution? The Jewish coterie headed by Lenin and Trotsky. Who (sic) has the German people cast out of their country? The international gang of financiers'. (80)

The clichés presented as argument and the tone of the tirade suggest the influence of the Britons and the IFI, but the Auckland-based extremist organization seems to have had only a brief though bitter life and any assessment of its ideological debts must remain speculative. (81)

Although the public emergence of the new political anti-semitism in New Zealand was displayed in its most rabid aspects by the publishers of The Jewish Peril and the anonymous author, or authors, of the D and E organization's newsletter, it was also associated in a diffuse but persistent manner with the growing popularity of the Social Credit proposals of Major C.H. Douglas.

While the Social Credit movement had attracted some support in New Zealand during the 1920s, it made little real impact until 1932 when, aided by the despair induced by the Depression, it;

'won converts by droves in the worst hit dairying regions, in provincial towns dependent on the business of farmers for prosperity, and among

(80) Tomorrow, Vol. 1, No. 21, 5 December 1934, p.1, 'Notes by the way'.

(81) Michael Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression' (MA Thesis, History, Auckland, 1969) points out that the reference in Tomorrow is the only surviving evidence of the D and E organization, p. 147, n.6. This alone would suggest that its appeal was restricted, its membership small and its life short.
urban small businessmen and professionals'. (82)

The growth of support for the movement was particularly marked amongst the farmers of the Auckland province where the regional branch of the Farmers' Union officially adopted Douglas's reform programme. (83)

The Social Credit philosophy held financiers responsible for economic crises and demanded the complete reform of the financial system. Many of its adherents spoke of conspiracies by 'international financiers' in tones which echoed The Protocols 'revelation' of the Jewish conspiracy. Douglas himself gradually developed an explicitly anti-Jewish dimension to his philosophy. As he attempted to define more precisely the power-seeking conspiracy he held responsible for the world economic crisis, he moved from references to 'a very deeply laid and well constructed plot of enslaving the industrial world to the German-American-Jewish financiers' until, by the mid-thirties, the Jews had been singled out as the major threat. This theme intensified in the later years of the decade and, although Douglas took some pains to emphasize that 'attacks upon Jews as a body are wholly indefensible', he himself stressed that Jews were 'splendidly organized', racially exclusive, and possessed an inherent ability to think in an 'overall way' which enabled them to use their financial capacity in the pursuit of power. (84)

According to John L. Findlay:

'Anti-semitism of the Douglas kind ... may be fantastic, may be dangerous even, in that it may be twisted into a dreadful form, but it is not in itself vicious nor evil. It is merely an extreme form of religio-philosophic propaganda'. (85)

(83) Ibid., p. 62; R.M. Burdon, New Dominion, p. 173.
(85) Ibid., pp. 104-105.
Yet the difference between Douglas's analysis of Jewish power and the
darker fantasies of The Protocols was one of relatively minor degree. The
Protocols offered lurid confirmation of Douglas's conspiracy analysis.

The New Zealand publishers of The Jewish Peril were in no doubt as to
how the 'Jewish conspiracy' could be defeated. They proclaimed that;
'there is a way out which conforms to all Christian principles and sound
economic laws, a way out that would break the present power of the Money
Monopolists, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, and that way is through
the Social Credit Proposals of Major Douglas. Who shall say that Major
Douglas shall not become the instrument through which Christianity and
Civilization will be saved?'(86)

The statement further suggests that the publishers assumed that the bulk of
their audience would either support or sympathize with the Social Credit
movement.

An important qualification must be made at this point. It has already
been stated that no mass movement based on political anti-semitism emerged
in New Zealand during the Depression. The essence of the appeal of the
Social Credit philosophy lay in its programme for financial reform. Those
elements in society from which it drew its support were largely former Reform
or Liberal Party supporters who had been forced to question their traditional
assumptions by the impact of the Depression but were unwilling, until 1935,
to accept the preferred solutions of the Labour Party which retained its
associations with 'Bolshevism' in their eyes.(87) This support did not form
a cohesive association but, rather, constituted a vague alliance of groups
and individuals with divergent political sympathies, united only in their


(87) The increased acceptability of the Labour Party amongst these groups in
1935 was due in large part to the championing of the credit reform issue
by Labour in its campaign. See Erik Olssen, John A. Lee, p. 75.
support for financial reform. Some of these individuals and groups did issue anti-Jewish propaganda, prompting W.N. Pharazyn to observe in *Tomorrow* that:

'Ten years ago the idea of anti-semitism in New Zealand would have been laughed to scorn, but no matter how insignificant and how ridiculous its disciples may be, we have it here now'. (88)

However for the majority of New Zealanders who supported the theories of Major Douglas, anti-semitism was an 'ideological satellite' which could be accepted or rejected with varying degrees of enthusiasm without affecting their central commitment to the concept of Social Credit. (89)

While anti-semitism had become fashionable in Russia once more as the Stalinists solidified their grip on power in the late 1920s and 1930s, and had percolated through to other left-wing movements in Germany and Central Europe, 'mainstream' anti-semitism in Western Europe retained its close association with the extreme right and, in particular, the various fascist movements. (90) This association, when contrasted with the general nature of conservative protest in New Zealand during the Depression, further reveals the

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(90) George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, pp. 186-188; p. 193; pp. 229-230. It should be remembered that anti-semitism is not the exclusive preserve of right-wing political organizations and that the Left is just as prepared to give vent to rabid anti-semitic sentiment on equally expedient grounds. It should also be stressed that not all fascist movements were anti-semitic although that was the general trend. The Spanish Falange, for example, rarely indulged in anti-Jewish rhetoric and the Italian fascist movement was virtually free of anti-semitism, actively resisting Nazi attempts to make it conform. See also F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism*, (London, 4th ed., 1976), pp. 45-79; pp. 194-203.
restricted appeal the doctrines of political anti-semitism held for the vast majority of New Zealanders.

New Zealand conservatives on the whole avoided and abhorred the extremist hysteria many of their contemporaries in Europe and America were indulging in. Effusively patriotic and, by definition, imperial zealots, they nevertheless sought points of reference in New Zealand's history, searching for an age, an attitude, a personality which expressed the true spirit of the country before the growth of the power of the state and the depreciation of individual effort and private enterprise had perverted the ideal.

The peculiar nature of New Zealand conservatism and its response to the Depression is illustrated most clearly by the New Zealand Legion. Founded in 1933, the Legion's jingoistic patriotism, uncompromising anti-communism, and dedication to the abolition of the party political system, led its opponents to rapidly dub the movement as fascist. This sobriquet was resented and constantly repudiated by Legionnaires and, in fact, the movement had only superficial similarities with the 'classic' fascist organizations of Europe.

The differences were much more significant. The Legion was, above all, anti-statist and regarded the steady extension of state regulation in twentieth-century New Zealand with alarm. In direct contrast to the doctrines of fascism and communism, the Legion promoted a 'cult of the individual' which stressed the necessity of individual effort and private enterprise. Legionnaires saw themselves as the inheritors and preservers of the highest traditions of New Zealand liberalism, embodied in the person and politics of their adopted hero, Sir George Grey. They promised that each individual would be free to act as his or her conscience dictated, a credo which implied great faith in personal integrity and led to the expression of opinions which - coming from committed conservatives - smacked of paradox. One Legionnaire announced in the Dominion that;
'The Legion would consider every idea, every plan, and every suggestion which was submitted to it, no matter from what source it might come. And it mattered not whether one was a die-hard Tory or an admirer of Karl Marx - his ideas would be carefully considered in an unprejudiced light'. (91)

Despite such claims, however, the Legion was at base a regressive organization seeking a 'return' to a nineteenth-century 'Golden Age' which had never existed and it displayed a marked distaste for communism, socialism and fascism. In its view these movements represented the worst aspect of the modern age - the subordination of the individual to the state. Furthermore, they were foreign doctrines which were incompatible with the best British traditions of individual liberty and laissez-faire capitalism. New Zealand had not defended its heritage with sufficient perserverence to prevent the incursions of these un-British creeds but the Legion was determined to turn back the tide.

Ironically, the sanctity with which these beliefs were held led to the Legion's collapse towards the end of 1934, as the organization's leaders attempted to increase the Legion's influence by formalizing its structure and its political stance. This move alienated the majority of members who saw in it a betrayal of the Legion's commitment to preserve individualism and support for the organization evaporated rapidly. (92)

The vacuum left by the Legion was filled to some extent by the Democrat Party which contested the 1935 election. Its platform included policies such as the reduction of the exchange rate to its 'natural level', the payment of a

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(91) *Dominion*, 20 April 1933, quoted R.M. Burdon, *New Dominion*, p. 175.

(92) This discussion is based on a general survey of Michael Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression' (MA Thesis, History, Auckland, 1969), passim.
subsidy on agricultural exports and substantial reductions in taxation. The
anti-socialist Democrats received 65,000 votes but no Parliamentary seats.
Instead, by 'splintering the conservative vote', they 'increased the size of
Labour's majority'.(93) For its part, the Labour Party skilfully exploited the
pro-Social Credit sentiment which enabled it to make sizeable gains in middle-
class, rural and semi-rural seats while holding its working-class strongholds.
Labour held fifty-three of the eighty Parliamentary seats, establishing the
power base which, despite increasing defection in the 1940s, kept the party
in office until 1949.(94)

Although the Labour Party was benignly left-ish rather than uncompromis-
ingly socialist by the time it won its long-awaited victory, its acceptance
by those elements in New Zealand society most affected by the Depression can
be seen as a rejection of right-wing solutions and an expression of a general
desire for the benevolent intervention of the state in the social and economic
life of New Zealanders. This new political consensus and the rapidity with
which the new government moved to tangibly improve conditions effectively
forestalled the development of any popular expression of political extremism
of the right or the left, restricting the appeal of doctrines such as political
anti-semitism to a lunatic fringe.

Anti-semitism did not miraculously vanish in the wake of the 1935 election
however, and continued its association with some of the more uncompromising
supporters of Social Credit.

A.N. Field, a former sub-editor of the Dominion, progressed in short-order
through his own 'counter-subversion' group, the National Security League, and
the New Zealand Legion to become an energetic local campaigner in the cause of

(93) Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change', in Oliver and Williams,
(eds.) Oxford History of New Zealand, p. 221.

(94) R.M. Burdon, New Dominion, pp. 179-182; Keith Sinclair, A History of New
Social Credit. Field's work illustrated a course of development slavishly similar to that of his Canadian mentor, Major Douglas. Thus while in The Truth About the Slump, probably his most popular work, Field noted that the leaders of the 'money power conspiracy were not all Jewish', (95) his later publication, All These Things, displayed an increased obsession with the 'Jewish conspiracy'.

All These Things is a tour-de-force of the conspiracy theory analysis of modern history. The dynamic force behind all recent - and most distant - developments stands 'revealed' as the 'hidden hand' of international Jewry working relentlessly towards world domination. The wide-ranging argument restates what passes for traditional anti-semitic wisdom: Jews engineered the outbreak of the First World War and precipitated the financial crisis which brought on the Depression; bolshevism, socialism, Free Masonry and sundry other movements were inspired and directed by Jews for their own dark purposes; the 'Zionist connections' of politicians such as Samuels and Lloyd George had depleted the ability of the British Empire to resist the Jewish will, and so on. Field also updated his narrative, citing Father Charles E. Coughlin, 'the radio priest' and leader of the National Union for Social Justice, 'America's most distinctly "fascist" movement', (96) as his authority for 'revealing' the Jewish domination of the Roosevelt Administration and the New Deal. But all this was merely background to the crux of Field's discussion.

Field's principal concern was to expose how recent enactments, especially the setting up and administration of the Reserve Bank and the Mortgage Corporation, had advanced the Jewish cause in New Zealand. As his discussion

(95) A.N. Field, The Truth About the Slump, quoted Michael Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression'. p. 146; see also p. 52.

makes clear, Field was not opposed to the Reserve Bank although he was much less favourably disposed towards the Mortgage Corporation. What he found most objectionable was the division of control of both of these agencies between the state and private shareholders. Provisions such as these, he argued, allowed the Jews to exploit their financial capacity and the credulity of the gentiles to bring their aim of world domination one step closer to fruition. (97)

All These Things was published privately by Field in 1936 and must have been written in 1935 under the assumption that the Labour Party would not win the forthcoming election. Events rapidly weakened Field's analysis. The Labour Government nationalized the Reserve Bank in April 1936 and the Mortgage Corporation followed suit in June. While Field undoubtedly supported these moves they called the veracity of his painfully constructed conspiracy theory into question: such a vigorous display of independent action by the new Government appeared to contradict his 'revelations' about the servility of New Zealanders to international Jewry.

Those who shared Field's fears soon found new cause for concern, however, when Mark Silverstone was appointed to the Board of the Reserve Bank.

Silverstone, a Pole of Jewish extraction, had arrived in Dunedin from England in 1904. A cabinetmaker by trade and a socialist by conviction, he rapidly became involved in trade union affairs and left-wing politics. Although initially critical of the New Zealand Labour Party's repudiation of industrial action in the 1920s, by the time of his appointment to the Board of the Reserve Bank he was a Labour member of the Dunedin City Council. (98)

Opposition to Silverstone's appointment centred on the fact that he was a Pole, and, more to the point, a Jew. The original Reserve Bank Act had

(97) A.N. Field, All These Things, (Nelson, 1936), passim.

specifically disqualified all but natural born British subjects from membership of the Board. Tomorrow claimed that this provision had been included by Coates especially to allay the misgivings of the anti-Semites among the currency reformers' whose belief in The Protocols had convinced them that steps had to be taken to prevent "International Jewry" entwining our modest essay in central banking'. (99)

The agitation had a tangibly ludicrous aspect to it and Tomorrow lost no time in pointing it out;

"That anyone so far removed from the hypothetical learned elders as a Dunedin cabinet-maker 30 years resident in New Zealand should fall victim to the ban would set Threadneedle Street in a roar should it hear about it". (100)

The Government proved completely unsympathetic. They were far more concerned at the hostile and obstructionist behaviour of the Board, dominated by the Governor of the Reserve Bank, the British-born Leslie Lefaux. Silverstone was an old friend of Nash's and probably the only Board member who genuinely understood and sympathized with the Government's aims. (101) The objections of the anti-Semites fell on deaf ears.

Pressure of a more widespread and significant nature was directed upon the Government from 1936 as various interest groups attempted to gain assurances that the entry of German Jewish immigrants to New Zealand by way of Britain would be strictly limited.

The first influx of German Jewish refugees to Britain had followed Adolf Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. British politicians and officials, while reluctant to discard Britain's traditional role as a haven for the

(100) Ibid., p. 3.
oppressed, appreciated the political and social dangers of unrestricted admission of refugees in the prevailing depressed economic climate. They sought the solution to their dilemma by making it clear that Britain was a haven, not a country of immigration. They stressed that Britain's large population and high unemployment made it inconceivable that any significant numbers of immigrants could be absorbed and that, although a restricted policy of granting asylum to some of the German Jewish refugees was to be adopted, this was only a short-term arrangement pending their re-settlement in some other country better equipped to meet their needs or until they returned to Germany. This policy remained essentially unchanged until after the outbreak of the Second World War despite the fact that it was soon revealed as only a partial solution, of use only while numbers remained comparatively low and asylum could be granted with some liberality. (102)

The promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935 introduced a new phase in the Nazis' persecution of the Jews. The laws forbade marriage and extra-marital relations between Germans and Jews and disenfranchised German subjects and nationals who could not provide sufficient proof of 'racial purity' to achieve the dubious distinction of being certified of 'German or kindred blood'. The laws were followed by an intensification of 'unofficial' persecution by the S.S. The number of Jews leaving Germany increased and, as the Nazis intended, their exile became more expressly permanent. The growing pressure on Britain's immigration policy was increased still further following the recommendation of the Peel Commission on Palestine in June 1937 that Jewish immigration to the mandated territory, which had previously absorbed large numbers of refugees, should be limited with progressive severity to

prevent the Jewish population becoming the dominant group in Palestine.  

Although New Zealand was responsible for the formulation of its own immigration policy, those groups with a vested interest in preventing any increase in immigration were concerned that an attempt by the British Government to pressure New Zealand into helping absorb some of the surplus refugees might succeed. New Zealand appeared to possess sufficiently prohibitive legislation to meet most circumstances. The Immigration Restriction Amendment Act of 1920 had restricted entry exclusively to persons of British birth and descent to the extent that those who had been naturalised, or whose parents had been naturalised British subjects were not recognized. A further Amendment Act in 1931 had even restricted immigration by Britons. The Minister of Customs, however, retained the discretionary power to permit the entry of persons of any origin and it was feared that British entreaties might persuade the Government to use this power with greater liberality than had previously been the case.

Protests against the threat of large-scale admissions of immigrants had traditionally been led by those groups who perceived the greatest threat to their economic interests. In the late 1930s the opposition to the admission


In the event, such entreaties were not forthcoming. Britain realized the extreme reluctance of all the Dominions to accept Jewish refugees for a variety of reasons and, unwilling to give the appearance of attempting to interfere in the formation of the Dominions' immigration policies - 'a jealously-guarded national prerogative' - avoided approaching them. It was also accepted by Britain that New Zealand's ability to absorb significant numbers of German Jewish refugees was minimal. See A.J. Sherman, Island Refuge, p. 14; p. 103.
of German Jews was led by the British Medical Association (New Zealand Branch) and the New Zealand Dental Association.

It is not difficult to identify the economic motives which prompted these groups to voice their opposition. Doctors and dentists had not been immune to the impact of the Depression and those just embarking on their careers had been hardest hit. (105) With the economic climate beginning to improve, the prospect of an influx of Jewish doctors and dentists must have evoked fears of a return to constrained circumstances.

The proportionately high numbers of doctors, dentists, and medical and dental students amongst the refugees had, from the first, been a cause of concern to British medical practitioners. As early as November 1933 they had extracted assurances from the Home Office that the number of refugees studying medicine would be carefully monitored and had themselves imposed further limitations by using their own licensing procedures to limit the numbers of refugee doctors and dentists permitted to practice. (106) The success of the British medical fraternity made action by the New Zealand associations doubly necessary. By securing the imposition of similar or more extensive limitations they would not only be doing their share of safeguarding the standards that their British compatriots claimed to be defending, they would also be forestalling the possibility of those refugee practitioners refused licenses in Britain emigrating en masse to New Zealand.

The Government proved responsive to the demands of those groups who sought the restriction of immigration by German Jews. This responsiveness arose largely from Labour's consciousness that it had been elected to cure economic and social ills and that, although conditions had begun to improve and confi-


(106) A.J. Sherman, Island Refuge, p. 48.
dence was returning, the gains were still fragile and the recovery far from complete. There was still much that had to be done to salvage New Zealand's existing social and economic resources before any new responsibilities could be assumed.

The apparent indifference of New Zealand to the tragic situation of the German Jewish refugees must be largely assigned to ignorance of the ominous trend of events and attitudes within Nazi Germany. L.M. Goldman cites a submission from the New Zealand Dental Association to the Government requesting that the entry of 'non-Aryans from Germany' be prohibited but, although this indicates at least a passing familiarity with the race myth that was so central to political anti-semitism, it is not enough of itself to adequately support the conclusion that the opposition of dentists and doctors to the admission of Jewish refugees had a significant anti-semitic dimension. (107) The Aryan myth had first emerged in scholarly circles in the eighteenth century and, while it is undoubtedly one of the more unpleasant attempts to gloss racism with a veneer of 'scientific', 'philosophic', and 'historic' respectability, it was not of itself anti-semitic. (108)

For its part, the Government displayed its readiness to disregard traditional attitudes towards the admission of immigrants in 1937 when it decided to admit the wives and children of Chinese who were not New Zealand born, as refugees for the duration of the conflict in China. (109) This step was a significant departure from New Zealand's historic reluctance to admit Asiatics and undoubtedly owed much to the Labour Government's staunch opposition to Japanese aggression.


As the true character of the Nazi régime became increasingly apparent, greater numbers of German Jewish refugees were admitted to New Zealand. Whereas from 1933 to 1938 there had been a yearly average of 37 admissions, between March 1938 and March 1940 674 Germans and Austrians, more than half of whom were Jews or Christians of Jewish descent, came to New Zealand. (110) Although an inconsequential contribution to the solution of a massive international problem, these figures represented 'something of an influx' by New Zealand standards and enough refugees arrived to make 'a considerable impact on the New Zealand community'. (111)

Following the outbreak of war, these refugees, together with various other national groups represented amongst the country's 7,000 unnaturalized aliens, became the focus of suspicion. Aliens' Authorities checked the case of every alien and assigned classifications ranging from a recommendation for immediate internment through to exemption from alien status. Many refugees, persecuted and stripped of their nationality in their former homelands, now found themselves classed as 'enemy aliens' and subject to various restrictions. Although actual internments were kept at a minimum, most refugees were affronted by their classifications. (112)

As New Zealand pursued its seemingly callous policies towards immigrants, prompted first by economic necessity and then by the exigencies of war-time, the country's new interest and participation in international affairs led to its first significant attempts to evolve a policy upon the problem of Palestine. The revelations of the fate of European Jewry under the Nazi persecution provided a fresh impetus so that by 1945 New Zealand had concluded

(111) Ibid., pp. 157-158.
(112) Ibid., pp. 159-160.
that an internationally determined solution of the 'Jewish Question' was a social and political imperative, and that the best hope lay in some sort of solution to the Palestine problem.

The First Labour Government introduced a new independence and vigorous idealism to New Zealand's foreign policy. Initially suspicious of the character and intent of the League of Nations, the Labour Party warmed increasingly to the idea of an international body of arbitration during the 1920s and 1930s. As the Party became increasingly committed to collective security as the only effective way to preserve world peace, so a vital and adequately empowered League of Nations became a central aim of its foreign policy formulations.

Upon coming to power the First Labour Government found itself confronted with a succession of international crises which threatened the credibility of the League of Nations and prejudiced world security. New Zealand's attentions in world affairs, like those of most countries, were drawn to these crises; the continuing problem of Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War, the German annexation of Austria and the underlying issue of reform of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Unlike most other countries, New Zealand sought means to curtail the activities of the 'outlaws' rather than appease them.

It was a disillusioning process. In September 1937 William Jordan, New Zealand's outspoken representative to the League, observed to Prime Minister Savage that;

'The League is absolutely depressing, not because of anything lacking in its constitution, but because it is an expression of the political outlook of the Nations' Members, and it is evident that, with very few exceptions, there is about the same outlook on things international
and general, as the New Zealand Government had in October 1935'. (113) Jordan returned to this theme a few weeks later, stressing that New Zealand should not 'lose faith in the League'; 'it is representative of Governments and not peoples, and when Governments with a more healthy outlook are represented here, then the League will attract to it more nations, and it may then serve the purpose for which it was founded'. (114)

The Labour Government shared Jordan's opinion that the League's shortcomings were in the execution rather than the conception and remained hopeful that the organization would ultimately fulfil its promise. In the interim, however, the League's impotence as an agent of collective security prompted New Zealand to temper idealism with pragmatism. From the latter part of 1937 onwards the Labour Government pursued 'a dual policy', paying more heed to the defence arrangements of the British Commonwealth, the traditional guarantor of New Zealand's security.

'Such an approach was not without difficulty, for the requirements of the two security systems - League and Commonwealth - were, by the late 1930s, to some degree incompatible. Not until 1939 was the latter reluctantly accorded primacy.' (115)

Some of the compromises necessitated by this bi-focal approach can be seen in New Zealand's policy towards Palestine from 1937 to 1939.

Under the terms of its mandate the British Government was required to submit an annual report on its administration of Palestine to the Council of the League of Nations. Prior to 1937 these reports and discussion of them


by the Permanent Mandates Commission had been little more than the observance of formalities. The 1937 report, however, raised matters of substance, involving both the Council and the Assembly of the League in the discussions.

The British Government had responded to the Arab uprisings of 1936 by dispatching the Peel Commission to examine the grievances of both parties and make recommendations as to how order could best be restored and maintained in the mandate. The Commission's report, presented in June 1937, found that the best hope of solving the problems facing the British mandate lay in the partitioning of Palestine. It recommended that the country be divided into independent Arab and Jewish states with Jerusalem and the Holy Places remaining under British control. Although opposed by the Foreign Office who argued that it prejudiced Britain's control of a vitally strategic area and might drive the Arabs - in and outside Palestine - into the welcoming arms of Italy, the plan was placed before the League's Mandates Commission in September 1937. (116)

The Commission's approval was required before the British Government could apply to the Council for any change in the conditions of the existing mandate. It agreed that the three-way partition did appear to offer the best hope for Palestine's future security and advancement however, it was also convinced that both states should continue under some form of British mandate until they demonstrated themselves capable of self-government. At this stage the British appeared to realise that, under the arrangement envisaged by the Commission, their responsibilities, and problems, might increase markedly. The British delegate then requested the authorization of the Council of the League to set up a further study to examine 'the many questions of detail' which

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(116) Michael J. Cohn, Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate, pp. 32-34; See also Chapter One, pp. 39-41.
the policy of partition raised. (117)

Jordan had been instructed to give 'general support' to the British case. (118) In his address to the Council he stated that the New Zealand Government supported the British proposals and sympathized with Britain's efforts to find a solution to this 'controversy between two rights'. While an 'adequate home should be provided for the Jews in Palestine', it should not be forgotten that the Arabs of Palestine had also been promised a state of their own. Britain should be permitted to try and find an acceptable compromise. (119)

This public support was subject to some private reservations. On 16 January 1938 Jordan confessed to Savage that he suspected that the problems of reconciling the contending claims to Palestine would prove beyond the capacity of Britain, or any one nation, no matter how experienced and sincere. Savage concurred;

'I quite agree that the British difficulties in Palestine are exceedingly great, and the Jewish problem is one that calls for the earnest attention of the world. If the League were not so futile at the moment it would appear to be a proper subject for international consideration through that organization, but at the moment this would appear to be useless'. (120)

Thus by the early months of 1938 both Savage and Jordan were clearly of the opinion that the by now inseparable Jewish and Palestine problems could only be resolved by an international effort. The significance of this realization in terms of New Zealand's post-war policy on Palestine will become evident


(118) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 1A, Telegram (unnumbered) M.J. Savage to W.J. Jordan, Geneva, 9 September 1937.


as this discussion progresses, but the date at which this conclusion was reached and its association with some form of partition as a possible solution should be borne in mind. It should also be remembered that while New Zealand was interested and concerned in the future peace and prosperity of both Arab and Jewish populations in Palestine, it was preoccupied with other, more urgent international issues in the late 1930s.

The Permanent Mandates Commission next met to consider Britain's proposals for the future of Palestine in June 1939 amidst a rapidly deteriorating international situation. In May the British had released another White Paper on Palestine which had been immediately rejected by both Arabs and Jews and was drawing an increasing amount of international and domestic criticism. (121) Despite the hostile reception accorded this latest development in their Palestine policy, the British Government presented it as the basis for a new settlement and requested the Mandates Commission to recommend its acceptance by the Council.

The Commission noted that the White Paper heavily restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and limited their rights to buy land and that the plans for partition had been shelved in favour of a combined, or federal, state incorporating an Arab majority and a 'safeguarded' Jewish minority. It unanimously held these provisions to be inconsistent with the true intentions of the Mandate and, by a four-to-three vote, declared the Mandate could not be reinterpreted to make them acceptable.

Although the Commission was only empowered to make recommendations to the Council, it was

'a body of experts ... wielding an enormous influence ... (whose) recom-

(121) Michael J. Cohen, Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate, pp. 85-90; See also Chapter One, pp. 41-42.
mandations to the League Council had never been disregarded'. (122)

The Council was scheduled to discuss the Commission's report in September 1939, and final acceptance or rejection of the document depended on its decision. (123) New Zealand was represented on the Council by Jordan and would have been confronted with an unpleasant choice between its obligations to the League of Nations or Britain but the issue did not arise. On 3 September Britain declared war on Germany and New Zealand’s duty was clear. Any possibility of the League of Nations participating in a settlement of the Palestine problem evaporated.

Although the League of Nations had proved to be a woefully inadequate agency for the promotion of world peace and international co-operation, Jordan remained convinced that the concepts the organization had supposedly embodied were sound. Writing to the ailing Savage in January 1940 he maintained:

'the purpose and possibilities of the League are most satisfactory, but the purpose of the Members is the evident obstacle to the accomplishment of the purpose of the League. There has been a lack of determination in dealing with matters for which the League was formed ... I am confident that our policy on international affairs is right, and will eventually prevail. At present, the League is functioning very feebly in international affairs, but it will develop when the Member States are alive to their welfare'. (124)

The Government shared Jordan's confidence. It motivated their enthusiastic participation in the post-war formation of the New World Order and was displayed in their response to a variety of international issues including the search for a solution to the Palestine problem.


Michael Joseph Savage died in March 1940. He was succeeded as Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs by Peter Fraser. A former union activist and radical socialist, the Scots-born Fraser had played a dominant role in the explanation and formulation of Labour's foreign policy since he was first elected to Parliament in 1918. (125) Although considerably more conservative in outlook and increasingly unwilling to countenance opposition in his later years, he retained an intense interest and sometimes-naive idealism in foreign policy, playing a vital role in important developments in world affairs and becoming one of the few New Zealanders who can justifiably be called a statesman.

Fraser had extensive contacts with New Zealand's Jewish community and local and visiting Zionists. Like Savage, he was a close friend of the Jewish brewer, Ernest Davies. He attended a reception given by the Auckland Jewish community for David Ben-Gurion in January 1941 when Ben-Gurion was returning to Palestine after an unsuccessful attempt to arouse American Jewish opposition to the 1939 White Paper. (126) When the Zionist Federation of New Zealand held its first Dominion Conference in Wellington in 1943 Fraser delivered an 'understanding and thoughtful address'. (127)

The full details of the evolution of New Zealand's policy on the Palestine problem in the war years and the immediate post-war period are unavailable (128) but the indications are that it remained based on the preference for

(128) P.M. 277/5/2, Parts 2-4, the general files on 'The Arab-Jewish Dispute' covering the period from November 1941 to November 1946, remain unlocated despite efforts by the staff of Research Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Archives to track them down.
an internationally determined solution which Savage and Jordan had stated in early 1938 although the earlier appreciation of the 'controversy between two rights' appears to have undergone a subtle transformation.

In addressing the United Nations delegates at the San Francisco Conference in April 1945 Fraser asserted that:

'Whatever can be done to help the persecuted Jewish people shall and must be done to the utmost ability of all right-thinking men ... There should be no antagonism or misunderstanding between the Jewish and Arab peoples, as everyone living in Palestine would naturally benefit from what the Jewish people have made out of a land which was once desert, until the desert bloomed as a rose. Palestine is very akin to the ideals of New Zealand except that the Jewish people went into Palestine with a tradition of privation ... After Fascism and Nazism have been destroyed there will be problems and I hope that Mr Roosevelt and Mr Churchill will share in the solution of them. The spirit of justice which lives in their breasts, as in those of the other leaders of the United Nations will then be translated into fair decisions and just re-arrangements.

I hope and believe that the representatives from this country who take part in the counsels will stand four-square for justice for the ancient home and new hope of the Jewish people'. (129)

This statement was distinctly pro-Zionist. It accepted that Palestine was the solution to the 'Jewish Question' and that, if the Arabs would only accommodate the newcomers, Jewish immigration and know-how would benefit all the country's inhabitants. Arab rights were acknowledged, but they would have to

(129) NZJC, Vol. 1, no. 7/8, April/May 1945, p. 155.
accept the 'fair decisions and just re-arrangements' determined by the 'leaders of the United Nations'.

Fraser's support for the Jewish homeland in Palestine obviously owed much to his contacts with New Zealand Jews and Zionists but it is equally clear that his concern for 'justice for the ancient home and new hope of the Jewish people' owed much to his revulsion at the Nazi's 'final solution'.

Anthony Eden had confirmed the veracity of rumours concerning the Nazi programme to exterminate the Jews of Europe in a statement to the British House of Commons on 17 December 1942. The news had been immediately followed by the simultaneous declaration in London, Moscow and Washington of the Allied Governments' firm resolve to bring all those responsible for, or participating in, this monstrous crime to justice. (130) A woefully inadequate response perhaps, but as an Otago Daily Times editorial of 19 December pointed out the Allies were presently incapable of providing any practical assistance to the 'Jewish remnants in Europe' and that while the Joint Declaration would have no immediate effect at least it committed the Allies to bringing the murderers to justice. (131)

In Wellington on 22 February 1943, two days before that year's Parliamentary session was due to commence, a 'mammoth protest demonstration' was held. The meeting was addressed by Peter Fraser, Sid Holland, the leaders of different religious denominations, and the Belgian Consul-general, M. Armand Nihotte, who spoke on behalf of the peoples of Occupied Europe. A resolution condemning the Nazi atrocities and demanding retribution was passed unanimously;

(130) Otago Daily Times (ODT), 18 December 1942, p. 3, col. 8.

(131) ODT, 19 December 1942, p. 4, col. 2.
'We ask that, on the day of reckoning, no stone be left unturned to bring the perpetrators of these monstrous crimes to justice. We pledge ourselves anew to the utmost efforts of total war against the Nazi Powers which menace the safety of a free and decent humanity and threaten the security of the future of our children'. (132)

Fraser's anger and disgust can be clearly gauged from his address to the meeting. He told his audience that the Nazi atrocities, more sinister than the many evil things done during the First World War, were 'mass cruelties planned in cold blood - the practical application of the philosophy that the Germans had been taught since Hitler got into power'. Resolutions did not count with such people; naked force was 'the only argument these beasts can understand'. (133)

His resolve to see that war criminals were fully punished did not dissipate. On 20 September 1944, D.C. Kidd, Opposition M.P. for Waitaki, directed a question in the House to Fraser inquiring;

'what attitude the Government of New Zealand will take if a competent Court of jurisdiction set up by the Allies ... imposes the death penalty on Nazi war criminals, seeing that in New Zealand capital punishment for murder has been abolished by the present Government?' (134)

Fraser's immediate response was to assure Kidd that New Zealand would fully support any special Tribunal that was established and 'do everything possible to see that the ends of justice are fully met'. He further pointed out that the criminal code of New Zealand 'or any other nation' had 'no bearing on

(132) ODT, 23 February 1943, p. 2, col. 8.

(133) Ibid., The protest was not specifically inspired by news of the Holocaust. All Nazi atrocities - slave labour, mass executions in Poland, Russia, and Czechoslovakia as well as the 'Final Solution' - were condemned.

(134) NZPD vol. 266, p. 431, 20 September 1944. Kidd's claim that Labour had 'abolished' capital punishment for murder was rather precipitate. That was done by Ralph Hanan, Minister of Justice under Holyoake, in the late 1950s.
the matter'. (135) Although Fraser was not more forthcoming on this last point, it appears to refer to New Zealand's participation in the United Nations War Crimes Commission, established in October 1943, which was engaged in defining war crimes for future prosecutions. The deliberations of this commission, although still indeterminate in 1944, were to contribute to inclusion of some rather novel principles of law - notably 'Crimes against Humanity' and 'Crimes against Peace' - in the Charter of the International Military Tribunal which conducted the Nuremberg trials. (136)

Seemingly dissatisfied with his original reply to Kidd's question, later the same day Fraser asked leave of the House to address the matter again. His second statement was even more vengeful. War criminals, he stated, could not be classified with ordinary murderers 'because they were infinitely worse than the worst murderers'. The fact that New Zealand did not impose capital punishment would not handicap its participation in any Court or Tribunal:

'The question of capital punishment was debatable, and the experiment had to be watched from time to time. But when it came to people who had plunged the world into such a holocaust and were directly responsible for the deaths of millions and untold suffering to millions of others, he did not know whether Courts of justice should be set up at all ... The crimes and the cumulative crimes of those people were so great that the quicker they were got rid of in the most expeditious manner the better'.

(137)

The numerous reports of Nazi atrocities which had appeared throughout the war, even the certain knowledge of Nazi plans for the 'Final Solution' which had been confirmed in December 1942, were in no way adequate preparation

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(137) NZPD vol. 266, p. 461, 20 September 1944.
for the publication of full details of the concentration camps which numbed the readers of English newspapers on 19 April 1945. The news had no less an impact in New Zealand. In the midst of the flurry of reports, each more horrific than the last, which followed the initial revelations, the Otago Daily Times attempted to confront the unimaginable in an editorial that alternated between shock, loathing and desire for vengeance:

'It is not possible to read of the discoveries made at the notorious Buchenwald and Auschwitz concentration camps without experiencing utter nausea, without admitting to a feeling of despair that there can ever be regeneration of minds so lost in the turgid depths of depravity ... Buchenwald will be its own warning to the world against the ghastly possibility of repetition. It, and those other festering seats of German 'kultur', bid fair to prevent for all time the recovery of the race that has tolerated them to any position of respect in the judgement of a shocked world ... Punishment, condign and swift, for as many of the lustful Nazi criminals as may be gathering into the Allied net, can be no more than a first step towards impressing on the German people as a whole the enormity of the deeds that have been committed against humanity in their name. Another step, noteworthy as a precaution against later denials of guilt, has been taken by Allied officers, who have ordered German civilians to be escorted through Buchenwald, in order that they might see for themselves what has taken place under Nazi supervision. Nothing should be spared any living German in that respect, just as nothing was spared the nameless dead who are the victims of Nazi policy'.

Within a week of the appearance of these reports the United Nations Conference on International Organization met in San Francisco to draft the

(138) ODT, 20 April 1945, p. 4, col. 2.
Charter of the new world organization. Fraser sought every opportunity to ensure that the new Charter was an improvement on the Covenant of the League of Nations, incorporating firm commitments to the maintenance of international peace and security and pledging the nations of the world to the social and economic advancement of mankind. Although the document that eventually emerged failed to fulfil his expectations, he remained hopeful that

'As the organisation is formed and the nations work together, confidence and trust will grow'. (139)

It was becoming increasingly clear that Fraser's optimism was misplaced by the time that the future government of Palestine was placed on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations in April 1947. The discussions on Palestine, which Fraser hoped would successfully demonstrate the potential of the United Nations, and the General Assembly in particular, underlined the growing realisation that the United Nations, like the League before it, was 'an expression of the political outlook of the Nations Members'. (140) The broad gulf between conception and reality remained unbridged.

By 1947 New Zealand had established a tradition of liberal and humane, if sporadic, concern with the international aspects of the 'Jewish Question'. Internally, its record while less consistent, bore favourable comparison with those of all other nations. There had been resistance to any suggestion of large-scale Jewish immigration to New Zealand, but the opposition had been prompted by economic rather than racist concerns. The more virulent doctrines of anti-semitism and their associated racial mysticism aroused little sympathy or support. Such anti-Jewish prejudice as did exist was largely of the crass, but comparatively subdued kind that derived from cultural stereotypes. In

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(140) P.M. 16/1, Personal letter, W.J. Jordan, Geneva, to Rt. Hon. M.J. Savage Wellington, 2 October 1937, p. 3; See also Chapter Three.
general, however, New Zealand's Jewish community enjoyed complete acceptance and integration.

From 1947 onwards New Zealand's attitude to the 'Jewish Question' became, in essence, an aspect of its policy on the 'Palestine problem'. It became clearly a matter of foreign policy, intimately linked to New Zealand's attitude to and expectations of the United Nations. (141) New Zealand's commitment and responsibilities to Britain remained important although secondary concerns. The search for a solution to the 'Palestine problem' rapidly acquired a moral and idealistic dimension for the small group of men who directed New Zealand's foreign policy in the late 1940s. Wherever and whenever traditional concern for British opinion could be reconciled with the success of the United Nations' deliberations on Palestine this was done with a will, but, when faced with a choice between the two, after a suitable period of soul-searching New Zealand supported the United Nations, despite growing reservations.

The men who prepared for New Zealand to take its place 'amongst the nations of the world', as this question 'of common interest to all mankind' was discussed, shared the view, expressed 56 years earlier by Sir George Grey, that it was 'the duty of the New Zealand nation, however small or however great it may be, to do all the good it possibly can for people in all parts of the world'. (142) They fervently hoped that the majority of the members of the United Nations were of a like mind.

(141) See Chapter Three.

(142) NZPD, vol. 72, p. 631, 30 July 1891.
CHAPTER THREE: POST-WAR INITIATIVES IN NEW ZEALAND FOREIGN POLICY AND THE UNITED NATIONS' FIRST SPECIAL SESSION ON PALESTINE

Two years were to pass before the United Nations was given the opportunity to display its capacity for 'fair decisions and just re-arrangements' in the problem of Palestine that Fraser had called for at the San Francisco Conference. (1)

In the interim an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine and a further series of tripartite discussions between the mandatory power and the contending national groups failed to make any progress towards a settlement. Britain's position in Palestine became increasingly untenable. The growing militancy of Palestinian Jewry, displayed in the intensification of the terrorist activities of the Irgun and Lehi groups and the illegal immigration 'policy' of the Haganah, stretched British resources, and self-control, to breaking point. Increasingly repressive measures were adopted by British authorities within the mandate. These served only to aggravate the situation, antagonising the local population and arousing world-wide criticism. By February 1947 it was obvious that the mandate was unworkable and the British Government had no alternative but to place the future of Palestine in the hands of the United Nations. (2)

Upon receipt of the British Government's request that the future of its mandate in Palestine be included in the agenda for the next regular session of the General Assembly, the Secretariat of the United Nations submitted the British proposals to all Member States for examination. Approval of the matter's inclusion in the agenda was not required. Article 11 of the Charter of the United Nations entitled any Member to bring any question 'relating to the

(1) NZJC, vol. 1, no. 7/8, April/May 1945, p. 155. See also Chapter Two.
(2) See Chapter One, pp. 51-52.
maintenance of international peace and security' before the General Assembly. Britain's additional request, that a special session of the Assembly be convened to establish and instruct a committee to prepare for discussion of the Palestine question, did, however, require approval. Under Article 20 the Secretary-General could only convocate special sessions 'at the request of the Security Council or of a majority of Members of the United Nations'. (3)

By 13 April 1947, 39 of the 40 Member States who bothered to reply had expressed their agreement with the British request. Empowered by this majority the Secretary-General summoned the First Special Session of the General Assembly to open at Flushing Meadow, New York, on 28 April 1947. (4)

The comparative alacrity with which the Secretary-General was given authority to convocate the special session indicates the importance which even ostensibly uninvolved nations attached to some sort of settlement of the Palestine problem. It soon became apparent that interests and motivations varied and, as the General Assembly proposed formulae and examined alternatives, the issues became progressively clouded, the debate increasingly partisan. The provisions of the eventual 'solution' that emerged on 29 November 1947, when two-thirds of the General Assembly supported the partitioning of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, were a compromise which owed more to expediency than idealism. They illustrated, both in the breach and the observance, that despite the various attempts to revitalize and enhance the concept of an international peace-keeping and peace-promoting organization, the United Nations was just as susceptible to the indifference and insecurity of its


members of the League of Nations had been. Nevertheless, in some quarters initial expectations of the United Nations and its involvement in Palestine had been high.

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New Zealand's First Labour Government, although disappointed by the failure of the League of Nations to usher in a 'new age' of diplomacy in which aggressors were dissuaded by the combined action of members of a world body committed to the principle of collective security and in which all nations were united in the pursuit of humanitarian ideals, retained high expectations for the positive impact of the United Nations on the post-war world. The failure of the League, it was felt, had not arisen from the principles and objectives of the Covenant. These had been essentially sound although they should have been more clearly defined and less dependent upon the good intentions of the members. The absence of binding commitments upon members to promote its ideals and enforce its decisions had emasculated the League. Surely the horrors of the Second World War had awakened the nations of the world to their welfare and would encourage 'a more healthy outlook' in international affairs. (5)

During the Second World War New Zealand had strengthened its diplomatic ties with Australia. The general principle that the two countries would derive considerable benefit from consultation and co-operation on matters of mutual interest, such as their perennial preoccupation with defence and regional responsibility, had been periodically asserted by various groups and individuals since the late nineteenth century. Before the Second World War, however, little effort was made to give practical expression to the theory.

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Successive governments in both countries demonstrated a greater concern with establishing the primacy of their often conflicting territorial ambitions in the Pacific region than with actively co-operating. (6) Such exchange of views as did take place tended to be filtered through the agencies of the British Government and Britain's authority to ultimately establish Commonwealth foreign policy remained essentially uncontested. The outbreak of war with Germany and the appearance of the more immediate Japanese threat imparted new and urgent relevance to arguments in favour of increased co-operation between Australia and New Zealand although, ironically, the major stimulus to streamline and formalise the previously sporadic attempts at trans-Tasman co-operation came not from their enemies but from their allies.

By the second half of 1943 the tide of war in Europe, Asia and the Pacific had turned in favour of the Allies and, although final victory was still a far from immediate prospect, increasing attention was directed towards the broad outlines of post-war settlement. Antipodean apprehensions were aroused by the reluctance of the 'Big Four' (United Kingdom, United States, Russia and China) to directly involve their lesser allies in discussions on the new world order. Misgivings concerning the Moscow Declaration of 30 October 1943 had been somewhat allayed by two factors: Britain had consulted with the Dominions prior to the conference and the Declaration had committed the participants to establishing a new international organization as soon as was practicable. The Australian Minister for External Affairs, Herbert Vere Evatt, remained particularly suspicious, however, and fearing that secret and arbitrary agreements had already been reached between the 'Big Four', he began to press enthusiastically for closer collaboration between Australia and New Zealand to protect their mutual interests and promote common

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ideals(7).

The Cairo Declaration, a joint statement on the prosecution of the war in the Pacific and the disposition of territories liberated from Japan, issued by Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek on 1 December 1943, apparently confirmed Evatt's suspicions.

The specific provisions of the Declaration were relatively innocuous. It presented the expected rhetoric, promising 'unrelenting pressure' would be brought to bear to punish the 'brutal enemy' for its aggression, but made little explicit provision for the parcelling out of liberated territories or Japanese possessions. Those that were mentioned (Manchuria, Formosa, the Pescadores and Korea), lay outside the South East Asian and Western Pacific regions which Evatt was promoting as the logical foci of Australian interest and were even further removed from the evolving consciousness of the South Pacific which marked New Zealand's tentative attempts to come to terms with geographical realities.(8) Nevertheless the arrangements did affect the future of the Pacific and Australia and New Zealand expected, with some justification, to be at least consulted about such matters, if not included in the discussions. Instead, 'their first intimations of the results of the Cairo conference were gained from press reports'.(9)

This latest display of Great Power indifference towards the claims of smaller nations to be heard provided additional grounds for suspecting that the 'Big Four' were indulging the Great Powers' traditional preference for 'secret diplomacy'. It also galvanized the determination of the Australian and New


Zealand Governments to have their interests and their rights acknowledged. Evatt's initial proposal for 'an informal and exploratory' exchange of views between Ministerial representatives rapidly grew into the formal top-level conference between the two governments which opened in Canberra on 17 January 1944. (10)

The original expectation was that the conference would result in the passage of a number of resolutions confirming the desire of Australia and New Zealand to consult and co-operate on regional and international issues and, at its conclusion, a joint Prime Ministerial statement noting the scope of discussions and delineating such general conclusions as were reached would be released. At the close of the second day of discussions, however, Evatt, seemingly encouraged by the wide areas of agreement already in evidence, suddenly suggested that the opportunity be taken to frame a formal agreement. Fraser was willing to accept such a move, subject to its ratification by the New Zealand House of Representatives, and on 21 January, after the 'intensive and sometimes frantic task of producing a fair text' had been completed to the satisfaction of both parties, the Australian-New Zealand Agreement was signed. (11)

The Agreement, which was ratified by both parliaments within a fortnight of its signature, introduced a new era in Australian-New Zealand relations. It identified a number of areas of mutual interest, outlined policy preferences in many of those areas, and established permanent machinery through which consultation and collaboration could take place outside the traditional and often meandering channels provided by Britain.

It was, in an immediate sense, a response to the Cairo Declaration.


(11) Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, pp. 112-114.
This was made clear by the consistency with which both countries asserted their claim to be active participants in post-war arrangements affecting the South-West and South Pacific regions. The reactionary nature of the Agreement ensured this preoccupation, but the two countries envisaged a far from exclusively regional role for themselves in the new world order. They demanded to be associated 'not only in membership, but also in the planning and establishment, of the general organisation referred to in the Moscow Declaration of October, 1943...'.(12)

The Agreement had an even more general significance. By signing and ratifying the Anzac Treaty Australia and New Zealand 'had formally stated their independent policy on important political and international matters about which Britain would hitherto have been expected to speak for the whole Commonwealth'. (13)

This latter development was underlined when the first - and last - of the governmental conferences provided for under the Agreement(14) was held in Wellington in November 1944. International organization was the main topic of discussion, the catalyst being provided by 'the Dominions' resentment' at what seemed yet a further attempt by the big powers to pre-empt the opportunities for their small allies to play a significant role in the preparations for peace and post-war reconstruction.(15)

In October the 'Big Four' issued the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, presenting them as a basis for the charter of the United Nations Organization. Australia and New Zealand welcomed this additional evidence of their larger allies commitment to establish a new world organization but their enthusiasm was dampened


(14) Robin Kay (ed.) The Australian-New Zealand Agreement, Doc. 53, Article 37, p.147.

both by the lack of consultation with the smaller powers and by the implications of many of the provisions contained in the Proposals.

Some significant attempts to improve on the old Covenant of the League of Nations had been made. The maintenance of international peace and security was recognized as the primary objective of the proposed organization and the promotion of economic and social co-operation, which had received only general consideration in the Covenant, had been given more explicit recognition. The Covenant's circumspect attempts to limit members' ability to 'resort to war' were extended into a less equivocal prohibition of threat or the use of force and a general commitment to advance international law and justice was made. While unconvinced that these principles had been given sufficient weight or clarity, Australia and New Zealand were in broad agreement with these aspects of the Proposals. The plans for the division of roles and responsibilities between the Security Council and the General Assembly - the two principal organs of the new organization - were, however, unacceptable.

Under the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals there would be a clear and complete differentiation of responsibility and function between the two bodies. Effective power and real initiative would reside almost exclusively in a Security Council of limited membership. The United States, Britain, Russia, China and France would be permanently represented on the Council and would possess the power of veto. Lesser nations, elected to the Council for a fixed term from the General Assembly, would have voting rights but no veto. The Council


(17) The Dumbarton Oaks Proposals did not contain any specific provision for Security Council voting procedure primarily because of a US-USSR deadlock over how extensive the permanent members' powers of veto should be. Agreement was reached at the Yalta summit between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin when it was accepted that, while a 7 to 11 vote by the Council would be sufficient to permit discussion any decision to impose economic or military sanctions would require the unanimous approval of the permanent members. Nevertheless, the Dumbarton talks accepted that the permanent members should have some power of veto and this was an essential feature of the U.N. as envisaged by the Proposals. See Ielad M. Goodrich, The United Nations, p. 24; Robert Dallek, Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1935 (New York, 1979) pp. 466-467; 510-511.
would be restricted to dealing with matters of peace and security in respect of which the General Assembly and individual members would possess rights of referral. It would also be responsible for applying and administering the system of progressive enforcement measures - economic and military sanctions - designed to bring aggressors to heel.

In this scheme the General Assembly, while not quite the 'innocuous debating organ' that the Soviet Union had proposed, was clearly subordinate to the Security Council. The Proposals made it plain that, while the 'Big Four' were prepared to give formal recognition to the principle of equality within the Assembly, democratic sentiments were not to be allowed to interfere with their predominant position in organizing international affairs. The Assembly could consider, discuss and make recommendations concerning 'general principles of co-operation' in matters of international peace and security on its own initiative. It could also examine any question relating to the maintenance of international order brought before it by individual members or by the Security Council. It was not empowered to institute practical remedies, however. Only the Security Council might decide if and how combined action was to be undertaken. The Assembly's limited advisory capacity in political affairs was further qualified by a prohibition against it making recommendations on its own initiative on any question relating to international peace and security which was before the Security Council.

The Assembly's major responsibility would be to promote international co-operation in economic and social matters. Even in these fields, which were of only secondary interest to the major allies, the Assembly's powers were severely circumscribed. The Dumbarton Oaks Proposals did not envisage an

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integrated system by which the Assembly could effectively oversee and administer economic and social co-operation. Instead, a diffuse and ill-defined structure in which a variety of specialized functional agencies enjoyed a large degree of autonomy was proposed. (20) A sub-committee of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, which would itself be at least technically independent of the Assembly, would exercise loose supervisory powers over the specialized agencies. (21)

The Wellington Conference, meeting some three weeks after the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals had been released, wasted little time in concluding that the Proposals were an unacceptable blueprint for the new international organization. In short order the Conference produced a set of twelve resolutions which were subsequently approved by both Cabinets and became the basis of Australian and New Zealand policy on the new world body. (22)

The Wellington resolutions restated the desire of the two countries to 'play their full part' in establishing a 'General International Organization' dedicated to 'preserving international peace and security and promoting human welfare'. A necessary precondition for the effective pursuit of these mutually dependent objectives, and hence a primary responsibility of the organization, was the creation of an effective and lasting system of collective security.

Although it was hoped that the new organization would encourage and provide the forum for 'the orderly change of situations, the continuance of which might endanger the peace of the world', Australia and New Zealand recognized that this might not always be possible. They regarded it as vital, therefore,

(20) The histories of these specialized agencies were as varied as their functions. Some had been in existence in one form or another since the mid-19th century e.g. Universal Postal Union. Others, such as the International Labour Organization, had been set up under the League of Nations while a third group were of more recent origin, e.g. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. Their widely divergent responsibilities alone posed considerable administrative difficulties.


(22) Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 149.
that an explicit interdiction on aggression and clear provision for combined action by members of the organization were included in any covenant, compact or charter. An international system of collective security could only work if each member nation accepted both the principle and the consequent obligations. The Covenant of the League of Nations had not imposed specific requirements on its members in this regard and the impotency of that body to deal with threats to international order remained a vivid and bitter memory. Australia and New Zealand believed the new organization could avoid the same dismal fate by clearly stating its commitment to the principle of collective security and spelling out members' obligations so that they became unavoidable conditions of membership. Under the provisions of the Wellington resolutions any state seeking to become a member of the United Nations would be required to pledge to carry out, 'by force if need be', the decisions of the organization for the preservation of international peace and security. This pledge would be given added emphasis by an equally binding declaration which recognized the territorial and political independence of members and their right to be preserved against external threat or force. (23)

Australian and New Zealand dissatisfaction with the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals was not restricted to the reluctance of the 'Big Four' to make firm provisions for collective security and combined action. The two countries insisted that the principal objectives - peace, security and human welfare - were inseparable and on these grounds alone the Proposals' plans to divide responsibility for political affairs and social and economic issues between the Security Council and the General Assembly were unacceptable. This difference, although significant in its own right, was part of a more general set of objections to the respective functions of the main organs of the new body as envisaged under the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals and illustrates the

radically different expectations shared by Australia and New Zealand.

The Wellington resolutions make it clear that Australia and New Zealand sought an international body organized on democratic principles and reproducing the essential features of their own parliamentary and bureaucratic systems.

While recognizing that the success of the organization depended upon the leadership of the Greater Powers, whose involvement would lend decisions the necessary political, economic and military backing, the resolutions held it 'essential that all members should actively participate in the general control and direction of its affairs'. The agency of this participation would be the Assembly, empowered to admit any sovereign state to its ranks and able 'at any of its meetings to deal with any matter within the sphere of action of the Organization, subject only to the executive powers of the Security Council in regard to the settlement of disputes and the action to be taken against an aggressor'. (24)

The Security Council, the dominant organ under the Proposals, was conceded a less powerful role by the resolutions. The necessity of vesting the Council with wide powers 'for the purpose of preserving security' to allow it to act to meet any crisis which might arise when the Assembly was not in session was acknowledged, but the Council would be responsible to the Assembly and would generally act as the executive agent of the Assembly's legislative decisions. It was accepted that membership of the Council should be limited, but it should be as 'representative as possible' within those limitations. The permanent membership which the Proposals had reserved for the five major allies was studiously avoided as was any suggestion of Australasian acceptance of any right of veto. (25)

(25) Ibid., para. 9, p. 230.
The form of the organization envisaged by Australia and New Zealand was rounded out by the resolution's suggestion that the various specialized agencies dealing with international economic and social issues be incorporated within the framework of the organization to provide, in effect, an international civil service. The role of the International Court of Justice would also be increased. It would be given what amounted to compulsory jurisdiction by its 'maximum employment' to ascertain 'facts which may be in dispute'.(26)

The analogies between the form of the General International Organization proposed in the Wellington resolutions and the political and bureaucratic institutions of Australia and New Zealand should not be overemphasized however. The intention was not to see a 'world government' established; the two countries made this plain in their attempt to ensure that the political independence of all members was recognized and safeguarded. There was, however, a firm commitment to an organization guided by democratic principles which possessed the necessary 'muscle' to enforce its decisions. In their structural preferences for this organization the resolutions simply displayed the same faith in the inherent superiority of the modified British institutions of Australia and New Zealand which later inspired Peter Fraser to chair the Trusteeship Committee of the San Francisco Conference in accordance with the rules of the New Zealand House of Representatives.(27)

The Wellington resolutions also addressed the difficult question of the administration of dependent territories and the desire of both countries to blend practical policies with humanitarian ideals was evident once again. The resolutions pressed for the principle of trusteeship, 'already applicable in the case of mandated territories', to be accepted by all powers responsible

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(26) Ibid., paras 10 and 8 respectively, p. 230.
for dependent territories. This would require them to recognize that the objective of trusteeship was 'the welfare and advancement of the native peoples' and subject all colonial and mandatory administrations to supervision by a new body 'analogous to the Permanent Mandates Commission set up within the framework of the General Organization'.

Australian and New Zealand policy at the United Nations Conference on International Organization which opened in San Francisco in April 1945 followed the broad outlines which had been determined at the Wellington Conference. The two delegations, ably led by Evatt and Fraser, directed considerable effort towards ensuring that their aims were incorporated into the Charter of the United Nations. The document that finally emerged, however, fell short of their expectations. Although Australia and New Zealand, as leaders of the cause of the smaller nations, had played central roles in securing a number of concessions of varying significance, they had been unable to infuse the Charter with the commitments to collective security and democratic principles which they had sought.

Addressing the New Zealand House of Representatives on 24 July 1945, at the commencement of the debate on the ratification of the Charter, Fraser made little attempt to disguise his reservations. He drew attention to his belief that the inability to direct and deploy 'military power and force' had significantly weakened the League of Nations and noted that the provisions of the Charter of the new organization had made some attempts to remedy this


shortcoming. While this was cause for hope, it was not enough in itself. The fatal weakness of the League, Fraser stressed, had been the failure of many of its members to carry out their obligations. While the United Nations had been empowered to request military assistance, it was still not an obligation and New Zealand's attempt to remedy this defect by proposing that the Charter oblige all members to collectively resist any active aggression had not received the necessary two-thirds majority. Thus the opportunity for vacillation, evasion of responsibility and the revival of the pre-war policy of appeasement remained. (30)

A more immediate threat to the potential success of the United Nations, Fraser advised the House, was posed by the power of veto given to the five Permanent Members of the Security Council. In accepting this provision member-states had prejudiced the organization's chances of preserving international peace and security. By exercising its veto any Permanent Member could prevent itself, or its friends and allies, from being declared an aggressor and subjected to such dissuasive measures as the United Nations had at its disposal. Although Fraser felt it might have been possible to gain the two-thirds majority necessary to defeat the proposal for the veto had the issue been pressed, he acknowledged that such an attempt would probably have been self-defeating. The five Permanent Members had been intransigent, making it clear that the right of veto was a non-negotiable article;

'The Charter had either to be accepted, with that provision, or there would be no Charter at all'.

So, 'after doing all we possibly could to get what we considered, and still consider, a great defect remedied', New Zealand had joined Australia and thirteen other irreconcilable opponents of the measure in abstaining from the

final vote. (31)

Fraser was, nevertheless, enthusiastic about the Charter as a whole. He regarded it as a markedly superior document to the Covenant of the League of Nations and was particularly satisfied with the greater flexibility allowed the General Assembly in comparison with its predecessor. He pointed out that the Assembly had been empowered to 'discuss any question or matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the Charter, and ... may make recommendations to the members of the United Nations, or to the Security Council, or to both, on any such questions or matters'. (32)

There is an air of justifiable pride in the statement. Fraser was quoting Article 10 of the Charter. He had led the struggle for the acceptance of this Article and, although his original proposal that the Assembly 'have the right to consider any matter within the sphere of international relations' had been left out of the form which was adopted, Article 10 represented a significant extension of the role of the General Assembly in comparison with that suggested by the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals. Its scope was still relatively restricted and its role clearly advisory, but the General Assembly had been given a real capability to examine political as well as social and economic questions. (33)

Evatt shared Fraser's satisfaction on this aspect of the Charter. The two men had fought hard to liberalize and democratize the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals to ensure that the smaller nations could make a significant contribution to the success of the United Nations through a suitably empowered

(31) Ibid., p. 580.
(32) Ibid., p. 579.
(33) H. Field Haviland Jr., The Political Role of the General Assembly, p. 12; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Foreign Policy: Statements and Documents 1943-1957; (Wellington, 1972), Doc. 8; Chapter V, p. 88.
General Assembly. Paul Hasluck, a member of the Australian delegation at San Francisco, has detailed the reasoning behind this approach:

'The case for giving a more significant role to the General Assembly and bringing all the activities of the United Nations into its purview was based on a hope - in some minds a faith - that, whereas in the Security Council the dominance of the great powers would mean that power politics would prevail, the influence of small nations in the General Assembly would mean that the declared purposes and principles of the Charter would be respected, that cases would be decided on their merits by a free vote after hearing arguments about rights and wrongs and that decisions would be such as to strengthen the usages and conventions of international law. The ultimate protection of the political independence and territorial integrity of small nations is to be found in respect for treaties and for the principles of equal rights, peaceful settlement of disputes and the restraint of power by principle. Hence it could be expected that most if not all the small and middle-sized nations would vote to maintain this protection of themselves'. (34)

These ideals and themes had underpinned the First Labour Government of New Zealand's approach to international organizations since it came to power in 1935. (35) They also formed much of the basis for the new consultation and co-operation between Australia and New Zealand.

Evatt and Fraser did not succeed in having all the principles and provisions set out in the Wellington resolutions incorporated in the United Nations Charter but they had realised the broader aim stated in the Australian-New Zealand Agreement and had participated in the 'planning and establishment' of

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the United Nations to some purpose. Nor did they regard their cause as lost. Fraser declared his belief that:

'As the organisation is formed and the nations work together, confidence and trust will grow', (36)

while, according to Hasluck, Evatt apparently regarded the Charter as 'the commencement of a process of evolution in which successive decisions and the lessons learnt in working together would bring in time a better Charter, a better world organization and a new international order'. (37) Article 10, allowing the General Assembly to 'discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter' and authorizing the Assembly to make recommendations to individual members or the Security Council, (38) was of obvious importance in this respect.

These hopes can be seen in the continued criticism of the Security Council's powers of veto by Australian and New Zealand delegates to the United Nations. They can also be detected in the response of both countries to the involvement of the General Assembly in the Palestine problem. The question of the future government of Palestine not only provided the chance that both countries sought to participate in 'fair decisions and just re-arrangements', (39) but also gave the Assembly its first real opportunity to discover and display its ability to evaluate a complex political, social and economic issue

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(37) Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 214.
(38) Ian Brownlie, (ed.) Basic Documents in International Law, Pt. 1, Doc. 1, Article 10, p. 6.
(39) This desire appears to have been even more pronounced on New Zealand's part. Australia, as a member of the Security Council (1946-47) presumably had more opportunity to make its voice heard, although it, too, attached considerable importance to the discussions on Palestine. See below.
and, hopefully, succeed where traditional political and diplomatic initiatives had failed.

The First Session of the General Assembly, held in two parts in January-February and October-December 1946, had been almost exclusively occupied with organizational and administrative matters. The Assembly had established a number of committees and sub-committees (although the semi-autonomous Economic and Social Council was much more active in this regard), had chosen New York as the permanent headquarters of the United Nations, confirmed the recommendations of the Security Council concerning the appointment of Trygve Lie as Secretary General and the admission of four new member nations, approved a series of trusteeship agreements, authorized the budget for 1946-47, and generally spent its time establishing and elaborating on the institutional framework provided by the Charter. (40)

Two more specific matters had also been examined, however; an application from the South African Government that it be permitted to absorb its mandate of South West Africa into the Union of South Africa and a resolution, sponsored by India, complaining that South African policies towards Indians in South Africa were a denial of human rights and impaired friendly relations between India and South Africa in contravention of Article 1 of the United Nations Charter. (41)

The request to absorb South West Africa was rejected by the 4th (Trusteeship and Non-Self-Governing Territories) Committee on the grounds that it was

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(41) Charter of the United Nations, Article 1. The purposes of the United Nations are: ...

2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen international peace;

3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Ian Brownlie, (ed.) Basic Documents in International Law, Doc. 1, p. 3.
against the interests of the African inhabitants of the territory and was contrary to the United Nations' trusteeship system. The General Assembly confirmed this decision, by 37 votes to 0 with 9 abstentions, and recommended that South West Africa should be put under a trusteeship agreement.(42)

The Indian resolution also received majority support despite South African claims that it was a domestic matter involving South African nationals and hence covered by Article 2(7) of the Charter.(43) The Assembly found that international relations between the two countries had been impaired and recommended that 'the treatment of Indians in South Africa should be within the provisions of the Charter, and in conformity with an agreement reached by the two countries at Cape Town in 1927' and called upon them to reach 'a satisfactory conclusion'.(44)

In both cases the Assembly could do nothing more than 'recommend' courses of action. South Africa's refusal to compromise on either issue could only be met by further discussion, further attempts at persuasion and more recommendations with such complete lack of success that South Africa's discriminatory racial policies and continued occupation of South West Africa (Namibia) remain vexatious international issues, seemingly defying conciliation or pacific resolution.


(43) Charter of the United Nations; Article 2;
7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

Ian Brownlie (ed.) Basic Documents in International Law, Doc. 1, p.4.
New Zealand had a degree of sympathy with South Africa's argument although in no way supporting its policies. Sir Carl Berendsen told the First (Political and Security) Committee on 11 May 1949 that New Zealand 'could not support any resolution containing any suggestion of condemnation or even of toleration, or any decision dealing with the substance of the question' until a legal opinion on the applicability of Article 2(7) had been obtained from the International Court of Justice; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Statements and Documents, Doc. 32, p. 194.

(44) James Barber, South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945-1970, pp. 30-33.
Palestine initially appeared a significantly better proposition. Britain, the mandatory authority, had voluntarily surrendered the responsibility for determining the territory's future government to the General Assembly under Article 11(2) of the Charter. Although the Assembly could still only 'make recommendations ... to the State ... concerned or to the Security Council or to both', (45) if it could propose a practical settlement, supported by the two-thirds majority such an important question required, (46) then both Britain and the Security Council would be bound, on moral grounds at least, to accept the Assembly's decision and assist in its implementation. Furthermore, if the General Assembly, where all nations enjoyed equal status, could successfully resolve the Palestine problem, then a precedent for genuine international consultation and co-operation would have been established and the case for the Assembly assuming a more vigorous and practical role in the direction of international affairs would be strengthened.

The General Assembly's success depended upon full and informed discussion of the Palestine problem. With this in mind, the New Zealand Government cabled its approval of the British proposal for summoning a special session to prepare the Palestine problem for debate to Victor Hoo, the Acting Secretary General, on 8 April 1947 and set about determining preferences for the instruction and constitution of the preparatory committee. (47)

Fraser and his advisors had little difficulty in establishing the broad principles which they wished to direct the committee's investigations. Sir Carl Berendse, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United

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(45) Charter of the United Nations, Article 11(2) in Ian Brownlie (ed.) Basic Documents in International Law, Doc. 1, p. 6.


(47) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Telegram (unnumbered) Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, Minister External Affairs, Wellington, to Victor Hoo, Acting Secretary General, United Nations, New York, 8 April 1947.
States of America, who also headed New Zealand's delegation to the United Nations, was instructed to ensure that:

'the most competent and impartial Preparatory Committee is established, that it is given wide terms of reference which will enable it to consider every relevant aspect of the matter, and that it is not bound to give special weight to any one alternative in advance of its thorough investigation of all possibilities'.

If necessary, Berendsen was to actively intervene to prevent the special session from premature examination of the Palestine problem and to keep discussion to the strict sense of the intentions set forth in the Agenda - the constitution and instruction of a special committee. He was to make it clear that New Zealand would not allow the Assembly to be drawn into a debate on 'any matter of substance' until 'all the United Nations have full knowledge of the problem and it is for the purpose of setting up a Committee to secure this knowledge that the Special Session has been called'.(48)

Nothing should be permitted to distract or prevent the regular session of the General Assembly, which would meet in September, from a complete and unprejudiced examination of all issues bearing upon the future status and administration of Palestine. To assist this end, the role of the Preparatory Committee should be restricted to preparation of the factual basis for discussion, although Fraser did concede that the provision of draft recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly might serve a useful purpose;

'The ultimate aim is the independence and self-government under conditions of freedom, security and prosperity, of all the inhabitants of Palestine in one or more viable states; the question is whether this can be achieved immediately and if so by what means and subject to what conditions; or

(48) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Telegram No. 246, Minister, External Affairs, Wellington (Fraser), to New Zealand Minister, Washington, (Berendsen), 24 April 1947, p.1.
whether some interim regime (trusteeship) for all or parts of Palestine is necessary and if so what conditions should be prescribed'. (49)

Such recommendations should take account of the existing political, economic and social conditions in Palestine and the situation, future prospects and desires of Jews 'in those countries of Europe which were subjected to prosecution (sic)', while attempting to ascertain the extent to which the United Nations, other international organizations and individual states could assist a peaceful resolution of the Palestine problem and aid the implementation of any General Assembly recommendations. (50)

In seeking a Preparatory Committee with broad terms of reference and whose findings were not pre-determined by precipitate discussion in the Special Session, New Zealand was motivated by a number of considerations.

An unfettered examination by an independent and presumably neutral committee could be reasonably expected to receive the co-operation of all parties to the dispute. The recommendations which would emerge from such a body should also be less influenced by conceptions of national interest than the successive British committees which had examined the problem previously. The machinery for handling New Zealand's external relations had developed markedly after the Labour victory of 1935 and the additional stimulus of the diplomatic demands of the war years, but the country's diplomatic resources were still severely limited. Information on most matters, and much of the tone and extent of the subsequent policy response, continued to be largely derived from British diplomatic dispatches. While these dispatches were explicit, detailed, and, considering the variety and extent of British interests, relatively impartial, the opportunity to receive up-to-date information and recommendations on

(49) Ibid., p.2.
(50) Ibid., p.2.
Palestine from independent arbiters held obvious appeal for the small group of men who directed New Zealand's external policy. (51)

It was also felt that an impartial inquiry and report would increase the General Assembly's chances of finding a workable solution. On 30 April, two days after the Special Session had opened, Fraser sent a telegram to Berendesen, restating at some length the position which was to be adopted by the New Zealand delegation. He stressed once again that nothing should be allowed to divert the responsibility of considering the problem in all its aspects from the next regular session of the Assembly, and stated an additional preference for the selection of committee members. He was convinced that a committee of 'competent, impartial and, if possible, experienced individuals', chosen directly by the Assembly as individuals rather than as representatives of their respective nations, offered the best chance of genuine impartiality. There seemed every hope that the members of such a committee, freed of considerations of national interest and relieved of political responsibilities, would content themselves with collating information and defining alternatives rather than

(51) At this point it should be noted that references to the policy and attitudes of 'New Zealand' and the 'New Zealand Government' while technically correct, are actually a convenient shorthand for the more strictly personal nature of the process by which New Zealand's external policy was formulated and directed. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister as well as Minister of External Affairs, administered his portfolio with a maximum of personal involvement and a minimum of 'interference' by Cabinet or the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs. This latter body, formed in 1947 and made up of 7 Government and 5 Opposition MPs, was designed to keep MPs informed on developments in external affairs and provide the Opposition with an opportunity for an exchange of views. It was, nevertheless, almost exclusively consultative in function. Policy formation lay in the hands of Fraser alone, advised and influenced by the extremely competent cabal of civil servants who made up the small External Affairs Department.

This practice of wide ministerial discretion in external affairs has not been restricted to Labour Governments alone although the frequency with which that party's political leaders have combined the offices of Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs has perhaps exaggerated the tendency.

choosing amongst them. This last aspect was vitally important to Fraser who believed 'that nobody less than the Assembly itself can usefully attempt to make that choice' (52).

Neither Fraser nor his advisors were so naive as to presume that the mere submission of an impartial report would be sufficient to ensure that the General Assembly's debate on Palestine would be free from acrimony and emotion. They were aware that the Arab League (53) was committed to a policy of uncompromising resistance to any attempt to establish a Jewish state in Palestine or any relaxation of restrictions on Jewish immigration, and that discussion of the region's future would almost inevitably be coloured by Great Power rivalries. Nevertheless, the majority of member-states were not firmly committed to any specific policy on Palestine; if discussion of 'matters of substance' could be avoided until after the special committee's report had been submitted, it seemed reasonable to expect that an informed Assembly could constructively evaluate the alternatives.

While the broad principles of New Zealand's policy concerning the instruction of the Preparatory Committee were determined with comparative ease and the primacy of the principle of impartiality clearly impressed upon Berendse, it proved more difficult to establish a clear and definite preference with regard to the constitution of the committee. The essence of the problem lay in the variety of proposals and suggestions as to how the committee could and

(52) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Telegram, (unnumbered), Fraser, Wellington, to Berendse, New York, 30 April 1947.

(53) Formed in 1945, the 7 member Arab League (Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Transjordan) was 'united on the Arab national cause in Palestine' although, paradoxically, having little real sympathy or contact with the fragmented Palestinian Arab nationalist movement. As with so many other nations, they had their own, less than altruistic reasons for their intense interest in the future of Palestine. See Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 266; Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries, pp. 66-67.
should be constituted. As the special session's discussions progressed, however, New Zealand's attention, together with the majority of the members of the United Nations, became focused on choosing between two alternative proposals suggested by the United States.

New Zealand had been advised of the United States proposals by the British Government in mid-April. Details were forwarded to Berendsen on 21 April together with some general indications of Fraser's views which formed the extent of the prior instruction of the New Zealand delegation concerning the constitution of the committee.

Berendsen was informed that the Americans proposed the Preparatory Committee be made up either of the 26 nations represented on the Security, Trusteeship and Economic and Social Councils, or by 11 'neutral' states elected by the special session. The latter proposal would exclude members of the Security Council and the Arab League. Fraser favoured the proposal for the larger committee 'at this stage', as he felt it 'would carry weight ... educate many states in the problem and thus save time at the September Assembly'. (54)

Fraser's initial disposition towards the larger committee is puzzling and seems inconsistent with his concern that the committee, and its report, should be impartial. New Zealand, as a member of the Trusteeship Council, and Australia, a member of the Security Council and the Trusteeship Council, would have been automatically included in the larger committee, but any positive or moderating influence of the two countries would have been more than cancelled out by some of the other members. The inclusion of the Great Powers would have introduced major issues of national interest and advantage, posing a real risk of diplomatic pressures being brought to bear upon the smaller nations represented on the committee as attempts were made to gather support for predetermined

(54) P.M. 277/5/2, P. 5, Personal telegram, Fraser, Wellington, to Berendsen, New York, 21 April 1947.
'solutions'. In addition, the membership of Syria (Security Council), Iraq (Trusteeship Council), and Lebanon (Economic and Social Council) - all members of the Arab League - guaranteed the presence of an irreconcilably partisan element and would provide a probable source of disruption.

Apart from the debatable assumptions that it would save time and possess greater diplomatic muscle, the only other apparent factor influencing Fraser's preference for the larger committee seems to have been that it was also Britain's preference.(55) But Fraser stressed that it was only a preference, not a policy. He told Berendsen that he believed it likely that additional formulae for the constitution of the committee would be placed before the special session and, just as he was unwilling to bind New Zealand to a definite policy on Palestine prior to the presentation of the committee's report, he was reluctant to commit his representative to a predetermined policy on the formation of the committee.(56)

Fraser's faith in Berendsen's ability to represent New Zealand's views also contributed to the general nature of the instructions issued from Wellington. Throughout his distinguished career Berendsen displayed extraordinary capabilities. As Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department from 1932 to 1943 he had exercised influence and initiative far in excess of that normally enjoyed by civil servants, particularly after the First Labour Government took office. According to Sir Alister McIntosh;

'The fact is that Berendsen was the draftsman of New Zealand's external

(55) Ibid.

(56) Ibid. Fraser's view on the question of what criteria should be applied in the selection of the committee members altered radically in the space of the next ten days. On 30 April he told Berendsen that his preference was now for 'competent, impartial and, if possible, experienced individuals'. See P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Telegram (unnumbered), Fraser to Berendsen, 30 April 1947. See also this chapter, no.52.
policy until he left for Australia as High Commissioner at the beginning of 1943, but that policy was, of course, laid down or approved by the Savage/Tracer Governments in terms which Berendson fully shared.\(^{(57)}\)

As Minister for New Zealand in the United States and Head of New Zealand's delegation to the United Nations, he not only represented his government's policy but continued to play an important role in its formulation.\(^{(58)}\)

The exchange of telegrams and letters between Fraser and Berendson throughout the course of the United Nations' involvement in the Palestine problem make it clear that what was taking place was not so much a case of the Prime Minister instructing a senior diplomat as it was an exchange of views between two men who respected each others' abilities and shared similar ideals. Thus Berendson could be trusted to effectively apply the broad principles which had been established to the specific issues that would arise during the special session and to execute New Zealand's policy with a judicious blending of initiative and consultation.

In the event, while Berendson kept Fraser fully informed of proceedings, there was little need for extensive consultation. It was apparent from the outset that the majority of the General Assembly shared New Zealand's determination that the agenda which had already been approved should remain unaltered and be strictly adhered to.

The First Special Session, although eventful, proceeded relatively smoothly. The Arab states of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia had responded to the British initiative by presenting for inclusion in the agenda an item calling for the immediate termination of Britain's mandate over


Palestine, and the declaration of an independent Palestinian state, with the object of pre-empting the Assembly's discussion and preventing any concessions to the Jews. Both the British and Arab proposals were placed before the General Committee of the Assembly whose decision as to their suitability for inclusion in the agenda, while not binding on the Assembly, carried considerable weight. (59)

Because the British proposal had already received the approval of the majority of Assembly who had acceded to the request for the summoning of the special session, the General Committee's recommendation that it be included in the agenda was little more than a formality. The Arab item, however, was rejected first by the Committee by a vote of 8 to 1 with 5 abstentions and then, inevitably, by the Assembly. The sole item on the agenda remained:

'Constituting and instructing a special committee to prepare for the consideration of the question of Palestine at the second regular session', and this was referred to the First (Political) Committee of the Assembly for discussion. (60)

Although an ultimate failure, the Arab states' attempt to add their proposal to the agenda of the special session was a limited tactical success. Discussion of the item in the General Committee and the Assembly provided opportunities for 'matters of substance' to be raised despite the reluctance of the majority of member states to become embroiled in premature discussion. Even here the potential for diverting the special session from its primary purpose was limited by the valiant efforts of the President of the Assembly, Dr. Aranha of Brazil, who managed to keep discussion of the Arab item largely

(59) H. Field Haviland Jr., The Political Role of the General Assembly, p. 53. In December 1949, in response to complaints of its liberality in recommending items for discussion, the Committee's authority to reject items was strengthened.

restricted to its procedural aspects. (61)

There was greater opportunity to raise 'matters of substance', and consequently greater potential for disruption, when discussions began in the First Committee. The Assembly had earlier decided that the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Arab Higher Committee should be granted hearings before the First Committee. (62) As non-governmental organizations they had been refused permission to appear before the plenary meeting of the General Assembly, but it was recognized that both organizations represented 'a considerable element of the population of Palestine' and hence deserved some consideration. (63) Such unprecedented benevolence on the part of the Assembly might also pay practical dividends. The chances of success of the preparatory committee, whatever form it eventually assumed, would be significantly increased if it had the co-operation of these powerful representatives of both parties to the dispute and, in this respect, any goodwill that might be generated by this gesture of sincere intentions on the part of the Assembly might prove critical.

As a consequence, the First Committee experienced considerable difficulty in limiting discussion to the item on the agenda but, as Berendsen later informed Fraser;

'less harm was done by the probably inevitable incursions into matters of substance than might have been expected. The representatives both of the Jewish Agency and of the Arab Higher Committee were, on the whole, responsible and moderate in their remarks, and though attacks against the Mufti on the one hand, and the Jews on the other as the race responsible


(62) The Jewish Agency: co-ordinating body of the international Zionist movement and Jewish settlement in Palestine. The Arab Higher Committee: The representatives of the six Palestinian Arab political parties (four Muslim, two Christian) under the presidency of the Mufti of Jerusalem.

for the crucifixion of Christ, led to considerable feeling as indeed did the firm and clear definition of quite irreconcilable points of view, nevertheless, by careful Chaimanship and by a general desire on the part of nearly every delegation not unnecessarily to add fuel to the fire, the tone of the discussion was generally much more restrained than might have been feared'.

In fact he told Fraser,

'The final result of the Assembly was, on the whole, good. Your wishes - obviously sensible - that discussion of the substance of the dispute should be minimised and that the Committee of Inquiry should be given the widest possible terms of reference were, on the whole, met - the first partially, but to the utmost extent that could be expected, and the second almost completely'. (64)

These successes can be regarded as an expression of the general will of the special session and were achieved rapidly and with little fuss. The election of the members of the preparatory committee proved more problematical.

By the time the First Committee came to consider the constitution of the preparatory committee there was general agreement that it must be made up of member states who were impartial and independent. To this end, despite consistent opposition by the Soviet Union, a succession of proposals seeking the inclusion of the 'Big Five' were defeated. The Committee found, however, that it lacked substantive alternative proposals. The United States, which had discarded both its previously suggested formulae, eventually came forward with a proposal for a seven-member committee, to be made up of representatives of Canada, Peru, Czechoslovakia, Uruguay, Iran, the Netherlands and Sweden. (65)

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(64) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 5, Confidential Memorandum, Bernedsen, Washington, to Fraser, Wellington, 28 May 1947, pp. 1-2.

(65) Ibid., p.2.
The specifics of the United States' proposal were unacceptable to Australia which, the previous year, had used the principle of 'equitable geographic distribution' to secure election to the Security Council. Using the same argument, the Australian delegation, who were under instructions to gain a seat on the committee, countered with a proposal to increase the membership from seven to eleven which was eventually accepted by a slim majority. New Zealand and Australia had been exchanging telegrams on the special session and Fraser was aware that the Australian attitude was virtually identical to New Zealand's. On 5 May he cabled Berendsen instructing him to support Australia's bid for membership.

Australian representation on the special committee was duly secured but Berendsen was unsure that the increase in membership was necessarily a good thing. After the conclusion of the special session he confessed to Fraser that he feared the price of Australia's inclusion might prove too high, for it had also led to 'the inclusion of India and Yugoslavia, both of them almost certainly destined to play a mischievous part, and Guatemala, one of the Central American states inimical to Great Britain'. The inclusion of Australia also meant, however, that New Zealand could be confident that one member of the committee at least sought the same ends as New Zealand.

General Assembly Resolution 106(5-1) was carried by 47 to 7 with 1 abstention on 15 May 1947 and the eleven-member United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) officially came into existence. It had been given 'the

(66) Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, pp. 248-249.

(67) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 5, Telegram No. 46, Berendsen, New York, to Fraser, Wellington, 2 May 1947.

(68) Compare P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Telegram No. 121, Minister External Affairs, Canberra, to Minister External Affairs, Wellington, 26 April 1947 with Telegram No. 246, Fraser, Wellington, to Berendsen, Washington, 24 April '47

(69) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 5, Telegram No. 42, Fraser, Wellington, to Berendsen, New York, 5 May 1947.

(70) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt. 5, Confidential Memorandum, Berendsen, Washington, to Fraser, Wellington, 28 May 1947, p.2.
widest powers to ascertain and record facts and to investigate all questions and issues relevant to the problem of Palestine' and was instructed to communicate its report to the Secretary-General no later than 1 September 1947, 'in order that it may be circulated to the Members of the United Nations in time for consideration by the second regular session of the General Assembly'. (71)

As Berendsen pointed out to Fraser, the First Special Session had been quite successful when seen in terms of New Zealand's policy. Matters of substance had been generally avoided in the Assembly's discussions and UNSCOP had been given wide terms of reference. All the members of the committee may not have been as impartial and independent as New Zealand had hoped for, but, in view of the 'intractable problem of human relations with which it was concerned', such expectations were probably unrealistic. (72)

There still seemed sufficient grounds for the continued hopes of both Australia and New Zealand that UNSCOP would complete a full preliminary investigation of the facts which would provide the September session of the General Assembly with the opportunity to make an impartial and objective decision on the future of Palestine. (73) Both countries further believed that success in the Palestine problem would not only benefit Arabs and Jews but would also enhance the prestige of the General Assembly and provide a precedent which might be used to claim a more active political role for the Assembly in future issues of international importance.

The First Special Session, however, had been concerned with organizational and procedural matters. The General Assembly had already established its compe-


(72) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, Confidential Memorandum, Berendsen to Fraser, 28 May 1947, p.2.

(73) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 5, 'Extract from Ministerial Statement by the Minister of External Affairs, Australia', 6 June 1947.
tence in these fields. 'Matters of substance' were an entirely different
matter and Australia and New Zealand were soon to be confronted with additional,
inconstravertible proof that, while the Charter may have restricted the Assembly
to an essentially advisory role because of Great Power preference and pressure,
the majority of members were not particularly dissatisfied with their subordin-
ate role. The Assembly as a whole was content to make its recommendations,
after suitably complex and often self-serving debate, leaving the question of
implementation to the Great Powers. As UNSCOP rapidly discovered the Great
Power unity of the war years, which had been largely illusory in any case,
was deteriorating rapidly and even the Security Council could give no guarantees
on the crucial question of how any solution to the problem of Palestine would be
implemented and enforced.
UNSCOOP, mindful of the Assembly's instruction that it submit its report to the Secretary General no later than 1 September, began investigations imme-
diately after the conclusion of the special session. Making use of its broad
authority to investigate 'all questions and issues relevant to the proble-
of Palestine'(1) the Committee began by attempting to gain guarantees of assistance
from the 'Big Five'. The reasoning behind this move was sound. Any proposal
for implementing whatever settlement the Assembly finally recommended would
have to be approved by the Security Council; if the Permanent Members had given
a commitment in advance, then the Committee could submit reasonably detailed
plans for the implementation of any proposal with less risk of stepping on
the toes of a Great Power and provoking a veto. After all, if the United
Nations was to determine the preferred solution for Palestine then, on practi-
cal and moral grounds, the organization should make adequate provision for its
implementation. In its attempts to obtain a prior commitment to the principle
of implementation, however, UNSCOOP was immediately confronted with the realities
of Great Power rivalries.

Britain was favourably disposed towards detailed examination of the ques-
tion of implementation by UNSCOOP. The British attitude had been made clear
at the commencement of the special session when Sir Alexander Cadogan had
stressed that his government 'should not have the sole responsibility for en-
fouring a solution which is not accepted by both parties and which we cannot
reconcile with our conscience'.(2) This seemed an entirely reasonable point
of view. Britain's inability to discover a solution acceptable to both parties

(1) General Assembly Resolution 106(A-1) in Rosalyn Higgins, United Nations
and the subsequent difficulties this had posed in administering and policing the mandate had prompted it to submit the problem of Palestine to the United Nations. Even those members of the special session who had been most optimistic about UNSCOP's prospects recognized that the Committee was unlikely to find any new solution which was acceptable to all concerned and that its recommendations to the Assembly would be, in all probability, variations on the recommendations previously made to the British Government by the succession of royal commissions. (3) To expect Britain to implement the Assembly's decision unaided in these circumstances would be little more than an abdication of its responsibilities to Britain and the Arabs and Jews of Palestine on the part of the United Nations.

The Committee's approach to the Americans, however, was politely rebuffed. President Truman had endorsed the establishment of 'a viable Jewish state in Palestine' during the 1946 congressional election campaign, but now, under considerable pressure from the State Department and American oil companies to avoid risking America's strategic and economic interests in the region by 'siding with' the Jews, he took considerable pains to impress upon UNSCOP that the United States was neutral on the issue. No decision on any matter of substance - including the question of implementation - would be made until his government had received and considered the Committee's report. (4)

The support of the United States, the most powerful of the Permanent Members, was essential if UNSCOP was to make substantial and detailed recommendations on the question of implementation and Truman's refusal to commit his country before receiving UNSCOP's report appears to have convinced the Committee that approaches to the other Permanent Members would serve little purpose.

(3) See Chapter One, pp. 36-40.

(4) John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel*, (Stanford, California, 1974), pp. 11-13; p. 142; Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, p. 319.
This decision can be easily understood. Neither France, confronted with the massive task of post-war reconstruction and colonial difficulties in Indochina, nor China, torn by civil war, were in a position to offer any meaningful guarantees. The Soviet Union might have been agreeable but any suggestion of Russian involvement in the region, particularly in view of the American reluctance to become involved in the matter, posed further difficulties.

Andrey Gromyko, the head of the Soviet delegation to the special session, had stunned the Assembly on 14 May by his sudden announcement that the Soviet Union recognized the right of the Jewish people to establish a state of their own. Not content with this unexpected repudiation of long-standing Soviet anti-Zionism, Gromyko went on to state that, while his government’s preference was for the creation of an independent unitary state in Palestine, it would also consider partition as a possible solution. (5)

While this new policy made it likely that the Soviet Union would be favourably disposed towards any UNSCOP approach on the question of implementation, the Committee was also aware that neither Britain nor the United States would countenance Soviet involvement in Palestine. Both powers were aware of Soviet ambitions in the Middle East and regarded the sudden reversal of policy as simply a transparent attempt to further those ambitions by supporting the Zionist cause. (6) It was therefore inevitable that any suggestion of Soviet involvement in implementing the eventual decision of the General Assembly would

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(5) Nicholas Bethell, The Palestine Triangle, pp. 312-313.

(6) Soviet ambitions in the Middle East hinged on four basic concerns; the traditional Russian desire to secure a warm water port; anxiety about her Middle Eastern flank, exposed to the pro-Western nations of Turkey and Iran; frustration at the rejection of Stalin’s suggestion that Middle Eastern oil supplies should be controlled by the 'Big Three' by Churchill and Roosevelt at the Teheran Conference, December 1943; and the tempting possibilities the extensive Western interests in the region offered for Soviet diversionary tactics. See Arnold Krammer, The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc 1947-1953 (Urbana, Chicago, 1974), pp. 32-34.
be quickly vetoed.

UNSCOP decided that the only practical way for it to deal with the problem of implementation was to avoid it and continued on its mission. It was an inauspicious beginning.

In early June UNSCOP travelled to Palestine to receive submissions from the Arab and Jewish communities and examine local conditions at first hand. On 13 June, shortly after the Committee's arrival in the mandate, a cable was received from the Secretary General informing the members that the Arab Higher Committee had resolved that 'Palestine Arabs should abstain from collaboration and desist from appearing before' UNSCOP. Three reasons were cited for the imposition of this boycott: the refusal of the United Nations to adopt the 'natural course of inserting termination mandate and declaration independence (sic)' in the agenda of the special session, the failure to detach the Jewish refugee problem from the Palestine problem, and the intrusion of world religious interests into the interests of Palestinians.(7)

The grievances may have been genuine but they showed a lack of understanding of political realities. The special session had indeed refused to include the Arab proposal for the immediate termination of the mandate and the declaration of an independent Palestine in its agenda but the measure remained the official policy of the Arab States and they had resubmitted it for inclusion in the agenda of the next regular session. The broad scope of UNSCOP's enquiries, moreover, offered the chance to present the Arab case for this solution for inclusion in the Committee's deliberations. Arab demands that the Jewish refugee problem be separated from the Palestine problem were beyond the comprehension or the capabilities of most nations and individuals. The majority of the survivors of European Jewry made it clear that their objec-

tive was to get to Palestine, to find genuine acceptance and security in an independent Jewish state, and a conscience-stricken world was keen for an opportunity to expiate its guilt. The third of the Arab objections, the intrusion of religious interests, appeared to seriously under-estimate Palestine’s unique status as a focal point for the Islamic, Judaic and Christian religions. Any attempt to divorce the Palestine problem from the religious interests, which had contributed so significantly to the intensity of the dispute, would have been, at best, impractical.

There was a fourth, unstated, reason behind the Higher Committee’s decision to refuse to co-operate with UNSCOP. Haj Amin el Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, had lost political ground through his support of Nazism during the Second World War. The Palestine Arab nationalist movement, bereft of its charismatic figurehead, had become fragmented and in the immediate post-war period the Arab League attempted to establish its leadership of the nationalist cause. The Mufti, however, worked resolutely to regain the initiative within Palestine and forestall the ambitions of both the Zionists and the Arab League. The founding of the Arab Higher Committee increased his influence and through this body he directed the uncompromising Palestine Arab policy which brought the London Conference of January-February 1947 to an impasse. (8)

This latest move by the Higher Committee was consistent with Haj Amin’s overall aims. A successful boycott would, he felt, demonstrate to the Zionists, the Arab League and the world at large that Palestinian Arab opinion was solidly behind the Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee and, furthermore, was irreconcilably opposed to any recognition of the Jewish claim on Palestine. The Chairman of the Special Committee attempted to assure the Arab Higher Committee that the Palestine problem would be examined impartially and there was

no intention of prejudging the issue but his overtures were rejected. (9) As had been the case when its attempts to extract guarantees from the 'Big Five' on the question of implementation seemed bound to fail, UNSCOP bowed to the apparent inevitability of the Arab boycott and proceeded to receive submissions which, naturally enough, were overwhelmingly pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist in nature.

The Higher Committee's boycott was not in the best interests of the Palestinian Arabs. The extent of the miscalculation can be gauged by an examination of the list of principal documents and statements submitted to UNSCOP. The Jewish case was more than adequately presented by the Jewish Agency who presented 19 submissions totalling some 1,000 pages, supported by additional submissions from over 50 other Jewish organizations. Aside from summaries in the submissions of the British administration, the Arab case, in contrast, was pressed in only two submissions totalling 16 pages from the Governments of Arab States and by a handful of small organizations, none of whom could claim to represent a truly significant proportion of Palestine's Arab population. (10)

The Arab Higher Committee had made a serious tactical blunder. Although individual oral testimony redressed the imbalance somewhat, a vital opportunity to present the Arab case had been squandered. Imperfect as UNSCOP undoubtedly was, the champions of the Arab national cause in Palestine and the self-proclaimed leaders of Palestine's Arab population had refused such opportunities as it offered. They had done their people and their cause a considerable disservice and the later accusations of the Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee, charging UNSCOP with bias and producing a report that favoured the Jews at the Arabs' expense, ring rather hollow.

(9) Ibid., Annexes 6, 7, 8, pp. 5-6.
(10) Ibid., Annex 9, pp. 6-11.
After three and a half less than successful months, during which submissions had been taken in America, Europe and Palestine and members had toured Displaced Persons camps and Arab and Jewish settlements, UNSCOP retired to Geneva on 1 August 1947 to begin preparing its report.

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While UNSCOP was cloistered in Geneva, New Zealand received notice of the agenda for the next regular session of the General Assembly. Three items relating to Palestine were scheduled for discussion: an unspecified item submitted by the United Kingdom, the report of the Special Committee, and an item submitted by the Arab States which called for the termination of Britain's mandate and the recognition of an independent, unitary Palestinian state. (11) Although New Zealand seems to have been taken somewhat by surprise by the proliferation of items over and above the continuation of the work begun by the special session, there was no undue alarm. It was felt that the report of the Special Committee would remain 'the real battleground'. Britain had not advised New Zealand of the nature of the item it had submitted, but this would not threaten the main item of discussion unless it involved 'something substantive ... which does not seem likely', while the Arab States' item, scheduled to follow discussion of UNSCOP's report, would 'presumably have no standing if any firm decision is made on the Report'. (12) Nevertheless, Fraser and his advisors decided that New Zealand should begin to determine some points of reference in anticipation of UNSCOP's report and to this end two study papers were prepared in mid-August.

The preliminary studies listed seven possible alternative solutions to the Palestine problem;

(a) Recognition of Palestine as an independent state;

(11) Agenda Items 21, 22, and 23 respectively.

(12) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 6, Memorandum, (unsigned), 'Palestine: Forthcoming United Nations Consideration', 14 August, 1947, p.1. The file copies of this, and the following report, have neither signatures nor initials to indicate their authors. It is possible that J.V. Wilson, then head of the Political Section, Department of External Affairs, and due to attend the debate on Palestine, was involved in their preparation.
(b) Recognition of Palestine as an independent state with special guarantees in regard to Jews;
(c) Division of Palestine into two states;
(d) Renewed United Kingdom Trusteeship;
(e) United States Trusteeship;
(f) International Trusteeship;
(g) An international territory secured by the United Nations (c.f. Trieste).'(13)

The preference that emerged within both of these reports (neither of which contains any clue as to their authorship), was for a combination of two broad possibilities: a unitary, non-racial state, as in option (b), under one of the forms of Preparatory Trusteeship listed in (d), (e), (f) and (g).

This decision was not arrived at arbitrarily. The studies stressed that both Arabs and Jews had strong claims upon Palestine. Consequently any solution determined by the General Assembly must adequately protect the rights of both parties while fulfilling, in some part, their respective demands. Some sort of middle ground must be found and, even more importantly, adequate provision must be made to implement the settlement in whatever form it eventually took.

For these reasons a partitioning of Palestine was not highly regarded as a possible solution. Furthermore, partition had been previously suggested as a solution but had been rejected as impracticable by the British Government. Although the Jews had 'shown a disposition to compromise for something of this kind', the Arabs had maintained unflinching opposition to the creation of any Jewish state in Palestine, even in the coastal area 'where the Jews are relatively concentrated'. The viability of partition as a solution was further

(13) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 6, Note for File (unsigned). 'Palestine', 16 August 1947, p. 1.
compromised by the small land area of Palestine. The creation of two states of 'comic opera dimensions' had previously been regarded as likely to increase, rather than decrease, the chances of conflict, and, while partition should not be completely dismissed until UNSCOP's report had been evaluated, indications were that the positions of the two contending national groups remained irreconcilable;

'One can only believe that if the Jews accepted it, it would be only as the thin end of a wedge, and that the Arabs would regard it as inviting liquidation sooner or later'. (14)

The concept of a unitary, non-racial state, guided to independence under a Preparatory Trusteeship was preferred as a more positive alternative. The difficulties such a scheme would entail were acknowledged. It would require the good-will and co-operation of both parties to the dispute, but this could not be reasonably expected until some sort of mutual agreement had been reached on the thorny issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine. The task in this respect was to find a 'middle way' which would permit more-than-token immigration and 'recognize the fact that Jews must, and will, migrate to Palestine', without 'riding rough-shod over Arab interests or giving the Jews a majority'. Another obvious difficulty involved what form the trusteeship itself should take. Here both study papers displayed even greater reluctance to deal with specifics than had been the case on the matter of immigration, simply concluding that any eventual decision should be directed by one overriding concern: to ensure that Britain was not pressed to assume or retain any responsibilities beyond those she accepted willingly. (15)

The solution the study papers advocated was not original. The Anglo-

(14) P.M. 177/5/2, Pt. 6, Memorandum, 'Palestine: Forthcoming United Nations Consideration', 14 August 1947, p. 3; Palestine's 10,000 square miles were roughly comparable to the size of New Zealand's Wellington Province.

American Committee of 1946 had recommended just such a course of action, although under this scheme Britain would have remained the sole administering authority. This last aspect had prompted the British Government to hastily reject the proposal on the grounds that it posed even more problems than the various schemes for partition. (16)

Provided British misgivings could be allayed by the involvement of either the United States or the United Nations itself in implementing the scheme, then such a solution held obvious appeal. It appeared to acknowledge and safeguard the rights of both Arabs and Jews while providing an equitable and moral settlement. In addition it offered a real chance of imminent relief for Britain while ensuring the continued involvement of the United Nations as supervisory, and perhaps administrating, authority for the indefinite period of trusteeship. Such a fortuitous congruence of Commonwealth concerns with New Zealand's ambitions for the United Nations could not be lightly dismissed and, 'unless and until such a hope were (sic) proved entirely groundless', the scheme should feature in New Zealand's considerations. (17)

The study papers were explicitly designed to examine alternatives and identify priorities as a basis for preliminary discussion. New Zealand was in no way committed to any of the views expressed. The official policy remained that any decision could be reached only by the General Assembly after full discussion of the report of the Special Committee.

Australia had also been preparing preliminary notes on the agenda for the September session of the Assembly. These were received in Wellington on 16 August and the markedly different views expressed together with the more definite nature of the proposals contained must have added a new dimension to discussions in New Zealand. Whereas the New Zealand study papers concentrated

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(16) See Chapter One, pp. 49-52.

(17) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 6, Memorandum, 'Palestine: Forthcoming United Nations Consideration', 14 August 1947, p. 4.
on the immediate obstacles to a settlement of the Palestine problem, the
Australian notes set the implications of the Palestine problem and the search
for a solution against the perspective of Australia's appreciation of the
international situation.

Palestine, it was argued, had the potential to become a major threat to
world peace if the present confusion and disorder continued. As things stood
it had become 'a focus of infection extending beyond Palestine into the Arab
world and into the Anglo-American-Soviet Union rivalry', constituting the major
stumbling block to the promotion of stable political and economic conditions
in the Middle East. Unless there was stability in this oil-rich region Soviet
penetration could not be effectively countered and the strategic interests
of the British Commonwealth were imperilled. Quite apart from the humani-
tarian issues involved in the Palestine problem, the concerns of Commonwealth
security and world peace made a decision and, more importantly, a decisive
policy on a Palestine settlement an urgent necessity. (18)

Australia's general approach to the forthcoming session followed the
same lines as New Zealand's. It insisted that the General Assembly must
undertake the fullest possible discussions before any recommendation was put
to the vote and demanded that any settlement exhibit the 'strict application'
of the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter. Australia
would also support the British position, subject to there being adequate con-
sultation with the Dominions and no fundamental conflict of views became
apparent. The idea of a unitary state which New Zealand was considering did
not feature in the Australian analysis. The notes stated that it was
Australia's belief that there were only two 'principal, practicable alterna-

(18) P.M. 277/5/2, Ot, 6m 'Extract from Australian Notes on Second Annual
Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations - Agenda Items
Nos. 21, 22, 23 - Palestine'. pp. 1-2. (undated, but received in
Wellington, 16 August 1947).
tives'; partition or some sort of federal state. (19)

Through the information transmitted by its delegate on UNSCOP, Australia was aware of the deficiencies and the difficulties of the Special Committee. It was also aware of the probable form that UNSCOP's recommendations to the General Assembly would take and consideration of the partition alternative, which was most likely to receive the strongest recommendation from the Committee, dominated the discussion of options in the Australian notes. This did not mean that Australia was entirely happy with partition as a solution, however, and the notes emphasized that 'Justice and Australia's interests' were most compatible with the Arab demand for a unitary state. (20)

A wide range of practical problems mediated against the success of such a plan and, accepting the tenuous nature of the relationship of justice to political realities, Australia concerned itself with serious consideration of how the problems inherent in the partition proposal could best be solved.

Britain's desire to extract itself from the Palestinian tangle as quickly as possible combined with the inevitability of further disputes between Arabs and Jews to pose a critical question: how was partition to be effected? Displaying a willingness and ability to address the issue of implementation which would unfortunately prove to be atypical of the general response of members of the United Nations, Australia proposed the submission of a trusteeship agreement which would move Palestine through partition to independence in three stages.

The Australian scheme envisaged that, after the acceptance of the trusteeship agreement by the General Assembly, there would be an interim period of six months during which Britain would remain as the Administering Authority while a United Nations Commission established the boundaries of the new states.

(19) Ibid., p. 2. The stress which was placed on Australian support for Britain being, to a large extent, conditional on consultation indicates Australia's continued sensitivity to the Dominion's 'right to be consulted' which had been a principal motivation behind the Australian-New Zealand Agreement, 1944. See Chapter Three. pp. 123-126.

(20) Ibid., p. 4.
At the end of this period Britain's responsibilities in what had been determined to be Arab Palestine would be transferred to an Arab state while Jewish Palestine would be administered by the United States. The choice of the United States as the supervisory authority for the Jewish state was deliberate. With the most powerful nation in the world as its protector, Jewish Palestine would be less at risk from the Arab League.

The trusteeships would be administered in accordance with the usual principles for two years. This period seemed sufficient to establish political stability and allow opponents of the scheme to accept the division as an actuality. It would also 'impose the restraining hand of a friendly State until the new States have had time to accustom themselves to the inevitable' while extending the period during which the United Nations could exercise its own supervisory powers over the administering authorities. At the end of the two year period, both states would be granted complete independence.(21)

The Australian suggestion had its weaknesses. Most notably, it failed to grasp the depth of feeling and the commitment of both Jewish and Arab nationalists which would ensure that any settlement and any boundaries were disputed. It also showed a lack of appreciation of the extreme reluctance of the United States to accept a responsibility which would inevitably require a military presence.(22) Nevertheless, it was a useful starting point and, even more importantly, a clear recognition of the need for the United Nations to make provision for the implementation of any decision it made on the future of Palestine. As will be shown, it also appears to have confirmed and reinforced

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(21) Ibid., p. 3-4.

(22) In this respect the extent of American commitments in Europe and Japan, the growing concern at the tightening Soviet grip on Eastern Europe, and the anticipated possibility of extensive Soviet request for the United States aid to resist communist aggression promised under the 'Truman Doctrine' were powerful inhibitory factors. Pressure on Truman to pursue a policy which was more consistent with American investment in the Middle East was also an important consideration.
the opinions of Fraser and his advisors on this issue. The question of implementation, which had previously been a secondary, associative consideration, became an increasingly important aspect of New Zealand's policy on the Palestine problem.

Neither Australia nor New Zealand developed their policies any further at this stage, however. Much of the reason for this undoubtedly lay in the conscious resolve of both countries to reserve their final decisions until UNSCOP's report had been received and evaluated, but considerations of a more immediate nature also played their part. Australia and New Zealand were intensely interested in the proposed peace settlement with Japan. A British Commonwealth Conference on this matter was due to commence in Canberra on 26 August and preparations for this meeting preoccupied both governments throughout late August. By the time the conference concluded on 2 September, UNSCOP had presented its report to the Secretary General who, in turn, had dispatched copies to all members of the United Nations. From this point onwards policy developments in Australia and New Zealand would be based on the content and recommendations of the Special Committee's report.

In view of the obstacles which had impeded its investigations and the limited time which had been at its disposal UNSCOP's report to the General Assembly was a usefully comprehensive discussion of the origins and development of the Palestine problem. The attention of the member nations was focused, however, on the Committee's proposals for the problem's solution.

The report offered proposals for two alternative solutions; partition with economic union or a federal state. Although UNSCOP had been instructed to simply 'submit such proposals' as it considered appropriate, (23) most of the

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Committee's members had felt it necessary to indicate which proposal they preferred. The Australian delegate, J.D. L. Hood, mindful of his Government's concern that the responsibility of the General Assembly to determine what form any solution would take should not be pre-empted, was the only member of the eleven-strong Committee to abstain from voting on the respective plans.

Hood detailed his reasons for refusing to associate himself or his country with any particular solution in a statement which once more demonstrates the compatibility of the Australian and New Zealand attitudes towards the role of the General Assembly in the Palestine problem. He stressed that, in his opinion, the Committee's decision to vote on the proposals it would submit to the General Assembly exceeded its 'proper functions and proper responsibilities' His interpretation of the Committee's terms of reference, and 'the undoubted implicit intentions of the special Assembly' reserved for UNSCOP the role of 'a recording, reporting and a fact-finding' body obliged to 'present to the General Assembly the whole perspective, the whole range of arguments'. He had abstained because;

'The final determination between the two is, and can only be, in the hands of the Assembly. The Assembly alone is the competent body to decide what is feasible and what is not feasible in the light of all the factors, including political factors, many of which are clearly beyond the scope of our own observations as a Committee'. (24)

The stress upon 'political factors' is significant. Australian and New Zealand demands that the General Assembly be given the right to participate in international political affairs, as well as economic and social issues, dated back to the Wellington resolutions of November 1944. The debate on the future government of Palestine would provide the General Assembly with its first real opportunity to demonstrate ability in this area, and - as Hood's statement made clear - neither country was willing to see that opportunity prejudiced by

any precipitate decision. (25)

Hood's stand, however, was not supported by other Committee members. UNSCOP's report made it clear that partition was considered the more practicable solution by the majority of the Committee (Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden and Uruguay), and the federal state proposal, which had been supported by India, Iran and Yugoslavia, rapidly faded from serious contention.

Partition was the preference of two-thirds of the Committee. This was the same majority as would be required if the scheme was to be accepted by the General Assembly and the significance of this apparently was not lost on many members of the United Nations. The main reasons behind the partition proposal emerging as the only possible solution given serious consideration by the second regular session of the General Assembly can be found by examining the alternatives as they were presented in UNSCOP's report.

The one inescapable conclusion that could be drawn from the report was that, in the Committee's considered opinion, the solution to the problem of Palestine lay in the adoption of one of two proposals. The task of the General Assembly, as perceived by many of its members was, quite simply, to determine which was the more practicable and, in this respect, the plan for partition with economic union - having already received the support of the majority of UNSCOP's members - was preferable.

Both UNSCOP proposals recognized the validity of the claims to Palestine of both Arabs and Jews. The minority proposal, however, only recognized the Jewish claim subject to qualification. It asserted that 'any solution ... cannot be considered as a solution of the Jewish problem in general' and questioned 'whether Jewish nationalism and the demand for a separate and sovereign Jewish State must be recognized at all cost'. (26) Such statements

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(25) See Chapter Three, pp. 139-143, p. 150.

were alone enough to diminish the proposals appeal in the eyes of those states, especially those in Europe, who sought the solution to the problem of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in the creation of a Jewish State which could be left to determine how those displaced persons could best be absorbed.

There were other features of the proposal which further reduced its appeal. The scheme sought to transform the Mandate into an independent federal government made up of Jewish and Arab cantons. The cantons would be politically autonomous in all internal matters but policies on immigration, foreign relations and national defence would be determined and directed by a central government seated in Jerusalem, the national capital. The government would consist of a bicameral legislature, the lower house based on equal representation, the upper house on proportional representation. All laws would require majority approval in both houses before they could be enacted. (27) In view of the widely divergent interests, concerns and political traditions of the Arab and Jewish populations a genuine political consensus was unlikely. Disputes would in all probability inspire one side or the other to adopt obstructionist tactics, preventing the central government from exercising any effective authority. Such a situation could encourage the cantonal authorities to step into the breech, instituting, in essence, a de facto partitioning. The history of the British administration in Palestine suggested that in either event there was likely to be widespread bloodshed as one or both of the parties attempted to gain the advantage. (28)

The proposal's treatment of the problem of Jewish immigration was similarly suspect. While acknowledging that a solution of the problem of Jewish immigration was intimately linked to any solution of the Palestine problem, the supporters of the federal state proposal contended that 'no claim to a right of unlimited immigration of Jews into Palestine' could be entertained. Its suggested policy on this issue, however, simply reproduced the type of formula that

(27) Ibid., pp. 60-61.
(28) See Chapter One, pp. 32-52, passim.
Britain had been attempted to apply since the 1939 White Paper on Palestine with a noteworthy lack of success. It recommended that Jewish immigration should be permitted for only three more years and the numbers admitted should not 'exceed the absorptive capacity ... having due regard for the rights of the population then present ... and for their anticipated natural rate of increase'.(29) Quite apart from the fact that such a scheme was entirely unacceptable to the Zionists who were already challenging Britain's attempts to restrict the influx of Jews to Palestine, running shiploads of refugees through the Royal Navy's blockade, the recommendations clearly implied that the Palestinian Arab community should remain in the majority. This would undoubtedly assist in protecting the rights of the Arab population, but it's effect on the rights of the Jewish minority was more open to question. At best it threatened to guarantee the political impotence of the central government, ensuring that political issues assumed a racial dimension and that overall power of acceptance or rejection lay in the Arab-dominated upper house.

The crucial question - how was the plan to be implemented - had received only cursory treatment. In essence, responsibility for administering Palestine during an unspecified preparatory period was to be 'entrusted to such authority as may be decided upon by the General Assembly'.(30) What was clear, however, was that the federal state proposal, like the unitary state proposal that had featured in New Zealand's preliminary considerations, would only succeed if the Arabs and Jews of Palestine could be reconciled and agreed to co-operate. The proposal made no suggestions as to how these preconditions could be guaranteed. At the same time, it advocated the continuation of many of the factors that had aggravated the situation in Palestine: a fact that was further revealed when, in an ironic display of common resolve, the proposal was rejected with

(30) Ibid., p. 60.
equal alacrity by both Arabs and Jews.

Partition appeared considerably more feasible in comparison. The proposal seemed to display a greater appreciation of the realities of the Palestine problem and the comparatively more detailed nature of many of the measures it suggested reinforced this impression.

The majority plan recognized that the 'basic conflict' was 'a clash of two contending nationalisms' and argued that only by the partitioning of Palestine 'could these conflicting national aspirations find substantial expression and qualify both peoples to take their places as independent nations in the international community and in the United Nations'. (31)

Under the plan, Palestine would be divided in three; an Arab State which would include 'Western Galilee, the hill country of Samaria and Judea ... and the coastal plain from Isud to the Egyptian frontier', a Jewish State made up of 'Eastern Galilee, the Beqaa plain, most of the coastal plain, and the whole of the Beersheba sub-district, which includes the Negeb', and an international zone which would cover Jerusalem and its suburbs. (32) Britain would remain as administering authority under United Nations supervision for a two year transitional period beginning September 1947.

Both states would be granted independence, at the end of this period, provided they had fulfilled a number of conditions. Both proposed states were to elect constituent assemblies which would be required to draft and adopt constitutions which granted universal suffrage and secret ballots, established legislative bodies elected by proportional representation with a responsible executive, and guaranteed equal and non-discriminatory civil, political and religious rights. The assemblies were also to prepare and sign


(32) Ibid., p. 53.
a treaty which would be binding on both states for a further ten years. The treaty would create the Economic Union of Palestine, providing for the operation of a customs union, common currency, common operation of transport and communications, instituting joint economic development, especially in matters such as irrigation, land reclamation and soil conservation, as well as establishing a system of collaboration between the two independent states and the international zone of the City of Jerusalem.(33)

The partition plan had significant weaknesses. Neither of the proposed states was genuinely viable and the scene had been set for future dispute by the division of both into three sectors, tenuously linked by 'two points of intersection ... one ... situated south-east of Afula in the sub-district of Nazareth and the other north-east Majdal in the sub-district of Gaza'.(34) The division may have been designed to encourage the long-term co-operation which the treaty would formalize, but the history of the Palestine problem suggested that continued conflict was a more likely prospect.(35) Nor did the provision for Britain to continue as administering authority display a realistic appreciation of the motives which had prompted Britain to surrender its mandate to the United Nations. Britain was looking towards the United Nations to release it from responsibilities which had become too burdensome. The prospect of continued involvement for a minimum of two years was unlikely to arouse anything but stubborn resistance from Whitehall.

Despite its weaknesses, however, partition appeared the solution least likely to fail. It had already received the support of the clear majority of UNSCOP's members. Furthermore, whereas the federal state proposal and, by implication, any attempt at a binationalist solution had been resoundingly

(33) Ibid., pp. 48-51.
(34) Ibid., p. 53.
(35) See Chapter One, pp.32-52, passim.
rejected by both Arabs and Jews, the partition plan had at least been cautiously accepted by the Jewish Agency. Although it fell far short of the Agency's own partition proposals, the UNSCOP plan 'offered them at least two indispensable prerequisites': the admission of 150,000 Jewish immigrants during the transitional period and an ultimately sovereign Jewish state. (36)

The Jewish Agency accordingly directed its efforts towards consolidating the emerging support for partition to ensure that it was adopted by the General Assembly during the forthcoming discussions. The leaders of Palestine's Arab community, meanwhile, condemned UNSCOP's report in toto and pledged to resist any attempt by the United Nations to impose either of the proposed solutions. Such threats were given little credence by the majority of members of the General Assembly. Even the resolutions to impose economic reprisals against Britain and the United States and to supply money and weapons to the Palestinian Arabs which were passed at an emergency meeting of the Arab League's Political Committee in mid-September (37) were dismissed as examples of excessive rhetoric.

'All three parties in Palestine, the Arab, Jewish and British, were inclined to indulge the same delusion: that in fact there would not be an Arab-Jewish war.' (38)

The United Nations discussions which began on 23 September displayed a general acceptance of this same fatal optimism.

The first action of the General Assembly, in a move designed to relieve the pressure on its First (Political) Committee, was to set up an Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question composed of all members of the United Nations. This committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. H.V. Evatt, the

(37) Ibid., p. 285; p. 299.
(38) Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 326.
Australian Minister of External Affairs, had three items on its agenda:

1. The question of Palestine: Item proposed by the United Kingdom.
2. Report of the Special Committee on Palestine.
3. Termination of the mandate over Palestine and the recognition of its independence as one State: Item proposed by Saudi Arabia and by Iraq'.

New Zealand's delegation was once more headed by Sir Carl Berendsen but, in recognition of the significance with which the debate on Palestine was regarded, the country's representation had been substantially strengthened by the inclusion of J.V. Wilson. Wilson, 'a man of considerable ability', had served on the staff of the League of Nations for some twenty years before returning to New Zealand to assist in the development of the Department of External Affairs. As the serving head of the Department's political section, Wilson brought to the delegation an intimate knowledge of the factors influencing New Zealand's policy together with his lengthy experience of the ways- and by-ways- of international organizations.

Fraser had indicated to Berendsen and Wilson that he had been favourably impressed by the majority plan for partition contained in UNSCOP's report but had not yet issued specific instructions. He remained sceptical of many provisions contained in the proposal, especially those relating to the central questions of boundaries and implementation, and was reluctant to definitely commit New Zealand to supporting partition until some indication of whether, and how, these questions were to be resolved had been gained from the Assembly's preliminary discussions. As a result, the New Zealand delegation observed

(39) AJHR, 1948, A-2, 'Report of the New Zealand Delegation to the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly', p. 120.


(41) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram No. 152, Berendsen, New York, to Fraser, Wellington, 5 October 1947, p. 1.
rather than participated in the Ad Hoc Committee's discussions, transmitting an impressive mass of information and opinion back to New Zealand, the content and tenor of which did little to dispel Fraser's anxieties.

The Ad Hoc Committee opened its deliberations on 26 September. Making use of the precedent established by the Special Session, it conferred upon the Arab Higher Committee and the Jewish Agency the right to attend the Committee's meetings, make statements at the opening and the conclusion of the general debate and to generally supply such information and render such assistance as the Committee might require. Both organizations accepted and were represented throughout the Committee's proceedings.

It was apparent to Bernesden from the outset that the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee would be beset by a variety of problems and that the principal of these would be what, if any, recommendations for implementing a solution should be forwarded to the General Assembly proper. The opening statements of the Arab Higher Committee and the Jewish Agency had convinced him that some plan for implementation was necessary. He informed Fraser that:

'Their positions remain wholly irreconcilable (sic). Any decision will therefore require enforcement either by powers acting on behalf of United Nations or by one or another of the parties'. (42)

The issue had been further complicated by the opening statement of Arthur Creech-Jones, the British Colonial Secretary. Creech-Jones had repeated the declaration which Sir Alexander Cadogan had made at the special session, underlining the British Government's unwillingness to be involved in implementing any policy which was not acceptable to both Arabs and Jews, (43) adding that under no circumstances was Britain prepared to impose a settlement by force of arms. He concluded by announcing that the British Government had decided that

(42) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram No. 151, Berendsen to Fraser, 5 October 1947, p. 1.

(43) See Chapter Three.
'in the absence of a settlement, they must plan for an early withdrawal of British force and of the British administration from Palestine'. (44)

It has been suggested that this British policy was inspired by the example of India and that, by declaring their imminent withdrawal, the British Government was attempting to reproduce in Palestine the climate of conciliation which had followed the declaration on 20 February 1947 of Britain's intention to leave India by June 1948. (45) This interpretation, however, underestimates the strength of the British Government's desire to wash their hands of Palestine. Britain's involvement in the Mandate had been costly and thankless and Palestine did not occupy the same prestigious position in imperial sentiment as the Indian sub-continent. Britain had handed the problem of Palestine's future to the United Nations and had set conditions for a continued British presence which no-one could realistically expect to be fulfilled. Britain would provide no Lord Mountbatten to negotiate a settlement in Palestine: that task was now the responsibility of the United Nations. Indeed, Britain's intentions were rather more definite than Creech-Jones' statement to the Ad Hoc Committee would suggest. On 5 October 1947 Berendzen told Fraser:

'It is gathered in conversation that the United Kingdom do in fact intend to withdraw from Palestine at early date (sic) and that they do not contemplate helping to enforce settlement in any conditions'. (46)

Fraser was initially sympathetically inclined towards this British policy. He acknowledged the difficulties Britain was confronted with in Palestine and stood firm on the principle that the United Nations could only be an effective organization if its members stood by their obligations under the Charter and accepted their responsibilities towards Britain as a fellow member and the

(44) AJHE, 1948, A-2, p. 121.


(46) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Telegram No.151, Berendzen to Fraser, 5 October 1947, p.1.
Arabs and Jews of Palestine as inhabitants of a non-self-governing territory. He hoped that Britain's stand on the question of enforcement would bring home to the Ad Hoc Committee its responsibility to not only determine which was the best solution but to also consider how that solution could best be implemented. (47)

Berendsen was unable to offer much hope in this respect however. The only initiative he could present for consideration by Fraser was an informal American proposal that some of the smaller powers, including New Zealand, might undertake the task of policing Palestine for whatever period of transition was deemed necessary to implement any decision reached by the General Assembly. The advantage of this scheme, in the opinion of the unidentified United States officials who raised the matter with Berendsen, was that by avoiding the participation of any Great Powers, the 'possible embarrassment' of a Soviet decision to send troops was averted. Berendsen reserved his opinion on this proposal although pointing out to Fraser that, in the absence of any alternative plan for implementation, the probable result of the General Assembly's discussions would be a decision with 'no more than moral authority' which left enforcement following Britain's withdrawal 'entirely to the interested parties'. (48) As the reasoning behind the American proposal made clear, there was no likelihood of the Security Council agreeing to any implementation plan involving the Great Powers.

Fraser's reply, dispatched from Wellington on 9 October, expressed appreciation of the difficulties that Berendsen outlined. Fraser hoped, however, that 'wiser counsels' would ultimately prevail and both Arabs and Jews come to recognize that partition held out the 'only hope of solving the problem'. New Zealand could not 'do otherwise than give general support to the majority

(47) AJHR, 1948, A-2, p. 121; See also Chapter Three.
(48) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram No. 151, Berendsen to Fraser, 5 October 1947, p. 1.
report of the Commission (sic) 'with the full realization 'that such support may oblige us together with other United Nations (sic) to face up to our share of the responsibilities involved'. This did not extend to a willingness to take part in such an enforcement scheme as that suggested by the United States however. Quite apart from the fact that it would severely tax New Zealand's limited resources such a scheme would abandon the principles of the United Nations Charter by placing an unfair burden of responsibility upon the smaller nations. The chances of a United Nations police force 'effecting an acceptable settlement' would be prejudiced unless a Great Power - preferably the United States - was actively involved. (49) Of more general significance, the involvement of one or more of the Great Powers in such a scheme could be interpreted as constituting the type of commitment to combined action to preserve international peace and security which New Zealand and Australia had pressed for in the Wellington resolutions and at the San Francisco Conference. (50)

Fraser's affirmation of his support for partition was made just as the tide of opinion was turning decisively in favour of that solution. On 9 October it was revealed that the Council of the Arab League had instructed its members to move troops to Palestine's borders ready for use if Britain should withdraw its forces. This blatant threat of aggression proved to be yet another tactical miscalculation. Truman, who had previously been receptive to the advice of his State Department to withhold United States' support for partition while Secretary of State Marshall made a final attempt to find a compromise solution, was convinced by this action that any hopes of an Arab-Jewish rapprochement were futile. On 11 October, in response to a direct

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(49) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram No. 165, Fraser, to Berendsen, 9 October 1947.

(50) See Chapter Three.
order from the White House, Herschel Johnson, the United States' representative on the Ad Hoc Committee, rose to announce that the United States endorsed the 'basic principles' of partition, although it would continue to seek 'certain amendments and modifications' to the plan presently before the Committee. (51)

The official endorsement of partition by the Soviet Union followed shortly after the American announcement. Soviet support for the majority plan had been anticipated in the light of Gromyko's statement to the special session but the Soviet representative, Semyon Tsarapkin, still took the Committee rather by surprise by proposing that, in view of Britain's obvious reluctance to continue as administering authority, the Security Council should undertake to administer Palestine during the transitional period recommended in UNSCOP's report. (52) The intrusion of Great Power rivalries once again prevented a seemingly worthwhile proposal from receiving serious consideration. Britain and the United States, while not prepared to propose any definite alternative plan for enforcement, immediately - and probably correctly - interpreted the proposal as an attempt to provide increased opportunities for Soviet penetration of the Middle East and quickly stated their opposition.

On 13 October, the same day as the Soviet declaration, an informal meeting of delegates from the 'old' British Commonwealth was held. India and Pakistan (the newest member of the United Nations, having been admitted on 30 September 1947) were committed to supporting the Arab cause and were not invited to attend. Britain's purpose in this meeting is not entirely clear, although the exclusion of India and Pakistan and the tenor of the message delivered to the Dominions' representatives suggests the intention may have been to persuade the


Dominions to hold off in their support of partition. Arthur Creech-Jones took considerable pains to impress upon the delegates the probably dismal course of events should partition be approved without adequate means of enforcement being provided. The gloomy picture of Arab guerrilla warfare, sabotage and 'massed attacks from outside' that was painted proved to be, however, a mere backdrop to the main point of Creech-Jones' address - Britain's decision, which he was soon to announce to the Committee, to 'withdraw their troops and administration unconditionally this (northern) winter or at latest spring'.

If the intention was to shake the resolve of the Dominions, the move misfired. All those present 'were agreed that Britain would be within her rights in taking the course proposed' but the response of the Dominion governments was to 'step up' their support for partition as the best available solution. South Africa reiterated its commitment to partition. Canada, previously non-committal in the hope that 'an agreement between Britain, the USA, and the USSR which might make possible any other solution', now accepted partition as the only 'practicable' proposal which 'had any chance of adoption'. Evatt, who had avoided making an early commitment which might compromise his position as chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee had, as usual, been the most outspoken of the Dominion representatives. He told Creech-Jones that Australia supported the majority plan with amendments and that, in his view, 'the United Nations should first decide what was (the) right solution and later consider what means of enforcement might be required and available'.

Fraser, too, recognized that Britain's decision to withdraw from Palestine was 'within her rights' but considered such an action to be neither responsible

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(53) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Telegram No. 159, Berendsen to Fraser, 13 October 1947, p. 1.

(54) Ibid., p. 2.


(56) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Telegram No. 159, Berendsen to Fraser, 13 October 1947, pp. 1-2.
nor morally correct. He told Berendsen on 16 October that;

'While I sympathise with the United Kingdom attitude and agree that the United Nations should not expect Britain alone to bear the responsibility for any enforcement of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee's Report, I do not consider that any member of the United Nations, including New Zealand, can divest itself of its proportionate share in finding a solution of this problem and if necessary in enforcing a just settlement'. (57)

Fraser also responded to the official notification of the British decision in a like manner, expanding on the principal themes of his telegram to Berendsen in a lengthy and critical reply dispatched from Wellington on 17 October. Because of what it reveals of Fraser's attitude to Britain's policy on Palestine the more general issue of the responsibility of members towards the United Nations and his overall attitude to the United Nations, his response is worth noting at length.

Fraser informed the Office of the Colonial Secretary in London that;

'The question of enforcing any United Nations policy for Palestine had already been engaging my earnest consideration. I think it healthy for the Arabs, Jews and members of the United Nations (especially the United States whose attitude has been deplorable) that they should be faced with the United Kingdom decision to withdraw and the consequent need to relate their policy to the probable consequences of that policy'.

At the same time, however, he was not satisfied with many of the assumptions and implications of Britain's decision;

'You maintain that a mandatory has the right to lay down a mandate when it so desires, whatever the wishes of the United Nations. South Africa

(57) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram No. 172, Fraser, to Berendsen, 16 October 1947.
maintains that they (sic) have the right to retain a mandate whatever the
wishes of the United Nations. Though I do not consider your proposition
to be as opposed to the spirit of the United Nations as that of South
Africa, I can accept it only with reservations ... Twenty-five years ago
the United Kingdom undertook the responsibility of the Mandate, and
though there have been some compensations (especially in the strategic
field), the discharge of that responsibility has involved more loss than
gain. Even so, I believe that at this final and crucial stage the United
Kingdom, because her successive policies are inextricably woven into the
present Palestine situation and because her people have the most intimate
knowledge of that country has no more, but even less, right than other
members of the United Nations to renounce that responsibility which falls
on every member to share in making and carrying out a United Nations
policy ...

It seems that you are unwilling to take the leading part, which is your
due, or even a share, which I believe to be the duty of all members, in
making a United Nations policy because you are not willing to take a
leading part, or even a share, in imposing a policy. In this way ... the
United Nations is denied your help in policy-making. This unfortunately
means that the policy of the United Nations will probably be less sound
than it should be; it will consequently carry less prestige, and it will
need more enforcement. You say that you cannot share in imposing a United
Nations policy with which you do not agree ... But the United Kingdom is
one of the United Nations, and how can the United Nations ever work if
individual members refuse to accept a share in carrying out a decision
made by the full United Nations in accordance with the Charter? In
vesting great power in the Security Council on which we are not even
represented we gave up a much greater measure of freedom than that'.
Fraser emphasized that, while he understood the combination of political and economic factors which motivated Britain's decision to reduce its commitments by evacuating Palestine, commitments to the United Nations constituted a special category:

'In due course I hope that we shall maintain national armed force for two purposes only: (a) for commitments on behalf of the United Nations and (b) for national commitments which have been specifically approved by the United Nations. At present you have 1,000,000 men in arms and none of the commitments for which they exist have anything to do with the United Nations. It therefore seems unfortunate to reject in advance the first direct United Nations commitment. If you were prepared to accept your share of the United Nations enforcement required, as we are prepared to do, we should be happy to discuss ways of working with you... since our contribution must necessarily be associated with a larger unit'. Fraser concluded by discussing his hopes for the eventual decision. He was convinced

'that there is no such thing as a 'right' or a 'just' solution, that policy-making and enforcement go hand in hand, that any solution will have to be enforced, that the more readiness the members of the United Nations... show to share in enforcing a United Nations policy the less such physical enforcement will be necessary in practice, and that such a situation will raise immeasurably the prestige and power of the United Nations'.

He hoped and believed that Britain would soon announce its willingness to share in the formulation and enforcement of the United Nations settlement for Palestine. (58)

Fraser's telegram to the Office of the Colonial Secretary demonstrates

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(58) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Telegram (unnumbered) Prime Minister, New Zealand to Colonial Secretary, London, 17 October 1947, pp. 1-3.
the extent of the differences between the two nations' approaches to the United Nations' involvement in Palestine. Britain viewed the surrendering of the mandate to the United Nations and the progress of the General Assembly discussion as signalling that its responsibilities towards Palestine were drawing to a close. New Zealand, however, was convinced that Britain retained ongoing responsibilities both as a principal contributor to the Palestine problem and as a member of the United Nations, bound by its obligations under the Charter. In Fraser's view, Britain was under a powerful moral - if not legal - obligation to lend its experience and abilities to the United Nations in its search for a solution.

Fraser also restated the belief which had been fundamental to the First Labour Government's ideological approach to international organizations and international affairs since it had come to power in 1935: that, given 'good will', firm resolve and commitment on the part of member nations and governments, the League of Nations and, even more definitely, its successor could usher in a 'new age' of diplomacy, providing effective forums for promoting international peace, welfare and prosperity. Threats would be met, and problems solved, by consultation, mediation and, where necessary, collective action and each nation would dutifully accept and execute its proper share under the 'new world order'.(59)

The telegram furthermore reveals that, at least as late as 17 October 1947, Fraser remained hopeful that, despite the apparent indifference of many of its members and the inequity of the powers of veto possessed by the Permanent Members of the Security Council, the United Nations Organization might evolve into the centre-piece of a genuine system of collective security which would establish and control the conditions under which nations could resort

(59) See Chapter Two, pp.105-110; Chapter Three, pp.128-129.
to the use of coercive means in international relations. A practical and properly supported scheme to enforce the General Assembly's decision on Palestine was therefore doubly important to Fraser. Not only would it increase the chances of the eventual 'solution' succeeding, but it would also provide the opportunity for Britain, New Zealand and all other member nations to make their 'first direct United Nations commitment', establishing the precedent that was vital if Fraser's hopes were to be ultimately realised. (60)

Those hopes received an almost immediate setback. The day after Fraser's telegram had been transmitted to London Creech-Jones announced to the Ad Hoc Committee that;

'His Majesty's Government would not accept responsibility for the enforcement either alone or in co-operation with other nations, of any settlement antagonistic to either the Jews or the Arabs or both, which was likely to necessitate the use of force'. (61)

It was now clear that Britain's and New Zealand's policies were directed towards markedly dissimilar objectives. New Zealand continued to avoid public criticism of Britain's position and to do what it could to forestall criticism of Britain by other members of the United Nations but, privately, there was disappointment at British inflexibility. Public expressions of sympathy for Britain's dilemma were still made by Bernedsen and Fraser but owed more to Commonwealth loyalties than genuine conviction. Britain appeared to have made sufficient provision for her own relief at considerable cost to her prestige and to the possible detriment of the chances of the United Nations to successfully resolve the Palestine problem. Accepting the former as an inalter-

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(60) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Telegram (unnumbered) Prime Minister, New Zealand to Colonial Secretary London, 17 October 1947, pp. 2-3.

(61) Quoted Nicholas Bethell, The Palestine Triangle, p. 350. A point which should be noted at this stage, and which acquires even more relevance in relation to the sequence of events immediately prior to the General Assembly's vote on partition, is the effect of the international date-line which puts documents and telegrams issuing from New Zealand a 'day ahead' of those coming in from Britain and America.
able reality, New Zealand devoted its energies to ensuring that the latter possibility was avoided.

On 21 October the Ad Hoc Committee concluded its general debate and placed the two plans proposed by UNSCOP before two sub-committees. Sub-committee I was made up of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Poland, South Africa, the United States, the Soviet Union, Uruguay and Venezuela; all countries which had declared themselves in favour of partition. They were now instructed to draw up a detailed plan on the basis of UNSCOP's majority proposal and to consider how this plan could best be put into effect. They were further instructed to consider the exercise of administrative responsibility in Palestine during the transitional period, including the possibility of the application of Chapter XII (International Trusteeship System) of the Charter'. (62) The second sub-committee, drawn from those nations which had supported the minority plan - Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen - was similarly instructed to prepare detailed recommendations for the creation of a federal state in Palestine. (63)

Both sub-committees held their first meetings on 23 October while the rest of the General Assembly turned their attention to the remainder of the agenda for the second regular session. In the four weeks before the Ad Hoc Committee reconvened to examine the 'concrete proposals' of the sub-committees, the New Zealand Government was able to re-examine its policy in the light of the emerging trends of the United Nations discussions while simultaneously taking steps to prevent the possibility of that policy providing ammunition for its domestic political opponents.

During this comparatively lucid interval, the reconciliation of New

(63) Ibid., p. 133.
Zealand support for the adoption of partition under the auspices of the United Nations with the country's obligations and concerns as a staunch member of the British Commonwealth was a primary concern. At the first meeting of the newly established Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs (64) on 22 October, Fraser took considerable pains to explain the factors influencing New Zealand's policy. He briefly summarized the difficulties Britain was experiencing in Palestine and criticized the 'unfair' attitude of the United States whose insistence that Britain fulfill the pledges made to the Jews was not backed by any offer of practical assistance. He then stated his firm belief that partition, which had been recommended by previous British commissions as well as the majority of UNSCOP, offered the only solution to the problem. To have the best possible chance of succeeding, however, any scheme for partition would require enforcement.

This was the crux of the matter. Fraser pointed out that New Zealand 'could not shirk her responsibilities', even if her share of any proposed United Nations force was 'no more than a squadron'. Nevertheless, the reception of such a commitment by the New Zealand public (and the Opposition), 'even though it were made on behalf of the United Nations', would have to be considered. (65)

In view of the later enthusiasm with which large numbers of New Zealanders volunteered to serve in the Korean conflict, 1951-1953, and the proposed 'police action' in the Suez Canal region in 1956, it seems unlikely that there would have been any difficulty in raising the troops for any New Zealand contribution to a United Nations force for Palestine. Fraser was uncomfortably aware, however, that while the majority of New Zealanders retained their

(64) See Chapter Three, p. 142 n. 51.

(65) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, Memorandum, 'Palestine: Extracts from Minutes of External Affairs Committee', 14 April 1948, p. 1.
traditional attachment to Britain and the Commonwealth, few shared his enthusiasm for and expectations of the United Nations. There was an appreciable risk that the combined effect of New Zealand's pursuit of a line of policy that differed markedly from Britain's and possible participation in a force which would replace Britain's troops in Palestine could expose the Labour Government to accusations of disloyalty, particularly from political opponents such as F.W. Doidge to whom 'loyalty to the Motherland' was 'an instinct as deep as religion'.

(66) Fraser was sensitive to such charges at any time, but in late October 1947, as he prepared to introduce the Statute of Westminster Adoption Bill and a Constitution Amendment Bill to Parliament, his sensitivity was particularly heightened.

The question of New Zealand's policy on the enforcement of any United Nations solution to the Palestine problem nevertheless had to be confronted. It also had to be handled with some delicacy. The solution was to present the facts in an analytical framework that stressed the compatibilities between New Zealand's obligations to the United Nations and to the Commonwealth. The External Affairs Committee was accordingly issued with a study paper, prepared by F.H. Corner, which stressed the dual opportunity a proper plan for enforcement would provide for establishing an important precedent for directed combined action by the United Nations while relieving Britain of responsibilities which had become too burdensome.

The paper stressed Britain's resolve to withdraw from Palestine and its refusal to associate itself with any solution which was not acceptable to both Arabs and Jews. It was 'unlikely' that such a solution would emerge from the


(67) Both bills were introduced on 7 November and passed on 25 November 1947; Angus Ross, ibid., pp. 153-156; W.D. McIntyre, 'Peter Fraser's Commonwealth', in NZ11A, New Zealand in World Affairs, vol. 1, pp. 60-68.
General Assembly's discussions. In this event Britain could not be expected to continue to police the mandate against its will, nor should New Zealand be a party to any attempt to pressure Britain to do so.

New Zealand should, however, face up to its own obligations to the United Nations;

'By accepting membership of the United Nations New Zealand thereby undertook a responsibility for sharing in making or recommending a policy on problems brought before the United Nations. So long as we retain our membership of the United Nations we cannot divest ourselves of that responsibility. The further issue which cannot be escaped is this: if we give our vote for a particular policy which can only be made effective by enforcement or police action, we thereby assume a responsibility for sharing in enforcing or otherwise meeting the consequences of that policy'. (68)

The study paper's conclusion was that New Zealand was faced with two basic alternatives; it could decide to uncritically accept a plan for a solution which made no provision for enforcement and risk seeing 'the prestige of the United Nations decline because of the reluctance of its members to back its arguments', or it could actively seek to ensure that provision for enforcement was included in whichever solution was ultimately accepted. (69)

A second study paper dealing with the strategic implications of Britain's decision to withdraw from Palestine, although prepared for the External Affairs Committee's meeting, was not presented to the members. (70) Fraser was reluc-

(68) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, FAC/2, 'Palestine: Some Problems which face New Zealand as a Member of the United Nations', prepared circa 16 October 1947, pp. 2-3.

(69) Ibid., pp. 4-5.

(70) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, 'Implications of the United Kingdom Decision to Withdraw from Palestine', undated, but prepared prior to the first FAC meeting on 22 October, 1947. Never submitted. The question of who prepared the report is more problematical; the defaced carbon copy on the above file provides no clue.
tant to risk arousing controversy and probably heated debate by submitting an evaluation which, as a hand-written comment on the file copy noted was 'speculative' and 'not to be regarded as having the approval of the U.K. Govt (sic')'. (71) Instead, he contented himself with simply drawing the Committee's attention to the strategic difficulties which might result if Britain withdrew from both Palestine and Egypt while failing to obtain a military and naval base in Cyrenacia (eastern Libya) and the problem that might be posed if Soviet forces assisted in the implementation of partition and later proved reluctant to withdraw. (72)

The study-paper had gone much further. It sought to identify and analyse a perceived shift in the role of the Mediterranean sea-route and the Suez Canal in Britain's post-war strategic planning. In the process it challenged some of the most important precepts of New Zealand's traditional strategic appreciation. (73)

The importance of the Suez Canal in future Commonwealth strategic planning was seriously questioned. The paper argued that, while the Suez Canal had been justifiably regarded as a vital link in the chain of Imperial communications when India had been a British possession, with India and Pakistan having achieved independence and Ceylon due to follow suit in a few months, the Canal's importance had been significantly diminished. It did retain some importance as a route for Commonwealth trade although, as the paper pointed out, the unavailability of the Mediterranean route for much of the Second World War had illustrated that the Canal's significance in this respect had perhaps been over-estimated.

The war had also demonstrated the increasing effectiveness of sub-marine

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(71) Ibid., p.1, Hand-written comment.

(72) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, 'Palestine: Extracts from Minutes of External Affairs Committee', 14 April 1948, p.1.

(73) See Chapter Two, pp. 80-81.
and air-power. Developments in these fields, the study-paper suggested, would make maintenance of the Mediterranean route through the Canal to the Persian Gulf, India and the Pacific increasingly expensive, possibly even militarily impossible. This argument was supported by reference to the "Cape" school of British strategists who urged the re-assignment of the greater part of the Mediterranean fleet to strengthen the more reliable and less endangered route around the Cape of Good Hope, arguing that it was both possible and practical to prevent the use of Suez by a hostile power by blocking its Red Sea end from bases in Aden, Kenya and other sites on the Indian Ocean.

Recognizing that Palestine's strategic location had been instrumental in 'persuading' Britain to accept the mandate, the study-paper suggested that Britain's decision to withdraw indicated that Palestine was no longer considered strategically significant enough to warrant the expense of remaining. Britain's withdrawal would appear to leave the way open for increased Soviet penetration of the Middle East which would pose a direct threat to the Commonwealth's all-important oil supplies but the study-paper confidently predicted that the United States would fill the vacuum and assume Britain's responsibilities, however reluctantly, both as part of its avowed policy of resisting Soviet expansion and to protect its own interests in the region. (74)

The study-paper made a critical error in its assumption that Britain's desire to withdraw from Palestine formed part of an over-all strategic re-evaluation. Britain retained its interest in the Suez Canal and the Middle East as a whole but the mandate for Palestine had become a liability that Britain was increasingly anxious to be quit of. Despite the best efforts of its administrators and the presence of a sizeable, and costly, military contingent

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(74) P.M. 277/5/2, P.7, 'Implications of the United Kingdom Decision to Withdraw from Palestine', circa 22 October 1947, pp. 1-6.
Britain was unable to maintain even a semblance of order in the mandate. Its actions had come in for criticism from both Arabs and Jews, further compromising Britain's position in the Middle East and Palestine had become the cause of considerable friction between Britain and its major ally, the United States, which was more than prepared to offer advice but less than willing to assist in implementing it. Britain wished to be rid of Palestine because the immediate costs appeared far in excess of any present or potential benefits. This analysis was reinforced by the woeful underestimation of the potential of the Palestine problem to remain a source of instability in the Middle East. Britain was not alone in this respect; all the members of the United Nations, including New Zealand and even the Arab states, shared this delusion to some extent.

At the second meeting of the External Affairs Committee on 29 October Fraser revealed that he was prepared to consider supporting a plan for partition which made no provision for enforcement in the interests of ensuring that the General Assembly did in fact reach a decision. This compromise was influenced by two factors; his belief that the Arabs "were unlikely to give effect to their threat of a Holy War", and his suspicion that the Soviet Union might insist that its troops participate in any enforcement plan, using the United Nations involvement as a screen behind which to extend its own influence in the region. In these circumstances, he suggested:

'The safe thing to do was to support the majority plan for partition, and then if strife occurred between Jews and Arabs these particular events might compel arrangements for enforcement to be made ... Palestine was only the same size as Canterbury and it would not hurt the Arabs much to give the Jews a piece of it'.(75)

(75) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, 'Palestine: Extracts from Minutes of External Affairs Committee', 14 April 1948, pp. 1-2.
The same combination - a complete misreading of the realities of Palestinian Arab nationalism, complicated by the intrusion of Cold War politics - was displayed by the Ad Hoc Committee's first subcommittee which had been instructed to prepare a detailed plan for the partitioning of Palestine. The bulk of the subcommittee's time and effort was spent on resolving a variety of petty disputes between the United States and the Soviet Union. When a workable compromise was finally reached on 12 November, the subcommittee had less than a week to discharge what was supposedly its principal task. (76)

The blueprint which emerged reflected the subcommittee's difficulties. In essence, the UNSCOP majority report had been accepted without significant alteration. Some minor territorial adjustments had been made, the most notable being the designation of the predominantly Arab-populated port of Jaffa, originally part of the Jewish state, as an Arab enclave. The tripartite structure of both states remained however, as did the proposal for economic union. (77)

New Zealand had anticipated that the basic form of UNSCOP's majority proposal would be accepted by the subcommittee although there had been hopes that the boundaries of the two proposed states might be redrawn with greater attention to contiguity. New Zealand's major interest, Fraser's statement to the External Affairs Committee notwithstanding, remained focused upon the question of how partition was to be implemented, and it was here that, like UNSCOP before it, the subcommittee displayed its weaknesses most clearly.

The subcommittee's plan recommended that both the mandate and Britain's military authority should end by 1 August 1948 and the two states set up 'not later than' 1 October 1948. The transfer of power would be supervised by a five-power commission appointed by the General Assembly from amongst those nations, other than the Great Powers, who supported partition. Although the commission would act under the authority and guidance of the Security Council,

(76) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 193, Berendzen to Fraser, 12 November 1947, p.1.

(77) Ibid., pp. 1-2; see also Howard M. Sachar, A History of Israel, p. 292.
once the British forces withdrew, law and order would be maintained by armed militia in both states with the Security Council assuming responsibility only if the situation in Palestine was deemed to have become a threat to peace. Thus no special provision for enforcement had been made. The only prohibitions which would apply would be those provided by the United Nations Charter and New Zealand had serious doubts as to the effectiveness of these in their existing form. (78)

As Berendse commented to Fraser, the subcommittee's proposals seemed 'to indicate an extraordinarily light-hearted attempt to ignore the difficulties and risks of implementation. Indeed their effect would almost inevitably be that which you have considered inadmissible (sic) namely that the United Nations should give direction but the United Kingdom alone bear all the risks'. (79)

However, given the mutual determination of the United States and the Soviet Union to oppose any possibility of one increasing its influence in the Middle East at the other's expense, it was inevitable that any proposal for implementation would lack effective muscle. The United States, in particular, seems to have remained optimistic that Britain would agree to assist in implementing the partition plan despite ample evidence to the contrary. Sir Alexander Cadogan had clearly indicated this would not be the case when he informed the Ad Hoc Committee on 20 November that Britain remained resolved that 'British troops and administrators would not be available to enforce a plan which was not acceptable to both sides'. His restatement of this by-now well-known British attitude did not lead to the emergence of any alternative proposals however. The Ad Hoc Committee blithely continued its discussion of the 'solution' to the Palestine problem based on the scheme that Britain's attitude had made totally impractical, its members variously displaying unwarranted

(78) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 200, Berendse to Fraser, 19 November 1947 p.1; AJHR, 1948, A-2, pp. 136-137; Howard M. Sachar, A History of Israel, p. 292; See also Chapter Three, pp. 132-134.

(79) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 200, Berendse to Fraser, 19 November 1947 p.1.
optimism or calculated cynicism. (80)

A New Zealand study-paper prepared by F.H. Corner for the fifth meeting of the External Affairs Committee on 19 November, but suppressed by Fraser, pointed out that;

'On "realistic" grounds it seems wise to support the majority plan ... because this plan does make a clear decision and give Jews and Arabs the chance to develop their self-contained states. Even though the states may not be viable, at least they will be definite states and everyone will know where they stand'. (81)

The paper then proceeded to raise 'certain moral principles' which required careful consideration by 'a small and relatively exposed state like New Zealand'. Two questions were of paramount importance in this regard; did any international body have the right to 'carve up a country and give part of it to another people, even though that people does need it', and could an international body order a people to receive immigrants whom it did not wish to receive?

It was argued that, by supporting partition, New Zealand would be declaring its acceptance of these principles which, once established, might be turned against New Zealand itself. In an analogy which seems specifically intended to arouse fear and suspicion, it was postulated that the same line of reasoning which made the partitioning of Palestine acceptable could conceivably be applied by the United Nations to justify the granting of the Canterbury Plains to the Chinese on the grounds that they could make better use of them, or to require New Zealand to admit a million Indian immigrants. All this pointed to a crucial question which 'prosperous New Zealand' should consider;


(81) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, 'Palestine: Supplementary Points for Consideration', undated, but prepared for EAC meeting 19 November 1947, filed 20 November 1947, p.1.
'Is the United Nations primarily concerned with the rights of states or with the rights of individuals?'.

The paper proposed that the former should prevail and that, in line with this, New Zealand would be best advised to disregard partition and the creation of a Jewish State in favour of ensuring that 'what has been done is not undone'.

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It is scarcely surprising that Fraser decided against issuing the paper to the External Affairs Committee. Not only did it advocate the complete abandonment of the policy which Fraser had publicly committed New Zealand to at San Francisco in April 1945, (83) but it threatened to introduce a new and emotional dimension to the whole issue by associating New Zealand's membership of the United Nations and some suggested implications of the partitioning of Palestine with New Zealand's deep-seated and traditional fear of Asiatics. (84) The future Government of Palestine had not been either a burning public or political issue to date. This had allowed Fraser and his advisors to pursue the policy their ideals and morals dictated untrammelled by the requirements of domestic politics. The alarming possibilities raised by the study-paper might tempt Labour's political opponents to make Palestine and the larger question of how actively New Zealand should participate in the United Nations political issues. New Zealand's fear of Asia and its historic sense of insecurity would do the rest, discrediting and possibly destroying Labour's flirtation with internationalism, increasing the calls for a return to the traditional assumptions and certainties in external affairs.

The policy advocated by the study-paper could also have a more immediate effect on New Zealand's participation in the United Nations. If adopted it

(82) Ibid., pp. 1-3.
(83) See Chapter Two, pp. 112-113.
(84) See Chapter Two, pp. 64-67.
would force New Zealand to contravene both the spirit and the letter of the obligations it had accepted by ratifying the Charter of the United Nations and which Fraser took so seriously.

The Charter had clearly stated the concern of the United Nations with the rights of both the state and the individual in its preamble. It also required all members to 'bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace'.

The future government of Palestine was just such a dispute. It was also a territory held under mandate and thus subject to the trusteeship provisions of the Charter which included the right conferred on the General Assembly to authorize any alteration or amendment of the terms of a trusteeship agreement prior to the granting of independence.

In addition, the paper recommended that New Zealand's policy should attempt to preserve the status quo in Palestine. This was unacceptable to Fraser. Quite apart from the humanitarian issues that were involved and that invoked his sympathy and concern, he was convinced that the unwillingness and inability of the League of Nations to apply radical or difficult solutions to the problems which confronted it had been a major factor in the organization's failure. The search for a solution to the Palestine problem was providing the United Nations with a real opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness in comparison with its predecessor. Even more importantly it was giving the General Assembly its first significant opportunity to demonstrate its ability as a legislative organ. This was the role which Fraser had fought to have explicitly reserved for the General Assembly and he was not prepared to have New Zealand's participation in establishing this potentially crucial precedent.

(85) Charter of the United Nations, Ch. I, article 1, in Ian Brownlie, (ed.) Basic Documents in International Law, p. 3.

(86) Charter of the United Nations, Ch. XII, article 79; article 85, ibid., p. 23; p. 25.
hampered by the intrusion of dubious issues of jurisdiction, already resolved in the provisions of the Charter, masquerading as 'moral principles'. (87)

New Zealand remained committed to partition. On 21 November Fraser informed the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations that:

'The New Zealand Government have (sic) been following the development on the Palestine question with very close attention and have come to the conclusion that we must support partition as the solution which offers the best possible hope, however small, of dealing with the situation as it exists at the present time'. (88)

New Zealand would continue to publicly support the British stand on the termination of the mandate and the withdrawal of British troops and administration at 'a convenient date'. While concerned at 'the possible consequences of the apparent failure of the Assembly to face the implications of their handling of the situation', Fraser repeated his criticism of 17 October, pointing out that the rigidly maintained British attitude on the question of implementation was equally alarming;

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(87) See Chapter Three, pp.130-131. Fraser apparently regarded the introduction of legal principles as a needless intrusion upon the debate. He also resentied allegations, both before and after the Assembly made its decision, that partition may not be legal. Berendsen expressed his doubts on this aspect of the partition resolution at the sixth meeting of the External Affairs Committee on 6 February 1948 and was immediately rebuked by Fraser. Fraser then went on to state that he subscribed to the theory that the 'acts' of international organizations should be recognized as a source of international law. (P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, 'Palestine: Extracts from Minutes of External Affairs Committee, 14 April 1948, pp. 2-3) This stance was, after all, consistent with his insistence that the General Assembly, the most representative and democratic of all the organs of the United Nations, should fulfil a genuinely legislative function. Thus partition as the solution duly passed by the General Assembly had, in Fraser's view, both moral and legal force.

(88) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 8, Telegram No. 248, Minister of External Affairs, Wellington, to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, London, 21 November 1947.
'I do not see how the organization can possibly work if individual members refuse to accept their share in carrying out a decision made in accordance with the Charter. I feel bound, therefore, to express my concern and to say I would regret deeply if the United Kingdom felt it had to maintain the attitude outlined in your messages since this may well mean the beginning of the breakup of the United Nations and must it seems to me, lead to a loss of faith in its efficacy amongst the people of the world'.(89)

Motivated by his concern that the General Assembly's decision, once made, should succeed and his belief that success could only be realized if more responsible provisions for implementing that decision were made, Fraser attempted an eleventh-hour bluff. Although New Zealand's policy never deviated from support for partition in actuality, Berendens was instructed to declare loudly and publicly that New Zealand would not vote for the partition plan 'unless it also provides for implementation'.(90)

Berendens informed the Ad Hoc Committee of his Government's view on 22 November(91) stressing New Zealand's insistence that;

'If the United Nations assumes the responsibility of deciding upon the partition of Palestine, then the United Nations must similarly assume the responsibility of implementing that decision and that responsibility must lie with all the United Nations as a whole. There must be a means of enforcement ... and that means of enforcement should be provided by every member of the United Nations according to the proportionate strength of that member'.

(89) Ibid.

(90) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 221, Fraser to Berendens, 22 November 1947

(91) Here again, the effect of the dateline should be noted. Fraser's instructions to Berendens were transmitted in Telegram No. 221 (see immediately preceeding note), authorized in New Zealand late on the afternoon of 22 November, but received by Berendens in New York in the morning of 22 November.
On behalf of the New Zealand Government he urged that

'even at this late hour the proposals should be amended to make adequate
provision for the orderly implementation of partition and to protect the
population of Palestine ... from the possibility - if it is no more - of
widespread disorder and distress'.

A decision on the matter of 'such grave importance and of such infinite
complexity' must be made, but it should not be made 'under the pressure of the
dying hours of the Assembly'. To prevent this happening Berendsen suggested
that the Assembly remain in session for an extended period sufficient to permit
the Ad Hoc Committee to give proper consideration to its proposals or, alter-
natively, that the Committee continue its deliberations after the conclusion
of the Assembly with the authority 'in due time to constitute itself a special
session of the Assembly'.(92)

The suggestion that steps be taken to extend the time available for con-
sideration of the proposals before the Ad Hoc Committee was not contained in
the instructions Berendsen had received and indicates the extent to which
Berendsen was allowed, and was prepared, to exercise his own initiative. His
proposals were, however, contrary to the general mood of the Assembly as well
as not being compatible with Fraser's desire to see the Assembly reach a
decision during its present session. Recognizing that his proposal aroused
little enthusiasm in the Committee and accepting that some sort of decision
would be made before the scheduled end of the Assembly's regular session,
Berendsen made no attempt to resurrect his suggestion, concentrating, instead,
on stressing that New Zealand's support for partition was conditional upon a
responsible plan for implementation and enforcement being formulated by the
Ad Hoc Committee.

The announcement that New Zealand would not vote for the partition plan in

(92) Quoted in AJHR, 1948, A-2, p. 140.
its present form was of only passing interest to the other members of the Ad Hoc Committee although the United States and the Soviet Union took the opportunity of using the implementation issue, which Berendsen had raised, to criticise British policy on Palestine. (93) To the leaders and supporters of the Zionist movement, however, Berendsen's statement gave considerable cause for concern. It was by no means certain that the partition plan would receive the necessary two-thirds majority when the Assembly voted, and its chances of success would be compromised even further if it was passed by only a slender absolute majority in the Committee. It was even possible that the partition proposal might be defeated in the Committee vote, in which case there would be little hope of it being accepted in full plenary session. New Zealand's doubts, being articulated frequently and forcefully by Berendsen, could arouse the apprehensions of many of the, as-yet, uncommitted nations as to whether partition was the better option. This impression was apparently confirmed by subsequent declarations by the Belgian, Yugoslav, Colombian, Mexican and El Salvadorian delegations that, because other alternatives had not been fully considered and because of doubts concerning aspects of the partition proposal itself, they intended to abstain from voting in the Committee. (94) If the Zionist cause was to succeed, it was vital that New Zealand and all the other 'vacillating' nations should not only accept that partition offered the 'best hope' of solving the Palestine problem, but should also support the proposals passage through both the Committee and the General Assembly.

Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Goldmann, two of the Zionist movement's most illustrious figures, immediately sent a personal telegram to Fraser. Their message stressed that, by abstaining from the Committee vote on partition

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(94) Ibid., p. 141.
'through doubt on certain issues,' New Zealand was prejudicing the one real chance for a decision. They agreed that the provision of an international force to assist implementation was 'preferable', but doubted that it was practicable. Fraser was warned that New Zealand's stubborn insistence on this one aspect might cause 'indefinite delay and prejudice success of entire scheme for which your delegation surely cannot wish to share responsibility'.

If partition was adopted on the recommendations of the United States and the Soviet Union, there was 'no reason' to expect 'major or prolonged disorders' in Palestine. If the scheme was rejected, the consequences would be 'incalculable' (although chaos in Palestine and the discrediting of the United Nations were nominated as two probabilities).(95)

Although sent from New York on 22 November, this message, together with others advancing identical arguments from Freda Kirchwey, a leading American Zionist, and Henry Morgenthau Jr., the former United States Secretary of Treasury(96) were, because of the different time zone, received in Wellington in the evening of 23 November. Fraser, who that morning had authorized the transmission of instructions to Berendsen to vote against the proposals of

(95) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 8, Personal telegram, Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Goldmann, New York, to Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, Wellington, 22 November 1947.

(96) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 8, Personal telegram, Freda Kirchwey, New York, to Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, Wellington, 22 November 1947; Personal telegram, Henry Morgenthau Jr., New York, to Rt. Hon. Walter Nash, 22 November 1947. Morgenthau (U.S. Secretary of Treasury 1934-1945) and Nash had met during Nash's period as New Zealand's Minister to Washington (see Keith Sinclair, Walter Nash, p. 263). Because of their 'friendly association during (the) war years', Morgenthau requested Nash to use his influence to ensure New Zealand supported the plan for partition. In November 1947 Nash was attending an economic conference in Havana. In view of Nash's absence and because Morgenthau's request involved Fraser's most zealously guarded portfolio, Fraser replied on behalf of his deputy (see below n.99) Max Freilich, Sydney-based Secretary of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand also sent Fraser a telegram on 25 November 1947 which has not been included above because by that date the change of heart which saw New Zealand support partition in the General Assembly was well under way.
both subcommittees unless able to vote separately 'for the sections with which we are in accord' in the majority proposal, (97) was in Christchurch and so there was an additional delay while he was informed of these latest communications. The knowledge that both sets of proposals would be put to the vote within the next few days infused proceedings with an additional sense of urgency.

The Zionist pleas for a reassessment of New Zealand's policy were partially successful. On his arrival at Paraparaumu Airport on the morning of 24 November, Fraser immediately telephoned McIntosh with instructions. Berendsen was to see Herschel Johnson, head of the United States delegation to the Ad Hoc Committee, and explain that New Zealand's misgivings about the partition plan could be almost totally allayed by an assurance, even if only made in private, that the United States would 'undertake the implementation' and back it with 'a full force'. Fraser further suggested that Morgenthau might be persuaded to bring his influence to bear in this respect. Although reluctant to discard his attempts to use New Zealand's vote as a lever to shift the Assembly towards giving serious consideration to the question of enforcement and still inclined to vote 'as dissenting and not approving' unless the Assembly or the United States displayed a more 'responsible' attitude, Fraser was now more disposed towards abstaining from the Committee vote rather than voting against partition. This course of action would allow New Zealand to register its disapproval of the partition plan without completely reneging on its support of the Jewish state. It would be an unsatisfying compromise but, as Fraser confessed to McIntosh;

'I don't want the Jews saying that you spoilt things - that our chance was spoilt by you'.

(97) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 222, McIntosh to Berendsen, 23 November 1947.
Before making any decision on the matter, however, Fraser wanted Berendsen's opinion. As time was very much of the essence, he accepted McIntosh's suggestion that he discuss the situation with Berendsen by telephone as soon as possible after he returned to Wellington. (98)

Discussion with Berendsen confirmed for Fraser many of the points which had been contained in the pro-Zionist messages and convinced him of the necessity for New Zealand's uncompromising public rejection of partition without enforcement to be changed. Fraser maintained his bluff in the replies to Weizmann, Kirchwey and Morgenthau, however, repeating that New Zealand attitude was that partition unaccompanied by any effective plan for implementation was 'futile and seems calculated to lead to bloodshed and chaos'. He stressed that;

Shuffling out of responsibilities or refusing to see them will solve nothing. If members of the Security Council, and particularly the United States, and indeed all the United Nations would be prepared to make straight-out statements that they will undertake their proportionate share of the task of enforcement, New Zealand would feel able to modify its attitude towards the Plan.

As the telegrams to Kirchwey and Morgenthau went to extra length to stress, 'a firm undertaking' and 'prior commitment' by the United States were the necessary prerequisites for a change in New Zealand's attitude. (99)

New Zealand's attitude was in the process of changing, however, with or without assurances. The 'new' policy which, although still short of the complete reversal sought by the Zionists, was much more attentive of the fate of

(98) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, 'Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Prime Minister at Paraparamu and Mr McIntosh', 24 November 1947; Telegram No. 224, McIntosh to Berendsen, 24 November 1947.

(99) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Personal telegrams, Peter Fraser to Chaim Weizmann, Freda Kirchwey, Henry Morgenthau Jr., all 24 November 1947.
partition, was officially outlined for Berendesen in a telegram sent from New Zealand early on 25 November.

In his latest instructions to his Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, Fraser asserted his continued belief that New Zealand had been right to point out 'the folly and dangers of a policy of partition without implementation'. Nevertheless,

It had been my belief that whatever we did the two-thirds majority would be carried but I gather that in your view this is now doubtful, and the terms of the messages I have received from Jewish Organisations(100) overseas tend to confirm that your warning and expression of the opposition of New Zealand may have imperilled the chance of a decision by the Assembly. In the light of these circumstances the Government is, I feel, bound to re-examine the aspect of the problem'.

He remained convinced that partition offered 'the best chance of success' and, in consequence, was willing to compromise on the question of how the solution should be enforced to ensure that the proposal survived and the Assembly reached the right decision, even if the plan retained its existing weaknesses. Fraser instructed Berendesen to make it clear that New Zealand 'would not hesitate to vote in the affirmative' if the United States and other members of the Security Council would simply give an assurance that they were 'in earnest in supporting the plan to the extent of being prepared to back it up with force if necessary' - a significant retreat from his earlier insistence that plans for implementation and enforcement constitute a fundamental part of any proposal forwarded to the General Assembly.

Fraser was also optimistic about the possibility of this condition being met either by private or public declaration. Berendesen, for his part, was

(100) The only relevant telegrams on the series file for this period are from individual Zionists, not Zionist organizations. Even the message from Weizmann and Goldmann studiously avoids reference to the Jewish Agency for Palestine - perhaps to stress the humanitarian rather than the political aspects of the question - although, in view of the two men's stature in the Jewish Agency, the connection would inevitably be made.
convinced that any move by New Zealand, or any other member nation, to introduce a formal resolution on enforcement to the Committee discussions would be seen by many nations as an attempt to obstruct a decision being reached and could inspire an 'adverse' reaction to the entire question of implementation, but Fraser felt it might still be possible to gain 'some specific assurance that they would share in the task of enforcement should the necessity arise' if a 'direct plea' was made to the individual members. This was why it was vital that Berendsen impress New Zealand's view on Herschel Johnson.

If this approach failed, New Zealand would be confronted with a choice between 'two possibly disastrous courses' - no decision or a decision in favour of partition without implementation. Both would 'in varying degrees lead to chaos', and it was no easy task for Fraser to decide which was 'the greater evil'. His faith in the essential soundness of the principle of partition and in the abilities and potential of the United Nations came to his assistance however. He informed Berendsen:

If we vote against the plan or even abstain and throw our influence against obtaining a two-thirds majority and the Assembly fails thereby to decide in favour of partition, chaos will inevitably result. If we vote for partition without implementation there is little doubt that our fears of bloodshed and chaos will be realised; but nevertheless, there is still the possibility that the nations who have given their support will in the last analysis be prepared to back an agreed policy with force.

After weighing all the circumstances of this dilemma and the possible consequences of the Assembly leaving the question undecided, I am loath to accept the heavy responsibility of blocking partition, the solution in which I believe, because the means of its attainment are not immediately being faced up to'.

Berendsen was instructed not to vote against the partition proposal in the
Ad Hoc Committee. He should abstain, taking the opportunity to explain the reasons behind New Zealand's decision, unless some such assurance as Fraser sought was forthcoming in which case he was to vote affirmatively. (101)

Berendsen received the telegram late on 24 November. Fortunately New Zealand's policy on the proposals of the second subcommittee had remained the same because the Committee had that day rejected the federal state plan by 29 to 12 with 4 abstentions and Berendsen, as instructed on 23 November, had registered a negative vote on New Zealand's behalf. (102)

On 25 November the partition proposals of the first subcommittee were put to the vote. The provisions for implementing the plan remained unchanged and vague and the Committee members maintained their general reluctance to seriously consider if and how partition should be enforced. Berendsen, after outlining New Zealand's views on this matter, therefore abstained for voting, although stressing that this decision did not prejudice New Zealand's final vote to be cast in the General Assembly. (103)

The draft resolution and plan for partition were approved in the Ad Hoc Committee by 25 to 13 with 17 abstentions. Although one vote short of the two-thirds majority which would be required for acceptance in the General Assembly, the clear majority support for partition in the Committee was more than sufficient to ensure its submission to the plenary session of the Assembly. (104)

(101) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 226, Fraser to Berendsen, 24 November 1947, pp. 1-2.

(102) AJHR, 1948, A-2, p. 142.

(103) GAOR: Second Regular Session: Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, 34th meeting (25 November 1947), Statement by Sir Carl Berendsen, p. 222.

(104) AJHR 1948, A-2, pp. 143-144. Under Article 18, para. 2 of the United Nations Charter, 'Decisions of the General Assembly on important questions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting'. (Ian Brownlie, (ed.), Basic Documents in International Law p.8). It should be noted that an abstention is not a vote.
It was impossible to predict whether or not the partition plan would receive the necessary support when the Assembly voted in plenary session however. Seventeen nations, a sizeable proportion of the 57-strong membership of the United Nations, had abstained from voting in the Committee. It was unlikely that this number of abstentions would be reproduced in the General Assembly vote but which way particular nations would move was difficult to assess. There was also the possibility that there could be defectors from the cause of partition to contend with. Fraser recognized that the acceptance of partition was far from assured and that for every vote cast against the plan, two votes in support would be required. He also knew that the General Assembly would be called on to reach its decision very shortly - possibly in a day or two. In these circumstances New Zealand could no longer hold out in the hope that the United Nations would suddenly accept the necessity of making definite provisions to enforce its decision and so on the evening of 26 November (New Zealand time) an uncoded telegram was sent to Berendsen confirming that he was to cast New Zealand's vote in the General Assembly in favour of partition. 

Fraser's attempts to persuade and cajole the General Assembly and individual members to confront the unpleasant issue of enforcement had been to little avail. Berendsen was able to report that Herschel Johnson had given, in confidence, an assurance of sorts, on behalf of the United States, that;

'The United States will take its full proportionate part on (sic) any enforcement agreed upon by the United Nations, probably by a decision of the Security Council. The United States will not, repeat not, in any circumstances send United States troops but would on above conditions agree to send volunteers as part of a United Nations voluntary force. The United States will not, repeat not, be put in the vanguard

(105) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 228, Fraser to Berendsen, 26 November 1947.
or step into the shoes of Great Britain". (106)

This assurance was of little comfort. As Berendes pointed out, the usefulness of the United States' stance, 'particularly on the aspect of prior approval by the Security Council, and how far any force so authorised and then prepared could hope to intervene in time to prevent disorder', was unclear and it was up to Fraser to decide whether or not it fulfilled his demands for a 'specific assurance'. (107)

Fraser had sought a definite commitment by the members of the United Nations to support the decision of the General Assembly. This would mean that the member nations would unite to enforce their common will and could provide a precedent which could be used to challenge the Security Council's monopoly on such effective power as was vested in the United Nations. He was realistic enough to recognize that combined action could only succeed with the approval and support of the Great Powers, especially the United States, but sought to obtain those guarantees with reference to the Assembly's decision, not as conditional upon a subsequent decision by the Security Council. He had sought a definite demonstration of the organization's commitment to the principle of collective security; what had resulted was a firm indication that New Zealand's expectations of and commitment to the United Nations as an effective and democratic forum for the conduct of international affairs were far in excess of those held by the majority of its fellow members.

Berendes announced New Zealand's intention to vote in favour of partition to the General Assembly on 26 November. During the same meeting the representatives of Belgium and the Netherlands, who had also abstained from voting in the Ad Hoc Committee, announced that they, too, would be voting affirmatively.

(106) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 213, Berendes to Fraser, 24 November 1947.

(107) Ibid.
Other previously uncommitted nations subsequently announced their intentions. The delegates of Greece and Haiti stated that their countries would vote against the plan and the representative of the Philippines, who had been absent from the Committee vote, announced that his government did not support the plan and would probably abstain from voting in the Assembly. Thus at the close of the afternoon session, the partition proposal's chances of success in the General Assembly vote were in even greater doubt. (108)

Thursday, 27 November 1947, was Thanksgiving Day and, in deference to the host nation, the General Assembly did not meet. The behind-the-scenes lobbying for and against partition continued however. In what proved to be a decisive move, the United States, for the first time, used its diplomatic and economic muscle to secure votes for partition. The extent and success of the United States' pressure is debated (109) but it seems to have been the key factor in persuading a number of nations who had abstained from the Committee's vote to support partition in the Assembly and convincing others that their objections to partition and their political and economic interest could best be reconciled by abstaining once more.

The debate resumed on 28 November and, despite attempts by Colombia and the Arab States to stall a decision, was concluded that afternoon. The vote was postponed for twenty-four hours, however, following the acceptance of a


(109) The two poles of the debate are represented by John Snetsinger, Truman the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel, pp. 68-71 and Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, O Jerusalem (New York, 1972), p. 27-28. Snetsinger stresses the apparent failures of United States pressure with states with whom such pressure could have been presumed to succeed, e.g. Greece (which voted against partition), and Cuba, El Salvador and Honduras (which abstained). Collins and Lapierre emphasize the apparent successes, e.g. France, Haiti and Liberia (which abstained from the Committee vote), and the Philippines (which had announced its intention to abstain from the Assembly vote), were placed under considerable pressure by the United States and ultimately voted for partition.
French proposal that a final opportunity be provided to allow 'any bona fide conciliation proposals' to be brought before the Assembly. (110)

This move had been opposed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and a number of other nations committed to partition and had the effect of ensuring that when the Assembly met the next day the majority of members were in no mood for any further delays. The Arab States made some last-ditch attempts to delay the vote and, for their pains, received an exasperated response from the Assembly. The Lebanese delegate, who informed the Assembly that the Arab delegations were 'prepared to hear any conciliatory formula based on the principle of a federated independent State organized on a cantonal basis' was brusquely reminded that this proposal had already been overwhelmingly rejected by the Ad Hoc Committee and, furthermore, it did not constitute a new proposal for conciliation. A submission by Iran that the Ad Hoc Committee reopen its discussions on the basis of the Lebanese proposal was ruled a new resolution. As such it would be proposed only after the vote on partition which, if passed, would render discussion of the Iranian submission irrelevant. (111)

The partition plan was then put to the General Assembly in the form of Resolution A 181 (II): Future Government of Palestine. In view of the doubts and apprehensions of its committed supporters, the resolution was passed with almost surprising ease by 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions. Seven of the nations which had abstained in the Committee (Belgium, France, Haiti, Liberia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and New Zealand), together with Paraguay and the Philippines which had both been absent at the Committee vote, now voted in favour of partition, more than making up for the unexpected decision of Chile to abstain. The opponents of partition had received additional support only from Greece, but had correspondingly lost the support of Siam, whose delegate


(111) Ibid., pp. 145-146.
was absent from the Assembly. (112)

Partition thus became the United Nations' approved solution to the Palestinian problem. The plan contained in Resolution A 181 (II) was that that had emerged from the first subcommittee of the Ad Hoc Committee. Britain's mandate over Palestine was to be terminated and her forces withdrawn by 1 August 1948. Two months after the British departed, the Arab state, the Jewish state and the International Regime for Jerusalem would come into being. The transition would be supervised by the United Nations Palestine Committee, made up of the representatives of Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Philippines, under the guidance of the Security Council.

The result was, predictably, welcomed by Zionists and their supporters and vilified throughout the Arab world. Within Palestine itself, the decision was the signal for an immediate intensification of Arab violence against the Jews. The Jews retaliated in kind and the country was swept by a civil war (113) which the British authorities were both unable and unwilling to prevent.

The General Assembly's decision in favour of partition was a hollow vic-

(112) The members of the United Nations voted as follows:
- For: Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelo-Russia, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Liberia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Sweden, the Ukraine, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.
- Against: Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen.
- Abstentions: Argentina, Chile, China, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Yugoslavia.
- Absent: Siam

(113) Although this period of conflict is often referred to as 'the undeclared war' or treated as the initial stage of Israel's war of independence, while Britain's mandate remained in effect Palestine was one country and the Arabs and Jews were fighting a civil war in circumstances similar to those that had operated in Ireland.
tory for New Zealand. Fraser's hopes that the Assembly would seriously address the whole question of implementation and take the initiative by making proper prior arrangements for combined action to enforce its decision should the Arab states make good their threats against the Jewish state had not been realized. Moreover, the resolution adopted by the Assembly handed overall supervision of the progress of partition to the Security Council. Provision had been made for the Security Council to institute such action as it deemed proper if either new state proved unable to select a Provisional Council of Government capable of effective administration and the maintenance of internal order. Local militia would be responsible for securing national boundaries against external threat. If this proved impossible, then the unwieldy provisions of the United Nations Charter would apply.

Fraser had expressed grave doubts about the effectiveness of the Charter's provisions for combined action against aggressors at San Francisco, (114) and it is clear that both he and Berendzen were convinced that definite provisions for enforcing partition would forestall any attempt by external powers to obstruct partition or destroy the Jewish state. (115) The absence of such provisions, however, meant that the United Nations could only react once the anticipated response of the Arab states became a reality. Even then, combined action would depend upon whether or not the Security Council decided that 'a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression' had taken place and the Permanent Members agreed upon what measures should be taken. If the Council decided that the threat was of sufficient magnitude to warrant the

(114) See Chapter Three, pp. 132-133.

(115) See, e.g. P.M. 277/5/2 Pt.7, Telegram no. 151, Berendzen to Fraser, 5 October 1947, p.1 (Above p.176); P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Telegram (unnumbered) Prime Minister, New Zealand to Colonial Secretary, London, 17 October 1947, pp. 1-3 (Above, pp.181-183), AJHR, 1948, A-2, p. 140. (Above, pp.193-194)
use of armed force rather than the imposition of diplomatic and economic sanctions, there would be a further delay while member nations were invited to participate and troops and materials readied for dispatch. (116)

Fraser and his representatives had consistently argued that the failure to make adequate provision for enforcing partition was irresponsible and that, by avoiding the issue, the members of the General Assembly were demonstrating the same unwillingness to face up to their obligations to the United Nations that had been the undoing of the League of Nations. James Thorn, New Zealand's High Commissioner in Canada, who attended several sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee as part of New Zealand's delegation, observed to Fraser, towards the conclusion of the Committee's discussions, that what he had witnessed had been 'a rather cynical farce ... mean and shabby, and certainly not calculated to serve the prestige of the United Nations'. The entire question had been discussed in an 'air of unreality' and, he concluded:

'if the member states dodge their responsibility one's confidence in the Organization cannot be strengthened. In fact, the seeds of its death may be being sown'. (117)

Such observations did not augur well for Fraser's hopes that the settlement of the Palestine problem would demonstrate the potential of the General Assembly and encourage the body to press for a more active political role with the attendant responsibilities. Fraser himself was becoming more subdued in that respect, however. His initial support for partition as the best possible solution had been dependent upon the inclusion of a plan for full implementation. As it became clear that there was little likelihood of the first sub-committee or the Ad Hoc Committee formulating such a plan, his misgivings grew.


(117) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Personal Letter, James Thorn, New York to Peter Fraser, Wellington, 24 November 1947, pp. 1-2.
until he contemplated voting against partition. The eventual decision that New Zealand would support the partitioning of Palestine was made on the basis that an imperfect decision was a lesser evil than no decision. He still remained hopeful that the 'air of unreality' that Thorn had observed would dissipate and that, once the Assembly realized the inherent weaknesses of the partition resolution it would adopt a firmer, more positive attitude on the question of implementation. (118) He was to be rapidly disillusioned. In the early months of 1948 Fraser, his advisors and representatives, found themselves defending the partition resolution against a United States proposal that, because of the difficulties being experienced in implementing the November decision, Palestine should become an international trust territory.

Such a proposal might have received New Zealand's support if it had been submitted for consideration before the Assembly had voted for partition; indeed, an international trusteeship had been nominated as a possible solution in the first New Zealand study-paper prepared on the options available to the General Assembly. (119) Partition had been approved in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter, however, and Fraser was not prepared to be a party to persuading the Assembly to abandon its decision in the face of Arab aggression. To do so would have been to sacrifice principle to expediency and repudiate one of the most fundamental assumptions of the First Labour Government's foreign policy; the belief that a resolute commitment to collective security was the only genuine defence against the threat or use of force.

(118) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.8, Telegram No. 226, Fraser to Berendsen, 24 November 1947, pp. 1-2 (see above, pp.205-207)

(119) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.6, 'Palestine: Forthcoming United Nations Consideration', 14 August 1947, p.1. (see above, pp. 159-162)
CHAPTER FIVE: "WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS TODAY IS NOT RESOLUTIONS, IT IS
RESOLUTION." NEW ZEALAND'S DEFENCE OF PARTITION

The General Assembly's decision in favour of partition was immediately
and uncompromisingly rejected by the Arab world. Arab leaders, although gener-
ally hesitant, and in some cases, apprehensive, were caught in the tide of
passions aroused by the 'Holy War' rhetoric they had adopted in their attempts
to intimidate the Assembly. Mobs, incensed by the decision, attacked Jewish
communities in Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Beirut and Aden. In Palestine, Arabs
attacked the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa, and the Mufti,
desperately seeking recognition of his right to control and direct his people's
opposition to the United Nations' solution, called a three day general strike
on behalf of the Arab Higher Committee.

The Mufti, alone amongst Arab leaders, wanted hostilities. The general
reluctance of the other leaders was based on an excessive estimation of Jewish
strength but the Mufti, blinded by his fanatical hatred of Jews, made a much
more serious blunder in underestimating the strength and abilities of the Jew-
ish defence forces. He assumed that the same situation and tactics which had
proved successful during the Arab rebellion of the 1930s would still apply. As
a result, the Arab volunteers initially recruited by the Higher Committee en-
gaged in unco-ordinated hit-and-run attacks on isolated Jewish settlements,
ambushed transportation and began sporadic bombing campaigns to create terror
in the cities.

In fact the situation was markedly different. The Haganah, which during
the 1930s had acted only as a defence force, was now ready to adopt a more
active, punitive role. While the Haganah, as the official militia of the
Yishuv, was by far the largest and increasingly the best armed of the Jewish
forces, the two small dissident organizations, the Irgun and the Lehi (Stern
Gang), were far more aggressive. The Palestinian Arab forces were divided by
lingering hostilities and suspicions between the Mufti's Husseini faction and
the rival Nashashibi group which disputed leadership of the nationalist cause
while the Jewish forces were united in their aim, the defence of the soon-to-be
Jewish state and were able to make a series of agreements for co-operating and
co-ordinating their efforts.

In the two weeks after the partition vote 93 Arabs, 84 Jews and 7 members
of the security forces were killed in armed clashes and bomb attacks. This
'small scale, irregular war' continued unabated throughout December 1947 to
intensify rapidly in the new year as the arms, money, and volunteers (the
Arab Liberation Army or Arab 'irregulars') supplied by the Arab League began
to make their presence felt.

The Jewish position progressively deteriorated throughout February and
March 1948. Jerusalem's Jewish quarter was under constant attack and relief
columns attempting to reach the city along the main road from Tel Aviv were
decimated by ambushes from the hills. Jewish farm colonies in the Negev desert
had been isolated, the kibbutzim in the Hebron hills were besieged and, in a
development which chillingly revealed the inherent problems of the partition
boundaries determined by UNSCO and approved by the General Assembly, Arab
forces cut the principal roads which linked the areas that had been assigned
to the Jewish state. (1)

Britain, meanwhile, pursued a 'policy' which has been rather benevolently
described as characterized by 'mischievous incompetence'. (2) The contribution
which the curious combination of British action and inaction made to the escal-
atation of the conflict and the attendant increase in the sufferings of the Arabs
and Jews of Palestine suggests, however, that Britain's policy could be more

(1) This narrative has been adapted from a variety of sources, the most
important being; Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, pp. 332-333;
pp. 336-341; J. Bower Bell, Terror out of Zion, pp. 254-272; Howard M.
Sachar, A History of Israel, pp. 298-300; Larry Collins and Dominique
Lapierre, O Jerusalem, pp. 85-211.

(2) Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 336.
aptly described as malicious obstructionism and callous self-interest.

On 11 December 1947 Creech-Jones announced in the House of Commons that Britain's mandate in Palestine was to be terminated on 15 May 1948. Britain's desire to be relieved of responsibility for Palestine had been well publicized in the successive statements made by British representatives in the course of the General Assembly's discussions. In view of the escalating violence within Palestine and the failure of the Assembly's partition plan to provide assistance in implementing the decision, Britain's reluctance to continue administering the mandate was understandable although this unilateral decision to trim some six weeks off the Assembly's timetable for partition indicates a certain amount of bloody-mindedness on the part of the British Government.

On its own, this move may not have been particularly significant but it was followed by a declaration that Britain intended to retain undivided control of Palestine until that date. Accordingly the five-member United Nations Palestine Commission (rapidly nicknamed the 'five lonely pilgrims'), was refused admission to the mandated territory until 1 May on the grounds that the Commission's arrival in Palestine would probably be the signal for a general uprising by Palestinian Arabs aided by the Arab States.(3)

Even Britain's demand to retain 'undivided control' had a hollow ring. Creech-Jones went on to reveal exactly what this meant when he stated that, in future, British troops in Palestine 'would only maintain order so far as necessary for their own security and speedy withdrawal'. Britain thereby refused to fulfil its legal and moral obligations, as administering authority and a member of the United Nations, to maintain, or even attempt to maintain, order in Palestine so that partition might proceed as painlessly as possible.(4)


Creech-Jones' statement was eminently sound in terms of British domestic politics. Both Government and public were sick and tired of the Palestine problem. It had proved costly both in men and money. Over 80,000 troops were stationed in the mandate by the end of 1947 and the bill for the upkeep of a British military presence since 1917 had exceeded one hundred million pounds. Three hundred and thirty eight British subjects had been killed in Palestine since 1945 and the forced retreat of British personnel into elaborately protected security zones, which even then provided an imperfect guarantee of safety, had been seen in some quarters as a national frustration and humiliation. (5) The British were more than prepared to wash their hands of Palestine and if chaos and bloodshed were to be the lot of the Arab and Jewish population, so be it.

The British Government had made it clear to the General Assembly from the outset of discussions that its troops and administrators would not assist in the implementation of partition. At the same time it had assured the Assembly it 'would not obstruct the proposed Commission', (6) but the intent of the policy announced by Creech-Jones seemed to be to impede the plan to such an extent that such slim chances of success as it had would evaporate. This was clearly its effect.

Britain's refusal to comply with the timetable and the administrative provisions of the Assembly's decision was compounded by the inconsistent and apparently partial efforts of British forces within the mandate to discharge their limited responsibility to maintain order. The Jewish defence forces remained illegal and the prohibitions on the importing and internal distribution of arms and ammunition by Jews continued to be enforced. At the same time, however, no attempt was made to prevent the infiltration of Arab irregulars and arms across Palestine's borders. As Arab military activities spread and

(5) F.S. Northedge, Descent from Power, p. 111; J. Bowyer Bell, Terror out of Zion, p. 186.

intensified British troops, in strict obedience to the command to maintain order only so far as was necessary for their own security, were notably tardy in coming to the aid of Jewish convoys and settlements which were under attack.(7) Britain's policy inevitably drew international criticism, but the British response to the 'widespread accusations of obstruction and consequent loss of goodwill' was to point out yet again that 'His Majesty's Government have consistently and publicly stated from the beginning that Britain could not be party to the imposition of any decision on Palestine which was not acceptable to both Jews and Arabs'.

It followed, therefore, that the Commission could not begin to enforce the partition plan 'while the mandatory power is responsible for maintaining order'. Moreover, the British Government had a responsibility to its troops and police 'which we should not be ashamed to stress in view of the extreme reluctance which has been so far shown by other members of the United Nations to volunteer to take their place'.(8)

New Zealand's response to the British announcements was subdued. After all, Britain's attitude had been made abundantly clear since the Assembly had met in its first special session in April 1947, and Fraser and his advisors had predicted that the passage of partition without proper provision for implementing and enforcing the decision would result in chaos and bloodshed in Palestine. On 17 October 1947 Fraser had commented that he thought it 'healthy

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(7) Howard M. Sachar, A History of Israel, pp. 299-301; F.S. Northedge, Descent from Power, p. 110; Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error, pp. 573-574; Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 333; p. 339. As Sykes makes plain, the apparent partiality of the British forces' attempts to discourage military activity and disrupt the military supplies of the Jewish forces was a reflection of the effectiveness of the anti-British campaigns of the Irgun and the Lehi. By late 1947 the British regarded the Jewish para-military organizations as posing the major threat to the security and safety of their forces.

for the Arabs, Jews and members of the United Nations ... that they should be faced with the United Kingdom decision to withdraw and the consequent need to relate their policy to the probable consequences of that policy'. (9) Under his direction New Zealand had consistently pressed for the serious consideration of the 'probable consequences' of partition and how they might be avoided. (10) This policy had not succeeded at the Assembly's second regular session but on 17 January 1948, a telegram dispatched from New York by W.B. Sutch, New Zealand's representative on the Economic and Social Council, suggested that, in some quarters at least, opinion was turning in favour of the stand taken by New Zealand.

Sutch based his observations on 'information from reliable sources, Palestine Commission Secretariat, British and Jewish Agency people (sic)'. (11) He revealed that all groups were concerned at the internal situation in Palestine which had 'deteriorated more rapidly than expected' and seemed unlikely to improve. The Jews were 'much less confident than previously of being able to keep order themselves' and the British had made it clear that the only reason keeping them in Palestine until 15 May was that 'difficulties of military evacuation' made an earlier withdrawal impracticable. Britain's refusal to co-operate in carrying out the partition plan had increased concern at the 'extent to which United Nations prestige may be adversely affected in ensuing weeks' and the Commission was alarmed at the prospect that it would have to 'create a Provisional Council of Government for the Jewish state and initiate the organising of Jewish militia in (the) face of Arab resistance' without any practical help from United Nations members.

(9) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Unnumbered telegram, Prime Minister, New Zealand to Colonial Secretary, London, 17 October 1947, p.1.


(11) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 9, Telegram No. 18, W.B. Sutch, New York to Peter Fraser, Wellington, 17 January 1948.
Dr. Ralph Bunche, head of the United Nations Secretariat for the Palestine Commission, had told Sutch that he felt the best course of action, 'even at this late stage', was to 'attempt the formation and despatch of an international force to keep order in Palestine' while the Commission performed its duties. There was only one other alternative under discussion which involved sending some of the Secretariat's personnel to Palestine to report to the Commission on the local situation so that the Commission could in turn, approach the Security Council for direction and assistance. Although the British were willing to accept the latter alternative, Bunche felt it less likely to achieve any practical result and, as Sutch pointed out, the present composition of the Security Council made its response unpredictable. (12)

The knowledge that events were proving New Zealand's analysis correct and the apparent probability that a request for a United Nations force to enforce partition would be forthcoming from either the Palestine Commission or the Jews themselves, as suggested by Sutch's telegram, seems to have persuaded Fraser to simply await developments. In the event, no such request was forthcoming and it was two months before a new initiative on the Palestine problem emerged from an unanticipated source.

The United States had been particularly perturbed by events in Palestine. When he had committed his country to supporting the partition plan, Truman had expected the 'swift, surgical division' of Palestine under the provisions of the General Assembly's resolution. As any prospect of his expectation being fulfilled rapidly diminished, his concern at the possible strategic implications

(12) Ibid. The members of the Security Council in 1948 were anything but unified in their policies towards the Palestine 'solution'. France, the United States, the Soviet Union, Canada, the Ukraine and Belgium had all voted for partition in the Assembly; China, Great Britain, Argentina and Colombia had abstained; Syria had voted against partition. The Great Power rivalries, which had already been on display during the Palestine debate in September-November 1947 were another factor which added to the unpredictability of the Security Council's response.
of civil war in Palestine was aggravated by the ominous turn of events in Europe.

On 25 February 1948 a new communist-dominated government was formed in Czechoslovakia, excluding any pro-Western politicians. It seemed probable that other countries would follow suit and that the United States would be no more able to prevent this happening than it had been in Czechoslovakia's case. Faced with what many of its policy-makers saw as irrefutable proof of the aggressiveness of Soviet intentions, the United States moved to a new level of military preparedness. The events prompted Truman to observe on 3 March 1948 that

'We are faced with exactly the same situation with which Britain and France were faced in 1938-9 with Hitler'. (13)

On 5 March, a cable from General Lucius Clay, head of the American occupation zone in Berlin, noted a toughening of the Soviet attitude and stated his fear that war could come with 'dramatic suddenness'. War in Europe began to seem an imminent possibility, if not an inevitability. On 12 March American military commanders abroad were ordered to review their emergency plans and, the next day, the Secretary of Defence, James Forrestal, was presented with 'an emergency war plan to meet a feared Soviet invasion of Western Europe and the Middle East' by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (14) Europe remained the principal concern, however, and Truman, fearing that an outbreak of total war in Palestine might require the United States to respond with troops and tempt the Soviets to move on Western Europe, became increasingly determined to avert a major crisis in the Middle East by any means short of direct United States involvement.


The Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, and the officials of the State Department, had never been convinced of the wisdom of partition and took the opportunity to impress upon Truman that any attempt to carry out partition would require enforcement, with the ensuing risk of involving the United States in a war against the Arabs. Such an event, they stressed, would be 'antagonistic to the national security of the United States' under normal conditions and, in view of the developing crisis in Europe, urgent steps should be taken to minimize the risk of disruption to supplies of oil from the Middle East. (15)

These arguments made a considerable impression upon Truman. Sometime before 8 March 1948 he approved a State Department draft of a statement to be read at the United Nations calling for the partition decision to be set aside and a temporary United Nations trusteeship over Palestine to be created. No date was set for the official announcement of this reversal of policy, however, and the State Department assumed that it had discretionary power to announce the policy without further consultation with Truman. Marshall accordingly instructed Warren Austin, the United States representative on the Security Council, to present the American proposal when he believed it most appropriate. (16)

On 19 March Austin drew the Security Council's attention to the failure of the Arabs, the Jews and the mandatory power to reach agreement on how the General Assembly's plan for partition could be implemented peacefully. Furthermore:

'The announced determination of the mandatory power to terminate the mandate on 15 May 1948, if carried out by the United Kingdom, would result, in the light of information now available, in chaos, heavy fighting


(16) John Snetsinger, Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel, pp. 86-87.
and much loss of life in Palestine. The United Nations cannot permit such a result. The loss of life in the Holy Land must be brought to an immediate end. The maintenance of international peace is at stake'.

On 31 March two formal resolutions calling upon the Jewish Agency and the Arab Higher Committee to send representatives to meet with the Security Council and arrange a truce, and requesting the Secretary-General to summon a special session of the Assembly 'to consider further the question of Palestine', were submitted by the United States. Both proposals were adopted on 2 April 1948.

Truman was 'embarrassed and incensed' by the timing of Austin's statement. On 18 March he had met Weizmann, who had been concerned at rumours of an imminent American retreat from partition, and had assured him of the continued support of the United States. Austin's statement in the Security Council, made the following day, had made Truman appear hypocritical, and drew immediate criticism from the Zionists. Although Truman subsequently took considerable pains to assert that the reversal had been the result of independent action by the State Department (1948 was a presidential election year, and the Jewish vote a prize worth courting), it should be noted that at the time, apart from loudly informing the State Department that he should have been told when the speech was going to be delivered, Truman made no effort to alter the new policy.

New Zealand had begun to evaluate the implications of the United States'...
proposals as soon as definite news of Austin's statement had been received. (19) By 23 March J.V. Wilson had completed an initial assessment which, he stressed, was highly speculative because of the absence of detailed information from the United States as to what their proposals actually involved.

Wilson viewed the sudden desire of the United States to have Palestine placed under some form of United Nations trusteeship as the inevitable result of 'a certain shortsightedness' in American foreign policy. The potential for the extension of Russian influence in the Middle East and the disruption of oil supplies from the region which disorder in Palestine provided were 'perfectly clear at the time that the United States forced partition on the Assembly'. Wilson suggested that it was apparent that neither possibility had been seriously considered at the time of the Assembly's decision and that this belated American concern was directly related to the recent events in Czechoslovakia.

While the developments in Europe could not be dismissed out of hand, Wilson argued that they did not, in themselves, justify the abandonment of partition. The United States' proposal could only be seriously considered as an alternative to the decision taken by the General Assembly in November if it made a genuine attempt to confront the issue of enforcement, and clearly demonstrated that the United States was now prepared 'to take the leadership in supplying forces and authority in Palestine even though the proposed trusteeship were nominally United Nations trusteeship'. He pointed out, however, that the available evidence gave no grounds for assuming that the United States was willing to accept such a role. Warren Austin had simply pledged that the United States would 'back up any decision by the United Nations'. This did not appear to indicate any desire by the United States to take the lead in any trusteeship scheme that might emerge, indeed, the implication was that the United States

(19) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 9, Telegram P. 25, W.B. Sutch, New York, to Minister of External Affairs, Wellington, (For Mr. Odell), 20 March 1948.
remained as unwilling to make a firm and definite commitment to this new proposal as it had been when New Zealand had attempted to extract an assurance that the United States would stand firm on the enforcement of partition.

Wilson therefore postulated that the United States' proposal might be aimed at preventing or postponing the British withdrawal from Palestine. Any decision to abandon, suspend, or postpone partition would mean, in effect a return to the status quo. In this event it could be contended that, relieved of the responsibility to implement a decision which it found distasteful, Britain was once more under a legal and moral obligation to continue as administering authority for Palestine until a trusteeship agreement was finalized. While such a suggestion may have been acceptable any time before the General Assembly's decision, in the existing circumstances it could not be regarded as feasible. It was unlikely to win the approval of the British, the Arabs, or the Jews and could conceivably add to the confusion by inspiring some precipitate action such as the immediate declaration of an independent Jewish state by the Jewish Agency.

Wilson concluded by again stressing that his study had been prepared only on the basis of such sparse details of the United States proposals as were available. He pointed out that New Zealand 'should see what there really is in the American plan before expressing any opinion', hoping rather ambiguously, that 'we might keep an open mind on the subject before finally rejecting it'.

The essential features of Wilson's analysis were confirmed by Berendsen whose report of a meeting with Roy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, U.S. State Department, was received the following day.

Henderson had told Berendsen, 'off the record', that;

'the latest decision was taken solely because in the opinion of the United

States it had become impossible to effect partition without the use of armed force and that it had not been possible to convince sufficient members of the Security Council to apply armed force ... The original decision had been nothing more than a recommendation which it had been believed would in the end be accepted by both sides and thus have become capable of implementation without substantial force. This had now proved to be contrary to the facts and there was no way now of enforcing partition except by a military operation which ... would necessitate the occupation of the whole of the Middle East. Partition ... was now a dead horse'.

Although the State Department was 'still not clear' on the details of the proposal that would eventually be submitted, Henderson refused to accept that the reversal of the partition decision would damage the credibility of the United Nations. On the contrary, he assured Berendsen, it would be 'a positive advantage to the United Nations as indicating to the world that the organisation could perceive and rectify its mistakes'.(21)

Berendsen was not convinced. Like Wilson he believed that 'the real reason for the alteration is ... the world situation and a reluctance by the United States in view of the stand they are taking ... against further Russian aggression, to have any of their at present exiguous (sic) forces tied up in a sideshow'. His own view was that

'the whole thing is shocking, that it adds to the irresponsibilities of the General Assembly in November in not facing up to the question of implementation, the further irresponsibility of now abandoning the decision then arrived at after months of debate ... without any real assurances that the new position will be any better ... It must ... have a most detrimental effect upon the United Nations and should in my opinion be protested by

(21) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, Telegram No. 112, Berendsen, Washington, to Fraser, Wellington, 23 March 1948, pp. 1-2.
us at the forthcoming Assembly meeting'. (22)

Berendsen's report indicated that the United States had joined the growing ranks of United Nations officials and member nations that accepted the logic of the viewpoint New Zealand had consistently presented throughout the United Nations' search for a solution to the Palestine problem. The American admission that partition without enforcement was an unrealistic policy was of little comfort to New Zealand, however. Fraser and his advisors were more concerned by the not entirely unexpected revelations that the Security Council was reluctant or unable to adopt a firm line on the implementation of the Assembly's plan and that the United States, by stressing that the November resolution was, after all, 'nothing more than a recommendation', seemed to be implying that it could, and should, be set aside with little fuss or bother.

New Zealand was opposed to such a move and refused to concede that the partition plan which had been approved by the General Assembly in accordance with the United Nations Charter could be regarded as anything other than a judgement and a settlement. A decision had been made on Palestine - one in which the 'Big Five' had either voted in favour or abstained. In New Zealand's opinion there was only one aspect of the matter which was still open to debate: how could the Assembly's plan best be implemented? Preparations for the second special session, which was expected to be summoned almost immediately, proceeded accordingly.

Once more New Zealand found itself in complete agreement with the expressed policy of Australia. Evatt had chaired the Ad Hoc Committee which had recommended partition to the General Assembly and he rapidly sprang to the defence of the November decision. He pointed out that the proper time for the United States' proposal to have been considered was during the Committee's discussions. Only one alternative plan had been submitted at that stage, however, and that

(22) Ibid., p. 2.
had been 'rejected by an overwhelming majority'. The partition plan, in con-
trast, had been approved 'by more than a two-thirds majority, the only dissen-
tients being the Arab States and certain nations very closely associated with
them'.

The 'just and impartial' decision of the Assembly 'must not be lightly
set aside'. To do so might 'be very damaging to the authority of the United
Nations' for it would amount to nothing less than a public retreat from 'a just
solution' which had been gradually undermined 'by intrigues directed against
the Jewish people'. It would also indicate that the United Nations itself was
subject to the intrusion of 'mere considerations of power politics' and expedi-
ency. This, Evatt argued, had already been demonstrated, for:

'Had the Great Powers who supported the proposal at Lake Success, New York,
adhered firmly to it, there would probably have been little difficulty'.

Evatt also questioned whether the trusteeship system could apply to
Palestine. The proposal implied, in his view, that the peoples to be placed
under the trusteeship were 'not sufficiently advanced for self-government'.
Such a suggestion was 'untenable in relation either to the Palestinian Arabs
or to the Palestinian Jews'.

'It would be little short of a tragedy if the fundamental rights of self-
government were to be denied to both the Jews and the Arabs as it is
guaranteed to them under the Assembly decision ...'.

Australia would only be party to such a move if 'new facts of overwhelming
cogency' could be presented to support the United States' proposal and if the
proposal itself was for 'a temporary United Nations Trusteeship merely for the
purpose of carrying out the Assembly's decision. (23)

Full details of the American trusteeship proposal finally became available

(23) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, Letter, A.R. Cutler, High Commissioner for Australia
on 6 April, only ten days before the second special session was due to commence and less than six weeks away from the date which had been set by Britain for the termination of its mandate in Palestine. The short time available for consideration of the details of the American proposal was of little importance to either New Zealand or Australia. It was immediately obvious that neither country could support the plan.

The United States proposed that Palestine should become a temporary trusteeship under the control of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. The agreement under which it would be administered, although expressly temporary, would be of indefinite duration, terminating 'whenever the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine agree upon the future Government of that country'. Law and order would be maintained by locally recruited police and volunteer forces. If these proved insufficient, such states as would be specified in the agreement would be called on to provide assistance. A variety of other suggestions on matters such as immigration, land purchases, and economic development, which combined elements of both the plans which UNSCOP had submitted to the Assembly the previous year, were also made. (24)

The weaknesses of the proposal were readily apparent. Ultimate independence would depend upon conciliation and the ability of Arabs and Jews to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The historic inability of the two peoples to reach agreement was the crux of the Palestine problem and had been a decisive factor against the federal state proposal which the Ad Hoc Committee had rejected in November 1947. The recent intensification of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine made the chances of such an agreement even more remote than previously.

The conflict posed a further problem. The United States acknowledged that a truce had to be agreed before the proposal could be seriously considered. (25) But, if a truce could be arranged, then there would seem to be little

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(24) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 10, Telegram No. 127, Berendson, Washington, to Fraser, Wellington, 6 April 1948, pp. 1-3.

(25) Ibid., p. 3.
reason why partition should not proceed. The chances of a cease-fire were remote anyway. On 30 March 1948 Warren Austin had persuaded the Security Council to invite the representatives of the Arab and Jewish authorities to a truce parley, but the request had not been received with any enthusiasm. Both sides were deliberately stalling, hoping that they would soon gain the military advantage and with little desire to be bound to fixed areas and positions under an official truce. (26)

In addition, the proposal depended entirely upon Britain's willingness to place the territory under trusteeship before terminating its mandate. (27) This would require Britain to discard its timetable for the withdrawal of troops and administrators and accept the possibility of renewed responsibilities in Palestine. Britain had already informed the Dominions that it was not prepared to co-operate under these conditions (28) and, in his cable of 6 April, Berendzen informed Fraser that, while the United States conceded that the proposal depended 'entirely' on Britain's willingness to assist, little had been done to meet Britain's objections. The United States itself showed a continuing reluctance to accept a leading role in enforcing any trusteeship agreement (which, in view of the motives which had prompted Truman to approve the policy change was scarcely surprising), although it had indicated its willingness to 'assist in the maintenance of security in Palestine' as long as the Soviet Union was excluded. (29)

In Berendzen's opinion, New Zealand's aim at the forthcoming special session should be to ensure that the prestige of the United Nations was maintained and that justice was done to both Arabs and Jews. This would require

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(26) Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, p. 356.

(27) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 127, Berendzen to Fraser, 6 April 1948, p3

(28) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.9, Telegram, Circular Q.52, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, London, to High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Wellington, (copy forwarded to Minister of External Affairs, New Zealand Government), 25 March 1948.

(29) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 127, Berendzen to Fraser, 6 April 1948, p3
the New Zealand delegation to make a firm and resolute defence of partition, stressing

'the inadequacy of the reasons that have been advanced in favour of abandonment, the irresponsibility of the Assembly's November decision without provision for enforcement and the readiness of New Zealand (if that is still the case) to take its proportionate share in any measures that might yet be devised to enforce partition'. (30)

Much could also be made of the argument that

'if ... a sufficient number of members are willing to supply forces to enforce trusteeship without partition there would seem to be no adequate reasons why a sufficient number should not supply forces to implement partition'.

He was convinced that trusteeship would be no easier to implement than the existing plan for partition and, as it could only be considered as a temporary expedient, simply postponed problems which should be realistically confronted as soon as possible. He saw, in the second special session, another, perhaps a final, chance to impress upon the members of the General Assembly their obligations and responsibilities to the United Nations and to the peoples of Palestine. (31)

Fraser was in agreement with the attitudes expressed by both Evatt and Berendsen. On 9 April the American Minister to New Zealand called on Fraser to request New Zealand's views on the trusteeship proposal. Fraser informed him that

'he had examined, briefly, the American plan ... and his first reaction had been that New Zealand could not support it. He did not feel that there was any prospect whatever of any truce. Considering the circumstances existing at the present time he felt it was unreal to imagine

(30) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 129, Berendsen to Fraser, 8 April 1948, p.: (31) Ibid., pp. 1-2.
that the minimum requirements of the Arabs and Jews, upon which the truce would be based, could possibly be realized'.

To ensure that the American representative would not harbour any illusions that New Zealand could be persuaded or pressured to support the United States' proposal, Fraser summarized the background to New Zealand's attitude. He stated that

'He had supported partition last year and he still felt that it was the right policy and, further, he felt the Great Powers, including the United States, should give it their support. A reversal of the Assembly's resolution would do nothing but harm and, in particular, that it would bring the authority of the United Nations into disrepute and demonstrate its impotency'.

He questioned the wisdom of abandoning partition, 'which had endeavoured to satisfy the hopes and just aspirations of the Jewish people', as a means of excluding the Soviet Union from taking part in the 'necessary enforcement action', and expressed doubt that the United States' proposal would, in fact, achieve that result. If the rumours he had heard proved correct and the Jewish Agency responded to the United States' proposal by declaring an independent Jewish state in Palestine, Fraser suggested that the Soviet Union might seize the opportunity by immediately recognizing the new state and sending in its troops under the guise of coming to the aid of the beleagured Jews.

Fraser also expressed uncertainty as to whether trusteeship would provide a practical solution. In his opinion the concept of trusteeship itself did not appear to be properly applicable to the situation in Palestine. Moreover, he doubted that the members of the Trusteeship Council would, in general, prove

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(32) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Note for File, prepared by A.D. McIntosh, 9 April 1948, p.2.

(33) Ibid., p.1.

(34) Ibid., p.2.
to be any less evasive on the issue of enforcement than the General Assembly at large. The probable result, therefore, would be that the responsibility for enforcing trusteeship would be left 'to the United States and certain members of the British Commonwealth'.

New Zealand could not accept such a burden of responsibility:

'During the debates on partition, New Zealand had made it plain that we would contribute our proportionate share, but they (sic) had regarded this to be on the basis of one in fifty odd, in accordance with the membership of the United Nations. Under the new plan it seems possible that the members involved would be a mere handful and we could not contemplate supporting any proposal of that nature'. (35)

In view of the extent of New Zealand's misgivings concerning the United States' trusteeship proposal as it stood, the only assurance that Fraser could give the American Minister was that

'if something better was put forward at the Assembly we would be very willing, and indeed amongst the first, to give what appeared to us a practicable solution our whole-hearted support'. (36)

The Second Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations opened in New York on 16 April 1948. The New Zealand delegation was once more led by Sir Carl Berendsen with A.D. McIntosh, the Secretary of External Affairs, sent from Wellington to act as Berendsen's alternate. The item, 'Further consideration of the future government of Palestine', was referred to the First (Political) Committee for its report and the discussions opened on 20 April when Warren Austin rose to submit a working paper containing a draft trusteeship agreement for Palestine and proposed that it be referred to the Fourth (Trustee-
The proposal Austin outlined remained identical to the plan which Berendsen had transmitted to Fraser on 6 April. In the intervening fortnight its chances of success had been made even more remote. None of the developments which the United States had hoped for had eventuated; efforts to establish a truce in Palestine had failed, Britain remained opposed to any scheme which might obstruct the termination of the mandate, and the hostile responses of Arab and Jewish organizations to trusteeship had vividly underlined the improbability of any plan so dependent upon conciliation and co-operation. The Jewish Agency steadfastly refused to accept that there were any grounds for the abandonment of the November decision while the Arab Higher Committee remained equally adamant that it would only accept trusteeship as a preliminary arrangement pending the establishment of an independent, unitary state in Palestine.

Austin's statement was followed by the opening of the general debate on the proposal, led by Sir Carl Berendsen. Berendsen's instructions on the attitude the New Zealand delegation was to adopt were quite specific. Unless the United States proposal offered a positive and genuine plan for the future government of Palestine, it would not receive support from New Zealand. Fraser had no wish to see the United nations 'adopt a second proposal which requires enforcement and will not be enforced'. The scheme submitted by Austin fell far short of the criteria set by Fraser and Berendsen, making the most of the


(38) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 127, Berendsen to Fraser, 6 April 1948, pp. 1-3.

(39) The British High Commission in Palestine had undertaken one of its last effective actions on 18 April when it had begun working for a local ceasefire in Jerusalem. Even in this area, already designated an international trusteeship, the British authorities were only able to enforce a ceasefire during the last six days of the mandate. Elsewhere the fighting continued unabated. See Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, pp. 356-357.

(40) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 138, Fraser to Berendsen, 9 April 1948.
opportunity his place in the speaking order presented, accordingly delivered a 'remarkable' and 'compelling' defence of partition.\(^{(41)}\)

He began by noting the 'sombre, indeed ... tragic' events which had led to the special session, reminding the delegates that they were under 'a heavy responsibility' to exercise 'the most complete integrity of thought and action' throughout their discussions. It was a time for 'plain speaking' and he, for one, intended to do just that.

Berendsen then proceeded to summarize the unhappy sequence of events in Palestine from the issuing of the Balfour Declaration to the November decision, offering a spirited but not entirely uncritical defence of British policy before turning to the adoption of partition by the General Assembly. He told the Committee:

I do not think that any delegation which voted in favour of this decision felt that partition was a perfect solution. I think most people were of the opinion that the problem was susceptible of no perfect solution, and that any decision at all must inevitably be the cause of injustice and hardship to very many thousands of worthy people, and that the best that could be done, and the least that should be done, was to decide upon that solution which offered the least injustice, the least departure from principle, and the least practical difficulties in the circumstances as they had arisen during the course of the past thirty years.

The New Zealand Government believed then that partition was the best solution, and it believes the same thing today\(^{(42)}\).

In failing to make adequate provision for the enforcement of its chosen solution, however, the Assembly had done 'the right thing in the wrong way'. New Zealand had consistently argued that the absence of proper provisions for

\(^{(41)}\) The laudatory adjectives are from Chaim Weizmann, Trial and Error, p. 581, and Trygve Lie, In the Cause of Peace, (New York, 1954), p. 172 respectively

implementing and enforcing the partition plan had prejudiced any chance for an orderly and peaceful transfer of power in Palestine. The majority of the members of the Assembly had not accepted New Zealand's arguments at that time, but had instead 'professed to believe ... that enforcement would not be necessary.

While 'the situation that has arisen today ... was, to anyone who faced the facts, as clear and as obvious and as inevitable as night following day', New Zealand drew no comfort from the confirmation of its initial analysis. The people of Palestine were paying an awful price for the 'simplicity' and 'naiveté' of the General Assembly and the only proper response the Assembly could make would be to rectify the obvious weaknesses of its original decision, not to compound the problem and aggravate the suffering by abandoning partition; 'The result of our error is death, bloodshed, murder, outrage and agony in Palestine. The result of our error then is a grave risk that the Assembly of the United Nations is in serious and humiliating danger of losing the public confidence upon which its authority in the last resort depends. We have today, therefore, an additional problem not (sic) only how to do justice to both Jew and Arab, but how to avoid wrecking the authority and influence of the Assembly. I say to you that neither this organization nor, indeed, any of its members can hope to give the world the lead of which the world is so sorely in need, unless that lead is steady and consistent, unless the course that is set (sic) yesterday is the course that is followed steadily today and tomorrow. The alternative is inevitable confusion and dismay'.

Berendsen hastened to add that this should not be interpreted as suggesting that New Zealand considered that the Assembly's decisions 'must remain immutable'. If circumstances had altered to such an extent that a particular policy was no longer viable then it was logical and correct that the matter

(43) Ibid., p. 38.
should be re-evaluated, but New Zealand was far from convinced that this was the case with regard to the plan to partition Palestine. The only new factor to emerge since the November decision was the widespread violence. This had been both predictable and predicted, but the Assembly had chosen to ignore it in their deliberations. The most honourable and practical solution was to now authorize combined action to repress the violence, perpetrated by both Arabs and Jews, by 'lawful force'. The Assembly could not let itself be intimidated by 'lawless violence'. The failure of the League of Nations had demonstrated that it was not enough to 'hope to preserve peace and order in the world by words alone'. For its part, New Zealand continued to support the enforcement of partition through joint action by all members of the United Nations although it was prepared to seriously consider any proposal 'which offers prospects of ending the strife ... and achieving a just settlement between the Jews and the Arabs within a reasonable period'.

Berendsen concluded his address by once more impressing upon the delegates the awesome responsibility which confronted them. He stressed that the United Nations involvement in the Palestine problem was

'a test case, and ... the future of this organization and the future of the world may indeed depend upon the way in which it is decided. What the world needs today is not resolutions, it is resolution. And it is the most earnest hope of the New Zealand Government that the Assembly will adhere to the principles it accepted last November, and show that resolution which the situation demands. We must not, we dare not add to the irresponsibility of our November decision for partition without enforcement the further and final irresponsibility of a surrender to illegal force'.

(44) Ibid., pp. 38-40
(45) Ibid., p. 40.
Berendsen's speech was an impressive rebuttal of the United States' proposal. He had refused to adopt the diplomatic obscurities which typified the addresses generally delivered in the Assembly and its committees, and had shown no qualms about levelling criticism, both general and specific, and apportioning responsibility. Trygve Lie, the Secretary General, who was to experience considerable difficulties with some members of the Security Council for displaying these same tendencies, was so impressed by the way 'the salty New Zealander' expressed the views he shared that he sent Berendsen 'an admiring bouquet of roses' - the first time he 'ever did such a thing for a speech'.

Berendsen had also expressed with force and clarity the principles and ideals which motivated New Zealand's approach to the United Nations Organization and which it hoped would be given genuine substance in the Palestine 'test case' now to make up for the insipid and 'irresponsible' decision of the preceding November. Such hopes were to prove, once more, unrealistic.

Although as the debate developed it became clear that some states were prepared to support the trusteeship proposal, if only in principle, it was also apparent that the same reluctance to assume even proportionate responsibility, which had precluded any serious provision for enforcement during the previous discussions, was now working against the American plan. At the same time it was increasingly obvious that there was more than sufficient opposition to the proposal to defeat it if it was put to the vote. Australia, Uruguay, Guatemala, the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia, the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia had joined New Zealand in defending partition and opposing trusteeship. The Arab States, India and Pakistan were likely to either abstain or even vote against the plan unless a unitary Palestinian state was promised, and there were good grounds for suspecting that the majority of non-committed states would abstain in an

attempt to avoid the possibility of being called on to assist implementation. (47)

In view of the lack of substantive support that the trusteeship proposal had received the United States was not particularly perturbed when the resolution requesting that the draft trusteeship agreement be submitted to the Fourth (Trusteeship) Committee was energetically resisted by New Zealand and the other opponents of the plan. The resolution was easily defeated on the ground that 'the important aspects of the trusteeship proposal were primarily political and it was desirable to avoid a decision of principle either for or against partition or trusteeship before the terms of the trusteeship proposal were known in detail'. (48)

The First Committee therefore continued its discussions although with a notable lack of enthusiasm or direction. The increasingly pointless nature of its task sapped the morale of the Assembly and Berendsen reported to Fraser on 3 May that proceedings had become characterized by an 'air of dejection'. Both Berendsen and McIntosh were convinced that the trusteeship proposal was a dead issue and Berendsen jauntily reported that he had informed the American delegation that 'I could put an end to this fiddling by just a few plain words which I proposed to do unless they could show me good reason to the contrary'. The Americans had requested him not to do so because they remained confident that 'there were still real prospects of an agreement between the Jews and the Arabs'. Berendsen had magnanimously agreed to their request and resigned himself to the fact that 'the apparently fruitless discussion of the American proposal will continue'. (49)

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(48) Ibid., p. 13.
(49) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.11, Telegram No. 160, Berendsen to Fraser, 3 May 1948, p.1.
McIntosh, for his part, felt that the Palestine problem had now become 'more insoluble than ever'. Although trusteeship was no longer a live issue, partition 'as envisaged in November' seemed equally unlikely to be realized. In light of the existing situation which constituted a de facto partitioning of Palestine, he was convinced that

'The only prospect now seems to be to let events take their course and work towards mediation between both parties once they have taken up their partition positions'. (50)

McIntosh, who sent this dispatch from the New Zealand legation in Washington, was apparently unaware of the most recent developments at the United Nations.

On 3 May Creech-Jones had proposed to the Committee that it consider 'the possibility of a central, neutral authority to act on behalf of the United Nations, to further the cause of mediation, and to take over certain assets'. (51) In view of the Arab and Jewish threats to proclaim separate states on 15 May, he argued, some action had to be taken to minimize the inevitable chaos, fill the vacuum left by Britain's withdrawal, and complete the transfer of economic and social services to local authorities.

Although Britain's concern for the inhabitants of Palestine had resurfaced somewhat belatedly, the First Committee seized the opportunity to give its discussions a new direction. In the best traditions of the United Nations, the delegates then engaged in 'a prolonged procedural discussion' before a sub-committee comprising the representatives of China, Poland, Norway, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Guatemala, France, India, the Soviet Union and the United States was formed and instructed to formulate a proposal for consideration by the General Assembly. (52)

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(50) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.11, Personal Telegram, A.D. McIntosh to Peter Fraser, 4 May 1948.


(52) Ibid., p. 13.
The subcommittee began its task on 5 May and reported back to the First Committee in the evening of 13 May, less than twenty-four hours before Britain's mandate was to be terminated. Its task had been complicated by the, by-now predictable, disputes between the Soviet Union and the United States, but the subcommittee had nevertheless formulated a resolution which demonstrated a greater appreciation of the realities of the situation in Palestine than those with which the special session had previously been occupied.

It accepted that there was no prospect of implementing the plan for partition as it had been passed by the General Assembly. That would require a unity of purpose and a level of practical commitment which was obviously beyond the United Nations. The United Nations Palestine Commission, the woefully ineffectual organ of implementation which had been created by the November resolution, was relieved of the responsibilities it had been unable to assume and, in its stead, a Mediator in Palestine was to be appointed.

The Mediator's responsibilities would be extensive. He was to use 'his good offices with the local and community authorities in Palestine' to arrange for the operation of essential services, assure the protection of the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites, and promote 'a peaceful adjustment of the situation in Palestine'. He was also to be empowered to invite 'appropriate specialized agencies of the United Nations' and 'other governmental or non-governmental organizations of a humanitarian and non-political character' to render such assistance as they could to the peaceful settlement of Palestine's problems.(53)

In discharging his duties to promote 'peaceful adjustment', the Mediator was to co-operate with the Truce Commission for Palestine (Belgium, France, and the United States), which had been established by the Security Council on 23

April. Yet while the resolution empowering the Mediator was sufficiently general to allow him to work with whatever authorities were established following the termination of the mandate, the Truce Commission was ostensibly bound by the Security Council's call for both Arabs and Jews to refrain, 'pending further consideration of the future government of Palestine by the General Assembly, from any action which might prejudice the rights, claims, or positions of either community'. (54)

Fraser was alarmed at this inconsistency. He was reluctant to accept the negation of the November resolution under any circumstances and was vehemently opposed to any requirement upon the Mediator to co-operate with the Truce Commission under these circumstances. (55) His telegram instructing Berendsen not to support the subcommittee's draft resolution was not received, however, until after the First Committee had concluded its discussions and the General Assembly had passed the resolution by 31 to 7 with 16 abstentions. (56)

Berendsen, convinced that the resolution represented 'the very least the Assembly could do' and that it was 'in no way inconsistent' with the line of New Zealand policy throughout the United Nations' discussions on Palestine, had 'both spoken and voted in favour of the proposal'. (57) He had also fought successfully for the inclusion of the General Assembly's right to instruct the Mediator in the resolution, arguing that it 'was likely that the Assembly might wish to take up the problem of Palestine at a future session' and any implication that it was surrendering its powers of direction should therefore be avoided. (58)

Even as the Assembly was meeting to reach its decision on the mediation

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(55) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.12, Telegram No. 148, Fraser to Berendsen, 15 May 1948.
(57) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.12, Telegram No. 174, Berendsen to Fraser, 15 May 1948.
resolution, events in Palestine were conspiring to make peace and political security in the Middle East an increasingly distant prospect. On the morning of 14 May, a day earlier than scheduled, the British completed their departure and that afternoon, in Tel Aviv, David Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. The armies of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, poised on the borders of Palestine until Britain had withdrawn, immediately began their advance to fulfil the promises of their governments to redeem the whole country for its Arab inhabitants. (59)

Britain's mandate for Palestine officially expired at precisely 6.00 p.m., 14 May, Washington time, - midnight in Palestine. At 6.11 p.m. Truman's press secretary released a White House statement informing the world that the United States had recognized the provisional government in Tel Aviv as the de facto authority of the new state of Israel. (60)

Truman, no doubt still irked by the State Department's handling of the announcement of the trusteeship proposal, did not inform the Department of his intention. As a result, when the news reached the General Assembly, the American delegation was placed in what Berendsen described as 'the ludicrous position of having to go to the rostrum and say that they did not know whether it was a fact or not'. (61)

Berendsen, who had been angered by the 'uncertainty, irresolution and pusillanimity' displayed by the Assembly during the second special session (62) was nonetheless wryly amused by the American delegates' discomfiture. He deemed it a type of rough justice that the American reversal of policy, which had been responsible for the summoning of the special session, should be reversed in its


(60) John Snetsinger, Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel, p.111.

(61) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.12, Telegram No. 174, Berendsen to Fraser, 15 May 1948.

(62) Ibid.
turn as the special session drew to a close. When asked for his reaction to the United States' recognition of Israel by a reporter from the New York Times, he replied:

'Just dizzy, that's all, just dizzy'. (63)

Berendsen's dissatisfaction with events at the special session went much deeper than his rather frivolous comment to the reporter indicated, however. He concluded his official report on the second special session by stating:

'It was certainly one of the most ineffective meetings I have ever attended, falling far short of the obvious necessities of the case and bitterly disquieting to those who pin their faith, as I do, to this great organization. For all practical purposes the net result of this meeting was that, for the time being at any rate, the Assembly, in a spirit of muddled and timid irresolution, washed its hands of the problem of Palestine and left its solution to the bitter animosities of the contending parties and probably to the senseless and tragic arbitrament of the sword ... one must hope ... that the United Nations will learn by this dismal experience and show a higher sense of reality and responsibility in the future'. (64)

The General Assembly had, however, squandered its opportunity. By failing to even seriously discuss enforcement of its decision, first in its second regular session and then in the second special session, the Assembly had ensured that a full-scale war would be waged over the future government of Palestine. This meant that the Security Council would thereby assume principal importance in any subsequent United Nations involvement in the issue. Although the General Assembly did exercise the right it had retained, on Berendsen's

(63) John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel*, p. 112.
(64) *AJHR*, 1948, A-2A, p. 34.
insistence, to discuss the reports of the Mediator in Palestine, it now acted strictly in accordance with Article 11 of the Charter which empowered it to 'discuss any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security ... and make recommendations ... to the Security Council'. (65) There was no longer any serious suggestion that the Assembly initiate United Nations policy on Palestine and the successive truces and eventual armistices were achieved under the auspices of the Security Council. (66)

The Palestine discussions threw those weaknesses of the United Nations which had been of most concern to New Zealand into clearer relief than any previous issue had done. It was clear by the end of the second special session that the majority of the member-nations were no more committed to the United Nations than they had been to the League of Nations. Obligations and responsibilities - in New Zealand's eyes, clear and binding - were regarded by most as flexible options to be avoided if possible.

As international tensions increased during 1948 New Zealand's faith in the United Nations faltered. Fraser, Berendsen and McIntosh retained high hopes for the organization's future but they were also aware that, on present performance, New Zealand's enthusiasm for the United Nations was rather excessive and unwarranted. New Zealand continued to feature in Assembly discussions on Palestine and to assert that the failure of the decision of November 1947 lay in the timidity of the Assembly, rather than in any specific weakness of the plan, but the defence of partition lacked its former commitment and vigour. A more subdued and traditional response to international issues was in evidence as is displayed by the seeming inconsistency of New Zealand's reluctance to recognize the Jewish state it had fought for.


(66) The extent of this switch to Security Council initiative can be gauged from the selection of documents reproduced in Rosalyn Higgins, United Nations Peacekeeping, vol. 1, pp. 18-52, passim.
CHAPTER SIX: NEW ZEALAND’S RECOGNITION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The technicalities and implications of recognition of a Jewish state by New Zealand were first examined in detail in a study paper prepared in the Department of External Affairs for J.V. Wilson and F.H. Corner on 20 April 1948, shortly after the convening of the second special session of the General Assembly. The paper predicted that the Jewish Agency would proceed to proclaim the existence of a Jewish state whatever the outcome of the General Assembly’s discussions and that New Zealand, as a bona fide supporter of the Jewish cause, would be subsequently requested to recognize the new state. Although recognition would be consistent with New Zealand’s policy on the settlement of the Palestine problem, the broader implications of such a move would have to be carefully evaluated before New Zealand responded. (1)

There were no significant legal barriers to recognition. The discretionary nature of recognition was an accepted article of international law and, following the passage of the Adoption of the Statute of Westminster Act in November 1947, New Zealand was fully entitled to determine the extent and the course of its relations with other states. Provided it was satisfied that the Jewish state complied with the essence of the rather fluid legal definition of statehood - an independent government, exercising effective authority within a defined area - New Zealand was free to extend recognition. (2)

In the wake of recognition a set of purely legal consequences would arise. The recognized state would acquire the capacity to enter into diplomatic relations and make treaties with the recognizing state. Under English civil law it

(1) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.11, 'Palestine: Note on the Recognition Question', (prepared by 'R.G.C.'), 20 April 1948, pp. 1-4.

(2) Ibid., pp. 4-6. The elements of this definition were open to vastly divergent interpretation. As will be seen, differing emphases allowed Britain to cite these requirements as an important justification for withholding recognition while South Africa and, later, Canada considered the conditions had been fulfilled sufficiently to allow recognition to be given to Israel.
would also be entitled to institute civil proceedings in the courts of the
recognizing state although itself granted sovereign immunity. As the study
paper pointed out, however, with the exception of the creation of a formal
diplomatic relationship;

'none of these positive legal implications of recognition could have much
practical significance ... between New Zealand and a Jewish state'.(3)
The granting of recognition was clearly perceived as a political rather
than a legal act and this initial study paper, together with almost all the
subsequent evaluations, were primarily concerned with the political implications
of recognition.

In April it appeared likely that the granting of individual recognition
by New Zealand

'could possibly produce disadvantages from the point of view of external
policy which would outweigh the desirability of recording our conviction
as to the abstract propriety of the Jews' right to a separate state by
the formal act of recognition'.(4)

It was probable that the Arab States would register their disapproval of
such an action by applying 'unofficial sanctions'(5) against New Zealand. Oil
supplies were the most obvious target and attempts to impede or interfere with
oil shipments to New Zealand would inevitably affect Britain's economic and
strategic interests in the region. The study paper interpreted British policy
as an attempt to 'steer an impartial course between Jews and Arabs', but pre-
dicted that, should events necessitate the abandonment of that policy, Britain
would support the Arab cause if only to ensure the continuation of the critically

(3) Ibid., p.6. See also Michael Akehurst, A Modern Introduction to International
'Recognition in International Law - Theoretical Observations' in Leo Gross
(ed.) International Law in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1969), pp. 589-
601; James Crawford, The Creation of States in International Law, (Oxford,
1979), pp. 15-30 passim.

(4) P.M. 277/5/2 Pt.11, 'Palestine: Note on the Recognition Question', 20 April
1948, pp. 8-9.

(5) i.e. not approved or authorized by the United Nations.
important oil supplies. In these circumstances, recognition of a Jewish state by New Zealand would not merely embarrass Britain, it would be contrary to 'the interests of Commonwealth strategy'. (6)

In addition it seemed unlikely in mid-April that many members of the United Nations would be prepared to consider extending individual recognition to a Jewish state. Britain would obviously maintain its official impartiality for as long as possible and the United States appeared committed to its trusteeship proposal. The indications were that only one of the Great Powers seemed likely to extend recognition - the U.S.S.R. The study paper pointed out that the Soviets might seize the opportunity 'to establish a sphere of influence in the Middle East' and perhaps even provide military aid to a Jewish state. Such a direct threat to Western interests in the region would certainly draw sharp and immediate protests from Britain and the United States;

'In such a situation New Zealand could hardly afford to consider opening diplomatic relations with a Jewish state, or be in the position which might result from her having done so'. (7)

This latter possibility was of considerable concern to New Zealand and, as a result, while New Zealand's opposition to the trusteeship plan was made unmistakably clear at the second special session, considerable effort was made to ensure that New Zealand's stance was interpreted as nothing other than a defence of the Assembly's November resolution and that the country in no way supported Soviet criticism of British or United Nations policy. The surprising reversal of United States policy which resulted in the extension of recognition to the new state of Israel within minutes of the official termination of Britain's mandate effectively dissipated New Zealand's anxieties, however, and plans for

(6) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.11, 'Palestine: Note on the Recognition Question', 20 April 1948, p. 7.

(7) Ibid., p. 8.
a similar declaration by New Zealand were immediately set in motion. (8)

Political considerations, both domestic and external, would best be served if New Zealand's recognition of Israel was part of a unified Commonwealth response. Accordingly, on 16 May, New Zealand's representatives in London, Canberra and Washington were instructed to inform the governments to whom they were accredited that the 'question of de facto recognition' was under consideration by the New Zealand Government and, the following day, the opinions of the Canadian and South African governments were sought. India and Pakistan, which had voted against partition and continued to support the Arab cause, were not approached. Although desiring consultation and co-ordination on the matter, New Zealand was, nevertheless, prepared to extend recognition irrespective of the actions of other Commonwealth governments. They would, however, be informed 'before publication of any announcement'. (9)

The decision that the form of New Zealand recognition would be de facto rather than de jure owed less to the precedent established by the United States than it did to New Zealand's continued commitment to the General Assembly's November resolution. New Zealand had consistently defended the partition plan as the proper and legal basis for the settlement of the Palestine problem. In view of the situation that presently existed in Palestine therefore, there was 'no moral obligation' to extend de jure recognition to the Jewish state; in fact, New Zealand was 'under a moral obligation to the Arab rump state not to do so'. (10)

There were, however, practical reasons why some form of recognition should be extended to the authorities in Israel as soon as possible. These reasons

(8) For detailed discussion of New Zealand's policy at the General Assembly's second special session and the events leading up to the United States' recognition of Israel, see Chapter Five, passim.

(9) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 12, Telegrams; No. 856, Fraser to Deputy High Commissioner, London; No. 115, Fraser to High Commissioner, Canberra; No. 186, Fraser to New Zealand Minister, Washington; (all 16 May 1948). Telegrams; No. 8, Fraser to Minister, External Affairs, Ottawa; No. 23, Fraser to Prime Minister, Union of South Africa, Pretoria (both 17 May 1948).

(10) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 13, 'Recognition of Israel', Study paper prepared by J.V. Wilson, 17 May 1948, p. 2.
did not arise from any consideration of our necessities or of normal practice but from political motives such as the desire not to disappoint expectations which our very vocal support of partition have created and perhaps more positively to do everything in our power to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish state'. (11)

De Facto recognition seemed to provide the solution to this dilemma. Fraser was informed that:

'de facto recognition is normally extended when the new government has effective authority within the territory though such authority may be precarious or even wrongful. De facto recognition is provisional and is liable to revocation if the other conditions of recognition (these conditions are generally understood to be (a) effective government, (b) exercising effective authority which involves permanency and stability, (c) within a defined territory) are not subsequently complied with'. (12)

Thus the New Zealand Government could reconcile its moral and practical obligations by extending de facto recognition to Israel without prejudicing any subsequent insistence that the ultimate settlement of the Palestine problem be 'limited to the terms of the Assembly resolution'. (13)

The British Government's response to the news that New Zealand was considering extending de facto recognition to Israel was immediate and, in contrast to the obscure generalizations which had typified previous communications on the Palestine problem, to the point.

Fraser was informed that the British Government saw no reason to recognize the Jewish state, and had 'positive reasons' for not doing so;

(11) Ibid., p. 2.
(12) Ibid., p. 1.
(13) Ibid., p. 2.
'Recognition of the Jewish State at this stage would in our view amount to a declaration of hostility to the Arab World. The effect could be to impair our relations with the Arab States for many years to come. We could expect to have even greater difficulty than before in securing our strategic requirements, the whole climate of opinion in this vital area would be hostile to us, and we could expect increasing difficulty in obtaining facilities for the extraction of Middle East oil which we feel to be essential to the Commonwealth as a whole and to most individual members thereof ... The effect of our policy will, of course, be considerably impaired if any Commonwealth Government grants immediate recognition even de facto to the Jewish State. The United Kingdom Government, who have to bear the main brunt of maintaining the interest of the whole Commonwealth in the Middle East, hope that the Commonwealth Governments will feel able to assist by refraining from recognising the Jewish state at this stage'.

This plea, sent with variations to all heads of Commonwealth Governments, fell on ears which, while not deaf, were far from fully receptive. The British Government tried, with astonishing clumsiness, to disguise this fact, sending Fraser a 'summary' of Commonwealth opinion on 18 May which attempted to convince him that the other Dominions were in substantial agreement with the British analysis.

The British Government, however, apparently underestimated the extent of Commonwealth consultation which took place outside the channels it provided.

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(14) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.13, Memorandum, Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Wellington, to Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, Prime Minister of New Zealand, 'Recognition of Jewish State in Palestine', 17 May 1948.

Fraser was aware that with the qualified exception of Canada, whose acceptance of Britain's stance owed as much to resentment at diplomatic pressure from the United States to grant early recognition to Israel as it did to any inherent merit in the British argument, the other Dominions were in favour of recognition. South Africa was convinced that de facto recognition of Israel was consistent with both the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of the General Assembly's resolution and refused to compromise its discretionary right to grant recognition. Australia was prepared to accede temporarily to the British request, but stated that, in its view, Britain's strategic problems were of her own making; if Britain had shown sufficient resolve to stand on principle, to follow the Assembly's recommendation and bring pressure upon the Arab States to accept it, the war in Palestine may have been prevented. Australia furthermore suggested that, rather than passively await developments, all Commonwealth countries should jointly declare their willingness to recognize states which became members of the United Nations and pledge to support Israel's membership application in accordance with the November resolution. (16)

Fraser's detailed response to the British Government's stated policy combined aspects of the Australian and South African policies with the restatement of New Zealand's established policies on Palestine and the United Nations. He stressed that New Zealand's support for the partitioning of Palestine was the result of 'very careful consideration' and the belief that the solution 'involved the least injustice ... to the rights of both parties'. The Assembly had made its decision in November 1947 and, in New Zealand's view:

'The adoption of the partition plan gave it ... the significance of a judgement by the United Nations. The plan, admittedly, was a whole; but its essential element was the endorsement of the Jewish claim for a State'.

Although the partition plan had not been carried out in accordance with the provisions made by the General Assembly, New Zealand continued to support 'the principle of the establishment of a Jewish State and an Arab State in Palestine' and, as a result, was finding it 'most difficult' to withhold de facto recognition.

Fraser conceded that the fighting had made the 'present juridical situation' in Palestine obscure, but he was confident that 'the Jewish Provisional Government is exercising effective Government authority over a Jewish area corresponding more or less with that recommended by the Assembly Resolution of November 29, and that the requirements of international law for de facto recognition of a government are satisfied, and in fact have been satisfied since the termination of the Mandate'.

He denied that there was any suggestion of partisanship in New Zealand's intended action. If the Palestinian Arabs set up a government within the territory allocated to the Arab State by the General Assembly, New Zealand would be equally willing to recognize it. Under no circumstances, however, would New Zealand recognize or accept the right of the Arabs to proclaim a unitary Arab state throughout the whole of Palestine; such an action would be in flagrant contravention of the General Assembly resolution.

While the New Zealand Government appreciated the importance of the strategic and economic considerations which motivated British objections to early recognition, it remained unconvinced that these were of sufficient gravity to warrant the reversal of 'a course of policy with which New Zealand has come to be very definitely associated'. The United States and the Soviet Union, along with an ever increasing number of smaller nations, had already recognized Israel and New Zealand was convinced that, in this context, Arab reactions to recognition of the Jewish state by members of the Commonwealth 'might not be as serious as they would otherwise be'. Nevertheless, New Zealand accepted that 'uniformity
of action within the Commonwealth' was desirable and was accordingly prepared to delay its recognition of the Provisional Government of Israel until 'any further comments' the British Government might wish to make could be considered. (17)

The hopes which the Australian and New Zealand governments held for a combined Commonwealth declaration of recognition vanished on 24 May 1948 when the South African Government announced that it had accorded de facto recognition to the State of Israel. South Africa could boast the best organized and most influential Zionist movement in the Commonwealth and the Zionists took full advantage of the expectation that the forthcoming election would be closely fought to bring pressure to bear upon the Smuts Government. Smuts himself had consistently supported the struggle for the Jewish state since his involvement in Lord Curzon's Subcommitte on Territorial Desiderata in 1917. Britain's pleas proved no match for the combination of personal belief and possible political advantage. (18)

Britain responded to the South African action by intensified efforts to persuade the other Dominions to toe the line. The continued barrage of 'advice' and analysis from the Office of the Colonial Secretary was reinforced by a series of messages from 'The United Kingdom Government', forwarded to the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand by the respective British High Commissioners. (19)

(17) P.M. 177/5/2, Pt.13, Telegram No. 104, Minister, External Affairs, New Zealand, to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, London, 21 May 1948; Repeated: No. 96, to Minister of External Affairs, Canberra; No. 69, to Minister External Affairs, Ottawa; No. 26, to Prime Minister, Union of South Africa; No. 197, to New Zealand Minister, Washington.


(19) These messages presumably originated from, or were at least approved by, the British Cabinet and were designed to impress upon the Dominions the importance Britain attached to the withholding of recognition. The more formal nature of their delivery, and their address to the heads of the Dominion Governments rather than the respective Ministers of External Affairs, appears to bear this out, particularly as the 'ordinary' telegraph communications from the Office of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, which presented the same arguments, continued unabated. See also n.20 below.
The persistent theme of all these British communiques was that the Dominions should comply with Britain's request to delay recognition of Israel until there was some firmer foundation for granting recognition than presently existed. Using the same legal tests of statehood that had already featured in New Zealand's assessment of the grounds for recognizing Israel, Britain attempted to prove the 'illegality' of the Jewish State. This argument, which heavily stressed the need for a state to exercise effective authority within a defined area and contrasted the confused and disputed situation within the old mandate of Palestine, had some substance. By itself, it may have been enough to persuade Australia and New Zealand - the focii of British concern - that there were sufficient grounds to postpone recognition, but other features of the British view seemed almost calculated to arouse antipodean ire.

Both Australia and New Zealand had felt obliged to criticise what they saw as British obstructionism and expediency on various occasions since the problem of Palestine had been submitted to the United Nations. Britain's steadfast refusal to provide even rudimentary assistance for the implementation of the General Assembly's resolution had been a particular cause for concern. Now they found themselves confronted with the British argument that because the Jewish state did not comply with the detailed provisions of the Assembly's plan, recognition of that state could not be justified. (20) This argument failed to impress either Fraser or Evatt. Both men had acknowledged all along that responsibility for the problems in Palestine could not be placed upon Britain alone but they were equally adamant that the fault did not lie either with the partition plan or the Jewish state. They were reluctant to penalize

(20) See P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.13, 'Message from the United Kingdom Government to Mr Fraser about Palestine', 24 May 1948; P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.14, 'Message from Mr. Attlee to Mr Chifley on Recognition of State of Israel', 8 June 1948; P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.15, 'Message from the United Kingdom Government to Mr Fraser about Palestine', 16 August 1948.
the new state of Israel because the United Nations had not faced its responsibilities and defended its creation from external aggression.

Fraser, however, decided on a tactical withdrawal. He informed the British Government that he would 'hold (his) hand' while any likelihood of 'persuading the Arabs to agree to a truce' remained. As he told Berendes, this concession had appeased majority opinion within the New Zealand Cabinet at little real cost; it was far short of a firm commitment to withhold recognition until Britain decided it should be granted. Subsequent action, Fraser confided, depended on the result of the Australian Cabinet's discussions on the matter which were due to be held in the next few days. If Australia decided in favour of recognition, this would necessitate a decision by New Zealand, but he was no longer sure that the independent extension of recognition by one or all of the Dominions was immediately preferable, and was 'beginning to wonder whether we may not do more practical good by our bringing pressure to bear on the United Kingdom'. (21)

Fraser had, in fact, already begun to place pressure upon the British Government before confessing his motives to Berendes. On 28 May, in a telegram sent to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, he strongly criticized aspects of Britain's policy towards Israel and threatened to state his disapproval publicly unless that policy was modified. He would await developments on the truce proposals, but his patience had its limits;

'While I have no intention or wish to proceed without consulting the United Kingdom Government ... I cannot maintain silence indefinitely'.

Although 'deeply ... disturbed' by the British Government's attitude to the 'whole question' of a settlement to the Palestine problem, Fraser was particularly alarmed by the continuing supply of British munitions to the Arabs and the presence of British officers in the Transjordanian Arab Legion. Such assistance

(21) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.13, Telegram No. 208, Fraser to Berendes, 30 May 1948.
was 'both wrong and unwise' and could not 'be excused in time of war'. It should be stopped immediately so that Britain could 'keep free itself (sic) of the charge that it is assisting the Arabs against the Jews' which made a mockery of Britain's claims to be impartial. The policy was made all the more reprehensible in Fraser's eyes because Britain was, strictly speaking, aiding aggressors to challenge the authority of the United Nations.

This aspect of British policy, he stated, had been widely reported in New Zealand newspapers, prompting the Leader of the Opposition to enquire where New Zealand stood. Fraser was consequently under some pressure to make a public statement 'setting forth (his) own conception of what is right and proper in the matter'. He gave fair warning;

'I feel bound to let you know in advance that any such statement will show that I am in disagreement with the United Kingdom Government and will even imply condemnation of their (sic) policy'. (22)

Australia proved equally critical of British policy and was equally unwilling to give a definite undertaking to postpone recognition. The Federal Cabinet discussed the question on 1 June and 'while there was (a) lot of support for immediate recognition, there was doubt in some minds as to (the) wisdom (of) making (a) decision until (the) position cleared'. It was agreed to delay any action for a 'few days', after which the decision to grant or withhold recognition would be in the hands of Chifley and Evatt. (23) On 5 June Evatt cabled the British Government proposing a joint declaration of de facto recognition by Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. (24) The British Government responded by sending Chifley the, by-now, standard reply, stressing

(22) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.13, Telegram No. 112, Peter Fraser to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, London, 28 May 1948.

(23) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.14, Telegram No. 119, High Commissioner for New Zealand, Canberra, to Peter Fraser, 2 June 1948.

(24) Summarized in P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.15, Telegram No. 268, A.D. McIntosh to Berendsen, 20 July 1948.
Britain's unwillingness to participate in such a declaration under the present circumstances and 'recommending' that the Dominions follow the Mother Country's lead. (25)

In the wake of the British rejection of Evatt's proposal, the efforts of Australia and New Zealand to elicit a joint declaration of recognition of Israel by Britain and the Dominions were effectively abandoned. Moreover they suspended any further steps towards extending recognition independently from Britain. Part of the explanation for this can be found in the first United Nations truce in Palestine which was reached after considerable negotiation and compromise and came into force on 11 June 1948. (26)

Although it lasted barely four weeks, the truce seemed to bear out in some part the British analysis and overcome some of the doubts about the possibility of conciliation which Australia and New Zealand had expressed. If the Arabs and Jews had agreed to lay down their weapons once, there was reason to hope that a further, more permanent truce could be arranged as the prelude to a negotiated settlement. This rather more optimistic prognosis persuaded Fraser and Evatt that there was more merit in the British Government's proposal to use the granting of recognition as a bait to entice the Israelis to the negotiation table than they had initially supposed. For the next six months the Dominions postponed any further action on the question of recognition in anticipation of a British initiative.

Any attempt to explain Fraser's sudden silence on the inconsistencies of British policy towards Israel and the moral and legal obligations upon the Commonwealth to grant immediate de facto recognition to the Provisional Government of Israel must also take into account his response to the rapidly increas-

(25) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.14, 'Message from Mr. Attlee to Mr Chifley on Recognition of State of Israel', 8 June 1948.

ing international tensions in the second half of 1948 which many interpreted as the opening gambits of World War Three. (27)

On 28 September, shortly before his departure for the Commonwealth Prime Minister’s Conference in London and the third regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, Fraser presented his grand view of the international situation to the House of Representatives. His mood was far from optimistic as he informed his colleagues that:

'The world is not a bright and encouraging place at the present moment. I am not going to say that war and bloodshed between the nations of the earth are imminent or inevitable ... black as the outlook is, it is clear that certain nations are counting the cost ... and planning and hoping to win the fruits of war without actually engaging in it. That may be at once encouraging and menacing. It is quite clear that there must not be any repetition of what happened with the Nazi power – that is, the democratic nations in retreat. If that happened again it would be the end of everything that is worthwhile in our civilisation'. (28)

Fraser was convinced that Russian Communism posed the same threat to world order in the late 1940s as German Nazism had in the late 1930s. New Zealand had abandoned its pretensions to an independent foreign policy to reassert its commitment to Britain in the face of the Nazi threat and Fraser was determined that the new threat should be met in similar fashion. He fervently hoped that the Commonwealth Conference would display the 'sense of solidarity that is

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(27) The Russian blockade of Berlin which began in late June 1948 created a general war scare in the West, although the response in official circles, particularly in the United States, to this development was more measured. See Stephen E. Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, pp. 172-176; Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace, pp. 372-392 passim; Bruce R. Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980), pp. 410-425 passim

absolutely essential to the security of the British countries at the present
time', for

'nobody unless he is completely or wilfully blind, or who shuts his eyes
(sic) to reason, can come to any other conclusion than that the Western
nations of Europe are threatened, that among the Western nations is the
United Kingdom, that the United Kingdom is the centre, focus and force
of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and that she is also threatened.
New Zealand, as previously, is in the position where her frontiers are the
frontiers of the British Commonwealth. The frontiers of the British
Commonwealth are the frontiers of democracy. Nothing is to be gained by
shirking our duty and not facing up to the facts'. (29)

Amongst the facts that Fraser was dutifully facing up to was the less than
Fraser stressed that 'a great deal' had been achieved by the Trusteeship Council
and the Economic and Social Council but, in the final analysis, the United
Nations Organization had made 'little progress along the paths of peace'. The
Security Council's inability to prevent aggression was the 'predominant'
feature of the world scene, and Fraser had no doubts as to where the blame for
this lay:

'the veto power has been used to stultify, to negate all progress, all
efforts towards international progress or attempts at humanitarian and
reasonable adjustment of international differences, and so long as that
power is used we can look in vain for a single, solid, firm foothold in
a world of seething hatred'.

Australia and New Zealand had consistently opposed the veto provision since
its appearance in the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals. Their prophecies had 'been
more than realised' but such proof of the righteousness of their continued

criticism of the veto was cold comfort in the face of the 'unscrupulous force that is spreading over the face of the earth'.(30)

Fraser was as yet reluctant, at least in public, to discard the United Nations as the guarantor of international security and accept the traditional alternative of 'forming rival blocs of nations, and ... dividing the world into armed camps'. On the contrary, he continued to assert that;

'We must still make the best of the United Nations Organization and endeavour to support it in every way in the hope that reason ultimately will prevail, and that the goodwill and the prayers of the millions who placed their hopes upon its Charter will be finally realised'.

The British Commonwealth could play a vital role in this respect by demonstrating that countries that were 'free ... independent and sovereign' were nonetheless interdependent and that 'without our mother country and without the strength that unity means ... our sovereignty would count for little'. The example of the Commonwealth should illustrate to 'all the nations of the world ... that it is only by interdependence and co-operation that any one of them can attain to the full fruition of freedom and democracy' and the world become 'that place of peace and harmony and human brotherhood all of us wish and pray for'.(31)

Fraser had arrived at a neat reconciliation of New Zealand's role as a member of the Commonwealth with its role as a member of the United Nations. His policy on Palestine, which had previously displayed the frequent incongruities between these two roles, was modified accordingly. The private attempts

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(30) Ibid., pp. 171-172. See also Chapter Three, passim. For an indication of the persistence of New Zealand opposition to the veto 1945-49 see Statements and Documents, Document 10, pp. 99-100; Document 11, pp. 107-108; Document 14, pp. 116-118; Document 22, pp. 143-146; Document 28, p. 171 Document 36, pp. 201-202. See also Peter Fraser Papers, 1/7, pamphlet, New Zealand and the New International Order: Speech at San Francisco by the Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, pp. 7-10.

to persuade and pressure Britain into adopting a more favourable attitude towards the new state of Israel were abandoned in favour of public statements stressing the need for conciliation and co-operation between Arabs and Jews.

In his September statement Fraser expressed 'the very earnest and sincere hope' that the peace plan of the General Assembly's mediator, the late Count Folke Bernadotte, (32) would be 'considered and accepted by both the Jewish and Arab peoples ... that we shall see in that country ... harmony prevailing once more ... and that the Jewish people will be established in their national home, with the Arab people dwelling with them in unity and peace, both in their own parts of Palestine'. (33) These same themes, together with yet another defence of the soundness of the principles underlying the partition resolution of November 1947, were restated in the speech on the Palestine problem Fraser delivered in the First (Political) Committee of the General Assembly on 29 November 1948. (34) They had become the basis of New Zealand's subdued policy on Palestine.

At the opening meeting of the third regular session the British delegation introduced a resolution calling for the General Assembly to support the recommendations contained in Bernadotte's report and appoint a Conciliation Commission to take over the Mediator's functions. New Zealand was in general agreement with the proposal and voted in favour, although only after it had combined with a number of other nations - including Canada and Australia - to secure a series of amendments which gave the General Assembly ultimate approval

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(32) The Stern Gang (LEHI) disliked Bernadotte and opposed his plan. They sought to destroy both by assassinating the Mediator on 16 September 1948. This act aroused universal horror and disgust, and the Israeli authorities, who shared the world's abhorrence, moved rapidly to round up the terrorists. See J. Bowyer Bell, Terror out of Zion, pp. 336-340.

(33) Statements and Documents, Document 28, p. 171.

(34) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.17, Summary of Statement by Right Honourable Peter Fraser in the First Committee, 29 November 1948.
of the Commission's membership. (35)

The British Government remained extremely unwilling to even consider recognizing the Provisional Government of Israel. The Australian Government raised the question on 21 December only to be informed that the British view remained unchanged and that

'Recognition is not envisaged at present but its advisability will be considered if and when it appears that a Palestinian settlement is in sight in which both sides can at least acquiesce'. (36)

It is perhaps a measure of the discomfort Australia and New Zealand shared at the international situation that this British response - essentially the same as the policy which both countries had sporadically criticised since its announcement at the first special session of the Assembly in April 1947 - was accepted without further comment. The two countries continued to await a British initiative on the question of recognition even after the announcement of the Canadian Government on 24 December 1948 that it had satisfied itself that the State of Israel complied with the essential conditions of statehood and that Canada was therefore extending de facto recognition. (37)

Fraser had avoided any further communication with the British Government on the question of recognition since his telegram of 28 May. He had also resisted any temptation he may have felt to publicly criticize Britain's policy but an ominous turn in Britain's attitude prompted him to break his silence in the early days of 1949.


(36) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.17, Telegram No. 329, Minister, External Affairs, Canberra to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, London, 21 December 1948, (Repeated: Telegram No. 239 to Minister, External Affairs Wellington); Telegram No. 318, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Australian Government (sic), 24 December 1948, (Repeated: Telegram No. 264 to New Zealand Government).

(37) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.17, Memorandum: Recognition of Israel, New Zealand High Commissioner, Ottawa, to Minister of External Affairs, Wellington, 28 December 1948; Lester Pearson, Memoirs vol.2, p. 217.
On 29 December 1948 the Security Council had called for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine. The Arabs once again refused to negotiate with the Israelis and the fighting continued. David Ben-Gurion, under pressure from his military commanders, authorized 'OperationMOREV', the final military operation in the south, designed to drive the Egyptian forces out of the Negev and the Gaza Strip. The campaign was a complete success but, in its course, Israeli forces pushed deep into the Egyptian Sinai. Britain, concerned at the spreading disorder within Egypt and aware that the sequence of military failures were an important source of tension, announced that unless the Israeli forces withdrew immediately, Britain would intervene militarily under the provisions of the Anglo-Egyptian Defence Treaty of 1936.

Although ordering the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai on 2 January 1949, Ben-Gurion allowed his commanders to complete the encirclement of the Egyptian forces in the Gaza Strip. R.A.F. fighters began flying over the battle zone with Egyptian squadrons. There was an almost tiresome inevitability about the result - four British Spitfires were shot down by Israeli Messerschmitts on 7 January. Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, immediately accused the Israelis of 'unprovoked aggressions' and implicitly threatened the deployment of British forces from the Suez bases. This proved too much for Truman. He had tacitly supported Britain bringing pressure to bear on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai but was not prepared to allow the situation to escalate. Even if British troops were not introduced into the conflict, the British attitude would not help the chances of either the Acting Mediator or the Conciliation Commission to secure a lasting ceasefire. On the contrary, the indications were that the Arab States intended to use the possibility of British intervention to rekindle the enthusiasm of their own forces. In an attempt to defuse a situation which seemed increasingly explosive, Truman issued a statement criticizing Britain's actions in sending its fighter-planes into the
combat area. (38)

Fraser was also concerned by these developments. On 11 January he cabled Nash from Washington, stating that, on the basis of press information, 'the mustering of British Forces ... was too excessive a step to take even if planes were wrongfully and inexcusably shot down', and requesting copies of the latest British cables concerning the recent developments. Nash duly despatched the information which had been requested but the British case failed to convince Fraser. On 14 January, after a meeting with Truman at the White House, Fraser issued a press statement declaring that he saw absolutely no grounds which could justify any British military action against Israel. He once more stated his firm belief that the United Nations resolution in favour of partition constituted the legal basis for the negotiation of a reasonable and permanent peace in Palestine, calling for the United Nations to recognize that the Jews had in fact established a sovereign state. He concluded by stating his conviction that

'everyone understands clearly today that Israel has become a Nation and a State and that it was only a matter of time before all countries accorded recognition to Israel and admitted it to the United Nations'. (39)

Fraser had made good his threat of eight months ago. What is more, his irritation at this further display of the apparently irreconcilable attitude of the British Government towards Israel caused him to once more seek a solution through the agency of the United Nations. The Australian Government had proposed a similar course of action on 1 July 1948, although both Australia and New Zealand had subsequently discarded the suggestion because it 'would have postponed any opportunity for according recognition until the next session of the Assembly'. (40) They had decided to await a British initiative on the matter.

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(38) Michael Bar-Zohar, Ben-Gurion: A Biography, pp. 185-186; Howard M. Sachar, A History of Israel, pp. 345-346; Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel p. 368.

(39) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Telegram No. 5, Fraser to Nash, 11 January 1949; Telegram P.M. 109, Nash to Fraser, 12 January 1949. Peter Fraser Papers 4/7, Newspaper clipping, Le Droit, Ottawa, 15 January 1949. (My own translation.)

(40) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.15, Telegram No. 268, McIntosh to Berendsen, 20 July 1948.
but the recent events suggested that the British Government would be even less willing to consider recognizing Israel in January 1949 than it had been previously. Fraser's patience was very nearly exhausted. His commitment to the British Commonwealth, although deep and abiding, was not unquestioning. He was convinced that Britain's policy had been in error in a number of vital respects throughout the United Nations' involvement in the Palestine problem, that it had constituted, and continued to constitute, an obstacle to the settlement of the dispute, and so he gave notice that he no longer considered himself under any obligation to postpone committing New Zealand on the question of recognition.

The chances of a widening and public breach with Britain on this matter, with its likelihood of domestic political problems for Fraser and the Labour Government, evaporated as events moved with almost indecent haste to once more create broad areas of agreement between the British and New Zealand policies in the second half of January.

Certain that the Jewish state was 'born, secured, and functioning', Ben-Gurion had ordered Israeli forces to complete their withdrawal from the Sinai. This move allowed the Egyptian forces who had been cut off by the rapid Israeli advance to withdraw to their own country. The Egyptian Government, perceptibly relieved at this rather unexpected letoff, let it be known that Egypt was now prepared to negotiate 'indirectly' with Israel. The other Arab States subsequently indicated that they would follow Egypt's lead. On 13 January armistice talks between Egypt and Israel began at Rhodes, aided by the capable presence of Dr. Ralph Bunche, formerly head of UNSCOP's secretariat, now the United Nations Acting Mediator for Palestine.(41)

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(41) Howard M. Sachar, A History of Israel, pp. 346-347; David P. Forsythe, United Nations Peacemaking: The Conciliation Commission for Palestine, (Baltimore, 1972), pp. 29-31. The members of the Conciliation Commission had not nominated their representatives in January 1949 and it was March before the Commission participated in the negotiations.
Although progress was painfully slow, by 21 January the British Government decided that the indications were sufficiently encouraging to allow consideration of whether Britain could 'facilitate these negotiations ... by extending recognition to the Government of Israel'. The Australian and New Zealand Governments were informed that the British Cabinet would make its decision on 24 January and were invited to participate in a joint declaration. It was also 'suggested' that they consider the 'appropriateness' of recognizing Transjordan, a 'well-established and co-operative' state, simultaneously. (42)

Australia and New Zealand lost no time in indicating their willingness to recognize Israel as soon as possible. Neither country, however, was prepared to recognize Transjordan at the same time. Fraser was resolved that 'unless there are overwhelmingly strong reasons for recognition of Transjordan ... (the) matter should be postponed for later action as recognition of Transjordan simultaneously (with) Israel would look as if recognition of the latter was done in an unwilling spirit'. (43)

Evatt shared Fraser's view, pointing out that both Australia and New Zealand had supported two earlier attempts to secure the admission of Transjordan to the United Nations. Although the applications had been vetoed by the Soviet Union in the Security Council, Evatt argued that both countries had adequately demonstrated their willingness to enjoy friendly relations with Transjordan. If Britain insisted, Australia was prepared 'to make some general statement' formally according de facto recognition to Transjordan, 'but not simultaneously with recognition of Israel'. (44)

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(42) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Memorandum, Message from Mr Attlee to Mr Nash, 21 January 1949.

(43) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Telegram No. 24, Peter Fraser to Walter Nash, 23 January 1949.

(44) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Telegram No. 9, High Commissioner for New Zealand, Canberra, to Minister, External Affairs, Wellington, 22 January 1949.
On 26 January the two Dominions were informed that the British Cabinet had agreed to the de facto recognition of Israel. It was envisaged that the declaration would be made 'very soon' although, because it had been decided to attempt to co-ordinate this action with the Benelux Powers, a definite date could not yet be given. (45)

Evatt immediately suspected yet another British attempt to persuade Australia and New Zealand to delay granting recognition. While confessing 'great satisfaction' at the reversal of British policy which, in his view, was 'a complete vindication of the attitude New Zealand and Australia have taken from the very beginning of United Nations consideration of this question', he stressed that the Australian Government saw no reason to either delay recognition or to support the 'technical and narrow' declaration which, it seemed, the British intended to make. (46)

On 28 January Joseph Chifley, the Australian Prime Minister announced that his Government had decided to accord 'full recognition to the Government of Israel' in the belief that 'the new nation of Israel will be a force of special value in the world community'. (47) Evatt explained the reasoning behind Australia's decision to grant de jure recognition in a statement released the following day;

'The legal basis of Israel is unassailable. It rests on the decision of the United Nations Assembly 1947 which contemplated the coming into existence of the new State and its subsequent recognition as a member of (the) United Nations ... The distinction between de facto and de jure recognition, which may have application in cases of Governments brought into

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(45) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Memorandum, Message from Mr Attlee to Mr Fraser about the Recognition of the Government of Israel, 26 January 1949.

(46) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Telegram No. 12, High Commissioner for New Zealand, Canberra, to Minister of External Affairs, Wellington 22 January 1949.

(47) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Note for file (unsigned), Australian Recognition of Israel, 29 January 1949.
existence as a result of internal revolution, has no application to the present case. The de jure or legal foundation in this case is the Assembly decision operating in relation to the termination of the previously existing Mandate'. (48)

New Zealand, applying a different interpretation of the distinction between de facto and de jure recognition, released its declaration of de facto recognition of Israel in co-ordination with the British Government on 29 January 1949. In his accompanying press statement Fraser declared that 'Events in Palestine have, during recent months, made it clear that the Jewish State is an established political entity in the Middle East and must be accepted as such'.

New Zealand's action was 'a logical development' of its support for the partition resolution passed by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947. He and his Government hoped that Israel and its neighbours would reach 'an early and final settlement in accordance with the provisions of the resolution of the General Assembly of 11 December 1948' which called on the parties to reach agreement on the final boundaries of the Jewish and Arab states, the establishment of an international regime for Jerusalem, the protection of the Holy Places and the resettlement of refugees. He was confident that these questions could be resolved and that

'the Government and people of Israel will make a special contribution not only to the development and peace of the Middle East, but also in the broader field of international relations'. (49)

Fraser's expectations seemed to be nearing realization in early 1949. A series of bilateral 'amistice arrangements' were successfully negotiated between Israel and Egypt (24 February), Transjordan (11 March), Lebanon (23

(48) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.19, Memorandum: Israel - Developments since Recognition, (prepared RCC), 17 June 1949, p.2.

(49) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.18, Unnumbered telegram, Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, Minister, External Affairs, Wellington, to Moshe Shertok, Foreign Minister of Israel, Tel Aviv, 29 January 1949; AJHR, 1949, A-1, Department of External Affairs: Report for Year Ended 31st March 1949, pp. 32-33.
March), and Syria (13 April), and there seemed every prospect that the Conciliation Commission would effectively assist the various governments in building 'a final settlement' upon these promising bases. (50) With this in mind, Fraser instructed Berendsen on 20 April to support Israel's application for membership of the United Nations. In doing so, Berendsen was told to reaffirm New Zealand's support for the Assembly resolution of 11 December, stressing that New Zealand expected 'that outstanding questions will be settled in accordance with that resolution' and making it clear that New Zealand looked to Israel to honour its obligations to the General Assembly which had provided the legal basis for its existence. (51) When those obligations had been fulfilled, New Zealand would extend de jure recognition. (52)

By May 1948, however, it was obvious to all concerned that any 'final settlement' of the Palestine problem was still a distant prospect. The major stumbling block was the question of the resettlement of the estimated 800,000 Palestinian Arabs displaced by the fighting in Palestine. While the Arab nations insisted on the complete resolution of the refugee problem as a pre-condition for peace negotiations, Israel remained adamant that the return of any refugees depended upon the establishment of a formal peace. The attitudes of both parties hardened progressively throughout 1949 and the possibility of genuine and lasting peace in the Middle East receded apace. (53)

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(50) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.19, Memorandum: Israel - Developments since Recognition, 17 June 1949, pp. 1-2.

(51) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.19, Telegram No. 121, Fraser to Berendsen, 20 April 1949.

(52) Like Australia, New Zealand saw the General Assembly resolutions as the legal basis for Israel's existence, but stressed the specifics of the November 1947 resolution, restated in the December 1948 resolution. Until these had been complied with, New Zealand was reluctant to extend de jure (i.e. unqualified) recognition.

The United Nations moved to assist the refugees. Initial assistance came from the various international welfare agencies, (54) their efforts directed by Sir Raphael Cilento of Australia who had been appointed Director of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization by the General Assembly in November 1948. With the failure of a number of attempts at a political or diplomatic solution, the problem was formally recognized and the international effort rationalized in March 1950 when the United Nations Refugee Works Administration (UNRWA) was established. UNRWA initially sought to encourage and assist the relocation of the refugees in their host countries. The scheme was a dismal failure. Not only did it ignore the national and personal sentiments of the refugees, but the Arab governments, citing the General Assembly resolution of 11 December as a guarantee that the refugees should be permitted to return to their homes, uniformly refused to co-operate with any resettlement plans. (55)

UNRWA, which had been intended to phase out the 'refugee problem', rapidly became an apparently permanent organization responsible for the relief, health and education of the Palestinian refugees. The refugees, confined to their camps, became dependent on international charity. The largest contributions to UNRWA came from many of the states which had most vigorously supported the creation of Israel. New Zealand had recognized 'the urgency of the problem' in late 1948 and by the end of March 1949 had shipped 'goods to the value of £37,328 to be distributed to those affected'. This concern continued under the National Government which not only voted in favour of the creation of UNRWA but kept New Zealand's contributions amongst the highest in terms of per capita income for many years. (56)


Thus it is unlikely that New Zealand's somewhat belated concern for the fate of the Palestinian Arabs was entirely motivated by any twinges of conscience felt by Fraser or the Labour Party. The international response to the 'refugee problem' was merely a logical development to the internationalization of the 'Palestine problem'. New Zealand had contributed to this new twist in the tangle of Middle East politics. It had a humanitarian duty to share some of the burden it had created, however unwittingly. Moreover, the old imperatives of 'imperial defence', which were resurrected in the final years of the First Labour Government and were central to the Holland Government's view of New Zealand's place in the world, required that New Zealand maintain an interest in the region, even if, for the moment, that interest was only expressed in the provision of aid and 'goods' for the refugees.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The United Nations' search for a solution to the Palestine problem was an abject failure. A Jewish state had been created, but owed its existence more to the successes of the Jewish armed forces than to the deliberations and resolutions of either the General Assembly or the Security Council. In the process some 800,000 Palestinian Arabs had been driven from their homes. Around 300,000 left Palestine altogether for refugee camps in Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria. Some went further afield to other Arab states or to Britain but the vast majority moved into the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the remnants of the proposed Arab state in Palestine. Even here independence was denied them. Under the armistice agreements signed at Rhodes, Egypt assumed control of the Gaza Strip while Transjordan administered and eventually absorbed the West Bank. These arrangements remained in effect until both areas came under Israeli control in the War of 1967. (1)

The Palestinian Arabs lost not only their homeland and their chance of independent statehood, they also lost their dignity and their cultural and social identity. They became refugees, dependent upon international charity for survival and subject to the political and social demands of their host countries. The Jews, who had sought a state of their own as a sanctuary, were condemned to live in persistent enmity with their neighbours and required to constantly redeem Israel with their blood.

New Zealand and Australia, which had shared high expectations of the United Nations' involvement in the issue, were disenchanted by the nature of that involvement and its tragic results. The future of Palestine had been placed squarely in the hands of the General Assembly, giving it its first real opportunity to discuss a complex political, social and economic issue in depth with

little danger of evoking outraged protests at unwarranted intervention in domestic jurisdiction. (2) It was also a chance for the Assembly to demonstrate its ability to determine an equitable and practical solution to a particular problem which involved more than 'general principles'.

In Old Testament times King Solomon, called on to judge a dispute between two women who claimed the same child, decreed that the child be cut in two and one half given to either of the claimants. One woman accepted the king's decision, but the other pleaded with him to give the child to her rival rather than kill it. This convinced Solomon that she was the real mother and he gave the child to her. (3) The General Assembly could not hope to reproduce Solomon's success. Not only did it lack Solomon's divine gift of wisdom for dispensing justice but neither of the rival claimants in the problem confronting it showed the slightest wish of compromising, let alone abandoning their claim.

It was widely acknowledged that there was little likelihood of reaching a formula for settlement that would receive the unqualified acceptance of both parties. The UNSCOP report had detailed the evolution of the Palestinian problem over the three decades of the British mandate. The Jewish case had been presented in extensive submissions and although the leaders of the Palestinian Arab national movement had refused to co-operate with the Special Committee, the analyses of the British administration and the short submissions of the Arab States made it clear that the Arab and Jewish views were irreconcilable. On these grounds partition, which had also been the most preferred solution of the succession of British commissions which had examined the problem in the inter-war years, seemed the most obvious practical solution as it at least offered

(2) South Africa had rejected the General Assembly's recommendations on its treatment of Indians and its mandate over South-West Africa on these grounds; see Chap. 3 pp.137-138 Britain had voluntarily submitted the future of its mandate in Palestine to the General Assembly and so had little grounds for raising such objections.

(3) 1 Kings, 3:16-28.
both parties independent statehood. For some reason which is not readily apparent, however, the majority of the Assembly members which were favourably disposed towards partition paid little attention to the main reservation of the British commissions; that partition would succeed only if adequately enforced until all concerned became resigned to the reality. Whether by convenient design or because they interpreted the statements as rhetorical outbursts for domestic consumption, the same members ignored the repeated threats of the Arab Higher committee and the Arab States that they would not accept any decision other than the immediate declaration of an independent unitary state in Palestine and, if necessary, would overturn any other settlement by force.

With Evatt chairing the Assembly's First (Political) Committee during the discussions on the Special Committee's report, Australia's role was largely confined to ensuring the debate ran as smoothly as possible. As a result New Zealand found itself virtually isolated in pressing the case for the inclusion of provision for enforcement in the partition plan. Berendsen persistently argued that the issues of implementation and enforcement were crucial to the success of any planned settlement and must receive genuine and detailed examination. If this was not done, the General Assembly would be circumventing its obligations and responsibilities to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to the peoples of Palestine.

When it became clear that New Zealand's stand was in opposition to the general mood of the Assembly, Fraser instructed Berendsen to try a different approach. Recognizing that effective enforcement required the involvement of at least one of the Great Powers, he told Berendsen to approach the United States delegation and use the threat of a New Zealand abstention from the vote on partition as a lever to extract a commitment to assist the implementation and enforcement of the Assembly's decision. Fraser's willingness to accept a private undertaking on this matter although such a move smacked of the old-style
secret diplomacy he found so distasteful, indicates the importance he attached
both to the need for enforcement and the success of the Assembly's plan.

Although the United States was prepared to give only a general undertaking
to take its full part in any enforcement provision made by the United Nations
and made it clear that the United States was unlikely to initiate any such pro-
vision, Fraser finally instructed Barendsen to vote in favour of partition.
New Zealand's decision, like that of Australia, was made on much the same
grounds as had the decision to abstain from the vote on the veto provisions
of the Charter at San Francisco in 1945. They were convinced that, in the
final analysis, a basically sound decision, the flaws in which could be remedied
as circumstances permitted, was preferable to no decision at all. Both nations
also anticipated that the escalation of conflict in Palestine would force the
United Nations to adopt a more 'realistic' and 'responsible' approach to enforce-
ment. They were disappointed that the United Nations would then be responding
through the Security Council to a situation that the General Assembly might
have prevented with a degree of foresight and commitment.

Instead New Zealand and Australia found themselves summoned to a second
special session of the Assembly to discuss a submission from the United States
that the previous decision in favour of partition be discarded and Palestine be
declared an international trusteeship. Neither nation found the proposal
acceptable and New Zealand led the fight in defense of partition. The reasoning
was simple. The United Nations could not abandon a duly taken decision simply
because predictable difficulties had arisen, nor could it be seen to back down
from the threat of aggression. Member-states were obliged by the Charter to
accept and assist United Nations decisions and to 'refrain ... from the threat
or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of
any State' (4) and New Zealand demanded that the United Nations make use of the

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(4) Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I, articles 4 and 5, in Ian Brownlie,
(ed.), Basic Documents in International Law, p. 4.
Charter's provisions for combined actions rather than perpetrate 'the further and final irresponsibility of a surrender to illegal force'. (5)

The United States proposal rapidly faded from serious contention but no further action was taken to enforce partition. After the British withdrawal was completed, the armies of the Arab States moved against the newly independent state of Israel and the 'problem' of Palestine rapidly became a 'breach of the peace'. In this situation the Security Council assumed increasing direction of the United Nations involvement and the role of the General Assembly became less important.

In May 1948 there was little chance that the Security Council would move to apply economic, diplomatic or military sanctions against the Arab aggressors. Britain, although officially impartial on issues involving its former mandate, was unwilling to permit any explicit or implicit anti-Arab measures for a variety of strategic, political and economic reasons. The Soviet Union and the United States were intensely suspicious of each others' international ambitions. The United States had made it clear to New Zealand the previous month that its price for any undertaking to 'assist in the maintenance of security in Palestine' was the exclusion of the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union had every reason to seek some involvement in the strategically placed and oil-rich Middle East. (6)

All three nations were permanent members of the Security Council and any one could prevent a United Nations response to developments in Palestine by exercising its veto. As a result the Arab invasion of Palestine was met, not by a combined United Nations action in defence of its decision and in response to aggression, but by a succession of resolutions calling upon the combatants to cease fighting and negotiate a settlement. (7)


(6) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.10, Telegram No. 127, Berendsen to Fraser, 6 April 1948; see also Chapter Five, pp. 230-231.

Despite the reservations he had expressed to the New Zealand House of Representatives on 24 July 1945 when leading the debate on the ratification of the United Nations Charter, (8) Peter Fraser continued to share with his principal advisers the hope that the United Nations would evolve into 'a supranational organization which would exercise judicial powers and command physical force and ... mobilise the loyalty of men and women all over the world'. (9) While acknowledging that the absence of a firm declaration binding all members to resist 'any active aggression against any member' was a serious weakness in the Charter, New Zealand remained convinced that the United Nations provided the framework within which a genuine system of collective security could be established and the 'four freedoms' (10) realized. What was required on the part of all members was the will to accept their responsibilities and honour their obligations to the letter and, above all, the spirit of the Charter.

During the initial stages of United Nations involvement in Palestine these hopes had continued to burn brightly. Walter Nash, who shared Fraser's vision of the United Nations' role in international affairs, declared in Parliament on 31 July 1947 that;

'We should not cease discussing the possibility of world government. If we abandon that ideal, with the intention, when we get peace, of just being peaceable, and have no struggle, then the human race will not be worth saving. It is the constant striving towards something higher and better and sometimes more difficult, to enable individuals and peoples to be free, that is worthwhile - not struggle for struggles' sake'. (11)

(8) NZPD, vol. 268, 24 July 1945, pp. 577-580; see also Chapter Three, pp. 132-136.


(10) NZPD, vol. 268, 24 July 1945, p. 574. The 'four freedoms' - freedom of speech and expression; freedom of religion; freedom from fear; freedom from want.

This notion that New Zealand should set moral and humanitarian concerns above more immediate objectives in foreign policy had been touched upon by Sir George Grey who had sought formal recognition 'that it is the duty of the New Zealand nation ... to do all the good it possibly can for people in all parts of the world' in 1891 by proposing that a memorial seeking an end to Jewish persecution be sent to the Tsar of Russia. It also inspired Peter Fraser to nominate the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as an issue deserving the attention of the United Nations and to pledge New Zealand's support for 'justice for the ancient home and new hope of the Jewish people' in 1945. (12) Humanitarian and moral concerns consistently underlay New Zealand's involvement in the General Assembly's discussions on the UNSCOP report and encouraged the spirited defence of partition undertaken by New Zealand in April and May 1948.

Such hopes had, however, little basis in reality. New Zealand's faith that the United Nations would prove willing and able to pursue such high-minded objectives within the framework of a system of collective security and its insistence that member-nations live up to their 'obligations' and 'responsibilities' to the organization were based on the assumption that the apparent unity of purpose of the war years still remained. This was not the case. Not only did the Charter neglect to clearly define what constituted aggression and commit all members to a pre-arranged response, but the decision as to what form any combined action would take rested with the Security Council, not the General Assembly. In this context the permanent members' powers of veto were vitally important. As a small power with limited resources, New Zealand could afford to emphasize abstractions such as justice and morality in its approach to international affairs but the complex national and international interests of the 'Big Three' (Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States) made them extremely reluctant to embrace a system of collective security which could work against

their policy goals.

Fraser was unwilling to accept that the United Nations' potential as the organizational framework for collective security was severely limited. During the debate on ratification he had stated his belief that the Charter and the organization presented 'a great opportunity, and, perhaps, the last opportunity, that the nations of the earth will have of forming an organisation to maintain peace, to prevent aggression, and to make impossible in the future the sort of attacks that were indulged in by the Nazi and Fascist powers'. (13) Although the Charter had stopped short of requiring all members to make an unqualified commitment to these aims, he hoped that a more positive approach could be established in practice.

The future of Palestine became to Fraser and his advisors a test case for the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole. They sought to establish important general principles in practice through the opportunity provided by this specific question. Here the general provisions of the Charter might prove advantageous for, once the Assembly was in possession of a detailed and impartial preliminary investigation, it could draft a plan for settlement which was uniquely applicable to the situation in Palestine. This plan should also make proper provision for implementing and enforcing the situation. In the process precedents would be established for the direct involvement of the General Assembly in determining the solutions to problems affecting international peace and security and combined action by the United Nations in support of an Assembly decision. These aims, however, were not realized.

The General Assembly's discussions on the Palestine problem demonstrated that the majority of member-nations were not interested in seeking a more active role for the Assembly in matters affecting peace and security. More seriously, the Assembly proved unwilling to discuss, let alone make provision for, the enforcement of its decision, leaving any action on that matter to the Security Council. On Fraser's instructions, Berendzen had argued that, by anticipating

(13) NZPD vol. 268, 24 July 1945, p. 575.
the need for enforcement, the Assembly might prevent a breach of the peace, aiding peaceful settlement and increasing the prestige of the United Nations. (14) This view had received little support and, even after New Zealand's analysis was proved correct and war broke out in Palestine, the Assembly avoided discussing the question while the Security Council's response proved half-hearted and ineffectual.

Because New Zealand was so intensely interested in the United Nations' handling of the Palestine problem the lessons which followed the failure of the organizations' attempt to solve that problem could not be ignored. As international tensions increased throughout 1948, New Zealand was forced to recognize the growing political and ideological divisions on display in the United Nations. In a world which was energetically realigning itself into power blocs and alliances around the United States and the Soviet Union the United Nations appeared increasingly impotent. The internationalist ideals which had been such important imperatives in New Zealand foreign policy in the immediate post-war period declined in priority as the country sought the security which the United Nations could not guarantee from more orthodox sources.

Before his departure to the third regular session of the General Assembly in Paris, Fraser cited the 'inability of the Security Council of the United Nations to prevent aggression' as the 'predominant' feature of the world scene. The United Nations had achieved much, particularly through the Trusteeship Council and the Economic and Social Council, but there had been 'little progress along the paths of peace'. He remained convinced that the organization had a significant contribution to make to 'peace and harmony and human brotherhood' and intended 'to support it in every way in the hope that reason will ultimately prevail', but, as his assessment of the number of crises facing the world

(14) See Chapter Four, pp. 199-200.
revealed, he did not expect his hope to be fulfilled in the immediate future. (15)

Fraser's enthusiasm was cooled further by the events of the Assembly's third regular session. This, the first session of the Cold War proper, became so bogged down by 'the constant repetition ... of speeches several hours in length on the same item of the agenda; the abuse of points of order; the harrying of the chairman and other methods of obstruction' that it had to carry many items of business over into early 1949. Nevertheless, Fraser remained attached to the organization, stressing that:

'The United Nations is important not because of our momentary assessment of this activity or that, but because it is an integral part of the system of international relations in which we are placed. It is one of the chief channels through which the nations, the great powers, as well as the small, express their foreign policies. It must be accepted with its achievements and its failures, its opportunities and its costs, or we must isolate ourselves from one of the main currents of international life. Also, as a member, New Zealand has its own share of influence and responsibility in affecting the decisions of the United Nations. In using that influence and discharging that responsibility the New Zealand delegation has attempted, while keeping our country's interests always in view, to remain faithful to the purposes and principles of the Charter'. (16)

Fraser's approach was, however, more circumspect than previously. The United Nations was 'an integral part ... one of the chief channels' of New Zealand foreign policy. It was 'one of the main currents of international life' and New Zealand's responsibilities to 'the purposes and principles of the

(15) Extracts from a statement by Peter Fraser in the House of Representatives, 28 September 1948, Statements and Documents, Doc. 28, pp. 170-172.

(16) Introduction to the Report by Peter Fraser on the First Part of the Third Session of the General Assembly, 21 September - 12 December 1948, Statements and Documents, Doc. 29, pp. 182-183.
Charter' were subject to its own interests. This last point is the most significant indication of the change in Fraser's attitude. Some fifteen months earlier he had criticized the British Government for refusing 'to accept a share in carrying out a decision made by the full United Nations in accordance with the Charter' although Britain had explained that assisting the implementation of any settlement in Palestine which was not accepted by both Arabs and Jews conflicted with its national interests. (17) The United Nations remained 'an integral part of the system of international relations' in which New Zealand was placed but Fraser was no longer insistent that it was a supranational organization.

Fraser attempted to resolve his anxieties and uncertainties by reaffirming his faith in the British Commonwealth. The ties of sentiment to the Commonwealth which Fraser shared with many other New Zealanders were strengthened by more pragmatic concerns for New Zealand's security, particularly as the United States had not yet embraced the concept of 'global containment' and remained preoccupied with the Soviet threat in Europe. (18)

Fraser, too, was concerned at the possible consequences of Soviet expansionism in Europe which, in his view, directly threatened Britain, 'the centre, focus, and force' of the commonwealth. In September 1948 he pledged that 'whatever New Zealand can do to help our mother country will be done', stressing that nothing was to be gained 'by shirking our duty and not facing up to the facts'. Chief amongst those facts was the insidious advance of communism whose forces he saw 'menacing us even inside our own country'. (19)

At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in October 1948 Fraser was

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(17) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt. 7, Unnumbered telegram, Prime Minister, New Zealand, to Colonial Secretary, London, 17 October 1947, pp. 1-3; see also Chapter Four pp. 181-183.


(19) Statements and Documents, Doc. 28, pp. 170-180, passim.
informed that Britain considered war with Russia an imminent possibility. New Zealand's contribution to Commonwealth defence was then discussed and Fraser agreed that New Zealand troops should be available for deployment in the Middle East theatre should the need arise. (20) He had previously been prepared to contribute a token force to a United Nations action in Palestine but this had not eventuated. He had abandoned, at least for the present, his hope that national armed forces would be maintained 'for two purposes only ... commitments on behalf of the United Nations and ... national commitments ... specifically approved by the United Nations'. (21) Any New Zealand presence in the Middle East in the foreseeable future would be in response to the traditional concerns of 'imperial defence'.

Fraser's transformation from committed internationalist to fervent cold war warrior and his acceptance of New Zealand's place in Britain's strategic analysis did not substantially alter his policy on Palestine. Although the 'unquestioning confidence of New Zealand in the authority of the United Nations to take extreme measures', which in J.V. Wilson's opinion was the most interesting aspect of New Zealand's Palestine policy, (22) had been severely shaken by the end of 1948, New Zealand stood by its earlier decisions. Fraser's speech in the First Committee on 29 November 1948 restated the essence of Berendsen's defence of partition the preceding April, repeating that New Zealand fully supported the resolution of November 1947 and considered that it should be the basis of any settlement because:

'once the decision had been reached the United Nations were (sic) under an obligation to observe it and to endeavour to have it enforced. The

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(21) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.7, Unnumbered telegram, Prime Minister, New Zealand, to Colonial Secretary, London, 17 October 1947, p. 2.

fact that some had even resorted to force in an attempt to defeat that
decision was an added reason to adhere to it'.(23)

He went on to state that the fact of Israel's existence 'could not be dis-
puted' and should be thus recognized by the Arab States as a condition of a
negotiated settlement which was fair to both parties.(24)

This explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist was at odds with the
British policy then in operation and was not entirely consistent with New
Zealand's continued withholding of de facto recognition from Israel in antici-
pation of a combined Commonwealth declaration. It displays something of the
problems Fraser faced in juggling his Commonwealth obligations and his commit-
ment to the cause of the Jewish homeland with its powerful humanitarian assoc-
iation. As his outspoken reaction to Britain's attempt to intimidate the
Israelis following the shooting-down of four British fighter-planes on 7 January
1949 showed, there were still distinct limits to his compliance, and patience,
with Britain's policy towards Israel.(25)

In his press statement a-nouncing that the New Zealand Government had
extended de facto recognition to Israel on 29 January 1949 Fraser again stressed
that Israel's existence was an accomplished fact. He described the Jewish
state as 'an established political entity in the Middle East' which 'must be
accepted as such'.(26) This statement, together with his speech to the First
Committee of the Assembly in November 1949 constituted the basis for New
Zealand's subsequent policy towards Israel.(27)

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(23) P.M. 277/5/2, Pt.17, Summary of Statement by Right Honourable Peter Fraser
in the First Committee 29 November 1949, p. 2.
(24) Ibid., pp. 1-2; see Chapter Five, pp. 236-240.
(25) See Chapter Six, pp. 266-268.
(26) See Chapter Six, pp. 270-271.
(27) Ariadna Diana Motus, 'A Policy of Uneven Evenhandedness: An Examination
of New Zealand's Relations with Israel, 1967-1975', M.A. Thesis, Political
The armistice agreements reached between Israel and the four combatant Arab states in the first half of 1949 formally brought to an end 'the military phase of the Palestine conflict'. Negotiations for a permanent settlement, which hinged on the questions of 'territorial settlements between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States, the resettlement of refugees, and the question of Jerusalem and the Holy Places', continued more slowly. New Zealand accepted an ongoing commitment to assist in the relief of the Palestinian refugees and, although a peace settlement had not been reached and a state of war 'technically' continued to exist, on 28 July 1950 the New Zealand Government extended de jure recognition to the State of Israel.

There had been a certain perfunctoriness about New Zealand's attitude to Israel and the ongoing Palestine problem following the extension of de facto recognition in January 1949. Disappointment at the ineffectual and indecisive nature of United Nations involvement in Palestine undoubtedly played its part. At San Francisco in 1945 Fraser had called for 'fair decisions and just re-arrangements' for 'the ancient home and new hope of the Jewish people' but, while a Jewish state had been established, Fraser was uncomfortably aware that the United Nations had done little to ensure a settlement that was 'fair' and 'just' for either Jews or Arabs. By refusing to accept the responsibilities demanded by its decision the United Nations had changed the emphases of the Palestine problem instead of solving it, creating a new source of bitter dispute between Arabs and Jews.

Other issues diverted the attentions of Fraser and his advisers in 1949. The Soviet blockade of Berlin continued into May. Although the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, which committed the Western allies to a combined response


to an attack on any or all members, on 4 April 1949 relieved New Zealand concern at the possibility of an immediate threat to Britain's security, tensions remained high. The Communist victory in Mainland China gave New Zealand more cause for concern, as did the increasing aggression of the Communist régime in North Korea and the Communist insurgents in Burma, Malaya and Indochina. (30)

Despite the striking Communist advances in Asia, New Zealand remained committed to making its major commitment to Commonwealth defence in the Middle East. While the focus of attention remained the same as it had been during the inter-war years, the rationale behind it was different. The Singapore strategy which had earlier prompted New Zealand's interest in developments in the Suez Canal region was no longer relevant. Neither China, nor Russia - nor, for that matter, Japan - posed an immediate threat to the security of New Zealand or Australia and both countries were screened by the United States' Pacific naval forces operating from forward bases. Britain considered that the Suez Canal and the oil supplies of the Middle East were, however, under immediate threat;

'The Soviets were held capable of mounting a powerful offensive from the Caucasus region which might, if undelayed, reach the Suez area within four months'. (31)

Britain informed its Australasian Dominions that the 'fate of Australia and New Zealand would be decided in Europe and the Middle East'. Britain's primary commitment would be to 'the battle of Europe' and it was in the Middle East that Australia and New Zealand could make their most valuable contribution. If the Western allies defeated the Soviet Union in Europe but lost control of the Middle East, 'the war would not have been won - there would only be an armis-


To ensure that New Zealand was able to fulfil its role, Fraser - the ardent anti-conscriptionist of the First World War - pushed for the introduction of compulsory military training in peacetime. With the scheme accepted in a national referendum held on 3 August 1949, Fraser informed the British Government that New Zealand would prepare its forces 'on the basis of the Middle East plan'.

Fraser's abrupt reaction to the realizations that the United Nations was not prepared to pay anything more than lip-service to the principle of collective security and that the Great Powers, upon whose support and involvement the organization's success depended, were primarily interested in protecting and furthering their own interests, was essentially the response of a frustrated idealist.

He had believed that the San Francisco Conference had met 'for the purpose of outlawing aggression and preventing war as effectively as possible and establishing peace on a sure and lasting foundation'. To succeed would be to fulfill a 'great and sacred trust' and

'prevent future generations from being plunged again into the horrors,'

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(32) Cab. 222/2/2, Pt.1, Discussion with Field Marshal Sir William Slim held on Friday, 23 June 1950. (Minutes taken by P. Shanahan, Cabinet Secretary), pp. 2-3. Although the Fraser Government had been defeated in the 1949 election, it is clear that the analysis presented to the new National Government by Field Marshal Slim demonstrated the same concerns as had been expressed to Fraser in 1949.

Slim also revealed that, in one aspect at least, the United Nations' decision had worked in Britain's favour:

'The Egyptians appreciated ... that the presence of British troops had prevented(Sweat) also from acquiring Agaba'. ibid., p.4.

This 'appreciation' acquired new significance in 1956 in regard to the Suez crisis.

bloodshed, suffering, destruction, and devastation of war. We will have
saved the world'.

To fail would be to 'betray all mankind'. (34)

Sentiment and good intentions were not enough;

'Ve must see to it that the machine designed to translate that goodwill
into effective operation among the nations is efficient'. (35)

Nor would a sound structure be sufficient without the resolution on the
part of all members to make the new organization work. The League of Nations
had failed because 'the rule of expediency replaced moral principles' and,
Fraser warned;

'unless in the future we have the moral rectitude and determination to
stand by our engagements and principles, then the procedure laid down in
this new organisation will avail us nothing ... I would plead most earnestly
that the members of the new organisation should seek international equity,
both political and economic, that the members will, in all circumstances,
keep their pledged word and faith, and that members will never again allow
aggression in any shape or form in any part of the world'. (36)

The United Nations' search for a solution to the Palestine problem, which
Fraser had hoped would provide the General Assembly with a chance to display its
potential, provided instead an opportunity for the majority of member-nations to
display their apathy, expediency, and opportunism. In the process the United
Nations incited aggression and war in Palestine, choosing to spend its time in
procedural disputes rather than acknowledge its responsibilities, to debate
impractical alternatives rather than act.

(34) Peter Fraser Papers, 1/7, pamphlet, 'New Zealand and the International Order
Speech at San Francisco by the Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser',
undated, p. 4.

(35) Ibid., p. 4.

(36) Ibid., p. 10.
Upon identifying the emergence of another ruthless and aggressive totalitarian power, Fraser recognized that, despite its possibilities and its achievements in social and economic matters, the United Nations could not guarantee New Zealand's security. As Berendsen informed the fourth regular session of the General Assembly on 22 September 1949:

'The long and the short of it - as sensible men and women throughout the world should always remember - is that while we have in this organisation something that is very precious indeed and something that this worthy of all support, nevertheless, we do not have the one thing, the means of defeating aggression, which in the long-run man must achieve or perish'.

(37)

New Zealand continued to support the purposes and principles of the United Nations but, until the organization could fulfil this crucial requirement, the country would seek to guarantee its security through its Commonwealth ties and its participation in regional alliances.

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