



*Gt. Brit. Colonial Office.*

# PALESTINE

## Termination of the Mandate

### 15th May, 1948

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His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will cease to be responsible for the administration of Palestine from midnight on 14th May, 1948. The ending of thirty years of British rule in Palestine, begun when General Allenby's troops occupied that country towards the close of the first world war, provides a fitting occasion for a brief review of its history and of the policy pursued by His Majesty's Government.

### I.—The Origin and Nature of the British Mandate for Palestine

The Mandate for Palestine was assigned to His Majesty by the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers in 1920, was approved by the League of Nations in 1922 and took effect in 1923, when the Treaty of Lausanne formally ended the war between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Empire, in which Palestine had previously been included.

To implement this Mandate, His Majesty's Government set up in Palestine an Administration comprising a British High Commissioner, appointed by and responsible to the Colonial Office, assisted by an Advisory Council nominated by him from his officials. These, together with the police and judiciary, were initially mainly British, but, in the civil service, British subjects were gradually replaced by Arabs and Jews in all but the most senior appointments. The Administration was supported by a British garrison.

With this mandate His Majesty's Government accepted certain obligations, which are set out in two documents: the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Mandate for Palestine. Article 22 of the Covenant contains the general rules applying to all Mandated Territories, while the Mandate for Palestine itself defines the particular rules to be observed by the Mandatory for that country.

Article 22 begins:—

"To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them, and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation, and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant."

Article 22 then goes on to explain that the nature of these Mandates should be adapted to the differing needs of the various territories to which they are to be applied, and its fourth paragraph reads:—

"Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a state of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."

The most important of the additional obligations imposed on His Majesty's Government by the Mandate for Palestine itself are those contained in the Preamble and in Articles 2 and 6. The following are the relevant extracts:—

### PREAMBLE

"The Council of the League of Nations: . . . Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on 2nd November, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might 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; . . . Confirming the said Mandate, defines its terms as follows:—"

### ARTICLE 2

"The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safe-guarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion."

### ARTICLE 6

"The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish Agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes."

On 16th September, 1922, the Council of the League agreed that those provisions of the Mandate relating to the establishment of a Jewish national home should not apply to Transjordan, which was thereafter separately administered until it became an independent State.

In accepting these obligations His Majesty's Government undertook three major tasks. The first of these was to promote the well-being and development of the people of Palestine. The second was to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and Jewish immigration into that country, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population were not prejudiced. The third was to prepare the people of Palestine for self-government.

It is by their efforts to carry out the tasks set them by the League of Nations, and not in the light of the conflicting aspirations of either Arabs or Jews, that the British Administration of Palestine must be judged.

### II.—The Development of Palestine

When British rule began, Palestine was a primitive and undeveloped country. Agriculture was inefficient, industry almost non-existent and communications inadequate. Its population of some 750,000 were disease-ridden and poor. Lawlessness was rife inside Palestine and made worse by raiding

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nomads from the desert. The Government of Palestine had to cope with all these problems in their task of promoting the well-being and development of the inhabitants.

In their efforts to improve agricultural efficiency the Government of Palestine introduced new types of livestock and seeds, better methods of farming and special measures directed against the pests and diseases affecting crops and cattle. Substantial loans were granted to farmers and considerable progress was made towards the restoration of Palestine's forests. The effect of these steps was reinforced by the achievements of Jewish capital and enterprise and by the steadily rising standards of health and education among the Arabs. A measure of the success achieved is provided by the increase in the export of citrus fruit (Palestine's most important export) from 2,600,000 cases in 1929-30 to 15,300,000 in 1938-39.

The development of industry has, in the main, been achieved by Jewish capital and initiative, but the expansion and modernisation by the Government of Palestine of the country's roads and railways and the construction of the deep water port of Haifa have also made an important contribution, while their active encouragement fostered the remarkable industrial expansion which took place during the war.

An efficient and impartial judicial system was set up and, although the Government's achievement in establishing law and order was later to be largely undone by political violence, it had made such progress by the end of 1926 that the British garrison could be reduced to a single squadron of the R.A.F. and two companies of armoured cars.

It is, however, in their efforts to improve public health and the standard of living that the Government of Palestine have achieved their most striking success. The elimination of malaria, the creation of medical services, the improvement of water supplies and the provision of infant welfare centres reinforced the effects of a higher standard of living due to economic development. The total Arab population was almost doubled between 1922 and 1945, mainly owing to the sharp fall in infant mortality (which decreased by 39 per cent. between 1927 and 1945) and to their growing rate of natural increase, now among the highest in the world.

The establishment and expansion by the Government of Arab education (Jewish education being provided entirely by the Jews themselves) was considerably hampered by the recurring political disturbances in Palestine and the high proportion of Government expenditure consequently devoted to the maintenance of law and order, but in 1945-46, 57 per cent. of Arab boys between 5 and 14 and 23 per cent. of the girls were attending school.

In the words of the report submitted in 1947 to the General Assembly by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine:

"One may find in the record of the Palestine Administration evidence of persistent effort to effect gradual improvements in the economic and social condition of the Arab population."

### III.—The Jewish National Home

The progress made towards the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people has been remarkable. 400,000 Jewish immigrants have entered Palestine since 1920 and the total Jewish population has risen from 84,000 in 1922 to 640,000 to-day. Large areas of land, once neglected, have been brought into fruitful bearing and the area owned by Jews has increased from 650,000 dunums<sup>(1)</sup> to over 1,600,000. New stand-

(1) One dunum equals 247 acres or 1,000 square metres.

ards of agriculture have been introduced and 300 agricultural settlements and small towns with an aggregate population of 140,000 created. Tel Aviv, which is wholly Jewish, has grown from a village to a modern city of 150,000 inhabitants, the largest in Palestine. Hydro-electric energy has been developed by the Jordan and Yarmuk concessionaries, who have also set up fuel power plants, while the resources of the Dead Sea are being exploited by a concessionary company founded on Jewish initiative. Industries have been established, notwithstanding the paucity of raw materials, covering a wide range of manufactures and having a gross output valued in 1947 at some £40,000,000. This economic development has been supplemented by successful efforts in the field of social services. The medical services, first established by voluntary bodies, are extensive, providing a wide range of facilities and commanding a high degree of skill in their staff. The communal education system, which provides primary schooling for almost all Jewish children of school age, as well as secondary, technical and agricultural education, is crowned by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The achievement of so much in so short a space of time is primarily due to the efforts, intelligence and devotion of the Jews themselves, and to the protection and assistance afforded them by the Government of Palestine. To quote once more the Report of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine,

"The present difficult circumstances should not distort the perspective of solid achievement arising from the joint efforts of the Jewish community and the Administration in laying the foundations of the National Home."

### IV.—The Obstacles which Frustrated the Efforts of His Majesty's Government to Establish Self-Governing Institutions in Palestine

The Government of Palestine were unable to make comparable progress towards the accomplishment of their third task, the preparation of the people for self-government, owing to the mutual hostility of Arabs and Jews. The existence of Arab opposition to the creation of a Jewish national home was apparent even before the Mandate began. The American King-Crane Commission sent out to the Middle East by President Wilson in 1919 had reported that:

"The Peace Conference should not shut its eyes to the fact that the anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and Syria is intense and not lightly to be flouted. No British officer, consulted by the Commissioners, believed that the Zionist programme could be carried out except by force of arms."

The first outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence took place in 1920 and 1921. These were followed by more serious disturbances in 1929.

These disturbances did not prevent the Government of Palestine from attempting to set up self-governing institutions. In 1920, the High Commissioner had formed a nominated Advisory Council consisting of 10 British officials, 4 Moslem Arabs, 3 Christian Arabs and 3 Jews. Two years later an Order-in-Council was issued providing for the creation of a Legislative Council, to consist of the High Commissioner, 10 official members and 12 elected members, of whom 8 were to be Moslems, 2 Christians and 2 Jews. The Arabs refused to take part in any form of government involving acceptance of the Jewish national home and boycotted the elections held in 1923, thus making it impossible to set up the Legislative Council. The High Commissioner then attempted to reconstitute the Advisory

Council on the lines of the abortive Legislative Council, but, of the 10 Arabs nominated by him, 7 withdrew their acceptance under political pressure, thus preventing the transformation of the nominated Advisory Council into a representative body. The High Commissioner then attempted to create an Arab Agency analogous to the Jewish Agency, to which Article 4 of the Mandate had assigned the duty of "advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine," but the Arab leaders refused this offer on the ground that it would not satisfy the aspirations of the Arab people, adding that they had never recognised the status of the Jewish Agency and had no desire for the establishment of an Arab Agency on the same basis. The Government of Palestine has ever since been carried on by the High Commissioner with the aid of a nominated Advisory Council of officials.

The next seven years saw a sharp increase in the number of Jews entering Palestine. In 1928 there had been a net Jewish immigration of only 10 persons, but between 1930 and 1936 over 182,000 entered the country. Although the impetus given to the economic development of Palestine by these immigrants and the capital they brought, conferred certain benefits on the Arab community also, the growth in the Jewish population was bitterly resented by the Arabs. In 1933 this resentment found expression in riots directed not against the Jews but against the Government of Palestine, who were accused of tilting the balance against the Arabs in their administration of the Mandate. By far the most serious outbreak of Arab violence, however, was the rebellion of 1936-39. This took various forms, rioting, sabotage, destruction of property, terrorism and guerrilla warfare, and was directed both against the Jews and against the Government of Palestine. In all some 4,000 people were killed and two divisions of British troops, together with several squadrons of the R.A.F., had to be employed to suppress the rising, a task not completed until the end of 1939. The violence and extent of the rebellion were such that His Majesty's Government appointed a Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel, to enquire into the underlying causes of the disturbances and into the operation of the Mandate, and to make recommendations for the removal of any legitimate grievances felt by Jews or Arabs. The Commission reported in 1937 that the underlying causes were the same as those which had brought about the earlier disturbances of 1920, 1921, 1929 and 1933, namely, the desire of the Arabs for national independence and their hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish national home. They pointed out that, although both Arabs and Jews were fit to govern themselves, yet, associated as they were under the Mandate, self-government was impracticable for both since neither would accept a Government in which the other had a majority. They concluded that the obligations imposed upon His Majesty's Government by the terms of the Mandate were mutually irreconcilable and that it was impossible both to concede the Arab claim to self-government and to secure the establishment of the Jewish national home. They accordingly recommended that the Mandate should be terminated and Palestine divided between the Jews and Arabs. Failing this, they recommended that, if the Mandate was to continue, the rate of Jewish immigration, previously limited only by the economic absorptive capacity of the country, should, for the next five years, be restricted to a maximum of 12,000 a year.

Neither the scheme suggested by the Peel Commission, nor the more detailed proposals for partition of the Woodhead Commission which followed them, proved acceptable to either Arabs or Jews. His Majesty's Government, who had originally accepted the principle of partition and

had been authorised by the League of Nations to investigate its practicability, could therefore only conclude that:—

"The political, administrative and financial difficulties involved in the proposal to create independent Arab and Jewish States inside Palestine are so great that this solution of the problem is impracticable."

His Majesty's Government accordingly decided to resume their efforts to reconcile Jews and Arabs within the terms of the Mandate. In 1939 they issued a White Paper defining their policy and explaining that it was not their intention to convert Palestine into a Jewish State or into an Arab State, but that their purpose was:—

"The establishment within 10 years of an independent Palestine State . . . in which Arabs and Jews share in government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded."

The White Paper went on to explain that His Majesty's Government had always hoped that:

"In time the Arab population, recognising the advantages to be derived from Jewish settlement and development in Palestine, would become reconciled to the further growth of the Jewish national home. This hope has not been fulfilled. The alternatives before His Majesty's Government are either:—

- (i) To seek to expand the Jewish national home indefinitely by immigration, against the strongly expressed will of the Arab people of the country; or
- (ii) To permit further expansion of the Jewish national home by immigration only if the Arabs are prepared to acquiesce in it."

His Majesty's Government pointed out that adoption of the first policy would mean rule by force, contravene the obligations imposed on them by the League of Nations and make impossible the creation of that mutual tolerance and goodwill between Arabs and Jews essential to the security and progress of the Jewish National Home itself. They accordingly decided that, after the admission of not more than 75,000 additional immigrants during the five years beginning in April 1939, no further Jewish immigration would be permitted, unless the Arabs of Palestine were prepared to acquiesce in it. His Majesty's Government also decided that, in accordance with the stipulation in Article 6 of the Mandate that the encouragement of close settlement by Jews on the land should not prejudice the rights and position of other sections of the population, certain restrictions should be placed on the sale of Arab lands to Jews. The amount of land already transferred had now made such measures essential, in order to leave sufficient land for the increased Arab population.

This new statement of policy was examined by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations in June 1939. Four of the Commission's members considered that this policy was not in conformity with the Mandate, while the remaining three thought it justified by existing conditions, provided that it was not opposed by the Council of the League. It was accordingly the intention of His Majesty's Government to seek the approval of the Council for their new policy, but this was prevented by the outbreak of war in September 1939. The Arabs were critical of many of the provisions in the White Paper but it seemed probable that they would eventually acquiesce in their application. The Jews, on the other hand, were bitterly opposed to it and its publication was immediately followed by an outburst of Jewish violence, which continued until the beginning of the war.

1939 also saw the beginning of organised attempts by large numbers of Jews to enter Palestine in excess of the permitted quota. These attempts have continued ever since, and, by exacerbating Arab resentment, have greatly increased the difficulty of maintaining law and order in Palestine. During the war the majority of these illegal immigrants were deported to Mauritius, as enemy agents might otherwise have employed this means of entering Palestine, then a vital strategic area. In 1945 these Jews were brought back from Mauritius and allowed to enter Palestine, an equivalent number being deducted from the legal quota, which, on the expiry of the five-year period laid down in the White Paper of 1939, had been fixed at 1,500 a month, as war conditions had prevented the Jews from bringing in all the 75,000 immigrants permitted by the White Paper. Although this limit was reached at the end of 1945, His Majesty's Government decided to continue the quota of 1,500 a month pending the report of the Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry, which was then starting its work. Jewish immigration has, in fact, continued at this rate ever since. In the summer of 1946 the influx of Jewish illegal immigrants exceeded the capacity of the camps in Palestine where, since the war, they had been detained pending their release under the legal quota, and the majority of those reaching Palestine waters subsequently have been sent to Cyprus for the same purpose.

The control of illegal immigration not only burdened still further the British forces in Palestine and the Royal Navy, but was also the principal cause of the steady increase in Jewish terrorist activities. These had ceased at the beginning of the war, in whose prosecution both Jews and Arabs had loyally co-operated, but broke out again in 1942. From that year until the end of the war Jewish extremists carried out a number of political murders, robberies and acts of sabotage, while Haganah (an illegal military force controlled by the Jewish Agency), organised the theft of arms and ammunition from the British forces in the Middle East. Once Germany had been defeated, these activities, previously sporadic and supported by only a minority of the Jewish community, increased in scale and intensity as the efforts of terrorist gangs were supplemented by those of Haganah and assisted by members of the Jewish Agency. Communications were attacked throughout the country; Government buildings, military trains and places of entertainment frequented by Britons were blown up; and numbers of Britons, Arabs and moderate Jews were kidnapped or murdered. This wholesale terrorism has continued ever since.

When the second world war ended in 1945, the League of Nations, to whom the policy set out in the White Paper of 1939 was to have been submitted, no longer existed. The violent and lasting hostility towards its proposals shown by the Jews and the presence in Europe of several hundred thousand would-be immigrants, the homeless survivors of German persecution, had also to be considered. When, therefore, in August 1945, President Truman suggested the immediate admission to Palestine of 100,000 Jewish immigrants, His Majesty's Government enlisted the co-operation of the United States Government in the appointment of an Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry to investigate the problem of Palestine and of Jewish refugees in Europe and to make recommendations accordingly. This Committee, in a report presented in April 1946, explicitly rejected partition as a solution and proposed instead that the Mandate should be continued pending the execution of a Trusteeship agreement. They also made a number of suggestions for economic and social development and recommended the removal of restrictions on Jewish purchase of Arab land and the immediate authorisation of 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates. As the Committee had made no precise recommendations as to the nature

of the administration or the steps to be taken to prepare for self-government during the long period of British rule which they envisaged, delegations of British and American officials met in London to draw up a detailed plan covering these points. This plan, whose principle was that of provincial autonomy, proposed the division of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish province with a third area under the direct control of a Central Government administered by the British High Commissioner with a nominated Executive Council. Each province would have an elected legislature and executive with a wide range of functions including control over land transfers and immigration. This plan was supported by both the British and the American officials and was approved, in principle and as a basis for negotiation with Arabs and Jews, by His Majesty's Government. The United States Government, however, declined to associate themselves with these negotiations. Both the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine refused to discuss it and, after negotiations with representatives of Arab States and informal conversations with the Jewish Agency, His Majesty's Government produced, in February 1947, a modified plan for a five-year trusteeship of Palestine on a cantonal basis as a preliminary to independence. This, too, was rejected by both Arabs and Jews, who had each put forward proposals of their own: the Arabs, for an independent Palestine with a permanent Arab majority; the Jews, for a Jewish Palestine or, if Palestine could not yet be granted independence, for unrestricted Jewish immigration and settlement throughout Palestine, or, as a last resort, for a viable Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine. Neither Arabs nor Jews would consider the others' proposals.

#### V.—The Problem Referred to the United Nations

After the failure of these discussions His Majesty's Government decided that the only course now open to them was to submit the problem to the judgment of the United Nations, asking that body to recommend a solution. The reasons for this decision were explained by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in a speech to the House of Commons on 18th February, 1947, in which he said:—

“His Majesty's Government have been faced with an irreconcilable conflict of principles. There are in Palestine about 1,200,000 Arabs and 600,000 Jews. For the Jews the essential point of principle is the creation of a sovereign Jewish State. For the Arabs, the essential point of principle is to resist to the last the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in any part of Palestine. The discussions of the last month have quite clearly shown that there is no prospect of resolving this conflict by any settlement negotiated between the parties. But if the conflict has to be resolved by an arbitrary decision, that is not a decision which His Majesty's Government are empowered, as Mandatory, to take. His Majesty's Government have of themselves no power, under the terms of the Mandate, to award the country either to the Arabs or to the Jews, or even to partition it between them.”

The question was accordingly placed on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations, who, after a special session, appointed on 15th May, 1947, a Special Committee to investigate the problem and recommend a solution. In the course of this session the United Kingdom Delegate had explained that His Majesty's Government could not commit themselves to enforcing alone any settlement not acceptable to both Arabs and Jews.

The Special Committee presented their report on 31st August, 1947. A majority of the members recommended the partition of Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish States, with special provisions for the neu-

trality of Jerusalem and the preservation of Palestine's economic unity. A minority recommended the creation of a federal State, in whose Government both Arabs and Jews would share. Neither plan was acceptable to the Arabs, but the Jews were willing to agree to partition subject to certain detailed reservations. The Committee's report was considered by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1947, when the United Kingdom Delegate explained that His Majesty's Government were not themselves prepared to undertake the task of imposing a policy in Palestine by force of arms, and that, in the absence of a settlement, they must plan for an early withdrawal of British forces and of the British administration from Palestine. He also urged that any recommendations made by the General Assembly should be accompanied by a clear definition of the means by which they were to be carried out. These warnings were repeated throughout the Assembly's session, which closed on 29th November, 1947, with the adoption, by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions, of a modified scheme of partition to be implemented by a Commission of five members unsupported by any police or military forces. This plan was accepted in principle by the majority of the Jews, but the Arabs announced their intention of resisting it by every means within their power and were promised full support in their resistance by Egypt, Iraq, the Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan and the Yemen. While this plan was still being discussed, and before the vote was taken, His Majesty's Government repeatedly emphasised that, in the absence of agreement by both Arabs and Jews, they would not themselves enforce it and announced their intention to withdraw all British forces from Palestine by 1st August, 1948.

His Majesty's Government had now striven for twenty-seven years without success to reconcile Jews and Arabs and to prepare the people of Palestine for self-government. The policy adopted by the United Nations had aroused the determined resistance of the Arabs, while the States supporting this policy were themselves not prepared to enforce it. 84,000 troops, who received no co-operation from the Jewish community, had proved insufficient to maintain law and order in the face of a campaign of terrorism waged by highly organised Jewish forces equipped with all the weapons of the modern infantryman. Since the war 338 British subjects had been killed in Palestine, while the military forces there had cost the British taxpayer £100 million. The renewal of Arab violence on the announcement of the United Nations decision to partition Palestine and the declared intentions of Jewish extremists showed that the loss of further British lives was inevitable. It was equally clear that, in view of His Majesty's Government's decision not to enforce the partition of Palestine against the declared wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, the continued presence there of British troops and officials could no longer be justified.

In these circumstances His Majesty's Government decided to bring to an end their Mandate and to prepare for the earliest possible withdrawal from Palestine of all British forces. They accordingly announced, on 11th December, 1947, that the Mandate would end on 15th May, 1948, from which date the sole task of the British forces in Palestine would be to complete their withdrawal by 1st August, 1948. His Majesty's Government's decision to end the Mandate was welcomed by Arabs and Jews alike, as well as by the United Nations.

#### VI.—The Last Months of the Mandate

The Government of Palestine had now to hold apart two peoples bent on open war and to guard the coast and frontiers of Palestine against the arms and supporters which both Arabs and Jews attempted to introduce,

while simultaneously winding up their administration, evacuating their officials, withdrawing their security forces and negotiating with the United Nations the transfer of their authority and functions. Inevitably not all of these tasks were fully accomplished.

It had originally been the intention of the United Nations that the Commission appointed to implement the Assembly's recommendations should succeed to the authority exercised by the Government of Palestine and should arrange for the transfer and maintenance of the essential services operated by the Government. Experts from the United Kingdom and Palestine were accordingly appointed to assist the Commission at Lake Success and the many problems involved were discussed in detail, both in London and in New York. The arrival of the Commission in Palestine to implement the partition plan would have inflamed Arab violence and made the problem of internal order more difficult than ever in the final period of the evacuation. His Majesty's Government could not, therefore, agree to the proposed entry, in February, of the whole Commission, but suggested the despatch of a small advance party. When this advance party had visited Palestine and seen for themselves the conditions prevailing there, the Commission reported to the Security Council that they would be unable to carry out their task without the assistance of armed forces, which the Security Council declined to provide. It then became obvious that the Commission would not themselves be able to arrange for the transfer of the functions exercised by the Central Government and steps were accordingly taken to devolve upon local authorities those functions which could appropriately be assumed by them. Municipalities were given increased powers of taxation, and hospitals, schools and other services were handed over to them. Municipal police forces were organised for the maintenance of law and order within their own communities and licenses issued to importers to enable them to continue the purchase of essential commodities hitherto imported in bulk by the Government. Certain services, such as posts and telegraphs, could not, by their very nature, be transferred to local authorities but, with these exceptions, everything possible was done to ensure that the disappearance of a Central Government would not lead to the complete breakdown of those services on which the ordinary life of the country depends. At the same time, the interception of ships carrying Jewish illegal immigrants and of armed Arab bands from neighbouring States added to the difficulties already overburdening the British forces, who had to defend both Arabs and Jews against major attacks by their opponents. Not only did they receive no co-operation from either side, but they were themselves constantly attacked and, in the last month of the Mandate, reinforcements had to be sent to Palestine in order to cover the withdrawal of the troops already there.

The mounting tide of violence and their almost insuperable administrative problems did not prevent the Government of Palestine from continuing their attempts at mediation or from supporting the efforts made by the United Nations to arrange a truce, particularly in Jerusalem, where the holy places of three great religions were threatened with desecration and destruction. In this, at least, they have achieved some measure of success.

Although British responsibility for Palestine has ceased, it is the earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that, as both sides come to realise the tragic consequences of attempting to conquer Palestine by force, some compromise may yet be possible, which will prevent the destruction of all that has been achieved during the last thirty years and which will enable the people of Palestine to live at peace and to govern themselves. To that end His Majesty's Government are still prepared to give every assistance in their power, short of imposing by force a solution not acceptable to both peoples.

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