PALESTINE

Statement of Policy

by His Majesty's Government

in the United Kingdom

Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, October 1930

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1. The Report of the Special Commission, under the Chairmanship of Sir Walter Rhaw, which was published in April, gave rise to acute controversy, in the course of which it became evident that there is considerable misunderstanding about the past actions and future intentions of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in regard to the administration of Palestine. It was realised that the publication of a clear and full statement of policy, designed to remove such misunderstanding and the resultant uncertainty and apprehension, was a matter of urgent importance. The preparation of such a statement, however, necessitated certain essential preliminary steps which have inevitably delayed its completion.

The Report of the Shaw Commission drew attention to certain features of the problem, which, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, called for prompt and full investigation, in view of their important bearing upon future policy. It was therefore decided to send to Palestine a highly qualified investigator (Sir John Hope Simpson) to confer with the High Commissioner and to report to His Majesty's Government on land settlement, immigration and development. Owing to the dominating importance of these subjects, and their close inter-connection, His Majesty's Government recognised that no statement of policy could be formulated without first taking into account a full and detailed exposition of the situation in Palestine under these three important heads, such as Sir John Hope Simpson was eminently qualified to furnish. Considerable pressure has been brought to bear upon His Majesty's Government to anticipate the receipt of Sir John Hope Simpson's Report by a declaration of policy, but, while appreciating the urgent need for as early a declaration as possible, His Majesty's Government felt bound to adhere to their decision to await the receipt of Sir John Hope Simpson's Report, especially having regard to the evidence which was accumulating as to the extreme difficulty and complexity of the problem and the need for the fullest investigation of the facts before arriving at any definite conclusions.

Sir John Hope Simpson's Report has now been received, and the present statement of policy has been framed after very careful consideration of its contents and of other information bearing upon the Palestine situation which has recently become available.
2. In a country such as Palestine, where the interests and aims of two sections of the community are at present diverse and in some respects conflicting, it is too much to expect that any declaration of policy will fully satisfy the aspirations of either party. His Majesty's Government has, however, permitted themselves to hope that the removal of existing misunderstandings and the more precise definition of their intentions may go far to allay uneasiness and to restore confidence on both sides. It will be the endeavour of His Majesty's Government, not only by the present statement of policy but by administrative actions which will result from it, to convince both Arabs and Jews of their firm intention to promote the essential interests of both races to the utmost of their power, and to work consistently for the development, in Palestine, of a prosperous community, living in peace under an impartial and progressive Administration. It is necessary, however, to emphasise an important point, viz., that in the peculiar circumstances of Palestine no policy, however enlightened or however vigorously prosecuted, can hope for success, unless it is supported not merely by the acceptance, but by the willing cooperation of the communities for whose benefit it is designed.

It is unnecessary here to dwell upon the unhappy events of the past year and the plorable conditions which have resulted from them. His Majesty's Government feel bound, however, to remark that they have received little assistance from either side in healing the breach between them during the months of tension and unrest which have followed on the disturbances of August 1929, and that to the difficulties created by the mutual suspicions and hostilities of the two races has been added a further grave obstacle, namely, an attitude of mistrust towards His Majesty's Government fostered by a press campaign in which the true facts of the situation have become obscured and distorted. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that on the establishment of better relations between Arabs and Jews depend the future peace and prosperity of the country which is dear to both races, the object which His Majesty's Government have constantly in view, and that it is more likely to be attained if both sides will willingly cooperate with the Government and with the Palestine Administration, and endeavour to repress in that, in the discharge of their mandatory obligations and indeed in all their relations with Palestine, His Majesty's Government may be trusted to safeguard and promote the interests of both races.

3. Many of the misunderstandings which have unhappily arisen between both sides appear to be the result of a failure to appreciate the nature of the duty imposed upon His Majesty's Government by the terms of the Mandate. The next point, therefore, which His Majesty's Government feel is necessary to emphasise, in the strongest manner possible, is that in the words of the Prime Minister, "That said Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, "is an international obligation from which there can be no question of receding." In spite of so unequivocal a statement, the hope seems to have been entertained that, by some means or other, an escape could be found from the limitations imposed by the terms of the Mandate. It must be realised, once and for all, that it is useless for Jewish leaders on the one hand to press His Majesty's Government to conform to the aspirations of the more uncompromising sections of Zionist opinion, and that to ignore the equally important duty of the Mandatory Power towards the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. On the other hand, it is equally useless for Arab leaders to maintain their demands for a form of Constitution, which would make it impossible for His Majesty's Government to carry out, in the fullest sense, the double undertaking already referred to. His Majesty's Government have reason to think that one of the reasons for the sustained tension and agitation on both sides has been the creation by misguided advisers of the false hope that efforts to intimidate and to bring pressure to bear upon His Majesty's Government would eventually result in forcing them into a policy which weighted the balances in favour of the one or the other party.

It becomes, therefore, essential that at the outset His Majesty's Government should make it clear that they will not be moved, by any pressure or threats, from the path laid down in the Mandate, and from the pursuit of a policy which aims at promoting the interests of the inhabitants of Palestine, both Arabs and Jews, in a manner which shall be consistent with the obligations which the Mandate imposes.

4. This is not the first time that His Majesty's Government have endeavoured to make clear the nature of their policy in Palestine. In 1922 a full statement was published and was communicated both to the Palestine Arab Delegation, then in London, and to the Zionist Organisation. This statement met with no acceptance on the part of the Arab Delegation, but the
Executive of the Zionist Organisation passed a Resolution assuring His Majesty's Government that the activities of the Organisation would be conducted in conformity with the principles set forth in the letter conveying the text of this Resolution to His Majesty's Government. Dr. Weizmann wrote:—

"...the Zionist Organisation has, at all time, been sincerely desirous of proceeding in harmonious co-operation with all sections of the people of Palestine. It has repeatedly made it clear, both in word and deed, that nothing is further from its purpose than to prejudice in the smallest degree the Civil or religious rights, or the material interests of the non-Jewish population.

The experience of the intervening years has inevitably brought to light certain administrative defects and special economic problems, which have to be taken into account in the welfare of all sections of the community. Nevertheless, the statement of policy, issued after prolonged and careful consideration, in 1922, provides the foundations upon which future British policy must be built up.

5. Apart from proposals for the establishment of a Constitution in Palestine which will be dealt with in later paragraphs, there are three important points dealt with in this statement which must now be recalled:

(a) The meaning attached by His Majesty's Government to the expression "the Jewish National Home," which is contained in the Mandate.

On this point, the following passage may be quoted from the 1922 Statement:

"...During the last two or three generations the Jews have recreated in Palestine a community, now numbering 80,000, of whom about one-fourth are farmers or workers upon the land. This community has its own political organs; an elected assembly for the direction of its domestic concerns; elected councils in the towns; and an organisation for the control of its schools. It has its elected Chief Rabbinate and Rabbinical Council for the direction of its religious affairs. Its business is conducted in Hebrew as a vernacular language and a Hebrew press serves its needs. It has its distinctive intellectual life and displays considerable economic activity. This community, then, with its town and country population, its political, religious and social organisation, its own language, its own customs, its own life, has in fact "national" characteristics. When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed, and that it should be formally recognised to rest upon ancient historic connection.

"This, then, is the interpretation which His Majesty's Government place upon the Declaration of 1917, and, so understood, the Secretary of State is of opinion that it does not contain or imply anything which need cause either alarm to the Arab population of Palestine or disappointment to the Jews."

(b) The principles which should govern immigration.

On this point the statement of policy continues as follows:

"...For the fulfilment of this policy it is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its numbers by immigration. This immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals. It is essential to ensure that the immigrants should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any section of the present population of their employment. Hitherto the immigration has fulfilled these conditions. The number of immigrants since the British occupation has been about 25,000.

"...It is necessary also to ensure that, persons who are politically undesirable are excluded from Palestine and every precaution has been and will be taken by the Administration to that end."

It will be observed that the principles enunciated above render it essential that in estimating the absorptive capacity of Palestine at any time account should be taken of Arab as well as Jewish unemployment in determining the rate at which immigration should be permitted. It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to take steps to ensure a more exact application of these principles in the future.

(c) The position of the Jewish Agency.

In the passage quoted below, an attempt was made to indicate the limitations, implicit in the Mandate, necessarily imposed upon the scope of the Jewish Agency provided for in Article 4 of the Mandate:

"It is also necessary to point out that the Zionist Commission in Palestine, now termed the Palestine Zionist Executive, has not desired to possess, and does not possess, any share in..."
the general administration of the country. Nor does the special position assigned to the Zionist Organisation in Article IX of the draft Mandate for Palestine imply any such functions. That special position relates to the measures affecting the Jewish population, and contemplates that the Organisation may assist in the general development of the country, but does not entitle it to share in any degree in its Government.

6. His Majesty's Government desire to reaffirm generally the policy outlined in the 1922 Statement, and, in particular, the three passages quoted above. On these three important points it is not thought that anything but barren controversy would result from an attempt further to elaborate their conceptions. It is recognised, however, in the light of past experience that much remains to be done to improve the practical application of the principles enunciated in the foregoing passages, and it is the intention of the Government, in consultation with the Palestine Administration, to take active steps to provide improved machinery for meeting the requirements of both Arabs and Jews, under these three heads. In particular, it is recognised as of the greatest importance that the efforts of the High Commissioner towards some closer and more harmonious form of co-operation and means of consultation between the Palestine Administration and the Jewish Agency should be further developed, always consistently, however, with the principle which must be regarded as basic, that the special position of the Agency, in affording advice and co-operation, does not entitle the Agency, as such, to share in the government of the country. Similarly, machinery must be provided to ensure that the essential interests of the non-Jewish sections of the Community should at the same time be fully safeguarded, and that adequate opportunity should be afforded for consultation with the Palestine Administration on matters affecting those interests.

7. At this stage it becomes desirable to remove any ground of misunderstanding that may exist as to the passages in the Mandate bearing upon the safeguarding of the rights of the non-Jewish community in Palestine. The passages in the Mandate specially bearing on this point will be found in:

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 it is doo, in the preamble, and the development of self-government in the Jewish community, and also for safeguarding 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 n-fits and POSITIO:n 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."

Article 9. "The Mandatory shall be responsible for seeing that the judicial system established in Palestine shall assure to foreigners, as well as to natives, a complete guarantee of their rights.

Respect for personal status of the various peoples and communities and for their religious interests, shall be fully guaranteed. In particular, the control and administration of Wakfs shall be exercised in accordance with religious law and the dispositions of the founders."

Article 13. "All responsibility in connection with the Holy Places and religious buildings or sites in Palestine, including that of preserving existing rights and of securing free access to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites, and the free exercise of worship, while ensuring the requirements of public order and decorum, is assumed by the Mandatory, who shall be responsible solely to the League of Nations in all matters connected herewith, provided that nothing in this article shall prevent the Mandatory from entering into such arrangements as he may deem reasonable with the Administration for the purpose of carrying the provisions of this article into effect, and provided also that nothing in this Mandate shall be construed as conferring upon the Mandatory authority to interfere with the fabric or the management of purely Moslem sacred shrines, the immunities of which are guaranteed."

Article 15. "The Mandatory shall see that complete freedom of conscience and the free exercise of all forms of worship, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, are ensured to all. No discrimination of any kind shall be made between the inhabitants of Palestine on the ground of race, religion or language. No person shall be excluded from Palestine on the sole ground of his religious belief.

The right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its own members in its own language, while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the Administration may impose, shall not be denied or impaired."

On the other hand, special reference to the Jewish National Home and to Jewish interests are contained in Article 4:

A Article 4. "An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognised as a public body for the purpose 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 community in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country.

The Zionist organisation, so long as its organisation and constitution are in the opinion of the Mandatory appropriate, shall