

UNITED NATIONS
Department of Public Information
Press and Publications Bureau
Lake Success, New York

Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine
Fourth Meeting

(PM) TAKE #1
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

(PM) TAKE #1
Palestine

The Chairman, Dr. H. V. Evatt (Australia) called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m., and gave the floor to Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, Chairman of the American Section of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

Dr. Silver began by paying tribute to the work and Report of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. He questioned why the Arab Higher Committee had been unwilling to present its case to UNSCOP.

Dr. Silver said that when the Allies liberated Palestine in 1917, Palestine was a segment of a Turkish province. There was no politically or culturally distinct Arab nation in that province. The Arabs who conquered Palestine in the seventh century held sway over that country, which contained a very mixed and heterogeneous population, for 437 years out of more than 3,000 years of recorded history in Palestine. After 1071 the country was conquered by various non-Arab peoples. By the time the Arabs conquered Palestine in 634 A.D. the Jewish people had already completed nearly 2,000 years of national history in that country, during which time they created a civilization which decidedly influenced the course of mankind.

Concerning Arab economic grievances, Dr. Silver said that the Report of the United Nations Special Committee, which had examined all of them, as well as the relevant chapters in the Royal Commission Report of 1937, conclusively proved that the Palestine Arabs benefited considerably and directly from Jewish development in the economic, financial and social spheres.

(END OF (PM) TAKE #1)

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(PM) Take #2
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

(PM) Take #2
Palestine

Dr. Silver challenged the contention of the Arab Higher Committee that, in contrast with the terroristic acts of the Jews, the Arabs ordinarily fought face to face as noble men. He read extracts from official dispatches to support his point.

Dr. Silver then commented on the statement made last Wednesday by Mr. Arthur Creech-Jones on behalf of the United Kingdom Government. This statement, said Dr. Silver, implied that the United Kingdom Government not only did not wish to assume sole responsibility for implementing the Report, but reserved to itself the right of refusing any cooperation in implementing the final decision of the United Nations, if, in its judgement, the decision did not comply with its own criteria of justice and with its own preferred technique of implementation.

Why then, asked Dr. Silver, had the United Kingdom Government not hesitated to employ in recent years a military force of one hundred thousand men, along with its navy and its air force, to impose, by force, a policy on Palestine which no international body had approved, which was contrary to the purposes and provisions of the Mandate, and which, he said, had been thrice disapproved by international bodies?

It must be clear to everyone, Dr. Silver contended, that no settlement of the Palestine problem was possible without some enforcement.

It was, he added, the realization that an Arab-Jewish agreement was impossible that prompted British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin to turn the problem over to the United Nations.

(End of Take #2)

UNITED NATIONS
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Special Committee on Palestine
Fourth Meeting

(PM) TAKE #3
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

(PM) TAKE #3

Palestine

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Dr. Silver then passed on the Report of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, and indicated the full approval of the Jewish Agency on all but one of the eleven unanimous recommendations made by the Committee.

The sixth recommendation, which the Jewish Agency does not approve, calls upon the General Assembly "to undertake immediately the initiation and execution of an international arrangement whereby the problem of the distressed European Jews; of whom approximately 250,000 are in assembly centers, will be dealt with as a matter of extreme urgency for the alleviation of their plight and of the Palestine problem".

Dr. Silver observed that a similar recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry had remained a dead letter, and he expressed the hope that the nations of the world would welcome those among the displaced persons who wish to emigrate to other lands than Palestine.

But, added Dr. Silver, to compel those Jewish refugees, many of whom have close family ties with Palestine, to go against their will to other lands and to deny them the right to go to the Jewish National Home would be most unjust.

The "intense urge" of the Jewish displaced persons to proceed to Palestine and the refusal of most of them to go anywhere else sprang, Dr. Silver said, not only from their realization that the prospects of their admission to other countries were slight in the extreme. It sprang preeminently from the fact that Palestine offered to them that which they needed most and could not find anywhere else -- the chance of a real home in congenial surroundings with the assurance of permanency.

The 12th (not unanimous) recommendation of UNSCOP which reads: "It is recommended that in the appraisal of the Palestine question, it be accepted as incontrovertible that any solution for Palestine cannot be considered as a solution of the Jewish problem in general," called forth the following comment from Dr.

ver:

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"The 'Jewish problem in general' is not a problem of Jewish immigration or of refugees. It is the age-old problem of Jewish national homelessness. There is but one solution to this problem, a national home. This was the basic Jewish problem which ^{was} faced by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and to which the proper solution was given -- the reconstitution of the national home of the Jewish people in Palestine."

Of the minority proposals in the Report, Dr. Silver said Palestine would become in effect an Arab State with two Jewish enclaves, in which the Jews would be frozen in the position of a permanent minority of the population of the Federal State.

The Jewish province, he said, would not have control over immigration even within the narrow confines of its own borders. Nor would it have control over its own fiscal policies. The plan entailed for the Jews all the disadvantages of partition -- and a very bad partition geographically -- without the compensating advantages of a real partition: statehood, independence and free immigration.

(END OF (PM) TAKE #3)

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Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine
Fourth Meeting

(PM) TAKE #4
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

(PM) TAKE #4
Palestine

On the majority proposals, Dr. Silver made a number of observations.

These proposals, said Dr. Silver, did not represent satisfaction of the rights of the Jewish people. They were a serious attenuation of these rights.

The first partitioning of Palestine, Dr. Silver declared, took place in 1922 when Trans-Jordan, representing three-fourths of the original area of Palestine, was cut off and was afterwards set up by the British as an Arab Kingdom.

It was now proposed to carve a second Arab state out of the remainder of the country, said Dr. Silver. In other words, he said, the Jewish National Home was now to be confined to less than one-eighth of the territory originally set aside for it. This, he declared, was a sacrifice which the Jewish people should not be asked to make.

The Arabs, said Dr. Silver, possess today independent monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and independent republics in Syria and Lebanon.

A population of 17 millions in Arab Asia occupies an area of 1,290,000 square miles, enormously rich in resources and potentialities, he said. This area, which formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire, and which, together with Egypt, was liberated by the Allied Nations, includes all the centers which are primarily associated in history with Arab and Moslem traditions.

Palestine, he added, the historic home of the Jewish people, which the map of the world after the last war declared to be the Jewish National Home, is, after the loss of Trans-Jordan, only ten thousand square miles in extent, and it is now proposed, in the Majority Report, further to reduce the area of the Jewish National Home by almost one-half.

Regarding western Galilee, which the majority proposals do not include in the contemplated Jewish State, Dr. Silver recalled that the Peel Commission should include it. Its exclusion, he said, would be an unjustifiable and permanent handicap in the development of the Jewish State.

(End of Take #4)

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Hoc Committee on Palestine
Fourth Meeting

(PM) TAKE #5
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

(PM) TAKE #5
Palestine

Dr. Silver declared that he would not question the propriety of placing the old city of Jerusalem, which contains the holy places, as well as the holy shrines which may be outside the walls of the old city, in the custody of an international trustee, as suggested by the majority proposal. But, he said, outside the old city a modern new city has grown up which contains a compact Jewish section of approximately 90,000 inhabitants. This new city includes the central cultural, religious and educational institutions of the Jewish people of Palestine. Including all of Jerusalem from the Jewish State, he said, would be a particularly severe blow for Jerusalem holds a unique place in Jewish life and religious traditions.

Dr. Silver nevertheless declared that he would be prepared to recommend to the Jewish people acceptance of the majority proposals -- subject to further discussion of the constitutional and territorial provisions -- because the proposals made possible the immediate re-establishment of the Jewish State, and because it would ensure immediate and continuing Jewish immigration.

Dr. Silver said he was impressed with the recommendation in the Report of an economic union between the two Arab and Jewish states and the Jewish Agency as prepared to accept this proposal.

It should be understood, however, he added, that the Jewish State must have in its own hands those instruments of financing and economic control necessary to carry out large-scale Jewish immigration and the related economic development.

The Majority Report, he said, provides, in effect, for a large subsidy from the Jewish to the Arab State, through equal sharing by the two States of the net revenues from customs and joint services.

This subsidy would be a very heavy one in relation to the national income of the Jewish Agency would, however, be prepared to assume this burden as one of the sacrifices designed to find a way out of the present intolerable impasse.

MORE

Concluding, Dr. Silver declared the Jews mean to be good neighbors, not only to the Arab state of Palestine, but to the Arab states throughout the Middle East. But, he added, neighborliness is a two-sided affair.

The Jewish Agency, Dr. Silver said, favours an international authority under the United Nations to supervise and insure the implementation of its decisions. Above all, they urge that the transitional period be as brief as possible. Two years, he said, is considerably longer than is necessary or desirable.

Finally, Dr. Silver agreed with the Report that "whatever the solution, enforcement measures on an extensive scale may be necessary for some time," although the Jewish Agency hoped that the transition from the present status of the country to the new status of two independent states, would be attended by a minimum of friction and conflict. If the forces of the United Kingdom should not be available to the United Nations during the transitional period, he said, the Jewish people of Palestine would provide without delay the necessary effectives to maintain public security within the country.

The Committee adjourned at 4:15 p.m., and will reconvene tomorrow Friday, at 3:00 p.m.

(End of Take #5 and end of Press Release GA/PAL/4)

Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine
Meeting

SUMMARY
Press Release GA/PAL/4
2 October 1947

PALESTINE COMMITTEE HEARS STATEMENT OF JEWISH CASE

At today's fourth meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine heard a statement from Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, Chairman of the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

Dr. Silver declared that the very identity of Palestine as a unit of human society is an achievement of Jewish history, that the country lost its separate character with the Jewish dispersion and only resumed a specific role in history when the Palestine Mandate was ratified.

Concerning Arab economic grievances, Dr. Silver said the UNSCOP and Royal Commission Reports prove that the Palestine Arabs benefitted from Jewish development.

Commenting that Mr. Arthur Creech-Jones had stated that the United Kingdom did not wish to assume sole responsibility for implementing the Report, Dr. Silver said the Committee reserved the right of refusing any cooperation in a decision it found to be unacceptable. /

/Dr. Silver asked why the United Kingdom Government had not hesitated to employ in recent years military force. It was, Dr. Silver said, the realization that an Arab-Jewish agreement was impossible that prompted the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, to turn the problem over to the United Nations.

Dr. Silver indicated the full approval of the Jewish Agency of all the previous and even unanimous recommendations made by the Committee, except the sixth one. This calls for the General Assembly to undertake execution immediately of an international arrangement whereby the problem of the European Jews would be dealt with as a matter of extreme urgency, for the alleviation of their plight and of the Palestine problem).

Of the minority proposals, Dr. Silver said they would make of Palestine an Arab State in which the Jews would be frozen in the position of a permanent minority.

(MORE)

Of the majority proposals, Dr. Silver observed they are a serious attenuation of the rights of the Jewish people. Coming after the creation of Trans-Jordan as an Arab Kingdom he said the partition plan proposed by the Report would confine the Jewish National Home to one-eighth of the territory originally set aside for it.

Regarding Western Galilee, which the majority proposal does not include in the Jewish State, Dr. Silver declared its exclusion would greatly handicap the development of the Jewish State. He also questioned the wisdom of placing all Jerusalem with the modern Jewish city, in the custody of an international trustee.

Dr. Silver declared, however, the Jewish Agency was prepared to accept the Report in order to make possible the establishment of a Jewish State and continuing Jewish immigration.

Dr. Silver agreed that an international authority under the United Nations should supervise and insure the implementation of its decisions. He agreed that whatever the solution, enforcement measures might be necessary and he added that should the forces of the United Kingdom not be available the Jewish people of Palestine would provide the necessary effectives to maintain public security.

The Committee adjourned at 4:15 p.m. and will reconvene tomorrow, Friday, at 3 p.m.

(A chronological account of this meeting is given in Takes #1 through #5 which follow this summary.)