

ISRAEL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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November 30, 1950

STATEMENT BY MR. MOSHE SHARETT (ISRAEL) MINISTER K® FOREIGN AFFAIRS BEFORE THE AD BDC POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman!

We have heard a long series of statements "by Arab delegates on this long- tortured subject. In large part these statements consisted of past history, mostly arbitrary In formulation and wholly irrelevant In the present context• In another part, they were a repetition of arguments already refuted; of fallacies exposed and of mis-statements of facts repeatedly nailed down•

X will deal only briefly with some of the accusations that have been made. X do not propose to weary the committee with our complete version of the facts of the oase aid of the whole trend of events, for such accounts were fully presented by us on former occasions\*

Much has been made again and again of the Deir Tassin outrage, X call it unhesitatingly an outrage and it was a very horrible one• Ear-reaching conclusions were drawn from the fact that this outrage occurred before the open invasion of Palestine by the Arab armies from outside had set in. The inoident was represented as the starting point, the very prime cause, of Arab flight. Some speakers over-reached themselves to the extent of asserting that it was actually this incident which called forth the invasion•

Now, the responsible leaders of the Jewish community at the time, 1£& the Government oflsraelever since, have never minced words in expreWqJpg their abhorrence sni repudiation of this and similar acts• X may add that I myself have played my direct part In the anti-terrorist campaigns con- ducted within the Jewish oomnanity• Yet let us be realistic end see events in their correct proportions, set against their concrete background. Moral resentment and indignation should not blur the fundamental political facts•

It is not enough to condemn an outrage. Its genesis must be appraised\*

Has there ever been a war in which either of the Warring parties was not guilty of excessive barbarism, particularly in those cases and during those phases in which no central authority, clad with full powers to enforce discipline, is functioning. I have heard harrowing tales cf atrocities perpetrated at about the same time in another part of the Asian continent•

I have read hair-raising stories of torture, burning alive, drowning and raping. War is a horrible affair and it־has inevitably hideous mani- festations• No useful purpose is ever served on such occasions by recriminations on separate incidents. Historically and morally tbs blame hinges always on initial responsibility•

Assuming that the Deir YaBsln outrage played such a decisive part indeed in causing or accelerating the Arab exodus - the question will still remain, how did it come about. Did such outrages break out like a bolt from the blue? Did the Jews quite suddenly, without the slightest direct pro- vocation, merely impelled by their lust for Arab blood, or by the deliberate purpose of getting rid Of the Arabs, set about butchering them? What we witnessed here as we listened to the exposition of some Arab delegates was a complete distortion of the picture, an utter inversion of cause and effect\*

What are the facts! On the day following the adoption by the General Assembly of Its historic resolution on Palestine on November 29, 1947,

Arab violence broke out in a number of centers and soon spread out all over the country• Jews •were shot at and .killed; their property was looted; their homes sacked; their transport paralysed. I will not say that all this

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cane \*by surprise. The wall• of thee• very toon■

reverberate with threat■ uttered at the tine with brutal frankness. I see gentlemen •round who were with us on these occasions and who must remember the words used, maybe even the tone of voice. Those threats were duly carried out•

Far from the Invasion having come about as a spontaneous reaction to some revolting act of Jewish retaliation• it was a course decided long before and carefully planned, lest those fundamental faots be blurred! let me refresh the memory of the honorable delegates. On 16 - 19,

September 19\*\*7, the Political Committee of the Arab league met at Sofar in the lebanon! It passed the following resolution(

"The Committee has determined by all practioal and effeotive means to resist the implementation of these (the UNSOOP) recommendations. The Palestine Arabs will launch a relent\*\* less war to repel this attack on their country, especially so as they know that all the Arab countries will back and assist them,"

This was well over two months before the Assembly adopted its decision.

On October 23, 19\*\*7, the Iraqi Prime Minister told the press!

11The Iraqi army will march and enter Palestine if the UN adopts partition.״

On Deoember 1, 19\*\*7, that is two days after the adoption of the

resolution, the Secretary General of the league, who is now attending tbs

Assembly as its honored guest, declared(

״By no means ■hall we permit the implementation of the United

Nations resolution to partition Palestine. The time is not a time for talk but for aotion.״

Action was indeed taken very soon. For it is not true that the intrusion of armed Arab forces into Palestine from neighboring countries started only with the entry of regular armies at the termination of the British mandate and the proclamation of the independent State of Israel! That was a fairly late stage in the proceedings. The invasion actually started early in January, 19\*18, more than four months before the liqui- dation of British rule! at a time when British troops and polios were in full control of the situation, large bands of so-called irregulars, who were specially trained and armed and organised in compact military units under sectional and regional command, entered the country from Syria, Iraq and Egypt, proceeding to occupy key positions and attaok Jewish towns and villages. At the time, full documentary material was presented by us to the Security Council, giving chapter and verse of all these operations( dates of crossing of the borders; location of camps; names of commanders; also the location and organisation of training grounds in the neighboring countries; also officially pub- liehed faots about the open sponsorship and direction of all these activities by the governments of those countries.

!Then, after the initial local outbreaks, truce was being negotiated between the cities of Jaffa and Tel Aviv, nn Iraqi commander who took charge of Jaffa ordered the Arab mayor to break off negotiations, for his goal was the conquest and ruin of Tel Aviv. Whan the Jews went out of their way to anneal to Arab villagers in the Sharon Valleyז to Arab townsmen at Half a and Tiberias to blae their peace and stay on. their call was disregarded, for the Arabs were told that they bad better be out of harm's way while the fighting went־on,' at'the Wd ־Of Which they-

wouiaTEe־brought back to find the cprintry cgmplstsly cleared■ of־the

Jews. TSe"ma88 flight from the Sharon Talley occurred well 1before the Incident at Deir Tassin.

Of what use is it now tp put the oart before the horee retrospeo- tivelyf No amount of perverse eloquence, distorted history and false arithmetic can dlsgulsfe the truth.

The refugee problem is the direct result and the tragic aftermath of the armed rebellion against the United Nations decision, assisted, intensified, and aggravated by the organised aggression perpetrated by tht neighboring Arab states. Whoever is responsible for the criminal act must bear the blame for its fearful consequences,

Inoldentally, the figure quoted here for the total number of refugees is an exaggeration. There were 1,200,000 Arabs in the whole of Palestine in 19\*17. There are about 170,000 in Israel today. If the number of Arab

refugees Is to be takes to be a million, It would aeaa that poetically all the Inhabitants of the considerable part of Palestine which has been Joined to the Jordan Kingdom are refugees \*— an obviously preposterous conclusion\*

But even allowing for the margin of exaggeration, the problem is admittedly of vast dimensions in relation to Palestine's former popu- lation. Hundreds of thousands of people are without permanent homes and in a state of acute distress, A solution of their problem is im- perative\*

But who is responsible for the delay\* the continued inaction, the prolongation of avoidable suffering? It is again the Arab States — by refusing to look facts in the face and to grasp the full hlstorio and practical import of the staggering and epoch-making events.

Is Palestine the only country in the world visited recently by cataclysmic changes? There has hardly been a major dislocation of late which has not brought in its wake such violent upheavals. In the aftermath of the first World War there was a mass uprooting and whole- sale transfer of populations between Greece and Bulgaria, between Greece and Turkey. As a result of the last World War, similar wholesale migrations were enforced from Poland and Czechoslovakia into Germany,

The disaster of voluntary self-evacuation of millions of people in India and Pakistan was the tragic but apparently inevitable concomitant of the emergence of those countries to independence. The catastrophic shifting of multitudes of people from one province to another inside China has assumed even greater dimensions. Those were fearful hurricanes which swept into the vortex many millions of people. Some of these prooesses were accompanied by far more widespread and acute suffering and by an infinitely greater toll of life than was the case in Palestine, They were calamities as compared with which the tragic aftermath of aggression iin Palestine pales into comparative insignificance.

Has there ever been, in any of these cases, a restoration of the status quo ante after the storm had subsided? Have peQple In large masses returned to their homes anywhere? Never\* nowhere. The expression which was attributed to Sir Raphael Cilento is perfeotly true. It was indeed a ״disaster comparable to an earthquake, to a flood\* to a tidal wave.״ Just as you cannot restore the physical landscape after the ravages of an earthquake, of a flood, of a tidal wave, so after a human upheaval of such fury and vastness, you cannot reconstruct the former background.

History marches on. It does not go back. There are phases when . it evolves peacefully and slowly, but occasionally a swift and violent eruption occurs. Let me not be misunderstood, I am not here advancing a doctrine of fatalism and inevitability\* On the contrary, I have faith in the preventability of human blunders and disasters. The United Nations is based on that faith. But once a disaster does occur\* usually owing to human folly or shortsightedness, it leads to conclusions which are in their veyy nature irreparable. Naturally, suffering has to be alleviated. Tictims of disaster must be given a chance to rebuild their shattered lives. But the new facts created in the meantime are very often irrevocable\*

To talk in this revolutionary context about the sanctity of individual rights as the only clue to a solution — to urge the return of the masses of uprooted people to their homes as a panacea is the height of the lack of responsibility and betrays a complete absence of either any honest or of any serious approach to the problem. Inasmuch as such verbiage diverts attention from and causes the neglect of other\* the really practicable solutions, it becomes criminal. You might as well try to console the victims of a fire which destroyed their dwelling by saying that you are going to rebuild the house out of its charred ruins.

The Representative of Saudi-Arabia did me the honor of quoting fairly extensively from my speeohes before committees of the General Assembly in past years. He recalled what I said about the complete security of property which the Arabs would enjoy in the Jewish State and the sure prospect of their becoming more prosperous and more deeply rooted, so to speak, in the soil.

Mr, Ohairman, I stand by those statements, hut I stand them In their definite context, as related to the realities of a certain situation and to underlying assumptions prevalent at the time\* It is self-evident that the ,basic assumption was the peaceful implementation of the United Nations decision, namely, the acceptance hy the Arabs of the principle of partition and the establishment of two separate states• What happened was that that assumption was rendered null and void - it was completely subverted by violence. Yet those responsible for this subversion of the basio premise now try to hold me to the conclusions which I drew from it. To say the least, that is not playing the game.

The same reasoning applies to the question of boundaries. When the Arabs rejected, with all the vehemence of which they are capable, the International dispensation of November 19\*\*7 and went, to war against it — when they resorted to arms as their means of settling the problem — they thereby gave hostages to fortune, entrusted their fate to the hasards of 'far and implicitly and irrevocably undertook in advance to abide by the final outcome of the armed clash. They abandoned their title to invoke any principle of an international settlement which they were out to drown in blood, Zt was basing Itself on this l principle that the present General Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, authorised the orossing by the United Nations forces of the 38th Parallel in Korea! You cannot trample an international arrangement underfoot relying on your armed might and fall back upon that arrangement after you have failed. You just oannot have it both ways, ,

The pathetic declaration that we heard today of Arab readiness to do everything to insure the full and effective implementation of United Nations resolutions on Palestine — a declaration whioh presumably refers, in the first instance, to the resolution of November 19\*\*7 —־ comes exaotly three years too late — and the three years have not been ordinary ones but most momentous in the history of that country, pregnant with fateful transformations.

The root cause of the marked departures from the 19\*\*7 settlement v in terms of area and population alike \*— the reason why certain basio

elements of the scheme have by now become physically obsolete — has been the rebellion of the Arabs in Palestine and the invasion of Palestine by Arab armies from outside\* ®he root cause of the pro- / longation of the misery of the Arab victims of that aggression has been

the obstinate refusal of the Arab governments to liquidate the state of war, thus created, by negotiating a concluding and comprehensive peace tf settlement.

For let me aseume, merely for the sake of argument, that the solution of the refugee problem is primarily to be sought in mass repatriation. Surely the security aspect is here paramount. Any measure of re-admission of Arabs to Israel would, in the framework of an all-round and stable peace between that country and its Arab neighbors be a totally different proposition from a similar re- admission ageinct the background of a most notable absence of such a peaoe — an absence due to a deliberate and express refusal to negotiate it•

Therefore, from their own viewpoint, by their persistent refusal to enter into peace negotiations the Arab states have done everything to make repatriation impossible. At the same time, because they would not hear of any other solution, they made no progress, not even a be- ginning with the resettling of refugees in their own territories.

Thus, stagnation has been made complete.

Much has been made by Arab representatives during this debate of the General Assembly's Resolution of December 19\*\*8. This resolution l now appears to be their very sheet-anchor. But the astonishing fact

| is that they all voted against it. It was carried in the teeth of their united and determined opposition. The convolutions of the j I Arab position regarding this and other resolutions are indeed a fascinating subjeot for a searching examination.

But leaving polemics aside, what is the real Import of that re- solution? It underlines in the very same breath the urgency of a general peaoe settlement, by enjoining the parties to enter immediately into negotiations to achieve it, and of the settlement of the refugee

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of compensation. 18 it not reasonable to infer that the underlying assumption was one of the organio unity of the two processes? With regard to repatriation as such, the provisions laid down in that re- solution are hy no means as sweeping and as unconditional as has been

represented here• The resolution relegates repatriation to the point of time when it will become practicable and provides only for the repatriation of those willing to live in peace within Israel• But peace is one and indivisible• Refusal to conclude it involves no claim to repatriation of which a peaceful frame of mind is an indis- pensable condition\*

It is interesting to analyze this refusal to negotiate peace with Israel, sustained with the tenacity worthy of much nobler pur- poses, in the light of certain statements which we heard during this debate. The delegate of Iraq, has conjured up a menacing prospect of Israel bursting its bounds and overflowing by armed invasion into the neighboring territories. If the danger appears indeed so imminent, why not try to seek safety in a peace treaty permanently guaranteeing the inviolability of frontiers fixed by mutual agreement, which agree- ment would then be sanctified by the adherence of both parties to the provisions of the Charter? Ert can such fears be accepted at their face value — nay, how can the impression be resisted that the ex- pression of tnese fears morely curves as a disguise for sinister / designs — if those who express them persist in spuming the elementary measure of self-protection ir.aerent in a formal peace treaty? Is it I not rather a grotesque Juxtaposition which we are here witnessing —

\ on the one hand, an alleged prospective victim of aggression un- \ compromisingly opposed to peace, and on the other hand, the ceaseless and untiring offers to enter into peace negotiations with a view to stabilizing the present frontiers, permanently on the part of a ן state accused of aggressive plans•

(HORS)

Sot to return to the eolutlon of the refugee problem. By now It ehould he clear .to all dispassionate observers, rrcdous to cc' ieWb r.t lerst some neasube of pfo'-reos tov/ard a solution £hd not no roly to place another resolution on paper, that the repatriation of on״ arnreeirhle nunhcr ז (hat- soever is utterly impractiorble, Sone highly cogent reasons against !repatriation have already been hoard both during this debate end ip the ׳ course of the discusoion of the report of the Rellof end ״or’® AiJfeney.

Ono decisive feature of tho situation in that Israel is rn idly fill- ing uo\* Hie Arch cnoduro is not the only kind of revolutionary tranofomar- tion that has occurred. Another 18 the vast Influx of Jewish i:vJLgrnnto,

10 start arguing tho rights m& wrongs of this process is, to sty the least, irrelevant. Israel cer.o into hoing for no other reason and ie innolled hy no other notive than to servo r.s a hone fbr all Jews in need of it. Todcy־ tho r.e.co return of Jows to the ccnxtttty of Israel ,13 fen elenentr.l phontsionon • a novenent of poo16ו diivon by misery fefid fear end drawn hy tho proviso of frcodon and tho ho^o of p new life. It ie One of thooo w׳ vos of migration, \(hich breo!ting out :rlth irresistible force fron tino to tin© in r.an':ind\*c history, eweep over continents and cross oeorno, and through the eivi] i zr.tiOns \AAth they croate0 reshape tho destinies of eountries end propies. Tho tv;o phenonena taken together represent a historic proeoso of redistribution Of population, which in tho long run . . .. pronises greater stability, prosperity, and good relationships,‘ both for the eountries concerned rnd for tho whole world.

Incidentally, Mr. Chairman, at present immigration of Jews to Israel 18 proceeding apace aleo from some of tho Arab countries. It 18 significant that while in this committee certain Arab delegates fulminate against the influx of Jews into Israel, the impression on the spot le that their governments are rather anxious to get rid of their Jewish nationals as quickly as possible.

The eeoond paramount consideration bearing on repatriation — again a consideration decisive in itself - le that of ■eeuritjr. In the best imaginable oircunstances the relationship between the returning Arab refugees end the Government and people of Israel will be one of mutual sullen suspicion, which will make for neither stability nor contentment. Here again, predictions and assurances based on the assumption of peaoe- ful cooperation in the creation of two states in Palestine are quite irrelevant in the present context, determined as it is by the fact that, to save its very existence, Israel had to fight a war forced upon it by the whole Arab world.

I said in the best of circumstances. But circumstances need by no means be the best. I could quota j| number of articles in the Arab press where the repatriation of refUeeee ie urged as a means of creating within Israel a potent fifth column for a future war of reconquesT. The very fact that governments emphatically refusing to males peace with Israel, even appearing obstinately to deny Its existence as a sovereign State, are with the same vehemence urging repatriation — the very spirit in which they urge this solution — would alone be a conclusive reason for Israel to rejeot it.

Repatriation is thus impracticable in fact, while from the point of view of statesmanship, \*?jj. would be a downright act of folly.

Let me recall in this connection the figures indicating the growth of Israeli population. There were about 650,000 Jews and leee than 70.000 ArabB in Israel soon after the State wee proclaimed. Since then the Arab population has increased by 100.000 and become stabilized, while the Jewish population has grown by the addition of Over 480,090 immigrants, who continue to oome in at the rate of 200,000 a year. The inexorable logio of these figures should be clear.

The version advanced here that the number of refugees keeps increae- ing as a result of large-scale expulsions from Israel la a complete, and I must say, malicious distortion. The figures I have Just quoted ■peak for themselves. The infiltration of unauthorized entrants into Israel ie naturally reeieted by frontier control. Such unauthorized entry 1■ actually proscribed by all the four Armistice Agreements now in operation under the ®■apioea of the United Rations, Bat no Arab who haa stayed on‘

In Israel from the very outset, or who has been allowed to%eturn, or who has entered and heen allowed to remain, has ever been expelled by force.

On the other hand in an area Which formerly constituted one country and has now become divided between Israel and Jordan, and between Israel and the so-called Qaza strip still in Egyptian occupation, cases occur when Arab residents of Israel prefer to oross to the Other side and live under

Arab rule among their kith and kin. Such people are naturally free to

leave and one such transfer has actually been carried through with the full cooperation of the local authorities on the other side of the border.

The only constructive step'so far taken toward the solution of the Arab refugee problem is the resolution already adopted by the committee and awaiting the Qeneral Assembly•8 approval under item B of our agenda\*

The main operative feature of that resolution is in the view of my Delegation the establishment under the auspices of the Belief and Works Agency of a Reintegration Eund ״which shall be utilised fox\* projects requested by any government in the Hear East and approved by the Agency for the permanent re-establishment of refugees and their removal from relief״. In order to lend a hand to the earliest possible achievement of this purpose, my Government has departed from a position it had consistently maintained concerning the solution of the refugee problem — namely that this problem cannot be taken out of the context of outstand- ing questions, but that it mutt• be envisaged as an integral and organic part of a general peace settlement. Accordingly, my oolleegue, Mr, Eban,

has announced our readiness to make contributions to this Eund by paying

into it installments on account of the compensation which we had always admitted that we owe for lands abandoned by Arab refugees\* This was done \_ on the understanding that, es had cleerly emerged from approaches made to us previously, the entire ״,mount of compensation due from us would be paid by Installments into that Reintegration Eund and serve to finance projects of reintogration and r9settlement.' We also made it clear that it was only in order to make ־״radiate resettlement possible that we were departing from our previous stand.

Such being our attitude, we cannot help take exception to certain features of the Eour-Pdwer resolution now before the committee.

Generally speaking, the practical road to the solution of the refugee problem through resettlement having been indicated in the resolution to which I have just referred, viz A/AO/38/1 28, Bev. 1, my Delegation 8eee no need for any additional resolution on the refugee problem as such and feels very strongly that any separate resolution on the eame subject can only confuse the issue. The resettlement of refugees having been dealt I with by the resolution on the Belief and Works Agency, the problem which > remains to be settled is that of general peace, with which the Gondlle\*• tion Commission 18 dealing. My Delegation is mindful of the recommend®- tion of the Conciliation Commission that the General Assembly should address an urgent appeal to the parties ooneerned to negotiate immediate- ly a settlement of all question• outstanding between them. We, therefore, welcome paragraph one of this draft resolution. Other parte of the draft, however, appear to us to call for criticism.

In the Bramble we are disturbed by the possible implication of th• wording adopted that both parties are equally to blame for the absence of agreement between them. We recall that on other occasions reports of TJhited Nations organs and resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council clearly fixed responsibility for failure to attain satisfactory results. We do not see why in the present case reticence should be observed on this crucial isbus — in other word• why it should not be stated explicitly that whila Israel had always declared it■ willingness to negotiate with Arab atatee, those ■tat•• had ooneietently refused to negotiate with Israel. Further, in the preamble, after the expression of conoern about the lack of progress on both counts - that of final settlement and that on the refbgee problem - we fall to aee why the latter question alone should be singled out for mention as a particularly urgent one. The implication that the general peaoe settlement 1■ not urgent - or shall I ssy not so urgent^? - is hardly oonduolve to its early attainment. Moreover, we oonslder that the motivation of the urgency of the refugee problem by reference to interests of peace and stability Cf the Hear East, opens the way for most undesirable interpretations and inferences\* To put it plainly, it is liable to work ae an invitation for trouble, ,