

MOSHE SHARETT

STATESMAN OF
ISRAEL 



MENACHEM Z.
ROSENSAFT

MOSHE SHARETT

This is the first compact biography of Moshe Sharett, the first Foreign Minister of the State of Israel, who was one of the outstanding spokesmen of the Zionist movement and of the Jewish State.

After the death of Dr. Haim Arlosoroff, his predecessor as head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, Sharett emerged as the acknowledged representative of the Yishuv to the world at large, speaking for the Jewish Agency and the Zionist movement in the negotiations with the British and the League of Nations, and later before the United Nations, prior to the proclamation of the Jewish State.

In 1948 he became Israel's Foreign Minister, a post he held until 1956. During that period he also served for a time as Israel's second Prime Minister.

A most versatile personality, Moshe Sharett was not only a skilled diplomat and statesman but also a thinker, writer, linguist and journalist of talent and note.

One of the most popular figures in the history of his young country, Moshe Sharett would probably like best to be remembered for having been, above all—as he signified in his adopted Hebrew surname—the Servant of his people.

Menachem Z. Rosensaft has composed this moving memorial, which contains many rare and previously unpublished illustrations, as his personal tribute to the man whom he knew and cherished as a great friend of his family.



Moshe Sharett with Menachem Z. Rosensaft at a reception in Tel Aviv, 1963.

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M.Z.R.

ON JULY 7, 1965, a small group of us drove to the North of Israel. After lunch, at around two o'clock in the afternoon, we were cruising along the highway leading from Naharia down to Haifa. It was a beautiful day, and we were all in high spirits. The driver had turned on the car radio to a musical program from Station Kol Israel.

In the middle of a number, the music abruptly stopped. "We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin . . .," said a man's voice. We listened quietly. What the announcer had to say did not come as a surprise. Deep in our hearts, all of us had expected it for some time. Yet, now that the blow had fallen, we found it difficult, almost impossible to believe. We did not stop the car on Mount Carmel as planned, but continued on towards Herzlia where we were staying. As we were driving along the road, we saw quiet clusters of people. They, too, had heard the news. Many were crying. We also were close to tears. We joined the nation in mourning the death of a great man.

"The Government of Israel, the World Zionist Organization, and the Knesset announce in grief and sorrow the passing of Moshe Sharett," began the official statement issued in Jerusalem that day.

"The Jewish people has been bereaved of a leader of the State, a pilot of the movement, and a teacher of the nation.

"One of the true nobility of the Jewish people has gone to his eternal rest.

"In his activities as Head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department on the eve of the establishment of the State, as Israel's first Foreign Minister, as its Prime Minister, as spokesman for the Jewish people and its State to the world, as the central pillar of the Zionist Movement and Chairman of the Zionist Executive in recent years, as one of the foremost leaders of Mapai and one of the standard bearers of the Labor Zionist Movement, Moshe Sharett inscribed illustrious chapters in the book of Israel's resurgence."

"The most beloved of Israel's leaders," President Zalman Shazar called him. "A man who stood head and shoulders above all others, but who himself was meek and modest," David Ben-Gurion said of him, "The multiplicity of his talents, as a writer, as a speaker, as a master of style and language, as a political leader, as a diplomat and as a statesman was extraordinary," Dr. Nahum Goldmann declared.

Statesman, writer, orator, thinker, pioneer, diplomat—Moshe Sharett was all of these. But to me and my family he was more than that—he was a most beloved and cherished friend.

My father knew him well for almost fifteen years. They saw each other frequently and often consulted with one another, especially on the problems concerning the survivors of the German Holocaust, which were close to Sharett's heart.

I first met Moshe Sharett in his official residence in Jerusalem in 1956. He was still Israel's Foreign Minister, and I was eight years old and felt rather lost in the large room filled with people whom I did not know. Sharett noticed my bewilderment, came over to me, and started

to talk to me in English, which I did not understand at the time. When my new friend realized this, he sat down beside me and we soon found that we had at least one common language, French. Then, for almost three quarters of an hour, the aristocratic veteran statesman and the schoolboy were engrossed in a conversation—oblivious to the others around us who had come especially to talk with the foremost diplomat of Israel.

From that time on, I saw him often. Whenever they were in New York, he and his devoted wife, Zippora, would come to see us, and on our annual summer visits to Israel

M. Robert Schuman (left), French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett at the Fifth General Assembly of the United Nations at Flushing Meadows, September, 1950.

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we would spend at least one evening in the Sharett home in Jerusalem. During these evenings he explained a great deal of the political structure of Israel, and it was he who took me on my first visit to the Knesset, the parliament of the country.

Until shortly before his death, Moshe Sharett and I kept up a regular correspondence. He was one of the first to write to me about a letter of mine that had been published in the *Jerusalem Post*. He liked it, he wrote, but, lover of the Hebrew language that he was, he added, "It would have been even more effective if it had appeared in Hebrew." Told that I was studying Hebrew, he would include in some of his letters a paragraph or two in that language to give me some practice.

Whenever he could do so, Moshe Sharett was present in person at our family's celebrations. He honored my Bar Mitzvah with his presence, and gave a long and heartfelt talk at the dinner that evening. When the twentieth anniversary of my father's miraculous escape from a train bound for the death camp of Auschwitz was celebrated, the man who had addressed parliaments and conferences the world over requested permission to speak on behalf of everyone present to express his affection and good wishes. In the early summer of 1964, shortly before he went to the hospital for the first time, Father called him to invite him to the commemorative observances marking the nineteenth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp of Bergen Belsen. But, for the first time in many years, Sharett was unable to come. "You know that I want to come," he told my father, "so you will understand that if I am forced to refuse your invitation, it is only because I am really ill." Soon thereafter, he took the time to write me to wish me luck with the magazine he had heard I was editing.

Moshe Sharett was one of the men I most admired and



COURTESY WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett (right) receiving the honorary degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters from Dr. Louis Finkelstein (left), Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, at a special convocation in New York on December 13, 1949. In the center is Herbert H. Lehman, Chairman of the Seminary's Board of Overseers.

respected. His friendship meant a great deal to me, and I shall always consider myself privileged to have known him. This short record is my own humble tribute to the life, the work, and the heritage of the statesman and leader, and above all, of a truly wonderful human being.

Moshe Sharett died in the early afternoon of July 7, 1965, just three months short of his seventy-first birthday, in the Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Karem, near Jerusalem, after a long and agonizing illness. He is survived by his wife, Zippora, three children—two sons, Yaakov and Haim, and a daughter, Yael—and eight grandchildren. Also still living are his brother Yehuda, a composer, and one sister, Ada.

In accordance with his own request, he was laid to rest on July 9 in the old cemetery of Tel Aviv just off Trumfeldor Street, next to the graves of his two brothers-in-law and inseparable friends, Eliahu Golomb and Dov Hos. Golomb, who had died twenty years before him, had been one of the "fathers" of the Hagana, the Jewish Defense Force of Palestine during the days of the British Mandate. Hos, who, together with his wife, Sharett's sister, had died tragically in an accident a quarter of a century before, had been a pioneer labor leader in Palestine and, at the time of his death, Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv.

Also in accordance with Sharett's last will, the conspicuous, black-bordered obituary notices usually printed in the press and posted on billboards in the streets in Israel were omitted, and no eulogies were delivered at his funeral. But the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv along which he was taken on his final journey were packed with men, women and children who had come to pay their last respects, and all the flags in Israel and at Israel's representations around the world were lowered to half-mast.

While his body lay in state in the courtyard of the Jewish Agency compound in Jerusalem, the members of the Cabinet of Israel and of the World Zionist Executive held a joint session at the Agency's Weizmann Auditorium. There, President Zalman Shazar, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, and Dr. Nahum Goldmann, the President of the World Zionist Organization and of the World Jewish Congress, paid their personal tribute to the man who had been their comrade-in-arms of many decades in the struggle for the establishment of the Jewish State.

"Leader and guide, statesman and fighter, writer and thinker, magnanimous and noble of spirit, a master of language and a man of pure heart—each of these descriptions fitted him. He wore many crowns, and one outshone the other," said the Prime Minister.

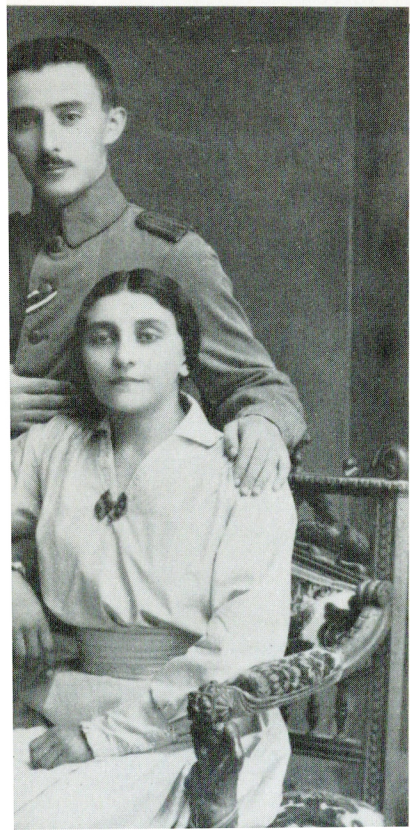
"His greatest and almost unique glory was rooted in his qualities as a moral leader," said Dr. Goldmann. "His devotion to his ideals, his modesty, his strength of character and will-power, which we have all of us witnessed with such awe and unbounded admiration during the past year since he fell ill, his goodness of heart, the unparalleled honesty and sincerity of his motivations, his passion for fairness and objectivity in dealing with friend and opponent alike, his wonderful sense of comradeship, his unbounded love for every Jew and for humanity at large, his unique character as one inspired and guided solely by idealistic motives, as a man whose strength and heroism were derived exclusively from his virtues, from his better impulses—these made him the great moral leader of our generation and in recent years raised him to an unparalleled position as the greatest moral authority in Israel."

On behalf of the Anglo-Israel Parliamentary Group, Sir Barnett Janner, veteran leader of Anglo-Jewry, cabled to Premier Eshkol: "We mourn the passing of a great statesman and a warmhearted personality." In New York, Dr. Emanuel Neumann, Chairman of the American Section of the Jewish Agency, declared that "no one of the present generation of Jewish leaders has personified more completely or more nobly the highest Jewish aspirations for national rebirth in freedom and dignity" than had Moshe Sharett. And on the day following his death, Deputy Premier Abba Eban concluded his tribute in the *Jerusalem Post* with a question—"Shall we ever see his like again?"

* * *

He was born as Moshe Shertok on October 15, 1894 at Khershon in the Ukraine, the son of Yaakov and Fanya Shertok. His father, a native of Pinsk, where Chaim Weizmann had gone to school, went to Warsaw to study at the Technological Institute. In his early youth, Yaakov had not felt any particular sense of identity with Jewish aspirations. In 1881, he was on the brink of joining the Russian Revolutionary Movement when a horrifying experience abruptly turned his idealism back to his own people. By accident, he saw before his own eyes the brutal death of a Jewish baby during one of the pogroms which wrought mass havoc among the Jews in the Russian pale that year.

As a result the elder Shertok became an ardent Lover of Zion, and, a year later, left for Palestine with the *Bilu* group, the first modern Pre-Zionist pioneering movement which had been founded by Russian Jewish students reacting against the pogrom wave. Several years later he re-



Moshe Shertok (Sharett) in officer's uniform of the Turkish Army, with his sister Rivka (wife of Dov Hoss), 1917.

turned to Russia, where he married and where his son Moshe was born.

Yaakov Shertok early instilled into his children a spirit of idealism and devotion to the Jewish people. It is said that the first geographical map to be placed before the infant Moshe had been one of Palestine, and that the first town to which he had learned to point with his tiny finger was the holy city of Jerusalem.

In 1906, when Moshe was twelve years old, Yaakov Shertok left Russia behind again and settled in Palestine with his family, this time for good.

Moshe's first home in the Holy Land was Ein Siniya, a lonely Arab outpost in the Ephraim Hills on the road between Jerusalem and Nablus. Yaakov Shertok had leased land there from an Arab family named Hussein. This clan, incidentally, was related to the man who was to become the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and whom Moshe Shertok, over three decades later, speaking in behalf of his people before the United Nations, was to expose as having been a collaborator of the Germans in the extermination of European Jewry. While his father was attempting to eke out a living for himself and his family by working the land, a mill and an olive press, also leased from the Husseins, the boy Moshe was put in charge of the family's sheep and goats. It was during those years of living and working side by side with the Arabs, that Moshe gained a first-hand knowledge of Arab life, customs, ceremonies, language and outlook which stood him in good stead later on. He would represent his family at the festivities, weddings and funerals of their Arab neighbors in Ein Siniya, many of whom were to remain Moshe's friends until the War of Liberation, even continuing to pay him visits during the years of Jewish-Arab conflict.

However, Yaakov Shertok was essentially not cut out to be a farmer. His field of interest lay primarily in writing

and journalism, and in 1908, after two years at Ein Siniya, the Shertoks moved to Jaffa. In 1909 they were among the founding residents of Ahuzat Bayit, the garden suburb of Jaffa which was the nucleus of what later was to become the city of Tel Aviv.

In 1913 Moshe completed his studies at the Herzlia High School and was in the school's first graduating class which included Eliahu Golomb, Dov Hos, and David Hacohen, Israeli Ambassador to Burma for some time, a Member of the Knesset after the establishment of the State and Sharett's lifelong friend. After graduation, he went to Turkey to study law at the University of Constantinople (now Istanbul). At the University, Shertok made the acquaintance of two other law students, several years older than himself, who had been pioneers in Palestine—David Green of Plonsk, who had changed his name to Ben-Gurion, and Itzhak Shimshelvit, who had adopted the Hebrew surname of Ben-Zvi.

While he was at Constantinople, Moshe lived with a Turkish family, taking advantage of the opportunity to become familiar with the customs and ways of the Turks.

When he returned to Palestine, he taught Turkish for a while at the Jewish School in Jaffa. One of his students, Zippora Meirov, was to become his wife in 1922.

When the Ottoman overlords of Palestine entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers, Jewish foreign subjects living in Palestine were given the choice of becoming Turkish citizens and joining the Turkish army if called upon, or leaving the country. Moshe chose the former alternative, and became active in a Jewish movement favoring Ottomanization, so that Palestine should not be emptied of its Jews.

In December 1914 he joined a group of Jewish young men who had volunteered for guard duty in the seaport of Jaffa to protect those Jews who had chosen exile and

were leaving for Egypt, against the depredations of Turkish port officials and steamship crews. Once he was briefly imprisoned after the local Turkish commander had accused him of "defamation" for making a complaint against an Arab sailor whom he had seen striking one of the Jews.

Eventually he and a number of fellow alumni from the Herzlia High School enlisted in the Turkish army. Sharett served for several months as a warrant officer on the Macedonian front. Due to his knowledge of languages—he was fluent in eleven languages including Arabic, Russian, French, German, English and Turkish, in addition to Hebrew and Yiddish—Moshe was appointed interpreter for the German commander of a Turkish unit in the Judea region. He used this position to protect Jewish settlers against plunder by the Turkish soldiers.

On his return to Palestine after the war, he was appointed Secretary of the Department for Land and Arab Affairs of the Va'ad haTzirim, the Palestinian representation of the Zionist Executive. At that time, too, he became a member of Ahdut Ha'avoda, the earliest Labor Zionist party, which was led by Berl Katzenelson, the noted ideologist of the Labor Zionist Movement.

That period marked the beginning of Moshe Shertok's lifetime of work on behalf of the Jewish people toward the establishment of the Jewish State. He kept in close touch with Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi, who had also returned to Palestine in the meantime. When Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Zionist leader, writer, and orator who had organized the first Jewish self-defense efforts in Jerusalem against Arab raiders in 1920, settled in Jerusalem, Shertok was a frequent visitor at his home, discussing politics, literature, and above all, Hebrew poetry, in which both men were vitally interested and active.

From 1920 to 1925 Shertok served on the executive of Ahdut Ha'avoda. He spent those years in England, where

he enrolled at the London School of Economics for studies leading to the degree of Bachelor of Science. While there he became active in the British Labor Zionist Movement, which he represented at the annual British Labor Conferences from 1920 until 1925.

In 1925 Katzenelson recalled him to Palestine where Katzenelson had founded *Davar*, the daily newspaper of the *Histadrut*, Palestine's labor federation which had been organized five years before. Katzenelson wanted Shertok's services as assistant editor.

A painstaking worker with exacting standards of efficiency, Shertok was not at all sure that he had the necessary experience to qualify him for the position.

"Surely," he told Katzenelson, "you understand that a daily newspaper really must come out on time every day. Is there anyone among you who has ever worked on the actual production of a daily newspaper?" When it turned out that not one of his co-workers-to-be had this experience, Shertok, then still in London, went to the editorial offices of a London daily to ask permission to spend twenty-four hours there. He remained from one morning to the next, observing the preparation of one edition of the paper from beginning to end. These twenty-four hours of experience gave him a practical advantage over every other member of *Davar's* editorial board.

He was assistant editor of *Davar* for several years. From 1929 to 1931 he also edited the English-language supplement for the daily, which won high praise from English-speaking Jewry, including the late Justice Louis D. Brandeis.

It was during those years that Shertok embarked on his prolific writing career. Under the pen names of "M. Ben Keddem" and "M. Karov-Rahok," he wrote extensively for *Davar* and other newspapers. In later years he was to complete two books, *Mishut B'Azia* ("Roaming Through

Asia") and *BeShaare HaUmot* ("At the Gates of the Nations").

"With his death," Ben-Gurion said, "Israel, Jewry and the Hebrew language have lost one of the generation's most outstanding personalities." Although he was at home in many Semitic and European languages, Hebrew always remained Moshe Sharett's first love. Zealously guarding the purity of the ancient tongue which was being given new life in the Jewish Homeland, he developed new Hebrew words to meet modern needs. He issued several volumes of Hebrew translations of English, French, Russian and German poetry, including that of Heinrich Heine and Mikhail Yurevich Lermontov.

As not only his co-workers in Palestine, but also his negotiating partners and opponents in foreign governments were soon to learn, Moshe Shertok was not only the devoted servant of his people—as he sought to signify when

Meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive with Arab leaders from Trans-Jordan at the King David Hotel, Jerusalem, April, 1933. Standing in second row (right to left): Moshe Shertok (Sharett) (second from right); Itzhak Ben-Zvi (later President of the State of Israel). In front row, flanked by Arab chieftains: Dr. Chaim Weizmann (left) and Dr. Chaim Arlosoroff. At far left, Dr. Emanuel Neumann.

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he adopted the Hebrew surname of *Sharett*, literally "Servant" in 1949—but a man of incredible versatility and a veritable storehouse of information. The word "rest" did not seem to be part of his phenomenal vocabulary. Almost until the last day of his life, Sharett thrived on a gruelling schedule of work which would begin at sunrise and continue until midnight and later.

In 1931 he was appointed Secretary of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, which was then headed by the able Dr. Haim Arlosoroff. In this position, Sharett took part in negotiations with the Emir Abdullah and other Arab chieftains for the establishment of Jewish settlements in Trans-Jordan, and for closer cooperation between Arabs and Jews. That year, too, he was elected chairman of the Security Committee of Palestine's Jewish Community, which shouldered the official and financial responsibility for the activities of Hagana, the Jewish self-defense organization which had succeeded HaShomer, the original defense unit of Jewish workers in 1920.

When, in 1933, Arlosoroff was assassinated at the age of only thirty-four, Sharett, himself not yet forty years old, was named temporary head of the Political Department and, at the Eighteenth Zionist Congress which was held in Prague that year, he was elected its Chairman, a post which he held until 1948, when he became the first Foreign Minister of the State of Israel. In this position, Sharett was one of those in charge of conducting the struggle with the British Mandatory authorities on problems of immigration and security.

Simultaneously, he continued to watch over the vital interests of the Zionist movement. At the same Zionist Congress which had confirmed Sharett's chairmanship of the Political Department, the Labor Zionist party received its first three seats in the Executive of the World Zionist Organization. They went to David Ben-Gurion, Eliezer Kaplan and Moshe Sharett.

Moshe Shertok (Sharett) (left of center, wearing hat) at the founding of Kibbutz Hanita in the Upper Galilee, March, 1938.



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From that time on, Moshe Sharett was one of the acknowledged leaders of the Zionist movement. It was he who, during the Arab disturbances of the middle and late 1930's, conceived the idea of the *notrim*, the Jewish Supernumerary Police Force, which operated under the command of Hagana and numbered 20,000 by 1939, and during the years immediately preceding the outbreak of World War II, he traveled to virtually every major city of the Middle East in an effort to bring about better relations between the Arabs and the Jewish Community of Palestine. As late as 1938, he was convinced, as he put it, "of the possibility of a full and fruitful cooperation between a Palestine embracing Jews and Arabs, and the neighboring countries, for the good of all."

By this time, however, Zionism had to contend with stiff opposition from a different source. The British were beginning to place severe restrictions on Jewish immigration to the "Jewish National Home" which their Government had supported in the Balfour Declaration only two decades before. Refugees from Germany, where Hitler had come to power, were turned away from the shores of Palestine to face death in Europe. At one point, a Royal Com-

mission led by Viscount Peel, which had been sent to Palestine in 1936 by the British government subsequent to the Arab riots, bluntly asked Moshe Sharett, in his capacity of member of the Zionist Executive, whether or not the Executive would condone and support the "illegal" immigration of Jews into Palestine. For a while, Sharett attempted to avoid answering directly, but when Lord Peel persisted, he answered with a frank "Yes." Moshe Sharett was speaking for the Executive as a whole, and during the years that followed, he and his colleagues were to fight with increasing determination, though with very little success, to open the gates of Palestine to all those seeking refuge there.

The most tragic incident calling for Sharett's personal intervention was that of the S.S. Struma which had left Rumania for Palestine late in 1941 with 769 refugees aboard. When the overcrowded vessel reached Istanbul, the Turks announced that they would permit the refugees to disembark only if the British were to admit them to Palestine. This the Mandatory authorities refused to do. Sharett pleaded day and night with High Commissioner Sir Harold MacMichael and with his political adviser, Chief Secretary Sir John Shaw, to let the refugees enter Palestine under that year's immigration quota which had not been filled. When MacMichael retorted that he was not ready to feed another eight hundred mouths, Sharett assured him that the Jewish Community of Palestine would be more than willing to share its own rations with the newcomers and that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York, too, had promised assistance. MacMichael still refused. He now told Sharett that he suspected some of the refugees of being Nazi spies since, after all, they had come from German-occupied Rumania. Sharett's proposal that the entire transport could be interned in Palestine for the duration of the war if that would prove necessary

fell upon deaf ears. In the end, the unseaworthy boat was forced to leave the harbor of Istanbul. On February 24, 1942, it floundered in the Black Sea, and all but one of its passengers were drowned.

Another task which occupied Sharett during the years of World War II was the endeavor to establish a Jewish brigade which would fight under its own emblem alongside the Allied armed forces. This idea had first been discussed in the summer of 1939, before the Nazi invasion of Poland. Chaim Weizmann had written to the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, offering the assistance of the Jewish Agency in the mobilization of Jewish manpower and resources, with particular reference to the Jews in Palestine, on the side of Britain and France in the event of war. Sharett was sent to London by the Agency which wanted a Jewish division to fight alongside the Allied forces. He was, however, given a cool reception. Disappointed by his failure, he booked passage back to Palestine on a flight via Berlin and Warsaw.

Round Table Conference at St. James' Palace, London, 1939. Seen in this picture, among others are Dr. Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion (foreground, center). To the left of Weizmann are (right to left) Prof. Selig Brodetsky and Dr. Nahum Goldmann. Seated between Ben-Gurion and Shertok (Sharett) is Mrs. Rose Jacobs.



The night before he was due to leave London, Sharett met an old friend, Orde Wingate, the British officer who had helped train the Hagana in Palestine and had organized night patrols to protect the Jewish settlements against Arab raids. The two men had first met in Palestine in 1937, and Wingate had taken an immediate liking to the statesman who, as yet, had no state to represent. When Wingate learned that Sharett was planning to travel over Germany, he was horrified. He begged him to change his itinerary, warning him of the possibility of capture by the Nazis, but Sharett remained unmoved.

Later that evening, Wingate had an idea. He asked Sharett whether he would stay if he, Wingate, were to arrange for him an interview with General Sir Edmund Ironside, who, as Inspector-General of the British Overseas Forces, was a key figure for Sharett to see in his efforts to organize an independent Jewish fighting force. Sharett hesitated. Wingate, however, went ahead and called the general. When Sir Edmund wanted to know exactly what post Mr. Shertok held in Palestine, Wingate, himself not sure of his friend's rank in the Zionist movement, replied, "Oh, he's kind of head of the Jews in Palestine." Sir Edmund granted the interview which, though not fruitful of the results Sharett and Wingate had hoped for, kept Sharett from leaving as scheduled and thus probably saved his life.

The interview with Sir Edmund Ironside was only the first of many attended by Weizmann and Sharett. As the war wore on, Sharett kept in constant touch with British general headquarters, with the British authorities in Palestine, London and in the North African desert where the three-year struggle against Rommel's *Afrika Korps* was in full swing. He sought out the soldiers from Palestine, who had been recruited by the Jewish Agency, advised them and gained their confidence. The young men were bitterly disappointed, for although Jews from Palestine were doing



Delegates to the Twenty-first Zionist Congress, Geneva, September, 1939, receiving the news of the outbreak of World War II. Seated in the front row (left to right): Shertok (Sharett), Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, and Eliezer Kaplan, Treasurer of the Jewish Agency.

valiant service in the British Army and Navy, with Palestine Jewish commandos and intelligence officers spearheading the invasion of Syria—then held by Petain's French puppet state—the British persisted in their stubborn refusal to tolerate a Jewish army or even a Jewish brigade. Perhaps the British equated an independent Jewish brigade fighting under its own colors in the British army with an independent Jewish State which they were unwilling to countenance.

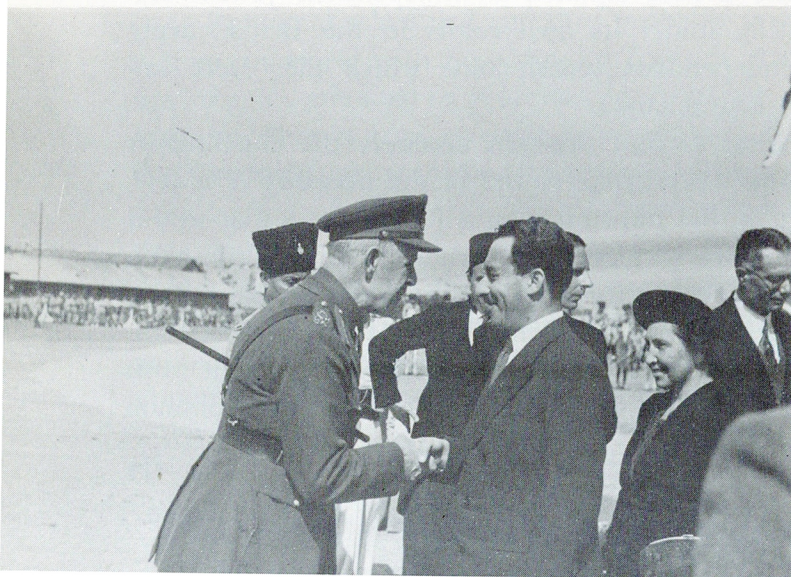
As a matter of fact, this was precisely the aim Sharett had in mind. He was convinced of the necessity of a Jewish brigade as the forerunner of a Jewish army that would eventually serve to guard and protect a Jewish commonwealth. Just as the Jewish Agency in Palestine was, in fact, a government within the British Mandatory Government, so the Jewish Brigade would be an independent unit within the British Army, fighting against the common

enemy but ready to serve the Jewish people and the Jewish Homeland once it would have achieved Statehood.

It was not until 1944 that, due in part to the personal intervention of Prime Minister Churchill, the Jewish Brigade finally came into being. It first saw action in Northern Italy in February 1945 as part of the British Eighth Army. Sharett went to Italy himself to visit the Brigade, in which his own son Yaakov was serving. When the colors of the unit were first unfurled, Sharett, who by then was popularly called the "father" of the Jewish Brigade, said to his fellow-Jews who were bearing the Star of David on their British uniforms:

"The work of the Jewish soldier and civilian in this war is one more stratum in the structure of the Jewish State of the future. It is a layer in the structure of the Jewish army of the future.

"For us, this flag is steeped in the blood of the five million Jews of Europe who were led like sheep to the slaughter. It is steeped in the blood of those who fought the battle of despair and heroism from the walls of the Ghetto. It is this flag that they raised in the moment of their final, desperate and holy outburst. It is steeped in the blood of the victims of our own self-defense who fell on the fields of our own homeland."



Moshe Shertok (Sharett) with Field Marshal Lord Gort, British High Commissioner for Palestine, October 1944. Mrs. Shertok is seen to the right of her husband.



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Moshe Shertok (Sharett) at reception on the seventieth birthday of Chaim Weizmann, 1944. From left to right: Meyer Weisgal, Eliezer Kaplan, Shertok (Sharett) and Dr. Weizmann.

In the years following World War II, Sharett devoted much effort and concern to the Jewish displaced persons of Europe who had survived Hitler's attempt at a "final solution" of the Jewish problem. He developed a particularly close relationship with the survivors of the concentration camp of Bergen Belsen which was the first camp to be reached by the soldiers of the Jewish Brigade. In Israel, he carefully followed the progress of the children who were born in Bergen Belsen after the liberation, and they, in turn, were very much attached to him.

He traveled to London, Cairo, Paris, the United States and Rome—where he was received by Pope Pius XII—to discuss the situation of the remnants of European Jewry. His sophisticated, dignified appearance, his gentlemanly

bearing, his calm which never deserted him, coupled with his diplomatic, precise and highly articulate presentation of his cause and his encyclopedic knowledge of pertinent facts gained Sharett the respect and admiration of even those who opposed him.

In the fall of 1945, after the landslide victory of the Labor Party in Britain's first postwar elections, Sharett, representing the Jewish Agency, presented a formal request to the new British government for the abrogation of the infamous White Paper of 1939. For some time, representatives of the British Labor Party had assured the members of the Executive that, if elected, the Labor Government would facilitate the immigration of Jews to Palestine and help them attain their goal of a Jewish National Home. However, when Sharett and his party came to Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin that November, their hopes were dashed when Bevin proposed that no more than 1500 Jews should be allowed to enter Palestine each month for a period of six months, after which Jewish immigration

was to cease entirely. Moshe Sharett was the only man in the Zionist Executive who refused to lose his temper at Bevin's ridiculous offer. "We shall not refuse this offer," he said in a statement to the press, "because every Jew who reaches Palestine will be one more Jew who has found shelter there. Every Jew admitted to his Homeland is one more Jew rescued and settled. However, we shall continue fighting without letup in Jerusalem, in London, and everywhere else, too."

The Zionist leaders pleaded, argued, and threatened, but Bevin remained unmoved. In the United States, President Harry S. Truman proposed that one hundred thousand concentration camp survivors be admitted to Palestine immediately. His suggestion was categorically rejected by the British government. Meanwhile, in Palestine,

Moshe Shertok (Sharett), Chairman of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, addressing Jewish military units in the British forces in Palestine, 1941.

COURTESY ZIONIST ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

Moshe Shertok (Sharett) with Brigadier Benjamin, Commander of the Jewish Brigade, 1945.



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

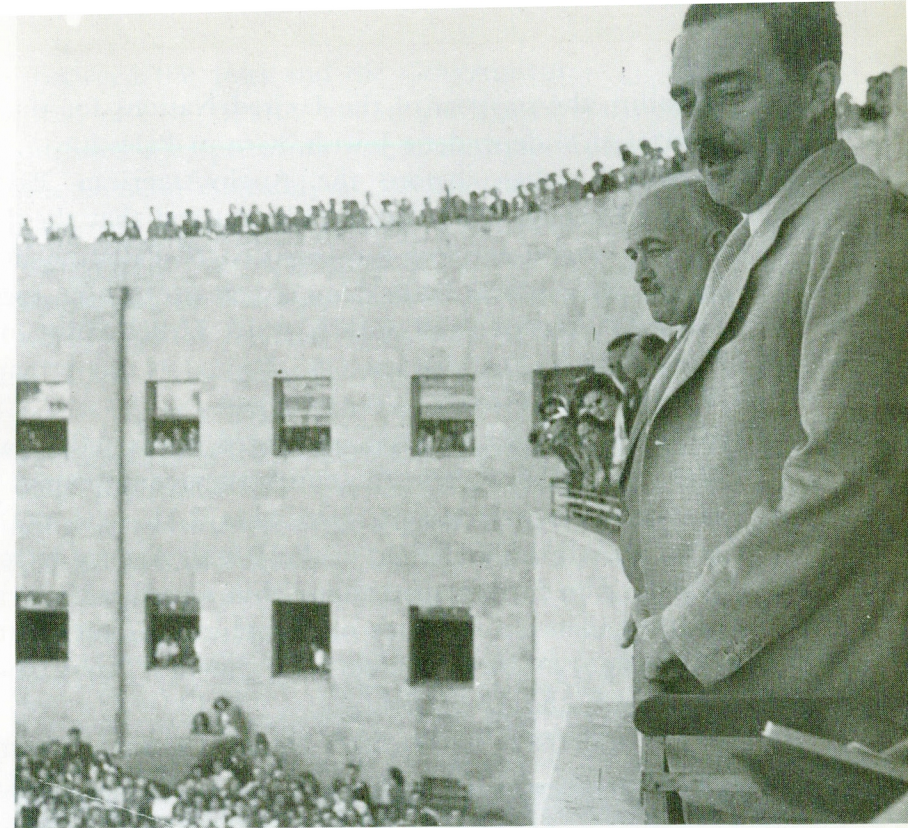




Moshe Sharett together with other Zionist leaders jailed by the British in the Latrun Detention Camp on "Black Saturday", June 29, 1946. (From left to right): David Remez, Dr. Dov Joseph, Moshe Shertok (Sharett), and David Hacohen.

the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel (known as the Stern Group) performed acts of terrorism against the British administration in revenge for the closing of Palestine to Jewish immigration. Ships loaded with displaced persons from Europe came to the coast of Palestine, only to be turned away or to have their passengers interned on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

On June 29, 1946, a Saturday, Sharett and other members of the Jewish Agency Executive, including David Remez, Itzhak Gruenbaum, Dov Joseph, and Rabbi Jehuda Leib Fishman (Maimon) were arrested by the British authorities. Other leaders of the Jewish community in Palestine, including Sharett's friend David Hacohen, were arrested simultaneously and they were all taken to Latrun where they were interned for four months. David Ben-Gurion, who was in Paris at the time, and Eliezer Kaplan, the treasurer of the Jewish Agency, who was also



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Moshe Shertok (Sharett) and David Remez on the balcony of the Jewish Agency building, accepting the enthusiastic welcome of Jerusalem Jewry after their return from the British detention camp at Latrun, 1946.

abroad were the only members of the Executive from Palestine to remain free.

Following his release, Sharett joined Ben-Gurion in London, and the two of them headed the Jewish delegation to the talks held with the British government at the Colonial Office. During the long negotiations, Bevin threatened them that he would turn the entire "Palestine problem" over to the United Nations. The Zionist leaders had no objections whatever to this proposed method of settlement of the crisis, and in February of 1947, Sharett called for the launching of a worldwide political offensive to

mobilize the support of the United Nations for the creation of an independent Jewish State in Palestine.

Much earlier, before the Anglo-American Palestine Commission, Sharett had already testified that the Jewish Agency would support the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish State. Now it was up to him, together with Ben-Gurion and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of the United States, to persuade the United Nations that this was the only solution to the problem.

Foreign Minister Bevin suggested other talks, but by then the Zionists knew how much they could expect from the British Government. Sharett said that he not only saw "very little likelihood of the Jewish Agency Executive engaging in further discussions" but also that there never really had been a chance of an amicable solution to the "Palestine problem" because of Bevin's "reluctance to antagonize the Arab world."

He addressed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. In *The Birth of Israel* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), Jorge Garcia-Granados, the representative to the U. N. from Guatemala and a member of the Committee wrote: "A parallel presentation of facts and figures was made to us by Moshe Shertok, Chief of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. A vigorous, dark-haired man with alert black eyes, who had apparently an encyclopedic knowledge of his subject, Shertok spent nearly two hours in painting a comprehensive picture of the country's geography, its people, its industrial and agricultural development, and its potentialities as the Jews foresaw them. The Jews, he said, were a 'nation in the making', whose national economy was handicapped by the conflict between its actual position and its status under the Mandatory Government. The Government's White Paper of 1939, with its restrictive laws on land purchase and immigration, had knocked out the 'cornerstone of coopera-

tion' between the Jews and the Government."

In May of 1947, Sharett was in the United States, where he addressed the special *ad hoc* committee of the United Nations General Assembly at Lake Success.

"Two things must be stressed," he said. "First, the (Jewish) Agency is the spokesman not merely of the Jews already settled in Palestine, but of all Jews throughout the world who are devoted to the idea of the Jewish National Home. The entire Jewish people, I might say, hold the Jewish Agency responsible for the success of that great enterprise. Secondly, the Agency is not merely an organ of national representation, but an instrument of nation-building, an institution of immigration, development and settlement. It mobilizes the energies and resources of our

Moshe Sharett with members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in New York. From left to right: Berl Locker, Rabbi Zeev Gold, Moshe Sharett, Mrs. Rose Halprin, Hayyim Greenberg.

COURTESY ZIONIST ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY



people for national reconstruction, and in Palestine it directs large-scale practical development work.

"The great historic phenomenon of the Jewish return to Palestine is unique because the position of the Jewish people as a homeless people, and yet attached with an unbreakable tenacity to its birthplace is unique. It is that phenomenon which has made the problem of Palestine an issue in international affairs, and no similar problem has ever arisen before."

Another time, before the same Committee, Sharett said that "the present political crisis in Palestine is nothing but a clash between the dire needs of Jewish immigration and the current anti-immigration policy of the Mandatory Power. We were asked by the representative of India why public servants of the British Government in Palestine are today the victims of terrorist activity. The answer is because the White Paper of 1939 is still in force. Terrorism is a pernicious outgrowth of a disastrous policy.

"The Jewish Agency has unreservedly condemned terrorist bloodshed, and in that attitude it is supported by the large majority of the organized Jewish community. Its harm to the Jews and to the Jewish future is far graver than to the Government and people of the United Kingdom. But Jewish efforts to resist and check terrorism are continually frustrated because Government action in pursuance of the White Paper adds fuel to the fire. Our efforts will continue, but the representative of India will no doubt agree that Palestine is not the only country which has been afflicted with this most hateful disease."

The fate of Palestine was decided on November 29, 1947. The member nations of the General Assembly voted thirty-three to thirteen in favor of the plan for the partition of Palestine. One nation was absent from the roll call; ten nations, including the United Kingdom, abstained.

Theodor Herzl's dream had become a reality. Many statesmen warned the Zionists not to proclaim a Jewish state at this time, but the Zionists, realizing that if they did not take the opportunity that now presented itself the establishment of the State might be delayed indefinitely, proclaimed the independence of *Medinat Israel*, the State of Israel, on May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv.

David Ben-Gurion became the first Prime Minister of the new republic. Chaim Weizmann, the ailing elder statesman of Zionism, was elected the first President of the State of Israel. Eliezer Kaplan, who had been treasurer of the Jewish Agency, became Minister of Finance. And Moshe Shertok who, in effect, had been Foreign Minister to the Jewish Agency since 1933, was the obvious choice for the position of Foreign Minister of the Jewish State.

Sharett went to work at once to build Israel's foreign and diplomatic service. Centering his staff around the nucleus of the school for diplomats he had set up prior to the establishment of the State, he turned a group of well-

Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok (Sharett) with Count Folke Bernadotte (in uniform) and Dr. Ralph Bunche, 1948.



meaning amateurs into a team of highly efficient professional diplomats and civil servants. He created a diplomatic language, coining new Hebrew words wherever necessary. He brought to his new position the insistence on precision and accuracy for which he had become known in the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Executive. When reading statements to the press, he spelled out difficult words and even went so far as to indicate punctuation marks to make sure that the Foreign Minister of Israel would not be misquoted. Moshe Sharett never was.

He had no patience with the trappings of bureaucracy. In the days of the Mandate he had paid a visit to the Dead Sea potash works, which was then still run along British lines, and had discovered that the plant had two separate



Foreign Minister
Moshe Sharett at
Yemenite immi-



COURTESY UNITED NATIONS

Moshe Shertok (Sharett) representing the Jewish Agency at a session of the United Nations Security Council.

dining halls, one for the workers, the other for the executives. Within hours Sharett had been able to accomplish by dint of persuasion what the workers had failed to achieve by striking—the executive dining room was abolished in favor of a more democratic arrangement. When he became Foreign Minister, his views on empty forms which to him seemed meaningless remained unchanged. His equals, subordinates and the press all continued to call him by his first name, using the informal address *Shma Moshe*—“Listen, Moshe.” The story goes that reporters from abroad began to employ the same form of address when speaking to him, under the assumption



COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

United States Ambassador James MacDonald and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett signing the U.S.-Israel Air Agreement, June 13, 1950.

that *Shma Moshe*, which they heard used over and over again by Israelis speaking to the Foreign Minister was the Hebrew for "Your Excellency."

In 1949, after the fighting had ended, Sharett was in New York attending the impressive ceremony at which the flag of the State of Israel was raised for the first time alongside the flags of the other member states of the United Nations.

"This is indeed a great moment for the State of Israel," he said to the representatives of the nations of the world who were watching. "It is a great moment for the Jewish people throughout the world. One is awed by the responsibility it entails and uplifted by the vision it reveals for the future."

"The admission of Israel to this Assembly is the consum-



COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

United States Ambassador Monnet B. Davies and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett signing the Point Four Agreement at the Foreign Ministry at Hakirya in Tel Aviv, 1951

mation of a people's transition from political anonymity to clear identity; from inferior to equal status; from mere passive protest to active responsibility; from exclusion to membership in the family of nations.

"The Jewish State arose because, in the words of Theodor Herzl who in his prophetic sight envisioned its creation fifty years ago, it has become a world necessity. Two historic trends converged to bring it about in our time—catastrophe in Europe and achievement in Zion.

"At no stage in the tribulations of the Jewish people was its basic insecurity more tragically laid bare than in the last World War, when three out of every four Jews in Europe—one out of every three Jews in the world—were put to death.

"Allied victory would have missed one of its essential, though at the time perhaps unperceived objectives, and the triumph of the United Nations over the scourge of humanity would have remained incomplete, if the Jewish people, as a people, had still remained homeless, without a country of its own.

"When the hour came, the Jews knew that their own survival and freedom, in their own country, as well as the fulfillment of the hopes of countless generations, were at stake. In this conviction lay their ability, outnumbered and out-armed, to defend themselves and uphold their independence.

"May it be recalled that on the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar our people pray for the day when all the peoples of the earth shall unite in one fraternity to seek the salvation of mankind, and that it was the prophets of Israel who bequeathed to the world the vision of a time

Sharett conducting community singing at close of Twenty-third Zionist Congress, Jerusalem, August 1951.

ESY JEWISH AGENCY.



COURTESY UNITED NATIONS

At the ceremony hoisting the flag of Israel for the first time at the United Nations, New York, after Israel's admission to the U.N., May 12, 1949. Left to right: David Hacohen, Abba Eban, Arthur Lurie, Moshe Sharett (holding flag), Gideon Raphael.

when 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'"

Wherever Moshe Sharett went, he won respect not only for the State of Israel but also for the Jews living in the countries he visited. In 1953 he made a good-will tour of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, combining official State visits with calls on the Jewish communities. By his personal charm and diplomatic skill, Moshe Sharett did much to promote closer contacts between Israel and these predominantly Catholic countries whose conception of the

Holy Land differed considerably from that held by the founders of the modern Jewish State.

But Moshe Sharett never thought that the achievement of an independent Jewish State was the be-all and end-all of Jewish striving. He remained loyal to the ideals of Herzlian Zionism which was dedicated to the unification of Jewish life throughout the world and to which Zionism and the Jewish State were instruments toward the survival and progress of the Jewish people as a whole. Unlike many other prominent Israelis, Sharett was never able to accept the theory that Statehood was an end in itself, or to view Diaspora Jewry as no more than an adjunct to the Jewish State. Although he himself had spent nearly all his life in

After the ceremony of the changeover of Chiefs of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, November, 1949. Left to Right: **Rav Aluf** Yigal Yadin, the new Chief of Staff; Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett; Premier David Ben-Gurion; **Rav Aluf** Yaakov Dori, outgoing Chief of Staff.

COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL



COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

At an Israel Independence Day reception at the home of President Chaim Weizmann at Rehovot, 1951. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett looks on as the President (seated) greets Mrs. Rahel Yanait Ben-Zvi and her husband, Itzhak Ben-Zvi, who was to succeed Weizmann in the Presidency.

the service of the land of Israel, his loyalty, first and foremost, was to the Jewish people as a whole.

Sharett was fully aware of the challenges facing the Zionist movement with the rise of the new State. While he understood Zionism as a revolt against the unbalanced social structure of Diaspora Jewry, he consistently pointed out that one of the main functions of Zionism was to pre-

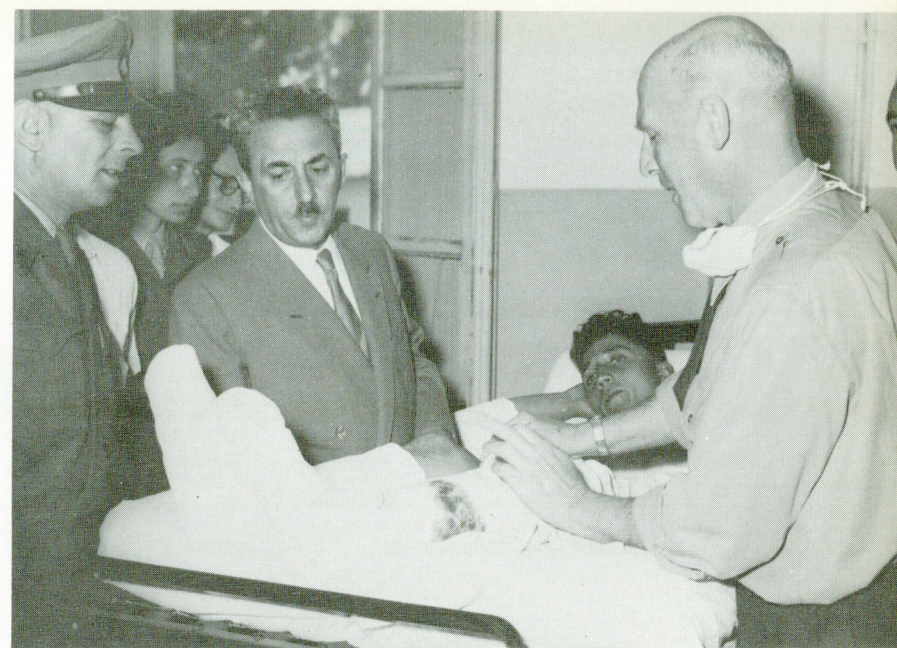
serve the soul of Judaism in the Diaspora. However, he did not approve of any spiritual or religious reawakening that did not integrate religion with the totality of Jewish life. Such a view, he felt, keeping religion, as it did, from encompassing the whole of Jewish experience, would only serve to hamper the contribution of religion to Jewish living.

In December, 1953 David Ben-Gurion resigned from the Premiership, suggesting as his successor Levi Eshkol, who then held the position of Minister of Finance. Eshkol, however, declined in favor of Sharett, and when the Central Committee of Mapai unanimously endorsed him, Moshe Sharett became the second Prime Minister of the State of Israel, retaining the portfolio of Foreign Affairs as well.

Sharett was Prime Minister until the election of the

viewing a guard of honor at Lod Airport, May, 1953, the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. From left to right: Sharett, Harold Stassen, Secretary Dulles.

COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY



Moshe Sharett visiting the wounded of the Nahal Oz attack, April, 1955.

COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Third Knesset in November 1955, when Ben-Gurion returned to the Premiership, leaving the Foreign Ministry to Sharett. By that time, however, Sharett and Ben-Gurion were continually at odds with one another. Ben-Gurion was impulsive, aggressive and more interested in the end than in the means to be used to accomplish it. Sharett, on the other hand, was a born diplomat, and much more educated and sensitive in the field of foreign affairs and international understanding than his erstwhile comrade-in-arms. Ben-Gurion, who acted also as Minister of Defense, found him too cautious and when, in June 1956, Ben-Gurion decided that he and Sharett could not build up between them the complete harmony he felt was necessary between the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defense, Sharett, to the great regret of many Israelis, resigned from the Cabinet.



Premier Sharett presenting his first Cabinet to President Itzhak Ben-Zvi, June, 1954. Seated, first row, left to right: Golda Meir, President Ben-Zvi, Premier Sharett, Peretz Bernstein. Standing, left to right: Levi Eshkol, Pinhas Lavon, Ben-Zion Dinur, Joseph Safir, Behor Shitreet, Moshe Shapiro, Dr. Joseph Burg.

"In recent weeks," Sharett said in the statement announcing his decision, "it has been clear to me that my resignation was unavoidable. The situation did not arise in connection with any pending political issue or current event or incident. Nevertheless, in a frank conversation which I had with the Prime Minister on the evening of last Saturday, I reached the absolute conviction that it was impossible to remain in the government of which he is the head."

Sharett never forgot that he had been forced out of the Cabinet only a few months before the Sinai Campaign. The conflict with Ben-Gurion had been caused to a large extent by Sharett's efforts to strengthen the partnership between



Premier Sharett presenting his second Cabinet to President Itzhak Ben-Zvi. From left to right: Zalman Aranne, Ben-Zion Dinur, Levi Eshkol, Peretz Naphtali, Dov Joseph, Premier Sharett, President Ben-Zvi, Golda Meir, Pinhas Rosen, Moshe Shapiro, Behor Shitreet, Dr. Joseph Burg, David Ben-Gurion, Zeb Sharef (Secretary to the Cabinet).

Israel and the United Nations in the days of the *fedayeen* raids.

Though deeply disappointed, Sharett went on with his public and Zionist activities. He became head of Am Oved, the publishing house of the Histadrut, served as chairman of the board of Directors of Bet Berl and as member of the governing body of the Socialist International. He represented Mapai at the Asian Socialist Conference of 1956 in Bombay, and at the Congress of the Socialist International at Hamburg in July 1959.



COURTESY UNITED NATIONS

Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett and Premier Ben-Gurion with Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in Jerusalem, January, 1956.

On that occasion, Sharett joined over two hundred of the delegates, including Mrs. Barbara Castle, the chairman of Britain's Labor Party, in a pilgrimage to the mass graves on the site of the extermination camp of Bergen Belsen, where he delivered a memorial address. The group was



Moshe Sharett with Josef Rosensaft, former chairman of the Central Committee for Displaced Persons in the British zone of Germany.

met at Belsen by Josef Rosensaft, former chairman of the Central Committee of Displaced Persons in the British Zone of Germany, who escorted the visitors around the camp site.

In one of his last articles, written in 1965 for *Holocaust and Rebirth*, the memorial volume published on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Bergen Belsen's liberation, Sharett paid tribute to the survivors of this concentration camp.

"It is to the credit of the survivors of the Holocaust in this camp and of their leaders, headed by that remarkable man, Josef Rosensaft, that they did not allow themselves to



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Conferring with Ben-Gurion at a session of the Third Knesset, August, 1955. Seated in first row (left to right) are Ministers Moshe Shapiro, Zalman Aranne, Moshe Sharett, David Ben-Gurion and Dr. Joseph Burg. Seen in the second row are Chief Rabbis Herzog (in top hat) and Nissim.

become fragmentized by countries of origin but formed, instead, one unit, which stressed the pronounced national character of the community of survivors as Jews." Sharett wrote. "This regime of accenting Jewish identity and organizing Jewish life immediately after liberation served as an example to other camps. It accented the essential nature of the Holocaust as a campaign to exterminate the Jewish people, and the peculiar character of the problem of the survivors as one of the manifestations of the historic lot of the Jewish people.

"The survivors of Bergen Belsen demonstrated to the occupation authorities and the international commissions

the refusal of the Jews in the camps to rebuild their lives on the ruins of the past, and their determination to shape their future destiny in the Jewish homeland."

He was a socialist all his life, but a democratic socialist. He viewed the socialist society as "that society which endeavors to solve every problem that arises in a socialist manner; i.e. in such a way as to increase equality, intensify justice and emancipate man from his bonds in keeping with the needs of society as a whole.

"Before the State existed we did not maintain, and we do not maintain today," he said, "that socialism can be attained instantaneously. This is not because we do not desire it, but because it is inevitable. I remember a great teacher saying: 'Socialism will never be fulfilled. Socialism will grow.'"

Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, accompanied by Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon and Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan visiting an army base somewhere in Israel.

COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL



At the Twenty-fifth Zionist Congress in Jerusalem in 1960, Moshe Sharett was elected chairman of the World Zionist Executive and of the Israeli Section of the Jewish Agency Executive, and was re-elected to these posts at the Twenty-sixth Congress in December 1964, which he was too ill to attend. The message he sent to that last Congress may be considered his last will and testament of the Zionist movement.

"In order to fit ourselves for the tasks of our generation, we must set our house in order. . . .," he wrote. "The various sections of the Zionist Movement, on the local and the world scale, are storehouses of devotion, closely woven fabrics of mutual ties, schools of developed doctrine, and from all these points of view they are of permanent value.

Sharett and Dr. Nahum Goldmann on the way to Rehovot to attend a memorial service marking the 25th anniversary of the death of Chaim Weizmann, November 2, 1962.

COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Moshe Sharett addressing the closing session of the Twenty-fifth World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, January, 1961.

"Their right to existence cannot be gainsaid, but it has to be justified afresh not merely on the ground that they exist, but according to the measure of their suitability for changed conditions. . . .

"The urgent tasks on the one hand, and the possibilities that are opening up before us on the other, call for a comprehensive realignment in thought and deed.

"The gates of our leadership must be opened to new men, not identified with any party; new groups must be given representation on Zionist institutions; we must break through the limitations of the present inter-party structure in order to respond to the needs that life imposes.

"As for the existing parties and organizations, each of them will be tested by the extent to which it sees itself in

the light of the general interest, by its willingness and preparedness to bear the central responsibility for the future of the entire movement.

"All of them together must lend a hand in a common effort to find ways to win over additional sections and organizations in Jewry, and to create, together with them, the framework for wide-ranging cooperation in order to ensure the survival of the Jewish people, by establishing a central place in its life for the State of Israel.

"Let the word go forth from this Congress for a renewed Zionist advance—first and foremost to win the younger generation—in order to mould a future for our people in the spirit of Zionist teachings and for the sake of Zionist deeds."

Sharett's last illness first became known in June 1964 when he entered the hospital for a checkup and doctors gave him only weeks to live. He returned home, but was hospitalized several more times before the end came.

That July, in a letter to me, Dr. Nahum Goldmann wrote: "Poor Sharett is very, very sick, which is a great shock to me and to everybody." But each time Sharett returned from the hospital, he resumed active work in the Jewish Agency, and continued to take part in the affairs of Mapai and of the Histadrut.

On August 28, 1964, the Freedom of the City of Jerusalem was conferred upon him.

On that occasion David Ben-Gurion wrote an official letter to the Mayor of Jerusalem.

"One of the greatest personalities of our generation, the son of one of the first *Biluim*, the first among the first graduates of the first Hebrew *gymnasium*, a distinguished Jewish statesman in the period of Jewish revival who, for fifteen years before the rise of the State, headed the Political Department of the Jewish Agency with understanding, devotion and perseverance, and was one of the instruments

Ceremony conferring the Freedom of the City of Jerusalem on Moshe Sharett by Mayor Ish-Shalom. President Zalman Shazar is seated at left.



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Dr. Ben-Zion Katz, Rector of Tel Aviv University, conferring an honorary doctorate on Moshe Sharett at Sharett's home in Jerusalem, March 16, 1965. Seated beside Sharett is Mayor Mordecai Namir of Tel Aviv.



6 מאי 1962

טלפון 24671

משה שרת
הסוכנות היהודית לארץ-ישראל
ירושלים

טלפון 24671

אנחנו היקר שלום רב!

שמחתי מאוד לקבל את

מכתבך ואת ברכתך לחג הסוכה.

אני רואה כי אתה עולה חיל בדמו

השנה העברית בן ונוסף!

לפני ימים אחדים חזרתי

מחול-הארץ. הייתי במילואן, בדקורין

ובמריסן. קדרכי ברכה ממילואן

למריסן עברתי א-כני מוילק-קלני ונזכרתי

בכך

Excerpt from letter written by Moshe Sharett to Menachem Z. Rosensaft, May 6, 1962.

headed the Israel government with honor and ability," Ben-Gurion said of Moshe Sharett.

"Moshe Sharett is distinguished not only for his Hebrew style and flair for language, but also for his exemplary life and his sense of civic and human responsibility, one of the few exemplary spirits of our generation, a giant of the spirit and of Jewish stalwartness in the loftiest sense of the term. During his term of office as Chairman of the Zionist Executive he has brought glory to the Institution through his

My dear Menachem,

I was glad to receive your note with the newspaper cutting. I had read your letter long before, on the day on which it appeared, and thought it was good sense, extremely well written, and very useful. It would have been even more effective if it had appeared in Hebrew.

Excerpt from letter written by Moshe Sharett to Menachem Z. Rosensaft, August 21, 1962.

for and trailblazer of the renewal of Jewish independence, and to whose lot it fell to be the architect of the policy of the sovereign State of Israel for many years and who also

pioneering loyalty and by his Zionism which does not need to be put in inverted commas."

Early that fall, I received my last letter from Moshe Sharett, in which he also wrote to me about his illness.

"Kindly convey my warmest regards to your parents," he wrote, "together with my apologies for having omitted to send them a telegram of congratulations on their eighteenth wedding anniversary. In the meantime, I, too, became the victim of a celebration—on the first day of Succoth I reached the venerable age of 70! However, I succeeded to keep it secret from the press and public, so only members of the family assembled to make merry that day in our house in Jerusalem, and they were over 80 strong! It was great fun, and some consolation for the mishap.* Please accept this disclosure as a token of friendship and don't divulge it to anyone. If you do make an exception in favor of your parents, it should be on condition that they, too, keep 'mum' about it and do not react to this sad event in any way."

Several weeks later, Sharett presided over a dinner given at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot in honor of an old friend, Meyer Weisgal, who was also celebrating his seventieth birthday. Toward the end of the dinner, Weisgal rose and wished Sharett good health and happiness for many years to come. Most of those present knew that Sharett by that time was desperately ill, and more than one furtively brushed away a tear.

In February, 1965 Sharett attended the Convention of Mapai. It was his last public appearance. He arrived in a wheelchair, for that same week he had fallen and broken his hip, and it was from the wheelchair that he delivered his address. It was one of the bitter ironies of fate that now, less than five months before his death, he found most of the members of his party siding with him against Ben-Gurion.



Moshe Sharett with Menachem Z. Rosensaft at a reception in Tel Aviv, 1963.

On June 25, only twelve days before his death, Sharett presided over a meeting of the Agency Executive at his home. That week he still kept fifteen appointments and managed to write no less than fifty letters by hand. It seemed that he was holding on to life with the last of his strength and will-power.

Two days later, however, on June 27 after a routine checkup at home, he was taken to the Ein Karem Medical Center for blood transfusions. He responded well, and for the next two days he carried on his work from his hospital



COURTESY JEWISH AGENCY

Foreign Minister Golda Meir congratulating Moshe Sharett after his address which he made from his wheelchair to the Tenth Conference of Mapai, February 17, 1965.

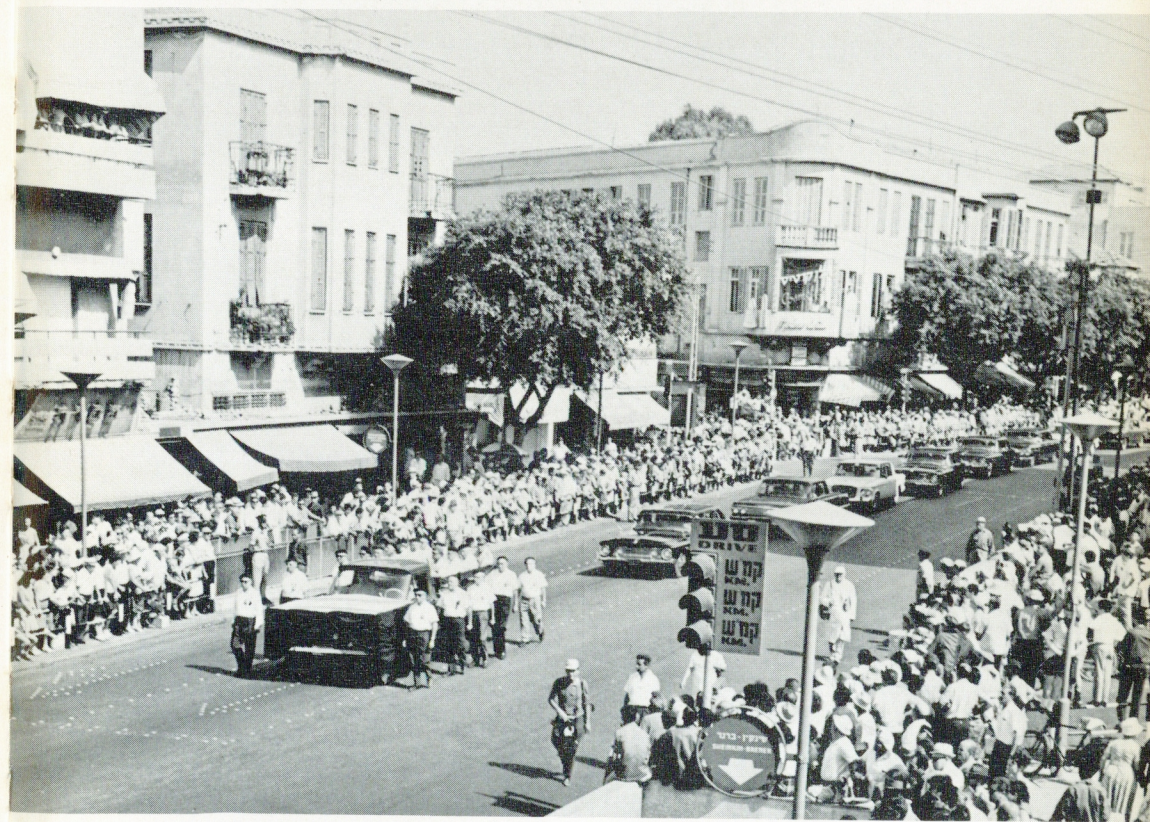
bed, as he had each of the other times he had been hospitalized, receiving reports from his aides, giving instructions and dictating letters.

On Thursday his lungs began to fail and he was given oxygen. But he rallied again, did some work, and, on Friday, July 2, he had a lively discussion with his brother

Yehuda about a melody to which the latter had set his Hebrew translation of a Russian poem by Lermontov.

Two days later, however, the last of his strength deserted him, and on Monday, July 5, he sank into a coma from which he never woke. Watching at Sharett's bedside together with his family was his closest friend, David Hachohen, who was now the chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset.

On July 7, the sad vigil came to an end.



COURTESY ZIONIST ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY

Funeral procession of Moshe Sharett passing through Allenby Street, Tel Aviv, July 9, 1965.

Moshe Sharett was an aristocrat, a member of that select nobility into which one can be accepted only by virtue of exceptional character, high principles and devotion to great ideals. In 1962, three years before his own death, Sharett wrote of Chaim Weizmann,

“Chaim Weizmann must be numbered among the exceptional personalities whose mortal and transitory life is stamped with immortality—men who are chosen to leave their mark upon history during their own lifetime and in full view of their contemporaries.” This epitaph could also most fittingly be applied to Moshe Sharett.