

LETTERS FROM ABROAD

BEVIN'S PALESTINE PLAN AND UN

THE fuel crisis in a shivering and freezing Britain has tended to remove the Palestine issue from the front pages of the newspapers. Nevertheless, the unsettled future of Palestine and the seriousness of the problem is still reflected in the press.

A typical example is a private conference on the government's foreign policy attended by about five hundred delegates of the London Labor Party held on Feb. 15, 1947 at the Kingsway Hall, London. It was addressed by Bevin and, according to the report in *Reynolds News* of Feb. 16, "the discussion ranged largely around the government's policy in Palestine and the position of the Arabs and the Jews."

One thing is clear. The decision of the government after the fiasco of the St. James Palace talks to refer the whole problem to the General Assembly of the UN which meets in six months, bears out the opinion that Bevin is "playing for time," deliberately delaying any real attempt to find a solution, in order to keep the situation as "fluid" and as "unsettled" as possible, so that Britain's hold could be tightened still further on the country.

Should anyone think that the British government, by deciding to bring the whole matter before the UN, has become highminded, then the following press observations will shatter this illusion: "The problem is far from being solved by the decision to submit it to the United Nations. The government announcement does not make clear under what circumstances Britain is going to stay on in Palestine." (*Manchester Guardian*, Feb. 15) This liberal paper is realistic enough to say that this reference to UN is merely a question of the "circumstances" under which "Britain is going to stay on in Palestine."

The diplomatic correspondent of the conservative *Sunday Times* was more explicit on Feb. 15: "It is generally believed that Britain will not formally renounce the Mandate. It is expected the government will submit positive proposals for dealing with the future administration of Palestine, and seek the guidance of the United Nations as to the plan best suited for a long term settlement. It will solicit advice and if necessary help, and only in the last resort would there be a question of British withdrawal." (My emphasis—I. R.)

To announce that the matter will go before the UN, without a word about surrendering the trusteeship to the United

Nations, and the withdrawal of troops; and to submit it to the meeting of the General Assembly which is due in September and not *forthwith* to the Security Council—these indicate clearly the real purpose of the gesture. The more responsible papers have made clear that they did not think the Bevin scheme was meant to be a serious attempt to seek a final solution.

"In no sense was it intended to be final," said the conservative *Times* on Feb. 11. "It was by no means certain that the government has taken a final decision in Palestine," declared the *Manchester Guardian* on Feb. 10. "British policy has hardly risen to the occasion and no final decision has been found."

From the mass of rumors and stories which filled the papers on the Bevin plan, a number of statements have, more or less, corresponded with the facts. The division inside the Cabinet is undoubtedly true. The Colonial Secretary's plan which envisaged two self-governing states in Palestine after a five year transition period under a so called central government did, according to the left-wing journal *Tribune*, make every allowance "for the continued use of Palestine as a British base." This "moderation" and "reasonableness" of the "Zionist-inclined" Colonial Secretary, appear to be confirmed by the *New Statesman and Nation* which said that he, and the High Commissioner, were continually urging "that a final decision must be announced before the Jewish Agency can be expected to cooperate against the terrorists."

This plan, which still assured Britain's strategic position, was not to the liking of the generals and the power politicians. They feared Palestine Arab opposition to partition might shatter their overall Middle East plan to build a mighty power bloc, stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, against the democratic upsurge in this area and, in the last resort, against the USSR. They opposed the limited measure of self-government envisaged in a partitioned Palestine. Even the Morrison plan, in which the British grip on Palestine was doubly assured, appeared "dangerous," and was subsequently whittled down to the Bevin proposals.

The Morrison plan envisaged a semi-autonomous Arab province and a similar Jewish province; whereas Bevin proposed a number of scattered Jewish and Arab zones, isolated from each other with no

prospect of the Jewish areas eventually linking together. The Morrison plan proposed one year in which 100,000 Jewish immigrants would enter Palestine; Bevin's plan spreads this number over two years. While the Morrison scheme placed real power in the hands of the High Commissioner heading a so-called general government, it did set up a whole mechanism of provincial governments, legislative chambers and a central executive. But in the Bevin plan even this facade of self-government has been scrubbed out and instead there are vague references to local councils and a central advisory council headed by the High Commissioner.

Can anyone think that the British government was really serious in its intentions when it put this plan forward to the Zionists, who had categorically rejected the Morrison plan; and to the Arabs, when these proposals are even further away from their extremist demand for an independent Arab Palestine?

Almost eight years ago a similar conference in St. James Palace ended with the White Paper. This was British imperialism's "reward" to the Weizmann-Ben Gurion-Sheretok fraction in the Zionist movement for their faithful services to their British imperialist overlords. Much has happened since that period—and yet those Zionists have learned nothing.

The Basle Congress resolution against participation in the London talks, which was a narrow victory of the pro-American imperialist faction over the pro-Weizmann faction in the Zionist movement, was brushed aside. Instead, six members of the Zionist executive negotiated with the government. In effect, instead of entering St. James Palace by the front gate officially, as they did eight years ago, to negotiate with the government (at no time then did Palestine Arabs and Zionist leaders ever negotiate directly), they went this time to the Colonial Office instead. There, Mr. Bevin told them that he had no less than five partition plans in the Colonial Office files. None, he said, was acceptable to him because each had a large Arab minority in the proposed Jewish state.

One well informed political correspondent reported that the most striking part of their meetings with Bevin was when David Ben Gurion complained that the Bevin scheme was vague and a mass of generalities and that the government had not even troubled to provide a map of the proposed Arab and Jewish areas. Mr. Bevin, somewhat taken aback, said he would oblige and so at the next meeting a map was already there. Three non-contiguous areas were marked as the Jewish areas, totaling less than the proposed single zone in the Morrison plan (which, incidentally, was smaller than the proposed partitioned Jewish area in the Peel

Plan). What stung the Zionist leaders was to see the whole of the Negev included in the Arab zone.

After all the exhortations made by these leaders at the recent annual conference of the British Zionist Federation to keep faith with Britain, not to expect too much from America, etc.; after Nahum Goldman's vicious attack on the UN which lined him up with the most pro-fascist anti-democratic elements, Britain once again meted out its "reward" for services rendered, the Bevin Plan.

If however, these so-called "moderate" Zionists did not swallow Bevin's bait, there are other poor fish in the Jewish community here who have. Both the Agudah and the Anglo-Jewish Association received from the government copies of the Bevin scheme and were invited to send delegates to the Colonial Office to discuss it. The former, an anti-Zionist clerical organization, and the latter, representing the upper class *Yahudim* who oppose the official Jewish state policy of the Zionist movement, had previously favored participation in the St. James Palace talks.

Now that the Zionists had participated—through the back door—it was to be expected that these bodies also wanted to have their say. So, in order to show some kind of "united front," a meeting was

called of the Jewish Agency, the Zionist dominated Board of Deputies, the Agudah and the Anglo-Jewish Association. Nothing, however, came of this meeting.

But the Agudah, after its delegates had consulted with Mr. Bevin, came out in favor of the Bevin Plan. Mr. H. Goodman, on behalf of the Agudah, declared, "that the Bevin Plan should not be rejected outright and that an effort should be made to reach agreement." He stressed that "the promise of a monthly quota of 4,000 immigrants over two years was of the utmost importance . . . nothing should be done to lose it."

The attitude of the Anglo-Jewish Association, which also sent a delegation, is not yet known. This body in the past always supported the government and was the first to go on record for participation in the London talks, and elected two delegates to "stand by" in case the Jewish Agency would officially participate.

Democratic opinion here has not shown any surprise at the most recent "solution" put forward by Bevin and has condemned it outrightly, exposing it as another imperialist maneuver which will not bring the long desired settlement of this burning problem any nearer.

London

I. RENNAP