

THE "FINAL SOLUTION": NAZI EXTERMINATION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY

This document illustrates the Nazis' comprehensive, well-thought-out plan to eliminate European Jews and shows their own estimates of the numbers killed. In this excerpt, SS Sturmbannführer Dr. Wilhelm Hoettl recounts a conversation with Adolf Eichmann about the numbers exterminated.

At the end of August 1944 I was talking to SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, whom I had known since 1938. The conversation took place in my home in Budapest.

He expressed his conviction that Germany had now lost the war and that he, personally, had no further chance. He knew that he would be considered one of the main war criminals by the United Nations since he had millions of Jewish lives on his conscience. I asked him how many that was, to which he answered that although the number was a great Reich secret, he would tell me since I, as a historian, would be interested and that he would probably not return anyhow from his command in Rumania. He had, shortly before that, made a report to Himmler, as the latter wanted to know the exact number of Jews who had been killed. On the basis of his information he had obtained the following result:

Approximately four million Jews had been killed in the various extermination camps while an additional two million met death in other ways, the major part of which were shot by operational squads of the Security Police during the campaign against Russia.

Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression,
vol. V, document 2738 — PS

Source: T. G. Fraser, *The Middle East, 1914–1979* (London, 1980), 24–26.

DOCUMENT 4.2

UNSCOP'S PLAN OF PARTITION WITH ECONOMIC UNION

This plan became the basis of the United Nations General Assembly partition proposal approved on November 29, 1947. The plan recognized the inherent hostility between the two populations and the economic imbalance favoring the proposed Jewish state, while at the same time assuming that an economic union between them was possible.

Source: T. G. Fraser, *The Middle East, 1914–1979* (London, 1980), 45–47.

1. The basic premise underlying the partition proposal is that the claims to Palestine of the Arabs and Jews, both possessing validity, are irreconcilable, and that . . . partition . . . is the most likely [arrangement] to afford a workable basis for meeting in part the claims and national aspirations of both parties.

2. It is a fact that both of these peoples have their historic roots in Palestine, and that both make vital contributions to the economic and cultural life of the country. The partition solution takes these considerations fully into account.

3. The basic conflict in Palestine is a clash of two intense nationalisms. Regardless of the historical origins of the conflict, the rights and wrongs of the promises and counter-promises, and the international intervention incident to the Mandate, there are now in Palestine some 650,000 Jews and 1,200,000 Arabs who are dissimilar in their ways of living and, for the time being, separated by political interests which render difficult full and effective political cooperation.

4. Only by means of partition can these conflicting national aspirations find substantial expression and qualify both peoples to take their places as independent nations in the international community and in the United Nations. . . .

9. It is recognized that partition has been strongly opposed by Arabs, but it is felt that opposition would be lessened by a solution which definitively fixes the extent of territory to be allotted to the Jews with its implicit limitation on immigration. The fact that the solution carries the sanction of the United Nations involves a finality which should allay Arab fears of further expansion of the Jewish State.

10. In view of the limited area and resources of Palestine, it is essential that, to the extent feasible, and consistent with the creation of two independent States, the economic unity of the country should be preserved. . . .

11. Such economic unity requires the creation of an economic association by means of a treaty between the two States . . . [creating] a common customs system, a common currency and the maintenance of a country-wide system of transport and communications.

12. The maintenance of existing standards of social services in all parts of Palestine depends partly upon the preservation of economic unity, and this is a main consideration underlying the provisions for an economic union as part of the partition scheme . . . [although] during the early years of its existence, a partitioned Arab State in Palestine would have some difficulty in raising sufficient revenue to keep up its present standards of public services. One of the aims of the economic union, therefore, is to distribute surplus revenue to support such standards. It is recommended that the division of the surplus revenue, after certain charges and percentage of surplus to be paid to the City of Jerusalem are met, should be in equal proportion to the two States. . . .

13. This division of customs revenue is justified on three grounds: (1) The Jews will have the more economically developed part of the country embracing practically the whole of the citrus-producing area which includes a large number of Arab producers; (2) the Jewish State would, through the customs union, be guaranteed a larger free-trade area for the sale of the products of its industry;

(3) it would be to the disadvantage of the Jewish State if the Arab State should be in a financially precarious and poor economic condition.

14. As the Arab State will not be in a position to undertake considerable development expenditure, sympathetic consideration should be given to its claims for assistance from international institutions in the way of loans for expansion of education, public health and other vital social services of a non-self-supporting nature.

15. International financial assistance would also be required for any comprehensive immigration schemes in the interest of both States, and it is to be hoped that constructive work by the Joint Economic Board will be made possible by means of international loans on favourable terms.

Recommendations

A Partition and Independence

1. Palestine within its present borders, following a transitional period of two years from 1 September 1947, shall be constituted into an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem, the boundaries of which are respectively described in Parts II and III below.

UNSCOP Report, vol. 1, chapter VI, part I
Plan of partition with economic union

DOCUMENTS

JAMAL AL-HUSAYNI

TESTIMONY ON PALESTINIAN ARAB REACTION TO THE UNSCOP PROPOSALS

September 29, 1947

Speaking before the U.N. Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Arab Higher Committee leader Jamal al-Husayni conveyed Palestinian Arab views of the UNSCOP proposals. Al-Husayni's arguments reflect the Palestinian Arabs' rejection of the decision that their fate should be subject to external forces. They also indicate an unrealistic hope for recourse to the United Nations in view of the fact that UNSCOP's actions were taken on behalf of that international body.

The case of the Arabs of Palestine was based on the principles of international justice. . . . The Arabs of Palestine could not understand why their right to live

in freedom and peace, and to develop their country in accordance with their traditions, should be questioned and constantly submitted to investigation.

One thing was clear: it was the sacred duty of the Arabs of Palestine to defend their country against all aggression. The Zionists were conducting an aggressive campaign with the object of securing by force a country which was not theirs by birthright. Thus there was self-defence on one side and, on the other, aggression. The *raison d'être* of the United Nations was to assist self-defence against aggression.

The rights and patrimony of the Arabs in Palestine had been the subject of no less than eighteen investigations within twenty-five years, and all to no purpose. Such commissions of inquiry had made recommendations that had either reduced the national and legal rights of the Palestine Arabs or glossed them over. The few recommendations favourable to the Arabs had been ignored by the Mandatory Power. It was hardly strange, therefore, that they should have been unwilling to take part in a nineteenth investigation. . . .

The struggle of the Arabs in Palestine had nothing in common with anti-Semitism. The Arab world had been one of the rare havens of refuge for the Jews until the atmosphere of neighbourliness had been poisoned by the Balfour Declaration and the aggressive spirit the latter had engendered in the Jewish community. . . .

Mr. Husseini disputed three claims of world Jewry. The claim to Palestine based on historical association was a movement on the part of the Ashkenazim, whose forefathers had no connexion with Palestine. The Sephardim, the main descendants of Israel, had mostly denounced Zionism. Secondly, the religious connexion of the Zionists with Palestine, which he noted was shared by Moslems and Christians, gave them no secular claim to the country. Freedom of access to the Holy Places was universally accepted. Thirdly, the Zionists claimed the establishment of a Jewish National Home by virtue of the Balfour Declaration. But the British Government had had no right to dispose of Palestine which it had occupied in the name of the Allies as a liberator and not as a conqueror. The Balfour Declaration was in contradiction with the Covenant of the League of Nations and was an immoral, unjust and illegal promise.

The solution lay in the Charter of the United Nations, in accordance with which the Arabs of Palestine, who constituted the majority, were entitled to a free and independent State. . . .

Once Palestine was found to be entitled to independence, the United Nations was not legally competent to decide or to impose the constitutional organization of Palestine, since such action would amount to interference with an internal matter of an independent nation. . . .

In conclusion, Mr. Husseini said that he had not commented on the Special Committee's report because the Arab Higher Committee considered that it could not be a basis for discussion. Both schemes proposed in the report were inconsistent with the United Nations Charter and with the Covenant [*sic*] League of Nations. The Arabs of Palestine were solidly determined to oppose

with all the means at their command any scheme which provided for the dissection, segregation or partition of their country or which gave to a minority special and preferential rights or status. Although they fully realised that big Powers could crush such opposition by brute force, the Arabs nevertheless would not be deterred, but would lawfully defend with their life-blood every inch of the soil of their beloved country.

UNO Ad Hoc Committee on the
Palestinian Question, third meeting

DOCUMENT 4.4

RABBI HILLEL SILVER

TESTIMONY ON ZIONIST REACTION TO THE UNSCOP PROPOSALS

October 2, 1947

Commenting before the U.N. Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Rabbi Hillel Silver of the Jewish Agency for Palestine began by addressing al-Husayni's testimony (see Document 4.3). His response reflects Zionist assumptions of their right to Palestine on historical grounds inapplicable to the Arabs. And although apparently accepting the idea of economic union, his statement suggests that the agency reserved wide latitude for independent Jewish action.

History was not a story out of the *Arabian Nights* and the Arab Higher Committee was indulging in wishful thinking. . . .

He recalled that at the time when the Allies had liberated Palestine, the country had formed part of a province of the Ottoman Empire and there had been no politically distinct Arab nation. . . . By 636 A.D. [when the Arabs took Palestine] the Jewish people had already had 2,000 years of history behind it, and Jewish civilization, besides giving rise both to Judaism and Christianity, had also brought forth spiritual leaders venerated also by Islam. In contrast to that, Dr. Silver quoted the report of the Royal Commission of 1937, which stated that in the twelve centuries and more that had passed since the Arab conquest, Palestine had virtually dropped out of history, and that in the realm of thought, of science or of letters, it had made no contribution to modern civilization.

Palestine owed its very identity to the Jews, losing it with the Jewish dispersion and resuming its role in history only at the time of the Mandate, which had given it a distinct place alongside the Arab world.

Seventeen million Arabs occupied an area of 1,290,000 square miles of great wealth, including all the principal Arab and Moslem centres, while Palestine, after the loss of Transjordan was only 10,000 square miles. The majority plan, set out in chapter VII of the Special Committee's report, proposed that that area should be reduced by one half. The plan, unlike that of the Royal Commission, eliminated western Galilee from the proposed Jewish State: that was an injustice and grievous handicap to the development of the Jewish State.

The majority plan proposed that the City of Jerusalem should be established as a separate unit. But modern Jerusalem contained a compact Jewish community of 90,000 inhabitants, and included the central national, religious and educational institutions of the Jewish people of Palestine. Moreover, Jerusalem held a unique place in Jewish life and religious traditions. It was the ancient capital of the Jewish nation and its symbol throughout the ages. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning": that was the vow of the Psalmist, and of an exiled people throughout the ages.

Dr. Silver strongly urged that the Jewish section of modern Jerusalem, outside the walls, should be included in the Jewish State. He also reserved the right to deal later with other territorial modifications.

If that heavy sacrifice was the inescapable condition of a final solution, . . . then the Jewish Agency was prepared to recommend the acceptance of the partition solution to the supreme organs of the movement, subject to further discussion of constitutional and territorial provisions. That sacrifice would be the Jewish contribution to the solution of a painful problem and would bear witness to the Jewish people's spirit of international cooperation and its desire for peace.

The Jewish Agency accepted the proposal for economic union [but] . . .

The limit to the sacrifices to which the Jewish Agency could consent was clear: a Jewish State must have in its own hands those instruments of financing and economic control necessary to carry out large-scale Jewish immigration and the related economic development, and it must have independent access to those world sources of capital and raw materials indispensable for the accomplishment of those purposes.

The Jews of Palestine wanted to be good neighbours in their relations not only with the Arab State of Palestine but with the other Arab States. They intended to respect the equal rights of the Arab population in the free and democratic Jewish State. What the Jews had already achieved in Palestine augured well for the future. Nevertheless, if that offer of peace and friendship were not welcomed in the same spirit, the Jews would defend their rights to the end. In Palestine there had been built a nation which demanded its independence, and would not allow itself to be dislodged or deprived of its national status. It could not go, and it would not go, beyond the enormous sacrifice which had been asked of it.

UNO Ad Hoc Committee on the
Palestinian Question, fourth meeting

DOCUMENT 4.1

DECLARATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

May 14, 1948

This historic document subsumes within it historical links with ancient Israel, the trauma of the Holocaust, and the promise of a liberal democratic state in the future. Its call to its Arab inhabitants was mitigated, however, by Israel's expulsion of many of them to gain control of their crops and lands during the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars.

Eretz-Israel* was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, Ma'apilim† and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community, controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish state, Theodor Herzl, the first Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in their own country.

This right was recognized in the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, and reaffirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its national home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish state, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and

*Eretz-Israel: The ancient land of Israel, Palestine.—Ed.

†Ma'apilim: Immigrants who had come in defiance of British policy.—Ed.

confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by the difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom and honest toil in their national homeland.

In the second world war, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom—and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their state is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.

Accordingly we, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.

We declare that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate, being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15 May 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the state in accordance with the constitution which shall be adopted by the elected Constituent Assembly not later than 1 October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish state, to be called "Israel."

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the Prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The State of Israel is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of 29 November 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building up of its state and to receive the State of Israel into the comity of nations.

We appeal—in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the state on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the diaspora* to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream—the redemption of Israel.

Placing our trust in the Almighty, we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the Provisional Council of State, on the soil of the homeland, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar 5708 (14 May 1948).

Israel Information Service

* diaspora: The Jewish community dispersed worldwide.—Ed.

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THE BEGINNING OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Regional Strife and Cold War Rivalries

1949–1957

THE CONCLUSION of the armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states introduced an era of no war—no peace; technically, a state of belligerency still existed. Israel's successful defense of its borders had not brought official recognition of the status quo either by Arab states or by much of the international community. A major stumbling block was the question of the Palestinian Arab refugees (see Documents 5.1 and 5.2). Western powers called on Israel to permit at least a portion to return to their homes, but the Israelis resisted this pressure or tied its acceptance to the conclusion of peace agreements with Arab governments. The latter insisted on the right of all refugees to return, at least in principle, as a preliminary step signifying Israeli good faith before they would consider peace talks. Some Arab leaders called also for a return to the 1947 partition plan, the borders of which they had previously rejected. Israel, which had benefited from that stance by expanding its sovereignty into areas allotted to the Arabs, naturally opposed these claims as being invalid, given the changing circumstances that had resulted from the wars of 1948.

In general, Israel found itself in an almost totally hostile environment. Arab leaders considered it the creation of Western imperialism, peopled by Europeans brought in with European and American encouragement at a time when other Arab countries were struggling to gain complete independence from European domination. Furthermore, the armistice lines encouraged border clashes and incidents. Drawn arbitrarily, they frequently cut off Arab villagers from their lands, which were then taken over by Jewish settlers. Palestinian Arab infiltration and Israeli retaliation, especially along the Jordanian line, became a staple of Arab-Israeli tensions. Israel's feeling of encirclement was compounded by Egypt's refusal to permit its ships through the Suez Canal, though Egypt did allow transit to ships of other flags destined for Israel. And from the early 1950s, Egypt frequently blocked traffic bound for the Israeli port of Eilat through the