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MARGARET
SOIFER

DRAMATIZATION ^A of the

SESSIONS OF THE
ROYAL COMMISSION

EDUC. DEPT.
L.O.A.
111 FIFTH AVE.
N.Y.C. 1937

SESSIONS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
(A Dramatization)
by Mrs. Margaret Soifer

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You are about to witness a dramatic presentation of the hearings of the Royal Commission. Before we begin, though, it is only just that you be made aware of a number of factors concerned in the shaping of this performance.

The first is our ignorance. We do not know the room in which these hearings take place, nor what any member of the Royal Commission looks like. We do not know whether they sat at a table, or on a judicial bench. We know nothing about any of the formalities by which the witnesses were called to testify. Except for some photographs we have seen of Dr. Weizmann, we have no idea of what any of the witnesses look like.

In other words, all we know is what we have read in the papers. The English monthly, "The New Judaea" published rather full reports of the hearings as they occurred. These we studied carefully, and also verbatim reports of the testimony by Dr. Weizmann, Mr. Shertok and Mr. Ben Gurion.

The second factor which operated in producing this performance is dramatic necessity. These hearings went on from November, 1936 to February, 1937. Witnesses testified both in Jerusalem and in London. Some of the most illuminating items of the testimony are contained in a mass of statistical detail rendered to the Commission in writing and not discussed orally at all. Often, significant facts and opinions were brought to the fore; just as often, the hearings lost themselves in a maze of quibbling and irrelevant details. Numerous people were called upon to testify, not in any logical order but rather as it was convenient for the witnesses to appear.

Now for the sake of dramatic necessity, we have telescoped this investigation which was stretched out for months to about one hour. We have set it in one place, presumably Jerusalem. We have outlined items that are better understood when read at leisure than heard haphazardly from the platform, and we have arranged the hearings in accordance with our own standards of dramatic suspense and climax.

The third factor involved is that of prejudice. The investigation of the Royal Commission involves many interested parties. There are several points of view maintained by the English; the Arabs are more violently divided; and even among the Jews, you know there are extremely opposing opinions with regard to Eretz Israel. Our presentation of the hearings emphasizes the Zionist cause. We are interested primarily in the success of the Zionist case as it was presented before the Commission. We have in-

cluded only those speakers and only those items that definitely bear upon the success or constitute a threat to Palestine as the Jewish Homeland under the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate.

Thus, ladies and gentlemen, you will witness the investigation of the Royal Commission, dramatized under the influence of ignorance, (another name for second-hand knowledge) dramatic necessity, and prejudice. Yet, truthfully, we claim that we have been most scrupulous in keeping all the testimony, questions, and criticisms straightforward and undistorted. This is an honest presentation of what happened to our case before the Royal Commission.

Lord Peel: Gentlemen, I am Lord Peel, chairman of this Commission. Allow me to present my colleagues, Sir Horace Rumbold, Sir Laurie Hammond, Sir Morris Carter, Sir Harold Morris, and Dr. Reginald Coupland. (Each Commissioner bows as his name is called, then they sit. All the others sit, too.)

Are all the witnesses present?

Secretary: (Stands) Your lordship, the Arabs refuse to appear and have sent this. (He places a sealed envelope on the table. Lord Peel opens it)

Lord Peel: It is signed by the Mufti of Jerusalem. "The policy of the Government in regard to Jewish immigration into Palestine makes it impossible for the Arabs in the country to cooperate with the investigation of the Royal Commission." (He passes the letter to the others who glance at it and pass it on, as Lord Peel continues.)

Although you are undoubtedly aware of the status and purpose of this Commission, it might be well to restate it here before any of the witnesses testify. Professor Coupland, do you mind doing this for us?

Coupland: Not at all. The Royal Commission is here to ascertain the underlying causes of the recent disturbances, inquire into the manner in which the Palestine Mandate is being implemented in relation to the obligations towards the Arabs and Jews, the proper construction of the terms of the Mandate and the legitimate grievances, if any, of both Arabs and Jews.

Lord Peel: Thank you, Dr. Coupland. Let me re-emphasize: to ascertain and to inquire, that and only that is the function of this Commission.

We wish to assure you that we are here with an open mind and that we are anxious to learn all there is to know about the existing situation in this country. You are requested to speak openly and freely, giving authoritative facts, opinions, criticisms, and any recommendations you wish to make to the government.

We are now ready to hear the testimony of the witnesses.

Secretary: Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

Lord Peel: Dr. Weizmann, the Commission has been studying carefully the pamphlets, surveys and reports that the Jewish Agency has submitted. We have called on you personally, however, because you have asked to testify and because we feel that what you have to say will be significant.

Dr. Weizmann: I should like to put briefly to you the Jewish problem as it presents itself to us today. It is the problem of the homelessness of a people. Individual Jews, and individual groups of Jews may have a home and sometimes a very comfortable home. Indeed, in the west of Europe-- England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium and Holland-- these Jewish communities are, as compared to the Jews in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, in a

fairly comfortable position. Then again, the great Jewish community further west in America is, economically, and to a certain extent politically and morally, in a condition which allows the Jews there to work and labor without let or hindrance. But Jews living east of the Rhine today are in a condition politically and economically which is neither life nor death.

Before the World War, Jews who suffered in certain countries could emigrate to others. Today the world is closed. We recently heard the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Colonel Beck, announce that there are a million Jews too many in Poland. Why exactly a million Jews? They are citizens of Poland; they have been connected with the fate and destinies of Poland for well-nigh a thousand years. Why should they be singled out as being a million too many? Where can they go? Is there any place in the world which can rapidly absorb a million people?

I shall not waste the time of the Commission by describing what is happening in Germany. Poland has slightly over three million Jews; Germany had in 1932 or 1933 something like 600,000, but that number has since diminished. If one takes the Jewries of Roumania, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, one sees practically the same picture, and it is no exaggeration on my part to say that today there are in this part of the world six million people doomed to be where they are not wanted, and for whom the world is divided into places where they cannot live, and places into which they cannot enter.

We are sufficiently strong, my lord, to have preserved an identity, but an identity which is sui generis and not like the identity of other nations. When one speaks of the English or the French or the German nation, one refers to a definite State, a definite organization, a language, a literature, a history, a common destiny; but it is clear that when one speaks of the Jewish people, one speaks of a people which is a minority everywhere, a majority nowhere, which is to some extent identical with the races amongst which it lives, but still not identical. It is a disembodied ghost of a race, without a body, and it therefore inspires suspicion, and suspicion breeds hatred. There should be one place in the world, in God's wide world, where we could live and express ourselves in accordance with our character, and make our contribution towards the civilized world, in our own way and through our own channels. Perhaps we would be better understood in ourselves, and our relation to the other races and nations would become more normal. We would not have to be always on the defensive, or on the contrary, become too aggressive, as always happens with a minority which is constantly on the defensive.

What has produced this particular mentality of the Jews which I have tried to formulate as a sort of disembodied ghost--- an entity and yet not an entity? I believe the main cause which has produced the particular state of Jewry in the world is its attachment to Palestine. We are a stiff-necked people and a people of long memory. We have never forgotten Palestine, and this steadfastness which has preserved the Jew throughout the ages and throughout a career that is almost one long chain of inhuman suffering, is primarily due to some physiological or psychological attachment to Palestine. We have never forgotten it nor given it up. We have survived our Babylonian and Roman conquerors. And whenever they once got a chance, the slightest chance, the Jews returned to Palestine. There they created their literature, their villages, towns and communities. Actually, during the nineteen centuries which have passed since the destruction of Palestine as a Jewish political entity, there was not a single century in which the Jews did not attempt to come back.

It is a fallacy, if I may submit it, to think that those 1,900 years were, so to say, a desert of time; they were not. When the material props of the Jewish commonwealth were destroyed, the Jews carried Palestine in their hearts and in their heads wherever they went. That expressed itself in their ritual and in their prayers. In the East End of London the Jew prays for dew in the summer and for rain in the winter, and their seasons and festivals are all Palestinian seasons and Palestinian festivals. This tenacity is perhaps our misfortune. If it had disappeared, there would be no Jewish problem, but here we are; it is our destiny.

The Balfour Declaration was issued by his Majesty's Government on the 2nd of November, 1917. It was a solemn act, a promise given to a people, which finds itself in the state which I have described. I know they did not think of it merely as a trifling war-time expedient which might serve us for a time, and when the war was over and things had settled down, would lose its value. I remember having seen a document of the British Cabinet where a report on this particular act was briefly given, and the way it was described pointed to the importance which the British at that time attached to the step. They knew it was a step fraught with grave consequences. It was difficult, but still they chose to make this Declaration.

What did the Balfour Declaration mean? It meant something quite simple at that time, and I am saying so advisedly. It meant that Judea was restored to the Jews or the Jews were restored to Judea. I could submit to the Commission a series of utterances of responsible statesmen and men in every walk of life in England to show that this Declaration was regarded as the Magna Charta of the Jewish people. At a very great and solemn meeting at the Opera House in London, Lord Cecil spoke, among others, and said, "Arabia for the Arabs, Judea for the Jews, Armenia for the Armenians." Much water and much blood have flowed under the various bridges of the world since that time, and not all of his predictions have been realized; but we read into the Declaration what the statesmen of Great Britain told us it meant. It meant a National Home, "national" meaning that we should be able to live like a nation in Palestine, and "home" in contradistinction to living on sufferance everywhere else.

It meant, as I say, at that time, and speaking political parlance, a Jewish State; and when I was asked at the Peace Conference quite impromptu by Mr. Lansing, "What do you mean by a Jewish National Home?" I gave this answer: "To build up something in Palestine which will be as Jewish as England is English." Of course, we have been bearing in mind, and our teachers and mentors at that time, British statesmen, repeatedly told us: "There is a second half to the Balfour Declaration. That second part provides that nothing should be done which might injure the interests of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine." Well, I must leave it to the Commission to test and try and find out whether, throughout the work of these last sixteen years, we have done anything which has in any way injured the position of the non-Jewish population. I go further than that. The Balfour Declaration says that the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities should not be interfered with. I think I can say before the Commission before God, and before the world, that in intention, consciously, nothing has been done to injure their position. On the contrary, indirectly we have conferred benefits on the population of this country. I should like to be perfectly frank: We have not come for that purpose. We have come for the purpose of building up a National Home for the Jewish people; but we are happy and proud that this up-building has been accompanied by considerable benefits to the country at large.

I think it will be admitted, after the Royal Commission has had an opportunity of surveying what we have done, that for the first time in the history of colonization this kind of work has been carried out by a private body, a body which had no treasury at its back, no State organization to aid it. In order to get funds for immigration, settlement, acquisition of land, we had to go hat in hand to the Jews of the world, and get their contributions.

It is a fallacy to think that what has been built up in Palestine has been built up by the rich Jews. I was instrumental in raising a great part of the public funds which have been sunk in this country. Between 1920 and the present day I have been in America eleven times, once in South Africa, innumerable times in various parts of Europe, and I know my clientele, so to speak. They are the poor and the lower middle-class; and when I speak of the poor Jew, he is very poor. Only since 1929, since the formation of the extended Jewish Agency, when Palestine became a sort of practical proposition, we began to get the support of the so-called practical men.

In the material which has been submitted to you and to which no doubt the Commission will give careful attention, you will see our achievements from the concrete facts and figures. I have before me a table, but I do not wish to weary you with it. The Jewish population of Palestine has increased from something like 55,000 at the end of the War to something (to take the official figures) in the neighborhood of 400,000.

(an aide of Dr. Weizmann may hold up a poster reading
1918-- 55,000; 1936-- 400,000).

We have acquired a certain amount of land. Now a word about that. Our Arab friends always tell us: "Yes, you may not have acquired much but what about the future?" The basis of the National Home today is 350,000 acres. In England, in America, in Canada, there are many private estates almost as big as that, but the total acquisition of land by the Jews since our early beginnings, during the past sixty years, amounts to that. It is said that all the land which has come into the hands of the Jews is good land, but is is not added that it is good land now, because the sweat and blood of our pioneers has been snunk into it, and a good deal of money. It was not good land at first. It was the land about which the British officials in 1919 said to me that we could not make anything out of it, and I daresay that if some of them had had a look at the land upon which Tel Aviv and Rishon le-Zion are built they would have said: "No, it is no good, nobdoy can settle on that."

We have met with all these difficulties. Another difficulty which we had to contend with, was that the very causes which might have hastened the issue of the Balfour Declaration also produced resisting forces. One of these forces is the growth of Arab Nationalism. The Arab race emerged out of the War more conscious of itself, and rightly so; and they look upon Palestine as an Arab country and upon us as intruders. It may perhaps be interesting to read to you a quotation from a speech by the late Lord Milner in a debate in the House of Lords in 1923:

"If the Arabs go to the length of claiming Palestine as one of their countries in the same sense as Mesopotamia (the name of Mesopotamia was then current) or Arabia proper is an Arab country, then I think they are flying the face of facts, of all history, of all tradition, and all associations of the most important character. The future of Palestine cannot possibly be left to be determined by the temporary impressions and feelings of the Arab majority in the country at the present time."

I should like to add that as soon as the Balfour Declaration was issued, and even before that, British statesmen and those who had negotiated with British statesmen, were well aware both of Arab susceptibilities and of the necessity to make our position clear to the Arabs. The difficulty with which one was faced, and is still unfortunately faced today, is that there were and are very few Arabs who can really speak authoritatively on behalf of the Arab people.

It may be that we have come to this country as a people which was looked upon primarily as a western people with western training. We have been engaged too much and too deeply with our own work, which has taxed all our energies, and it may be that we have not done all that we could have done in normal circumstances, to find our way to our Arab friends. History will have to judge of that; but many attempts were made by us here, in Cairo, in Damascus, in Beirut, to make the Arabs understand our point of view, to ask them to cooperate with us, to help to find a modus vivendi. The hand which we repeatedly stretched out was always repelled, and today we stand in this position. Anything which my Organization or myself or our friends can contribute toward helping the Royal Commission, if they need our help, in finding a solution of this thorny problem, you will find us only too ready to offer.

(Weizmann sits here.)

Lord Peel: Thank you, Dr. Weizmann.

Hammond: We shall have occasion to call on you again, if you will be good enough to remain.

Weizmann: Very well, sir.

Lord Peel: May we have the next speaker?

Secretary: Mr. E. Mills, Commissioner for Migration and Statistics.

Peel: How long have you held your present position, Mr. Mills?

Mills: Since May 1934, though it was not until May of this year that a Department of Statistics was started.

Peel: Can you give us an idea of what the proportionate population of Moslems, Jews and Christians is?

Mills: On June 30 there were about 850,000 Moslems, 370,000 Jews and 100,000 Christians.

Peel: Are there any immigration laws different for Jews and non-Jews?

Mills: No, my lord. Any foreigner may come in under any one of the three categories.

Peel: Does this also include Arabs?

Mills: The Arabs of Trans-jordan are exempt from passport restrictions and they enter and leave the country as they please.

Rumbold: Could you give exact figures?

Mills: I am afraid I cannot, sir.

Peel: Could you give us exact figures of Arab immigration from Syria and other places?

Mills: No, my lord. A number of Haurani come at certain times of the year, but as they never come through the immigration control posts, their numbers are not known.

Eliahu Epstein: Perhaps I might speak here, my lord. My report concerns Arab immigration.

Peel: Very well. Thank you, Mr. Mills. We will call on you again shortly. (To Mr. Epstein) You are Mr. Eliahu Epstein of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency?

Epstein: I am a member of the Administration of the Jewish Agency's Political Department and I engage in research work on social, economic and political conditions.

Peel: Were you employed by the University of Beirut?

Epstein: Yes, sir.

Peel: This work led to travel in neighboring countries?

Epstein: Yes. I may add that the American University at Beirut gave me the opportunity to tour and to investigate conditions in Syria and Transjordan.

Peel: I think that you wanted to speak on the question of..

Epstein: Arab immigration. May I ask that Mr. Shertok be allowed to participate in rendering this testimony?

Peel: Certainly. (Shertok stands) Kindly proceed.

Epstein: Arab emigration from the neighboring countries to Eretz Israel is neither temporary nor modest. It is the result not only of the attraction of Eretz Israel, but to an equal degree of conditions in those countries themselves. Similar forces have been responsible for an Arab immigration even from more distant lands.

Peel: Are you referring to the whole of Syria or to a section known as Hauran?

Epstein: I am dealing chiefly and in detail with Hauran, but I shall also have something to say about the other parts of Syria. At present, Hauran is on a lower social and economic level than the rest of Syria. The Bedouins who live in the vicinity of Hauran destroyed the farming industry even prior to the war. Also, drought hit the unfortunate country. The farmer continued to be oppressed by the Bedouins, as well as by his governors. A class of exploited peasantry was thus created, many of whom lost title to their plot of land.

Peel: What is the population of Hauran?

Epstein: About 100,000. The reports of the French Government to the League

of Nations in 1934 gives the number as 90,161.

Peel: How large do you estimate this number of immigrants to be?

Epstein: As far as I have been able to establish, the number is between twenty and twenty-five thousand.

Peel: (Shocked) From Hauran to Eretz Israel?

Epstein: Yes. The year 1934-35 was a year of drought which affected not only Hauran, but also Transjordan and to a slight degree Eretz Israel. During that year I visited about 30 towns in various districts of the Hauran in my endeavor to gather authentic material for a general estimate.

Peel: Could you tell us the part that seasonal immigration played?

Epstein: Yes. I had the occasion to visit Hauran during other seasons of the year and was thus enabled to compare my estimate for the various seasons. I think that the seasonal immigration was caused by the drought. Many towns in Hauran were completely deserted because of the absence of rain. The government did what it could to supply water by railroad, but the railroad lines do not reach into the interior. During that period from twenty to twenty-five thousand people left Hauran permanently. I gathered as much when I later revisited Hauran when conditions were more normal.

Peel: Is it your contention that the farmers of Hauran cross the boundary without permission and remain in the country?

Shertok: Yes. Generally speaking. I do not maintain that they all remain, but I estimate that from six to eight thousand have stayed behind.

Peel: Am I correct in saying that they are allowed to cross the boundary without permission for short periods?

Shertok: It does not depend on the length of their stay.

Peel: Would you say then that the mass immigration of the Hauranis is the result of the economic difficulties in Hauran?

Shertok: It is the result not alone of the economic situation there but of the relatively favorable conditions in Palestine.

Epstein: I should like to make the point that the emigration from neighboring countries gives rise to social and economic difficulties. First of all, it introduces an unspecialized, cheap labor. These immigrant laborers receive a daily wage of 70 to 100 Mills. The differences between their wage scale and their purchasing capacity naturally gives rise to many problems.

Peel: I would like to get this clear in my mind. Are you discussing immigration in general, legal immigration, or illegal immigration?

Shertok: The discussion is essentially of illegal immigration. Such immigration tends to harm local industry and to lower the wage scale.

Peel: Are we speaking of seasonal or regular immigration?

Shertok: There is always a permanent residium. Even in slack seasons a large number of laborers of this type is to be found in the coastal cities of Jaffa and Haifa.

Peel: Seasonal laborers?

Epstein: The government and especially the governmental contractors hire these people, which naturally encourages their coming. They are also employed by owners of orange groves and even by Arab farmers. There are instances when such farmers hire Hauranis to tend their farms, and they themselves go to work for Jews.

Peel: Do you mean to say that the government employs these Hauranis directly or indirectly at the wage you mentioned?

Shertok: The main point is that they are employed with the knowledge of their illegal entry.

Peel: However, are they employed at a low wage or at a wage that would conform with the standard of the trade?

Shertok: When the Hauranis are employed by the Government they receive a wage that is somewhat above their usual rate, but when they work for government contractors they receive a very low wage.

Peel: Aren't the contractors compelled to pay a fixed wage?

Shertok: No, sir.

Epstein: It is interesting to note that the importance of cheap labor from neighboring countries aroused the opposition of the Arabs too. From the angle of the general welfare there are many undesirable elements among these immigrants. Many of the Hauranis played prominent parts in the riots of 1923, especially in Haifa, and the same thing occurred to a larger degree in the early stages of the riots on the 19th of April of this year.

I should like, now, to pass on to another problem-- the large immigration from Transjordan.

Coupland: How do you know that they come from Transjordan? Do they admit this fact?

Shertok: Yes. They speak of it.

Epstein: Transjordan is largely a Bedouin country. Forty per cent or over of the inhabitants are Bedouins. The economy of the Bedouins, until now based on the breeding of camels and horses, cannot remain stable in an age of automobiles and aeroplanes. Some turned to agriculture. However, there are tribes that cannot because they lack the necessary capital and technical skill. Therefore, many tribes have disintegrated and many of their members turn to Eretz Israel. In addition to the Bedouins, many farmers from Transjordan were

attracted by the opportunities in Eretz Israel, especially in 1934-35, the years of the drought, and entered the country in great numbers. These are the two countries that served as the chief source for immigrants.

Peel: Illegal immigrants?

Shertok: The Transjordanian problem is more complicated. The inhabitants of Transjordan need no permits to cross the Jordan.

Hammond: Have you any suggestion how to curtail this immigration?

Shertok: The first step must be a strict system of supervision at the border and the issuance of identification cards.

Peel: Do you mean to say that these people come from Transjordan without passports?

Carter: Even without permits?

Shertok: Yes. We maintain that the non-supervision of the borders of Eretz Israel is intolerable. It is not solely a problem of the entrance of persons seeking work, but a problem of a far more serious nature. They smuggle arms into the country, and many undesirable elements find their way here.

Peel: I assume that these complaints were brought before the attention of the government?

Shertok: On innumerable occasions.

Peel: And were they dealt with satisfactorily?

Shertok: No.

Peel: I assume that you are not opposed to the entrance of laborers for seasonal employment with the condition of course, that such entry does not become permanent.

Shertok: It is really difficult to differentiate between seasonal and permanent immigration. It is difficult to prevent a seasonal worker from accepting permanent employment. His earnings during the busy season can tide him over the slack periods and he can wait for new work. We would rather have our own Jewish laborers unemployed during the slack season than to endure an outside immigration under the claim that it is seasonal.

Rumbold: If you would prevent the inhabitants of Transjordan and the Hauranis from working at the harbor, you no doubt desire the government to employ Jews? Is this your contention?

Shertok: Yes. This will be one of the results. It would also increase the general security and in general will raise the standard of living and improve the sanitary conditions. However, our basic claim is that if the country can absorb new immigrants from foreign countries, prior rights should be given the Jews to enter the country and to obtain work.

Rumbold: Will the Jewish porters accept the wage that is paid the Hauranis?

Shertok: They will agree to work for the same total amount that the government expends. This does not imply that their daily wage will equal that of the Hauranis. It will cost the government no more but the Jews will accept the work on a contract basis for an entire group. They will then proceed to use the most advanced methods so that they can increase their individual wages.

Hammond: You want all of the country's absorptive power for yourselves?

Shertok: Yes.

Peel: Mr. Mills, how do you in your department determine the country's absorptive power?

Mills: It is very difficult for us to determine it simply because there is no long past by which to determine future trends. In the peak years of industrial activity I did not issue as many labor certificates as were demanded in order to eliminate the possibility of people becoming public charges during the lean years. At the same time, I realized that a certain small labor reserve was necessary to take care of the country's natural progress and expansion.

Weizmann: May I say something about the determination of the absorptive capacity of the country?

Peel: Yes, Dr. Weizmann. (Mills and others sit) (Weizmann continues---)

Weizmann: It is inconceivable to any Jew that the Balfour Declaration could have meant anything less than that Jews should come into Palestine as long as Palestine could absorb them.

The exact state of absorptive capacity is something which is ascertainable by scientific investigation, but I think that the absorptive capacity is not nearly exhausted.

The one aim in the life of an immigrant who comes to Palestine is not only to make himself useful, but to create opportunities for other people to come. I would respectfully submit to the Commission that if they asked any settler, whether in a village or in a factory, if he was happy or content, in ninety cases out of a hundred they would get an affirmative answer, but the one thing they would ask is "Will other people come after me?" Not only have the immigrants not been a burden to the community, but they have created opportunities for the absorption of ever more people on a larger scale. I do not say, and I could not prove, that that can go on indefinitely for all time; but, judging the developments in the last few years, the possibilities of agriculture, trade and of commerce, still offer great opportunities for the absorption of the right kind of people.

Our experts are able to point to stretches of land which they may still be made available, always without trespassing upon the interests of the population which already exists, for Jewish settlement. The classic case is the Huleh marsh. Here was a marsh which for thousands of years lay idle and was the plague spot of Palestine. It was too big a marsh for such a small

country, and it was to all intents and purposes uncultivable. I hope, if in one or two years hence some members of the Commission chance to come to Palestine on an ordinary visit, they may see the change which will have been wrought in that particular part of the country. We hope to create room there for at least two thousand families. We have to on creating room. It is not like Canada or South Africa, where you have wide spaces. We have to create room, and I think it is perhaps good for us that we have to go on doing it. I think it is feasible and possible. I am not an expert on land or colonization, but facts and figures will be presented to you.

Rumbold: If the Jews are so interested in the development of the land, how is it that so small a percentage of Jewish immigrants are settled on the land? Why do so many cluster in the towns?

Mr. Mills: It is the avowed purpose of Zionism, to settle people on the land, and, particularly in the last few months the number of Jews employed in agriculture has increased:

Dr. Weizmann: Of the total population, the number of Jews engaged in agricultural occupations, is about 54,900, say roughly, 55,000. The number of Jews engaged in agricultural occupations in our own settlements, settlements which have been created by the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, is about 4,200 families. The percentage has become smaller in the past few years because the wave of immigration has stopped longer in the towns. Land colonization is a difficult and slow thing by its very nature. It is an organic growth, so to speak, and it needs a very considerable amount of preparation, both of the human material and of the land. We have met with considerable handicaps, and I think unless the Government adopts a dynamic and positive policy in helping to establish close settlement on the land of Palestine (and I am saying this without any desire to criticize the Administration of Palestine) colonization will naturally be slow.

Mr. Shertok: Another reason for the fact that the Jews have continued in the cities is that because of the restrictive policy of the Department of Immigration in granting labor certificates, there was a labor shortage in the cities. Because of it, people left agriculture in 1932 and afterward, and got into the building trade. The capacity of the country to absorb new inhabitants is underestimated, because the country has shown it can absorb many more people than were provided for in the labor schedule.

Peel: Will you permit me to ask this question? Let us for argument's sake put the country's absorptive capacity at 30,000 immigrants--

Shertok: Laborers?

Peel: Yes. We are discussing labor immigration. You would not raise any objection would you, if the government allowed a definite per centage of Arab immigrants? Would you say: "We Jews demand the complete 30,000?"

Shertok: Certainly we insist that the Jews demand the complete 30,000 except in special cases. We have no objection to admitting a non-Jew who is a specialist in his field and is needed in Eretz Israel. But as regards laborers in general we believe that the government is bound to facilitate Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel. The emphasis is on the words, "facilitate" and "Jewish". It is not part of the government's duties to facilitate the immigration of other nations in Eretz Israel.

Peel: This clarification is important. You believe that the phrase, "to facilitate Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel," means that exceptions to the rule are to be made in special cases only? You said that the government is not to allow entrance to immigrants from Arab countries, for example, but that all of Eretz Israel's absorptive capacity referring to laborers should go to the Jews? Is that so?

Shertok: Yes, sir.

Peel: And you base your contention on paragraph 6 which reads: "to facilitate the immigration of the Jews under favorable conditions."

Shertok: Yes. The Jews are in Palestine as of right, and we consider it a necessary corollary that the Jewish worker should be, as of right, in every occupation in this country. To us the return of the Jews in Palestine is a return to the land, and a return to manual labor.

Dr. Weizmann: We have adopted the principle in our work that everything we do we should try to do with our own hands. We think that you possess a thing only when you build it with your own hands, and here was the opportunity in Palestine which had never been offered to us in any other country. There was sand and marsh, which we had to convert into cultivable land. There were no houses; we could build them. There were no roads; some of them, at any rate, we could make with our own hands. Therefore we attach such great moral value to the principle that the Jew should not come at this particular time into a country where there is a backward population and a reservoir of cheap labor, and assume the role of overseer or overlord, leaving the manual work to the Arabs.

I should also like to reply to a reproach which is very often cast into our faces,-- that in the Zionist settlements we do not employ Arab labor. I should like to answer that, first of all, we do not employ any labor at all if we can help it. Ours is mostly self-labor. The settler has a piece of land which he must try to work with his own hands and the hands of his family.

We have prepared ourselves for every type of labor but there is one branch here in Palestine in which we are not at all adequately represented, and that is the government works.

I need not argue that employment in Government works would give the Jews more opportunity in Palestine-- that is understood. In all fairness this employment should be increased because the Jews pay more taxes proportionately than the rest of the population. In 1932 when the Jews comprised 18% of the inhabitants of Palestine, they paid 37% of the taxes.

Besides, relations between the Jews and Arabs could be more amicable, if they worked shoulder to shoulder on the same projects.

Hammond: Can you prove that?

Shertok: Yes, by example. The employment of certain percentages of Jews in the Haifa Port helped prevent the dislocation of services during periods of unrest, and relations between Jews and Arabs thus employed together have always been amicable. It is fair to say that relations between Jews and Arabs working together are better than relations between Palestinian Arabs and non-Palestinian Arabs.

Mr. Katznelson: (rising) May I include a few more facts on this matter?

Shertok: (introducing him) This is Mr. Berl Katznelson on the Executive Board of the General Federation of Jewish Labor, and Editor of Davar.

Peel: Proceed, Mr. Katznelson:

Katznelson: The fact is, sir, that employment in Haifa Harbor is given illicit Arab immigrants and denied legal Jewish immigrants. No Jews are employed by the Government in either harbor, therefore none are to be found in Jaffa at all.

Rumbold: Is that not due to the fact that their presence might have caused disturbances?

Katznelson: Would you suggest that employment of Jews was the cause?

Rumbold: At certain times the employment of Jews might have led to disturbances.

Katznelson: If that is the situation, that means that the Jews are only as second class citizens. I cannot agree that under an organized government there is any danger in employing Jews.

Peel: Your remarks will be taken under advisement, gentlemen. It seems to me, however, that the absorptive capacity of the country depends mostly on the availability of cultivable land. We have several authorities here to testify on the subject, I believe.

Secretary: Yes, my lord. Mr. D. G. Harris, Irrigation Advisor to the Government of Palestine, Mr. F.J. Salmon, Commissioner for Land and Surveys; Mr. L. Andrews, Development Officer, and Mr. C. Bennett, Asst. Director for Lands and Surveys. (These people rise)

Peel: It is very important for obvious reasons that we should ascertain what is the total land of which the State can dispose as its own.

Bennett: (Produces large map in heavy color so that whole audience can follow. He explains govt. holdings, land purchased by Jews, etc.)

Peel: What has been done and what is proposed to encourage the close settlement of Jews on the land, in accordance with Article 6 of the Mandate?

Harris: The whole policy of the Government is directed toward that purpose, my lord. The construction of roads in the rural areas, the draining of swamps, as in Beisan all tend to this, as well as the Government's agricultural, horticultural and veterinary services.

Hammond: How much more land is there available-- that is the real problem ?

Bennett: With regard to State Domain, there is no cultivable land available.

Andrews: And any lands that could be used are earmarked for the resettlement of displaced Arabs.

Carter: What do you define as cultivable land?

Bennett: The Government's definition of cultivable land is land which is actually under cultivation or which can be cultivated by the application of resources which are at the disposal of the average cultivator.

Coupland: What has been done to discover new water sources?

Harris: Very little.

Morris: Have private commercial enterprises done any boring for water?

Harris: Yes.

Andrews: Oh, yes ! I know of one successful enterprise completed at Yavniel. There are others, too .

Peel: Then you say that of all the State Domain everything is leased that is cultivable, and about 400,000 dunams of state land is uncultivable.

Bennett: Yes, under the Government definition.

Peel: It may be cultivable under another definition?

Bennett: Yes.

Rumbold: Then one could find more such uncultivable land upon which the Jews could build another town like Tel Aviv. I am also interested in these displaced Arabs for whose resettlement all unleased state land is earmarked. Could I have some figures on that?

Andrews: Yes sir. Since 1931 we received applications from 3,271 landless Arabs who wished to resettle on the land. Of these, only 664 families fell within the definition prescribed by the Government, and of these 317 declined on various grounds to take up the holdings offered. Therefore only 347 families had been provided for on Government estates.

Rumbold: What are some of the reasons for refusal?

Andrews: Some claimed that the land offered them in the Beisan district was unhealthful in spite of the fact that it is adjacent to the Jewish settlement of Beit Alpha, one of the most prosperous in the Eneq. Many Arabs who did not fall under the Government definition found work in the towns, many in the brick works at Haifa; others in the Nesher Cement works. The Bedouins settled on the 240 dunam camping site provided by the Jewish National Fund refused to be moved to Beisan. It is near leasable land, and all of them have employment, many in Jewish colonies.

Peel: This resettlement originally was to be assisted by some nominated members of the Arab Executive and the Jewish Agency.

Andrews: Yes

Peel: Neither board wished to assist?

Andrews: The Arabs refused, while the Jews were ready to appoint a representative. Since an Arab was not appointed, the plan fell through.

Dr. Hexter: May I speak on the subject of cultivable land?

Secretary: Dr. Hexter, land expert for the Jewish Agency.

Peel: You may proceed, Dr. Hexter.

Hexter: On irrigation the Jews have done much exploratory work. They brought the geophysicists to the country to engage in boring wells. From 1933 to the present time the records of 18 of these companies that they have made 473 borings, 433 for Jewish clients and 40 for Arab clients. The total depth of these borings is 38,000 metres, giving an average depth of about 80 metres.

In the Beersheba district, there are vast stretches where the soil is better than some of the soil in the north. There are two problems: to whom does the land belong and is there water available. The Jewish Agency are advised that it is well worth while to bore there, and they want to have land put at their disposal for that purpose, with the right of acquisition if water is found.

Lack of irrigation and the difficulty of acquiring land are responsible for only 15 per cent of the Jewish population being on the land.

Sir Laurie Hammond: In estimating the possibilities for encouraging close settlement you have to remember that it is affected by a large extension of irrigation.

Dr. Hexter: Yes.

Sir Laurie: Hence, when the Government has to make up its mind as to immigration of land workers, they are limited by the area of land under irrigation. You want Government to look at it with the eyes of hope and faith rather than take the natural view?

Dr. Hexter: Let me have the hope and faith, and let the Government help me to the extent of irrigation for improving the land. I only want a chance to prove that I can take a piece of land of "x" dunams, bring water there, settle a man and his family, and bring both man and land to a better condition.

Sir Laurie: You mean that the actual possibility of irrigation has been proved?

Dr. Hexter: That is what I said. I don't ask the Government to have faith that I will find water. All I ask is to let me intensify. Now there are certain legal aspects in our acquisition of land that Mr. Horowitz, honorary legal advisor of the Jewish Agency wishes to take up at this time, if it is your pleasure.

Peel: We are anxious to hear from him.

Mr. Horowitz: The Government contemplated entirely amending the land laws, "a very large and heavy task", but nothing has been done, actually. One of

the difficulties is that the title does not give the purchaser the immediate right of possession and the Turkish law is still honored which makes it a criminal act for a man to evict a trespasser by force. Under that law an evicted trespasser can go to the magistrate and obtain reinstatement. The present practice is for the magistrate to throw the burden of bringing a claim against the title-holder, and not the trespasser or complainant. The Land Courts function very slowly. The title-holder who succeeds in a higher court has to go back to the magistrate's court for confirmation. Then comes the difficulty of eviction. During the interval, in all big cases where much land is involved or political feeling exists, more trespassers will have come on the land when you come to execute your hard-won judgment, and you have to go through the whole procedure again. The police will not help.

Lord Peel: What is your suggestion to remedy this?

Mr. Horowitz: My suggestion is an ordinary method as under the law in England. Whether it is trespassing on a large cultivable piece of land or a private garden, where there is obvious trespassing, I am to have the aid of the police, and not to stand by and go through complicated and lengthy proceedings. We have had much trouble with this. There were cases where people claimed ownership of land, and having failed, turned around and claimed tenancy rights. After the occupation and cultivation by a trespasser for a year, and without any obligation to pay rent, the "wretched landlord" who tries to get some acknowledgment of the land remains liable to pay the rural property tax.

(Enter at this point a number of Arabs. Secretaries rush forward to get information from them which they take down. Then they are escorted to seats.)

Peel: Who are these gentlemen?

Secretary: My lord, they are representatives of the Committee of Ten, headed by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Eff. al Husseini.

Peel: I wish to address his Eminence. (Mufti stand and comes forward) May I know whom your Committee represents? Is it only the Arab Higher Committee or does it include the Moslem Supreme Council?

Mufti: We represent only the Higher Committee

Peel: You may make your representations.

Mufti: We beg to remind you of Article 20 of the Covenant of the League which provides that all obligations and understandings which are inconsistent with the principles outlined in the Covenant should be considered null and void. This applies particularly to the Balfour Declaration as being contrary to the principles of self-determination for each country which was recognized in another Article of the Covenant, Article 22.

Peel: The "obligation and understandings" to which you refer in Article 20 were agreements between members of the League of Nations, but not between members of the League and others.

Mufti: The Covenant provides for self-determination, and the agreement between

England and France with regard to the Balfour Declaration, which was made after the Covenant, is therefore contrary to its provisions.

Peel: The Balfour Declaration was made in 1917 and the Covenant of the League of Nations was not published until 1922.

Mufti: Although it was officially ratified after that date, it was agreed upon before then.

Peel: As a matter of fact it was agreed upon later. I think you have your dates somewhat mixed.

Mufti: Our recommendations, as well as the promises given to the Arab delegation by Mr. Ramsay Mac Donald in 1930 have not been carried into effect owing to Jewish pressure.

Lord Peel: You don't credit the British Government with having a mind of its own?

Mufti: When we see such action taken we have always had to attribute it to Jewish pressure, because we cannot believe the Government could follow such a course unless there was outside pressure.

Peel: What do you mean by "outside pressure"? Does that just mean Jewish arguments?

Mufti: The Jews have many means of making their influence felt which I don't wish to deal with at present.

Sir Laurie Hammond: I take it that the Arab portion of the population would be more happy if they reverted to a Turkish rule than under the present Mandatory rule.

Mufti: That is a fact.

Sir Horace Rumbold: Would you have chosen Turkey as a Mandatory?

Mufti: We revolted against the Turks in order to obtain independence.

Peel: But if you could not complete independence, you would rather the British Government handed the Mandate over to Turkey?

Mufti: We believe that we can obtain independence.

Peel: You stated that the Jewish National Home represented a danger to the Moslem Holy Places, that the Jews aimed at the reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon, and that their ultimate aim was to destroy the Mosque of Omar and the other mosques, and reconstruct the Temple on the ruins. On what evidences are these charges based and could you produce any proof?

Mufti: I am ready to submit evidence at any time. I will submit a letter to me from the Chief Rabbi of Poland, a statement from Sir Louis Bols and a report of Sir Alfred Mond.

Peel: Are you aware that the Mandate guarantees the integrity of the Moslem Holy Places?

Mufti: We are not suggesting that the Mandatory Power would interfere, but who knows that it will continue to be in this country. We also see the Jewish influence behind the Mandatory. Experience shows that the Jews can do anything as far as Palestine is concerned.

Peel: Do you think they would be able to persuade the Mandatory Power to destroy those mosques and to erect a temple?

Mufti: I know that they have demolished mosques in villages that were acquired by them. There will no check on Jewish activities once the Mandate is abolished, or when the Jews have become a majority in the country, even if there still is a Mandate.

Sir Laurie Hammond: The suggestion is that the power of the Jews would somehow imperil the British Government till the Moslem Holy Places were desecrated or removed?

Mufti: The Jews have great influence in England.

Another Arab: An inflated administrative apparatus has been created to further the Jewish National Home and its work is characterised by systematic discrimination against the Arabs. It is a source of grievance to us that preferential treatment is given to Jews. It is the pro-Jewish bias of the Government to which we object.

Sir Laurie Hammond: What you mean is this: that Government for political ends employs Jews for higher wages when they could get Arab labor for lower wages? Is that your grievance?

Sir Horace Rumbold: Is it your contention that the Government accepts a different standard between Jews and Arabs?

Auni Bey: It is. The Arabs are fighting for fundamental rights. We do not recognize the government.

Sir Laurie Hammond: You are asking us to report that the right thing to do is to remove the Mandatory Government?

Auni Bey: One of our demands is that the Mandatory rule should be abolished.

Lord Peel: Did you say "one of your demands"? Does not that swallow up the rest? (Laughter)

Auni Bey: Our first demand has always been that the Mandatory rule should be replaced by self-government.

Lord Peel: We are here to ascertain whether the Arabs or Jews have any grievances on account of the way the Mandate has been or is being implemented. I understand that you are not interested in this, as you want to do away with the Mandate altogether.

Auni Bey: Yes, that is so.

Mr. Antonius: Quite apart from the Arabs' objections to the policy of the Government, the Arabs feel that they are discriminated against. I believe

officials do not consider whether the Zionists accept the Mandate and the Arabs do not accept it. There is a certain amount of discrimination which breeds prejudice.

Lord Peel: I need not remind you that the Jews have complained to us again and again that the Government is too much pro-Arab.

Mr. Antonius: I said, in speaking of officials, that I am aware in many cases the officials must do violence to their consciences. I now don't speak of whether they are pro-Arab or pro-Jewish, but the Arab has acquired the position of the man to be watched. He is the trouble. He is the man who is suspected of flaring up at any time. It is a psychological attitude.

Lord Peel: But he has flared up once or twice you know.

(Col. Wedgwood enters)

Peel: How do you do, Col. Wedgwood?

Wedgwood: Thank you, my lord. As the principal critic of the Palestine Administration for the past 18 years, I ask leave to give evidence.

Peel: Carry on!

Col. Wedgwood: I have been a member of Parliament for thirty-one years and a Privy Councillor for thirteen. I have fought for England all over the world, and it is very often forgotten that I have also served in the Colonies. I wish to prove that the actions of the Administration in Palestine have been anti-Jewish and pro-Arab. Arabs have today in Palestine more public officials per square mile than probably in any other country under British administration. These officials have gradually been changed from British to Arab, and it is my conviction that the idea of placating by office has been carried out to an excessive degree.

One remarkable fact about the late disturbances is that, however bad the charges have been, very few people have been prosecuted or brought to justice. I attribute this in part to the difficulty of securing evidence, but in part to the Public Prosecutor, who is an Arab-- Jamal al Husseini's brother-in-law.

Both the Mayors of Haifa and Jerusalem are Arabs. Haifa has a slight preponderance of Arab voters, but not of Arab population. But in Jerusalem there is an actual majority of Jewish voters, and there it is not a question of election by the Council; the Government nominates the Mayor. They nominated an Arab!

Sir Horace Rumbold: There is a Jewish Deputy Mayor in Jerusalem and he is very active.

Wedgwood: Unfortunately, he has to very active, because the Mayor has just gone on strike. (Laughter) I question the reliability of the Arab police. Is there any other country in the world where people who refuse to obey orders are re-enlisted?

Lord Peel: What are your proposals, apart from criticism?

Wedgwood: No one should be sent to Palestine unless he is told about the carrying out of the Mandate and the settlement of the Jews in that country, and that he must support the Mandate. I beg of you, when you draw up your decisions not to sound the death knell of Jewry....

Peel: Thank you, Col. Wedgwood. Is Mr. Ben Gurion here, now?

Secretary: Yes, my lord.

Peel: May we hear from you now, Mr. Ben Gurion?

Ben Gurion (rises): A great deal is said about the benefit which has accrued to this country from Jewish work, the improvement of agriculture in Palestine, provision of more work, better sanitary conditions, better education, and so on. It is not the virtue of the Jews that brought this about and brought benefit to the country, but it is inherent in our work. The welfare of the whole country is our deep concern. But I want to remove a possible misunderstanding which may arise in such a discussion. The benefit which is accruing to the country from our work is not the reason and the justification of our being here and of the Jewish National Home. We are here in our own right. We claim to be here and to assure our future here because it is our own right and it is justified in itself whether it benefits others or not.

Sir Laurie Hammond: I understand Mr. Ben Gurion to say they are not here as philanthropists but as of right.

Ben Gurion: Yes, sir. It is an end in itself and we regard ourselves, the Jewish people, as entitled to live and to be free for our own sakes. Our right in Palestine is not derived from the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration. It is prior to that. I believe it was said by the Chairman of the Royal Commission or perhaps one of his colleagues that the Mandate is our Bible.

Peel: Did I ever go as far as that?

Ben Gurion: It may be that it was one of your colleagues. We should be glad to hear you say it, but I say on behalf of the Jews that the Bible is our Mandate, the Bible which was written by us, in our own language, in Hebrew, in this very country. That is our Mandate. I say we are here as of right and I believe first of all the British people and then other European nations and the United States of America which endorsed the action of Great Britain, the Jewish national home was an end in itself. It was not in order that the Jews should benefit Palestine, but it was to solve the Jewish problem. It was to remove a grievance, a historical grievance of the Jewish people against the whole Christian world for many centuries. I want to say one word on why we are here in Palestine. It is not because we once conquered Palestine. Many people have conquered a country and lost it and they have no claim to that country, but here we are for two reasons unprecedented in history. The first is this: Palestine is the only country in the world that the Jews, not as individuals but as a nation, as a race, can regard as their own country, as their historic Homeland, and the second reason is, there is no other nation-- I do not say population, I do not say sections of a people-- there is no other race or nation as a whole which regards this country as their own Homeland. All the inhabitants of Palestine are children of this country, and have full rights in this country. We have it as Jews, as children of the Jewish people whether we are here already or whether we are not here yet. When the Balfour

Declaration was made there were 60,000 Jews here. It was not only the right of those 60,000. Now we are 400,000 and it is not only the right of those 400,000. We may and we will come and we are entitled to come as long as the Jewish problem is not solved, as long as there is need for Jews to come to Palestine and there is a place for them in Palestine without displacing others.

We have never had a quarrel with the Arabs, neither with the Arabs in Palestine nor the Arabs in other countries. We came to this country with the consciousness that, besides saving ourselves and freeing and liberating our own people we had also a great civilizing task to achieve here, and that we could be of great help to our Arab neighbors here and in the surrounding countries, and I believe we have proved it by our own work.

(Curtain)