

The Jewish Agency for Palestine

MEMORANDUM

SUBMITTED TO THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

ON REFUGEES,

6th JULY, 1938.

77, GREAT RUSSELL STREET,

LONDON, W.C.1.

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הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל

THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE.

77, GREAT RUSSELL STREET,

LONDON, W.C.1.

1st July, 1938.

THE PRESIDENT,

THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON REFUGEES,
EVIAN.

SIR,

On behalf of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, I have the honour to submit the attached memorandum for the consideration of the Conference.

2. The Jewish Agency for Palestine is the public body recognised under Article 4 of the Mandate "for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine." It includes both the World Zionist Organisation and non-Zionist Jewish organisations interested in the upbuilding of the National Home.

3. The financial instruments associated with the Jewish Agency in the upbuilding of Palestine, the Palestine Foundation Fund and the Jewish National Fund, have, since 1920, invested a sum of about £14,000,000 in land purchase and colonisation. The Zionist Organisation has further played an important part in the establishment of various semi-public institutions, including among others the Anglo-Palestine Bank.

4. Under the control of the Mandatory Power, the Jewish Agency is responsible for regulating most of the Jewish immigration into Palestine; and it is in this capacity that it begs to submit the enclosed memorandum to the Conference in the hope that due consideration will be given to the part which Palestine has played, and can play in the future, in the solution of the Jewish problem.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

CH. WEIZMANN.

MEMORANDUM

SUBMITTED TO THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

ON REFUGEES,

6th JULY, 1938.

1. The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate for Palestine have given international recognition to the right of the Jewish people to reconstitute their National Home in Palestine. In formulating this policy it was emphasised that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice . . . the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." Thus an international confirmation has been given to the Zionist conception that the Zionist aims are fully compatible with equality of status for the Jews in the countries they inhabit, both as regards the rights and the duties of citizenship. Zionism has never considered enforced Jewish emigration as a legitimate means for countries to rid themselves of their Jewish population, or artificially to reduce the numbers of their Jewish population. Emigration is a right of the individual citizen, but not a duty, and must be free, and not compulsory.

2. Jewish history has largely been the history of migrations. Thus between the 'eighties of the nineteenth century and the great War, about three million Jews migrated from Eastern Europe to the United States, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Argentina, etc. Since the war, the need for emigration has increased, specially in the new states of Eastern Europe. The Jews being engaged in the more vulnerable branches of economic activity, have suffered much more from the prolonged depression than other sections of the population. Moreover, agricultural depression has driven great numbers of peasants into the towns, where they compete in occupations hitherto largely practised by the Jews. In many cases non-Jewish merchants,

artisans, and professional men, successfully exploit anti-Semitic boycott slogans against their Jewish rivals; and frequently receive support from the States, which, when faced by economic difficulties, make the Jew a scapegoat. In certain countries, such as Poland, Rumania, and Hungary, the "moderate" nationalists seek to achieve the economic elimination of the Jews by "peaceful" legal means, while the extremists would resort to violence in order more rapidly to attain this aim. Both wish for the forcible emigration of the Jews.

3. In Germany the Jews even in 1933 formed less than 1 per cent. of the population and there has never been the same problem of acute economic distress and competition as in Eastern Europe. But the deliberate policy of the German Government has since 1933 reduced the Jews to economic pauperism, and deprived them of human and civil rights. The treatment of the Jews in Germany and still more in Austria forms the extremest and most brutal chapter of the Jewish tragedy in Eastern and Central Europe.

4. Hundreds of thousands of Jews would leave Central and Eastern Europe if countries could be found to receive them. But the severe restrictions of the post-war period have reduced Jewish immigration to a mere fraction of its former size. The world to-day is divided into countries in which Jews cannot live, and countries which they must not enter.

5. The Jewish people throughout the world trust that the representatives of the Governments assembled at Evian on the

generous initiative of the President of the United States, will emphatically protest against the persecution by any country of any section of its inhabitants on racial, religious, or political grounds, and in particular against the policy of physical persecution, economic extermination, and expulsion, which has reached its worst forms in Germany and Austria. It is further hoped that countries which are still able to admit numbers of immigrants without any harm to their own citizens will apply a bolder immigration policy; this would give immediate relief to large numbers of victims of persecution and would ultimately benefit the countries which receive them.

6. In the post-war ordeal of the Jewish people, Palestine has been their consolation and hope. The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate have opened the way for the realisation of the age-old dream of the Jewish people. Between 1918 and 1937 the Jewish population of Palestine increased from 60,000 to 416,000, and from 10 per cent. to over 30 per cent. of the total population.

7. The Jewish economic structure in Palestine widely differs from that in other countries. Zionism aims at a normalisation of Jewish economic life; this requires a firm agricultural foundation for the Jewish economy in Palestine. The work is slow and difficult; there are obstacles in the way of acquiring the necessary land and adapting it to modern agriculture, and further in transforming a people urbanised for centuries into successful agriculturists. But there has been constant progress. In 1922 there were 75 Jewish agricultural settlements with a population of 15,000; in 1938, 223 settlements with a population of 105,000 of whom 60,000 (including dependants) are directly engaged in agriculture. The area of Jewish land has increased from about 140,000 acres in 1918 to some 350,000 acres to-day. Jewish citrus plantations have increased more than twelve fold since 1922, and now cover an area of

40,000 acres. The area of citrus land owned by Arabs has also shown a remarkable increase—from 5,500 to 34,000 acres; the large sums of money paid by Jews to Arabs for land have enabled them to advance from extensive to intensive methods of cultivation.

8. Jewish industry and handicraft in Palestine have greatly developed. According to Jewish Agency returns, in 1922 the number of Jewish workshops and factories was 1,850, with a personnel of 4,750, a capital investment of £600,000, and an annual output of £500,000. By 1937 the number of workshops and factories had risen to 5,600, with a personnel of 30,000, a capital investment of £11,700,000 and an annual output of £9,000,000. The Palestine Electric Corporation (built up mainly by Jewish capital and labour) sold 11,500,000 KWH in 1932, and 71,000,000 in 1937 (about three-fourths to Jewish consumers).

9. The building of houses, factories, workshops, roads, bridges, etc. constitutes a most important element in the economic development of the country. From 1932 to 1937 over £20,000,000 of Jewish capital have been invested in building (exclusive of building undertaken by the Government, and international companies). In spite of the depression of the last two years, this industry gives employment to over 11,000 workers.

10. The great change which has been brought about in the occupational distribution of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine is illustrated by the following figures from the Workers' Census conducted in March 1937 under the auspices of the General Federation of Jewish Labour. The Census showed a total of 104,000 (including members of agricultural collective and co-operative settlements, agricultural and industrial workers, clerks, teachers and members of the liberal professions). These, together with their dependants numbering 95,000, accounted for almost half of the

total Jewish population. Of the 104,000 no less than 36,000 had been without definite occupation in the lands of their origin, while 8,000 had been merchants. Of the 25,000 workers now engaged in Palestinian agriculture, less than one-tenth have previously been agriculturists; and of the 56,000 urban labourers, less than one-half had previously been manual workers.

11. Of the 135,000 Jews who have left Germany since 1933, 42,000 have entered Palestine and 48,000 other overseas countries. 25,000 have returned to their countries of origin; 20,000 have been admitted to European countries, many of them still without leave to reside permanently or to accept employment.

Of the German-Jewish immigrants into Palestine, 77 per cent. were under 40 years of age, and 30 per cent. of the total were under 20. 40 per cent. of the German-Jewish immigrants to Palestine belong to the so-called capitalist category, i.e. are members of families in possession of a minimum capital of £1,000. The transfer of this capital has been effected mainly through an agreement between the German Government and the Haavarah Trust and Transfer Office organised for that purpose.

The non-capitalist German-Jewish immigration has, for the most part, been absorbed in agriculture and industry with the aid of Zionist funds or the special relief funds collected in England, America and elsewhere. Altogether in the five years approximately £1,000,000 has been provided for settling in Palestine German-Jewish immigrants without means of their own.

The skill and organising ability of the immigrants from Germany have been a valuable asset in the development of the country. Some 14,000 have established themselves on the land. The physician or the lawyer from Germany working as a poultry farmer, industrial labourer, bus or lorry driver, is now common in Palestine.

In addition, a relatively large number of German-Jewish scientists and members of the liberal professions have found an opportunity of continuing their work in Palestinian institutions, such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Haifa Technical Institute, the Daniel Sieff Research Institute of Rehovoth, the Hadassah Hospital, the Workers' Sick Fund Hospitals, or else in private practice as physicians, engineers, lawyers, etc.

A special feature of the German-Jewish immigration is the Youth Aliyah, i.e. boys and girls of between 14 and 17 who were brought as immigrants to Palestine without their parents, and are educated and trained to a knowledge of agriculture or handicrafts in the agricultural settlements or in different Jewish institutions. Of 2,200 young people who had thus been brought to Palestine up to April 1st, 1938, more than 900 have already concluded their training, of whom three-fourths have taken up agriculture.

12. The Palestine Royal Commission of 1936 (Report p. 129) writes about the influence which the Jewish immigration and reconstruction work had in the past on the development of the country and on the Arab population :

- (i) "The large import of Jewish capital into Palestine has had a general fructifying effect on the economic life of the whole country.
- (ii) The expansion of Arab industry and citriculture has been largely financed by the capital thus obtained.
- (iii) Jewish example has done much to improve Arab cultivation, especially of citrus.
- (iv) Owing to Jewish development and enterprise, the employment of Arab labour has increased in urban areas, particularly in the ports.

- (v) The reclamation and anti-malaria work undertaken in Jewish "colonies" have benefited all Arabs in the neighbourhood.
- (vi) Institutions, founded with Jewish funds primarily to serve the National Home, have also served the Arab population. Hadassah, for example, treats Arab patients notably at the Tuberculosis Hospital at Safed, and the Radiology Institute at Jerusalem, admits Arab countryfolk to the clinics of its Rural Sick Benefit Fund, and does much infant welfare work for Arab mothers.
- (vii) The general beneficent effect of Jewish immigration on Arab welfare is illustrated by the fact that the increase in the Arab population is most marked in urban areas affected by Jewish development. A comparison of the census returns in 1922 and 1931 shows that six years ago, the increase per cent. in Haifa was 86, in Jaffa 62, in Jerusalem 37, while in purely Arab towns such as Nablus and Hebron, it was only 7, and at Gaza there was a decrease of 2 per cent."

13. The remarkable economic prosperity of the period 1932-1935 suffered the first check through the outbreak of the Abyssinian War and the consequent unrest. The Arab strike of 1936 and the period of violence and sabotage which has continued, with some variations, until now, have had their effect on the economic development of the country. The situation has been further aggravated by the uncertainty which still prevails with regard to the political future of Palestine. These factors have resulted in the reduction of immigration, but the marked decrease from 62,000 in 1935 to 30,000 in 1936 and 10,500 in 1937 is substantially due to the admittedly arbitrary restrictions imposed on it by the Mandatory

Government pending a decision on major policy, and to the severe currency restrictions of the countries of emigration. Jewish emigrants from Germany and Austria are now faced with still greater difficulties in realising even a small part of their property.

14. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the work of upbuilding the National Home has continued without interruption. In the past two years some 20 new agricultural settlements have been established, some of them in country which has been derelict for centuries. In this period the paralysis of Jaffa Port by the Arab strike has led to the creation of the Jewish Port of Tel-Aviv. Jewish labour has gained a greater share of employment in Haifa Port, and has established itself more firmly in road-building and other public works. Thousands of young Jews have enlisted in the ranks of the supernumerary police force, and are taking their full share in defending Jewish life and property.

15. The question of how many Jewish immigrants Palestine may ultimately be able to absorb cannot be answered now with any degree of certainty, since it depends largely on factors beyond the control of the Jews. But given more or less normal conditions of immigration and economic development, an approximate estimate may be attempted.

Prospects of agricultural development in Palestine have considerably improved in recent years; many areas formerly considered to be waterless, or nearly so, have been found to possess ample underground water supplies. So far only about 100,000 acres of land have been irrigated of which some 75,000 acres are under citrus. Careful calculations have, however, proved that Palestine's known water resources would suffice for the irrigation of a further 375,000 acres. There is not therefore the problem of land shortage which at one time was given so much prominence. One acre of irrigated land produces roughly five times as much as an acre of unirrigated land, and

five acres of irrigated land form an economic holding for a Jewish farmer. When, in due course, the 375,000 acres of irrigable land are brought under cultivation, and new markets have been created or found for their produce, they will be capable of supporting at least 60,000 farming families. If the newly irrigated land were planted with citrus, or put under some other form of intensive cultivation, the number of additional families provided for would be even greater, since $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of citrus land will support a family. At present only 14 per cent. of the total Jewish population live directly by agriculture; the remaining 86 per cent. earn their livelihood by industry, handicrafts, trade, or in the liberal professions. Even assuming that for every farming family there are not five, but only three non-farming families, it would mean that 180,000 such families could be established alongside with those of 60,000 farmers, which would amount to an additional population of about 1,200,000.

16. The possibilities of additional settlement would be further increased by the extension of development work to the vast area in the south, the Negeb. It might be still further increased if Transjordan, whose economic development depends entirely on fresh capital and the growth of population, were in some way brought within the orbit of Palestine, either by an agreed extension of Jewish colonisation into Transjordan, or by a process of transfer of population on the lines suggested by the Royal Commission.

17. The tempo of immigration during the next few years obviously depends on the restoration of normal conditions for the influx and employment of capital. It is, however, an essential condition for a large

Jewish immigration into Palestine, or any other country, that immigrants should not be prevented from taking with them their capital. The present German practice perpetrates gross injustice on would-be emigrants, and is moreover unfair to the countries of immigration. If large numbers of immigrants are to be absorbed by Palestine, its rapidly developing economy stands in continual need of fresh capital. From 1933 to 1936 Palestine absorbed an annual immigration of between 30,000 and 62,000. There seems to be no reason why immigration of this or even larger size should not be maintained during the next few years.

18. Palestine holds a unique position among the countries of Jewish immigration. It is the only country to which the Jew comes with international sanction, "as of right and not on sufferance." It is the only country where the Jewish immigrant does not find a fully-developed economy to which he has to adapt himself, but where he creates a new Jewish economic structure embracing all branches of national life. The reconstruction of the Jewish National Home in Palestine realises an age-old ideal, and this alone could call forth the strength necessary for the work which has been achieved in Palestine.

19. It is the earnest hope of the Jewish Agency for Palestine that this Conference will find ways and means to alleviate the fate of suffering Jewry in Central and Eastern Europe; to find fruitful openings for Jewish immigration in various countries; and will pay special attention to the great possibilities offered by Palestine for the solution of the Jewish problem.

London,
1.7.38.

