

THE SOVIET POSITION ON PALESTINE

By Andrei Gromyko

Following is the speech delivered by Andrei Gromyko, Soviet delegate to the United Nations, at the memorable American-Soviet-Palestine Friendship Dinner given in his honor by the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists in New York on December 30, 1947. Herschel Johnson, Permanent United States Representative to the United Nations, who was also to have been a guest of honor, was unable to attend because of illness. In addition to Mr. Gromyko, the speakers were Dr. Emanuel Neumann, President of the Zionist Organization of America, author Pierre Van Passen, playwright Arthur Miller and Max Levin, Chairman of the Ambidjan Committee. Chairman of the evening was Joseph Brainin, Chairman of the Committee which sponsored the dinner.—Eds.

I UNDERSTAND quite well the interest which is shown by Jewish people towards the decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine into two states: Jewish and Arab. The question of the future of Palestine has become an important and acute one. It is not accidental, therefore, that it has drawn the attention of political leaders of the world and not only that of political leaders for a considerable period of time.

Naturally, this question could not but interest, first of all, the Jewish people who are justly binding with Palestine and her future their national aspirations aimed at the creation of their own state. That is why it is not difficult to understand the deep interest, manifested, primarily, by the Jewish population in different countries in respect to this decision of the United Nations.

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS REPRESENTATIVES TO the United Nations has pointed out repeatedly that they are interested in the decision of the question of the future of Palestine both as a member of the organization and as a great power which, together with other great powers, bears special responsibility for the maintenance of international security. At the opening of the debate on this question at the Special Session of the General Assembly the government of the USSR pointed out that the time has now come to find a practical solution of it, the solution which should correspond to the interests of the population of Palestine as well as to the interests of the United Nations as a whole, and, consequently to the interests of the maintenance of international peace.

The Soviet delegation pointed out then that the most suitable alternatives for the solution of the question of the future of Palestine are the following:

1. Creation of a single independent Arab-Jewish state with equal rights for the Arabs and Jews, and
2. Partition of Palestine into two separate and inde-

pendent states.

Speaking about the first alternative we had in mind the creation of a state in which the Jewish and Arab population of Palestine would have equal rights as nationalities. Another understanding of the claim for equal rights would amount actually to inequality and infringement of the rights and interests of one of the peoples of Palestine.

Obviously such a solution of the question of the future of Palestine might be possible only if the Jews and Arabs wished to live together in a single state, enjoying equal rights within a new independent Arab-Jewish state. The desire to live and work together is an absolutely necessary condition for the adoption of such a plan. Unwillingness of the Jews and Arabs to live and work together makes such a solution of the question of Palestine impossible and unreal. Therefore, already at the Special Session the Soviet delegation pointed out that should it happen that the Arabs and Jews did not want or could not live together within a single state, the only possible and workable solution of the question of the future of Palestine would be its partition into two separate and independent Arab and Jewish states.

After the adjournment of the Special Session we noted with satisfaction that the alternatives mentioned by us as possible and most suitable for the solution of the question of the future of Palestine attracted the attention of the widest circles of the population of Palestine and not of Palestine alone. The subsequent study of the entire issue by the committee established at the Special Session of the General Assembly has led to the submission by the committee of recommendations to the regular session of the General Assembly, in principle coinciding with the above mentioned two basic alternatives for the solution of the Palestinian problem. Both of these proposals of the committee were subjected to a detailed and close consideration at the last session of the General Assembly. As a result of such consideration the Assembly adopted an important decision on the partition of Palestine into two states and outlined a program for the implementation of appropriate measures to this end.

Such is the summary of the consideration of the question of the future of Palestine, which has taken place in the United Nations up to now.

IT MAY SEEM TO SOME PEOPLE, THAT THE DECISION OF THE General Assembly adopted on this question is too radical and too bold. But it is impossible to agree with such a point of view. It is impossible to agree because the adopted decision under the existing circumstances is the only possible and workable solution. It is not more radical and bold than is necessary and than is dictated by the interests of the

maintenance of peace. Hardly anyone will dispute the fact that the relations between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine have deteriorated to such an extent that they don't want to live within a single state. They state this directly and openly.

It is true, we heard at the General Assembly statements to the effect that the Arabs are prepared for the creation of a single Arab-Jewish state but under the condition that the Jewish population will be in the minority and that consequently the deciding power in such a new state would be one nationality—the Arabs. It is not difficult to understand, however, that such a solution of the problem, which excludes the granting of equal rights to both of the peoples could not provide a proper solution of the question of Palestine's future, since, first of all, it would not lead to the settlement of the relations between the Arabs and Jews.

Moreover, it would be a source of new frictions and complications in the relations between these peoples, which are not in the interests of the Arab nor the Jewish population of Palestine nor in the interests of the United Nations.

Thus, the United Nations were confronted with the problem: either to leave the situation in Palestine as it has been up to now, or to adopt a decision which would radically change the entire situation in Palestine and lay the foundation for peaceful and fruitful collaboration between the Arabs and Jews on the basis of due consideration of the interests of both of these peoples. The question was posed precisely in this way having in view, that the above mentioned plan of the creation of a single state, as it was definitely found out at the Assembly, should be considered as dropped owing to the reasons, which I pointed out before.

BUT THE UNITED NATIONS CANNOT TOLERATE THE SITUATION, which has existed up to now. All are aware that the mandatory system, on the basis of which the administration of Palestine has been carried out up to now, has failed. Now nobody can deny this fact. The government of Great Britain, which administered Palestine on the basis of the mandate has been forced to admit this fact. You know about the statements made to that effect by Mr. Bevin the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain before the House of Commons on February 18 and 26, 1947, as well as the subsequent statements, made by the representatives of Great Britain at the sessions of the General Assembly.

You also know about the conclusions of numerous commissions, which at different times examined the situation in Palestine and which also arrived at the conclusion, that the mandatory system of the administration did not justify itself; it does not suit either the Arabs or Jews. Such conclusions were arrived at, in particular, by the Anglo-American Commission on the Palestinian question well known to you, which gave a fairly detailed characterization of the tense conditions, which resulted in Palestine from the administration on the basis of the mandate.

The continuation of the administration of Palestine on the basis of the mandate would inevitably lead to the

worsening of the already tense situation there and to further aggravation of the relations between the Arabs and Jews, to say nothing of the fact that the continuation of the regime which has existed there up to now would be unlawful because the system of the mandates of the League of Nations as a whole has lost its value and has ceased to exist in connection with the collapse of the League of Nations and the creation of the United Nations.

MOREOVER, AND THIS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED, THE decision on the partition of Palestine into two independent states has an important historical significance because it meets the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish people for the creation of their own state. These aspirations have been particularly intensified during the last years for entirely understandable reasons. This is explained by the fact that the Jewish people suffered from the atrocities of Hitlerite Germany relatively more than any other people. As a result of violence and massacres committed by the Hitlerite troops on the occupied territories of the European countries, approximately 6,000,000 Jews have perished and only one and a half million Jews in Western Europe have survived the last war.

Considerable numbers of the survivors still have no shelter and no means of existence, continuing to remain in special camps on the territories of Germany, Austria and some other countries of Western Europe and suffering great privations. The plight of the Jews in Western Europe during the war and the heavy losses which the Jewish people suffered from fascist hangmen can be explained to a great extent by the fact that the Jews didn't receive due protection from the Western Europe countries. No country in Western Europe rendered to Jews appropriate assistance and support and they were entirely left at the mercy of the fascists. This is understandable for some of these states themselves, for example, Spain, rendered assistance to Hitlerite Germany and her allies.

All these facts testify that it would be utterly unjust not to take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Jewish people for the creation of their own state. The denial to the Jews of the right to have such a state would be impossible to justify especially taking into consideration all that the Jews have suffered during World War II. Such a conclusion finds also a historical justification, for the Jewish population as well as the Arab has deep historical roots in Palestine.

NOW, WHEN THE DECISION ON THE PARTITION OF PALESTINE into two separate and independent states has been taken, the task is to ensure the speediest and most effective implementation of this decision. As it is known, in order to ensure the realization of this decision of the General Assembly there was created a special Commission for the carrying out of concrete measures which by the time of the withdrawal of the British troops from the territory of Palestine would permit the normal fulfillment of state functions by both of the new states.

The commission is facing serious tasks. It must render practical help to the Jewish and Arab population of Palestine in creating the administrative system of both of the states and in carrying out some other measures of great importance for the realization of the decision of the Assembly. It should justify the confidence bestowed upon it.

The Commission has necessary powers for the fulfilment of the tasks set before it. It has the necessary authority in case complicated problems requiring the interference of the United Nations confront it. This authority is ensured by the fact that the Commission must work under the instructions of the Security Council which is already occupied with the Palestinian question and which in case of necessity is ready to deal with this question in order to assist the speediest and most effective execution of the decision on the partition of Palestine.

There is no need for me to explain at length that not only the decision taken on Palestine but its fulfilment have been facilitated by the fact that it has become possible for such powers as the USSR and the USA to agree on this question. As it is known, the agreement between these two countries on important questions of international significance is rather an infrequent phenomenon at present.

It is only to be regretted that after the adoption by the General Assembly of the decision on Palestine the number of incidents as a result of the clashes between separate groups of Arabs and Jews has increased there. These incidents are the consequence of the actions of some irresponsible elements attempting to hamper the realization of the plan of its partition. Such actions cannot prevent the final fulfilment of this decision.

WE CANNOT AGREE WITH THE ASSERTIONS WHICH IMPLY THAT the decision on the partition of Palestine is aimed against the Arabs and Arab countries. It is our deep conviction that this decision corresponds to fundamental national interests of both the Jews and Arabs.

The possibilities for good neighborly and friendly relations between both of the states are insured by the decision itself. In this connection suffice it to point out, for instance, the decision on economic cooperation between them. This cooperation will enable both of the states to utilize their economic resources with the utmost mutual benefit. Naturally, this can be achieved when such a cooperation is based upon taking into consideration the interests of both of the peoples but not when it constitutes the means of adaptation of the economy of these new states to the economic needs of foreign monopolies.

The Soviet Union has always sympathized with the peoples of the Arab East who are fighting for their liberation from the last shackles of colonial dependence. This struggle of the Arab countries and their peoples has always found support from the Soviet state the national policy of which is the principle of the equality of rights and self-determination of peoples. The Soviet Union being a multi-national state has no racial nor national discrimination. All the peoples inhabiting it enjoy equal rights protected by the Soviet

Constitution. All of them constitute a single and solid family which with honor withstood severe trials of the war unleashed by Hitlerite Germany which as it is known had the economic might of almost all Western Europe at its command.

The Soviet Union supports and cannot but support the aspirations of any state and any people, not matter how small its weight in international affairs is, in the struggle against foreign dependence and remnants of colonial oppression. This is in accordance with the basic principles of the United Nations, which provide protection of sovereignty and independence of states and peoples.

SUCCESSFUL REALIZATION OF THE DECISION ON THE PARTITION of Palestine and on the creation of Jewish and Arab states as the result of this partition requires the cooperation of Great Britain with the United Nations and first of all with the above-mentioned Commission not in words but in deeds. Formal cooperation is absolutely insufficient.

It would be an abnormal situation if the Commission for instance spent a considerable part of its time at Lake Success instead of going to Palestine and getting acquainted with the state of affairs existing there and carrying out on the spot the tasks entrusted to it.

It is said that the British authorities in Palestine intend to hinder the work of the commission in the respect, that they are not going to admit it into Palestine until the British troops are withdrawn from considerable areas. In other words they will not permit it to enter Palestine until May 1 or June 1, 1948. I do not know whether this information corresponds to reality but if it appeared that it did, then such a situation cannot be considered as normal. The Commission has been created precisely for the purpose of carrying out its work in Palestine, i.e., where it is obliged to assist in the fulfilment of the decision of the Assembly.

Let us hope that Great Britain will yet cooperate with the Commission in the solution of this question not in words but in deeds and at any rate that it will not place any obstacles on the way to the fulfilment of this decision.

I shall finish by pointing again not only to the simplicity and practicability of the decision taken on Palestine but also to the fact that this decision is in full conformity with the national interests of both the Jews and Arabs as well as corresponding to our common interests of maintaining peace and security. Precisely therefore it should be put into practice effectively and expeditiously. In the nearest future normal conditions should be created for the cooperation between the new Arab and Jewish states as well as for their cooperation with other nations on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect for their interests.

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CONCERNING JEWS WHO WRITE

By Arthur Miller

Author of Focus and All My Sons