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Poale Zion, 1929.

MEMORANDUM TO THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY ON

THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE - SUBMITTED

BY THE JEWISH SOCIALIST LABOUR

CONFEDERATION POALE-ZION.

LONDON. 2nd September, 1929.

1. The grave events in Palestine demand the immediate and most serious attention of the Party. Security of life has not yet been restored, and the situation is still full of dangers. But it is essential to realise the full significance of recent happenings.

2. We do not intend to chronicle the sequence of events of the last ten days of bloodshed and horrors. Nor do we regard it as necessary to refute here the absurd legends, which are re-echoed in Cairo, Bagdad and India, that the Jews have attacked the Arabs in order to establish Jewish domination over Palestine, or that the Jews have sinister designs against the Holy Places of Islam. These ideas are the very basis of a provocative propaganda expressly designed to stir up the Moslems of different countries and the Arabs of Palestine against the Jewish Palestine Movement.

3. The outbreak was the result of a well planned premeditated, determined attempt to exploit the religious feelings and fanaticism of Moslem Arabs. Wild rumours were circulated and lying accusations in connection with the Wailing Wall controversy aroused passions as they were intended to do until this violent onslaught against the Jewish population was at last carried out.

The objects aimed at by the instigators of this disaster are, however, not religious but political. It is, in the first place, an attempt to intimidate the Jews and destroy the growing understanding which eight years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity and increasing co-operation between the common people of the country was achieving; in the second place to bring pressure to bear on the Labour Government to reverse a policy which was likely to come to fruition under its regime; and, lastly, to restore the political influence of the Husseini "dynasty" which dominates the Executive of the "Arab Congress" and the Supreme Moslem Council. The leaders of this group, discredited for corruption and personal ambition among the Arabs themselves, instigated these happenings in the hope of regaining amidst the bloodshed and confusion something of their lost prestige.

4. These facts in no way diminish the responsibility of the Palestine Administration. Their astounding lack of information and foresight, their neglect of the urgently necessary precautions, particularly after the demonstrations of August 15th and 16th in view of the growing widespread unrest, has been condemned by the public opinion of this country and that of the world. They have been charged with incompetence and with having let down the good name of British administration. Never before have British officials been accused of having allowed conditions to arise which made it possible for pogroms and massacres of the Tsarist Russian type to take place.

But the root of the evil is deeper and will not be cured by the dismissal of even the highest placed officials. The system which they attempted to administer has been proven wrong.

5. For years we have pointed out, and again as recently as in July to Lord Passfield, that a wide gulf exists between the declared intentions of the Mandatory Government in London and the attitude of the Administration of the spot, whilst many influential officials in Palestine are indifferent, or even hostile to the object and intentions of the mandate. They have been more concerned with placating the enemies of the Mandate than in encouraging the resettlement of the Jews.

There has been no clear evidence of intention to implement the Mandate by the Government of Palestine. Their attitude in industrial, fiscal and labour matters has taken little account of the special needs of Palestine as a country of immigration and settlement for the Jewish work seeking masses.

The usual reply to our criticisms and suggestions was that the actual policy guaranteed the peace and security of Palestine even whilst Syria was insurrectionary and Egypt was smouldering. The economic progress resulting from Jewish activity, the steady influx of a population with higher standards and of Jewish money - all these were ignored. At the same time, in spite of the promises given on the disbanding of the Gendarmerie, the number of Jews in the police force was reduced and a Frontier Corps was created from which Jews were practically excluded. The deplorable events of recent days have exploded the legends of security assured and of the wisdom of the attitude adopted.

6. In view of the total failure of the prevailing methods of administration, we wish to outline the immediate policy to be pursued.

The first essential is a change in the Palestine Administration, a change of spirit and heart. The execution of the mandate cannot be entrusted to officials who have no faith in its justice and practicability. Such men cannot be expected to evolve the right methods of putting the Mandate policy into effect.

7. The reorganisation of the defence forces of the country is the next necessary step. The Jews should constitute 50 per cent of the Palestine Police and an adequate proportion of the Frontier Defence Corps. The fact cannot be overlooked that the Arab Police partly deserted their posts during the outbreak, and that the Frontier Corps could not be relied upon.

8. We urge a revision in the relationship of the Government to voluntary Jewish self-defence. It has been again proved that in several instances Government protection did not arrive in time and the Jews were slaughtered outright when they could not defend themselves. In some places, they did organise for self-defence but these groups with their inadequate arms and little training were disarmed and arrested by the military authorities on the spot at the time when the Administration could not check the slaughter and provide ample protection. The most humiliating and inexplicable policy was the disbanding even of the Jewish special constables enrolled by the Government

when the crisis broke out. It is all the more distressing, as the Administration is reported to have yielded in this matter to the threats of "prominent Moslems." We must say that the effect of such measures against Jewish self-defence, apart from the loss of Jewish life which it facilitates, must be morally disastrous.

9. We associate ourselves with the claims of the Jewish National Council for compensation for loss of life and of property. This is an immediate responsibility of the Palestine Government. However, we would suggest that this is a case in which the Sheikhs and Effendis should be made to pay for the destruction in their vicinities. This bearing of the burden of their own policy will bring home to them its full effects.

10. These measures should be preceded by a restatement and reaffirmation of the British policy in Palestine. As in years past, when difficulties have arisen, the outcry is raised in a certain part of the Press in this country for "scuttling out of Palestine". This mostly "jingoistic" press does not mean in reality that England should abandon Palestine: it only means that Britain should abandon the Jews.

Whatever the motives which induced British statesmen of different parties to accept the idea and obligation of Jewish resettlement in Palestine, the fact remains that the Palestine Mandate is perhaps the only one which does embody the ideal of international service. It offers help to a persecuted and landless people. It established international protection for Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine on national lines. This is the spirit in which the Mandatory regime in Palestine has been conceived by the Labour Party both before and after the Balfour Declaration and was approved by the whole International Labour Movement.

We consider it of the greatest importance that the Labour Government should in this hour of trial and adversity for the Jewish people reiterate its determination to continue its trusteeship for the League of Nations and to discharge this international obligation to the Jewish people and Palestine. The Government should make its decision to carry out the mandate wholeheartedly both in the letter and in the spirit, and to create in Palestine such administrative, political and economic conditions which will further and secure the resettlement in Palestine of large Jewish masses and the establishment of the Jewish homeland.

11. An enquiry should be held into the circumstances leading to the present disturbances, and to probe their causes. It should not however delay the taking of such steps as are necessary to apportion the responsibility of those officials who may be guilty of acts of commission or of omission. The enquiry should be held in Palestine by an impartial body of distinguished men whose recommendations will carry great weight with world public opinion.

Such an enquiry should not deter the Government from adopting the immediate measures outlined in this memorandum.

12. We are convinced that the peaceful development of Palestine depends first and foremost on an understanding and co-operation between Jews and Arabs, and we wish to declare, undeterred by these tragic events which have marred their relations, our readiness to do all we can to bring about such an understanding. The view of a section of the British press which believes in traditional hostility between the two races is ignorant and without foundation. It is calculated to play into the hands of opponents of peaceful development. In actual fact the workers of both peoples have begun to co-operate in trade unions, and business men in chambers of commerce. Jewish hospitals do their work for Jew and Arab alike. The visitor to the country could see until these events, two peoples living side by side learning to respect one another, and to work for the welfare of their country. Feudal chiefs afraid of the growing cooperation used that last desperate method, the rousing of religious fanaticism to keep them apart.

Unfortunately the Arab working masses are not yet vocal and their pretended leaders make unwarranted claims on their behalf. Still we are convinced that even in these circumstances an understanding between the two people could be reached if those who claim to speak on behalf of the Arabs would know that the British Government stands firm by its decision to help the Jewish people to re-establish themselves in Palestine.

