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Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, 1946.

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הוועד לשחרור העם

HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

July 2, 1946

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,
Cleveland, Ohio.

My dear Dr. Silver,

I take the liberty of enclosing a copy of the plan for the establishment of a Provisional Government of Palestine. I hope you will give it your most earnest consideration.

The details of the plan are, of course, of secondary importance; the compelling fact is that here we have a concrete program which envisages a complete solution within a period of two or three years. Action on this plan depends entirely on the initiative of the people concerned and not on the non-existent good will of the British Government.

At present the Government of the United States, as the governments of most of the friendly United Nations, cannot come directly to the aid of the Hebrew people without the British Government's nullifying whatever assistance they intended to give us. The establishment of a Provisional Government of Palestine, even if it be in exile, will enable us to mobilize the aid of the civilized nations of the world directly without waiting for British concurrence which will never come, or come too late. Millions of our kin have paid with their lives because we gullibly waited for British fairness and justice. It is suicidal to wait any longer.

It is our confident belief that this plan contains a blueprint for an integral solution which should completely satisfy the aspirations of all true Herzlian Zionists, and at the same time not only eliminate the opposition but secure the co-operation of all sincere non-Zionists, Jews and non-Jews alike.

I should be most grateful if you would let us have your reactions and comments on this plan of action.

Faithfully yours,

Peter H. Bergson
Peter H. Bergson

HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION
2315 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest
Washington 8, D. C.

PLAN FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT BY THE HEBREW NATION

of a

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF PALESTINE

WHICH WILL ADMINISTER THAT COUNTRY PENDING THE CREATION

of a

CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Impelled by the certain knowledge that they can no longer wait for external elements to initiate action on their behalf, the Hebrew people are determined to begin at once constructive steps toward a permanent and integral solution of their national problem. The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, as the temporary authority of the Hebrew nation, is calling for the understanding and support of the governments of all civilized nations toward the fulfillment of this national urge for dignified survival through self-determination.

In setting forth its program of action for the immediate establishment of the Hebrew national territory of Palestine as a free and democratic republic by the creation of a Provisional Government for Palestine, under the direct and close supervision of the United Nations, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation is convinced that this action is the only basis for a peaceful, just, and durable solution of both the Palestinian problem and the so-called "Jewish problem". It is further convinced that this action will be a major contribution to conditions of peace and stability the world over.

This practical program of action is based on certain simple historical facts which have, however, been either short-sightedly ignored, or maliciously confused by forces interested in maintaining the present anomalous status quo.

In formulating its program, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation was impelled by the following facts:

- a. The indisputable existence of the Hebrew nation.

Despite the appalling casualties suffered in the war that

has not yet ended for them -- 6,000,000 dead in concentration camps, gas furnaces, heroic guerilla warfare, and on all the battlefields of Europe, Asia and Africa -- the Hebrew nation emerges reborn and yearning for life and independence. This nation, decimated as it was in an attempt at complete annihilation (an attempt encouraged by the indifference of the outside world and directly helped by the criminal attitude of Great Britain which cut off the only avenue of retreat before the ruthless enemy -- the road to Palestine), stands today cemented by bonds which no force on earth can weaken or destroy. The 3,000,000-odd Hebrews -- in Palestine or hitherto forcibly restrained from reaching their land -- constitute as cohesive and unified a nation as any of the fully recognized nations of the world.

b. Palestine is the territory of this nation. The inner problems with which this nation is confronted are no more complex than those which beset any other nation or state. The following program contains a detailed method of coping with these problems, with complete justice to all involved.

c. If ever in the past the terms "Jew" and "Hebrew" were synonymous, today they are not. The religious and cultural affiliation of the Jews is and must be understood to be quite apart and distinct from the national allegiance of the Hebrews. For in the progressive society of nations which the common men of the world are struggling to establish, religion and state are entities apart. The American Constitution implemented this principle in 1789 and it has proven to be of the greatest benefit to mankind. We Hebrews, solemnly proclaim our determination to adhere to this principle.

d. The Hebrew nation, which exists de facto, is now seeking de jure recognition. Its historic right to the undiminished territory of Palestine (both Cis-Jordan and Trans-Jordan) was formally proclaimed by the League of Nations. Today, the majority of Hebrew nationals remain outside their homeland, Palestinians-in-exile, solely because the force of British arms has prevented them from exercising their right to return to their homeland.

e. The League of Nations recognized the "historical connection" of the Hebrew people with Palestine and the "grounds for reconstituting their national home" there. It placed Palestine in Class A of the Mandates system, thus anticipating its early independence. (All other mandates in this class have already been terminated with attainment of national independence by the respective peoples.)

f. In contravention of her sacred trust to the Hebrew people and the other nations of the world, the Mandatory Power has violated the terms of the Mandate and is now ruling Palestine by usurpation of authority through force of military occupation. The non-functioning of the League of Nations and the pre-occupation of the United Nations with the war, created the opportunity for the British Government to change its role from that of trustee to that of despoiler.

g. The British Government has deliberately and artificially stimulated a supposed conflict between the Hebrew people and the non-Hebrews now residing in Palestine. It has invented an "Arab nation" whose alleged claim to Palestine it now professes an obligation to respect. The Hebrew population in Palestine, when Britain assumed the Mandate, was only 12 percent of the total population of the country. The authors of the Mandate, who were the leading statesmen of the world, including Messrs. Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau, and the League of Nations which ratified it, took this fact into account. The disposition of the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East took these statesmen several years. The total area involved was some two million miles, the vast majority of which was devoted to the creation of independent Arab States. Even the Arab delegates concurred in the decision to restore Palestine to the Hebrew

people. Therefore even the word "Arab" (or "Arabs") does not occur once in the entire Mandate. What the Mandate sought to guarantee was the individual rights of the existing non-Hebrew inhabitants of the country, and it is by our full acceptance of this principle that we shall establish Palestine as a free republic with the fullest equality for all citizens, irrespective of creed or origin.

h. With the failure of Great Britain to honor the terms of the Mandate, responsibility for carrying out these terms reverts to all those nations having original concern, namely, the signatories to the Mandate and the United States, which subscribed to these terms by separate convention. It remains the obligation of these nations to insure the fulfillment of the original purpose of the Mandate.

i. Recent events unfortunately leave no further doubt as to the actual intentions of the British Government. The involuntary frankness of Foreign Secretary Bevin must be sufficient proof of the fact that inquiry commissions, consultations, and diplomatic double-dealings with the United States were all part of a scheme to disguise the fact that Palestine is a British-occupied territory, ruthlessly subjugated by a military force. It must now be realized that the issue is a conflict between the oppressed Hebrew nation and the oppressor British Empire.

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In formulating this plan of action, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation solicits the support of all freedom-loving people, of all nations and all creeds. The ideas advanced may, at first, appear strange and opaque to many -- for this program is a challenge to the dogmas and prejudices by which the so-called "Jewish problem" has always been assessed.

Perhaps the world would better understand this program if it could understand the equality of human suffering. Humanity, which has been schooled to abhor inhumanity, accepts Hebrew suffering and humiliation as a matter of course and custom. The persistent, methodical and often official persecution of the men, women and children of this nation has developed an insensitivity to our abuse. Today, Hebrew blood fails to leave a stain on the conscience of the world. Yet the death of a Hebrew child is not different from the death of other children. A British soldier's life is precious and sacred but it is no more precious and sacred than the life of a Palestinian soldier. The Hebrew does not die more readily nor live less tenaciously because the world regards his homicide as being a lesser crime than the destruction of any other life.

Centuries of abnormal existence of the Hebrew people have had disastrous consequences both to them and to the world at large. Want of a complete solution has profited no one. At long last the forces of history have made an answer manifest to the world. This answer, as enunciated in the program of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, fulfills the need for a total solution based not upon sentiment or amorphous dreams, but upon the current political realities. It is with a deep sense of obligation to the historic magnitude of the problem that the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation presents the following plan. It is both a program and a call to action:

F I R S T -- Organization of Provisional Government

At the joint initiative of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and the Palestine National Council (Vaad Leumi) or of either one, a Hebrew Representative Assembly will convene in 1946.

Gathered in Palestine or abroad, as circumstances may dictate, the Assembly will be composed of spokesmen for the Hebrews in Palestine, leaders of the Hebrew partisans in Europe, representatives of Hebrew displaced persons and other Hebrew nationals, thus adequately reflecting the needs and will of the Hebrew nation.

The Assembly, as the ad hoc representative body of the Hebrew nation, will proclaim to the world the reestablishment of the sovereign state of Palestine -- the national territory of the Hebrew nation -- as a free democratic republic, with the fullest equality before the law of all citizens, irrespective of creed or national extraction.

Consequently, this Assembly will form and proclaim a Provisional Government of Palestine (in Palestine or in exile) which would remain the governing body of the country until a representative government of Palestine is elected on the basis of general suffrage, under United Nations supervision. These elections should take place within a period not exceeding two years from the date of the creation of the Provisional Government.

The Provisional Government will include citizens of Palestine without reference to creed or descent in order to insure to the fullest possible extent its representative character.

Upon the completion of its only function, which is the setting up and proclamation of the Provisional Government, the Assembly will disband.

S E C O N D -- United Nations Supervision

In view of the temporary nature of the Provisional Government of Palestine, it will seek the appointment, by the Secretary General, of a United Nations Supervisory Board, to advise and assist the Provisional Government in the transition from the mandatory regime to a constitutional republic. The Board should be composed of representatives of four or five nations without specific economic or political interests in Palestine, such as China, Mexico, Norway and Belgium. The nations whose representatives constitute the United Nations Supervisory Board shall not be regarded as guarantors or trustees of Palestine.

The Board will be supervisory in nature, functioning as a specialized agency of the United Nations, and will terminate immediately following the holding of the first national election, within a period not exceeding two years.

The prime purpose of the United Nations Supervisory Board will be to assist the Provisional Government in its tasks of:

a: immediately repatriating to Palestine the surviving Hebrews of Europe and the mobilizing of international resources in the accomplishment of this task;

b: calling a constitutional convention no later than 1947;

c: conducting national elections no later than 1948;

d: placing all religious shrines and holy places of the Christian, Moslem and Jewish faiths under suitable international control which would insure their extraterritorial status;

e: concluding treaties between the Provisional Government of Palestine and the British Government pertaining to withdrawal of British troops and the orderly settlement of certain legitimate British interests;

f: concluding arrangements for maintenance of U.N. bases in Palestine, if deemed necessary by the Security Council;

g: concluding treaty or treaties between the Provisional Government of Palestine and the United States to safeguard the mutual interests of both and to replace in functions and intent the American-British Convention of 1924;

h: concluding treaties with neighboring Middle Eastern States.

T H I R D -- Structure of Provisional Government

The Provisional Government will consist of the normal executive departments of government; of an Advisory National Council, and of a temporary judiciary.

The Executive Branch will have ministers heading the various regular administrative departments as well as ministers charged with specific tasks facing the government, such as repatriation, reparations and reconstruction.

The Cabinet of Ministers will select a Prime Minister who will also be temporary Head of the State.

Pending the establishment of an elected Legislature (as set forth in the preceding section on the function of the United Nations Supervisory Board), the Advisory National Council will assist the government in the formulation of its policies and will specifically concentrate on

- a: preparations for a system of democratically constituted national institutions;
- b: drafting of a proposed National Constitution for submission to the Constitutional Convention;
- c: formulation of an appropriate democratic electoral system.

The temporary judiciary will deal with those judicial matters which cannot await the creation of constitutional judicial processes.

F O U R T H -- Fundamental Democratic Basis

The Provisional Government will immediately abrogate all restrictive legislation imposed or maintained by the Mandatory and base the administration of the country on the following democratic principles:

- a: The separation of State and Church;
- b: Universal suffrage, regardless of sex, creed or descent and the guarantee of franchise to all literate citizens 18 years of age and over;
- c: Freedom of worship and equality before the law of all citizens regardless of extraction and religion;
- d: Freedom of speech and assembly;
- e: Abolition of feudal exploitation, peonage, child labor, and other archaic practices now operating to the disadvantage of the common man of Palestine;
- f: Equality of economic opportunity, enabling all citizens to share in the fullest development of the country by modern methods of technology and science.
- g: Freedom from want to be achieved by a progressive system of social welfare, social security, fair labor standards, public health service and compulsory education and wide opportunities for professional training.

F I F T H -- Immediate Tasks Awaiting Governmental Action

The Provisional Government shall devote itself in the main to the following tasks:

1. Inauguration of emergency procedure under which Palestinian passports will be issued, with a minimum of preliminary formality, to Hebrew displaced persons in Europe, North Africa and Asia upon application.
2. The speedy organization of repatriation of all such Palestinians with the full assistance of proper agencies of the United Nations, as it is the case with displaced nationals of other United Nations.
3. Organization of the armed forces of Palestine into a regular army to safeguard security and tranquility of the country.

4. Obtaining a seat on the General Assembly of the United Nations and inclusion of its representatives in all international agencies dealing with matters in which the interests of Palestine are involved, particularly the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the United Nations Committee on Refugees, and other agencies concerned with reparations and relief, in view of the responsibility of the Provisional Government toward the large number of Palestinians in need of repatriation.

5. Obtaining immediate representation on the United Nations War Crimes Commission to seek redress for the crimes committed against the Hebrew people.

6. Designation of accredited emissaries to the capitals of the world in order to obtain de facto recognition of the Provisional Government of Palestine by the individual member states of the United Nations, and to conduct the ordinary relations that exist between friendly states.

7. Establishment of a Reparations Board to endeavor to secure proper reparations due the Hebrew people under the United Nations Reparations Agreement. The Palestine Reparations Board will have claim to all properties which belonged to Hebrews in Europe now deceased and which are otherwise unclaimed by next of kin.

8. Securing of an adequate international loan to meet the needs of the mass repatriation program, and the full development of the Palestinian economy under the supervision of the United Nations Board and guaranteed by the resources of the Republic of Palestine.

9. Promulgation of a liberal land reform through the reclamation of wastelands and the opening up of all State and untilled lands to settlement; and assistance to new repatriates for settlement thereon.

10. Effective utilization of the presently untapped oil resources of Palestine and a liberal policy in granting transit, port and refining facilities to all nations interested.

11. Ensuring fullest utilization of the natural and industrial resources of the country; establishment of a system of taxation and facilities favorable to free enterprise and to development of the country's economy through establishment of special agencies such as the Jordan Valley Authority, and others.

12. Development of a Palestine merchant fleet and endeavoring to obtain the share due the Hebrew nation of the Axis merchant shipping and naval vessels pro-rated among the various Allied nations.

13. Securing reciprocal trade agreements which will serve both Palestine and the general economic development of the Middle East as part of the general pattern of economic cooperation among the United Nations.

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COMMENT

The foregoing proposals for the establishment of a Provisional Government are necessarily formulated in the most concise manner. Some enlargement and some additional relevant facts are therefore in order.

The territory which is now known as Palestine (in Hebrew Eretz Israel), comprising some 45,000 square miles, has been the national territory of the Hebrews for thousands of years of recorded history. It has been repeatedly occupied by various nations, but at no time during the past 3,000 years did it become a national homeland of any other nation. At no time in history have the Hebrews surrendered their sovereignty or given up their rights to Palestine by concluding a treaty or signing an act of surrender to any conqueror. A number of Hebrews have remained continuously in Palestine

throughout the centuries and the Hebrews in exile have ceaselessly, and often at great personal sacrifice, reaffirmed their connection with their ancient motherland. That they did not constantly constitute a majority in Palestine was not considered by the League of Nations as prejudicial to their right to resume their national existence there.

Non-Hebrews now living in Palestine have never had, and have not now, a national identity or cohesiveness. Any effort to synthesize a nation out of a religious community is a perversion of historical fact and democratic principle. That the present majority of the population of Palestine is Moslem cannot therefore in any way determine the political status of the country. In point of fact, Jews and Christians together comprise about forty-nine per cent of the population. The civilized nations have long subscribed to the principle of separation of State and Church, under which the whole question of majority and minority in Palestine becomes irrelevant. Palestine must be neither a Jewish nor a Moslem theocracy, but a political, social, and economic democracy. This is the end which our program is designed to achieve.

It should be pointed out, by the way, that the Jews would by now constitute an overwhelming majority in Palestine were it not for the policy of the Mandatory which, in violation of the Mandate, prevented their return to Palestine on the sole ground of their religious belief. On the other hand, the non-Jewish population of the country has increased on an abnormal scale in the period between the two world wars, because the modernization of Palestine by the Hebrews and the advantages resulting from it, attracted a considerable number of people from the neighboring Middle Eastern States.

But, as has been said, religious affiliation is inconsequential to the political structure of the State. Excluding the religious aspects, no one can challenge the fact that Palestine is already predominantly a Hebrew state in character. A democratic nation is determined by its elected institutions, by its culture, by its representative national life; and from whatever angle one regards Palestine, one cannot deny that at least eighty per cent of Palestine is Hebrew. Eighty per cent of all its doctors and lawyers are Hebrew; ninety per cent of all books published in Palestine are Hebrew; ninety per cent of its industry, seventy per cent of its foreign trade are Hebrew. Virtually one hundred per cent of its theatre, music, and art are Hebrew. Seventy per cent of its newspapers are Hebrew. Finally, some seventy-five per cent of the literate people of Palestine are Hebrew. (The disparity would be even greater but for the effort expended by the Hebrews in elevating the standards of Palestine's non-Hebrews. It must be taken against the background of nearly total illiteracy in the province of Trans-Jordan, where Hebrew influence was forcibly excluded by the Mandatory, and equally near-total illiteracy in the long-independent Arab State of Saudi Arabia.)

For these reasons, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation cannot accept the official formulation of the Zionists, who speak of the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. True, the Zionist leaders repeatedly stress that in their interpretation a "Jewish State" means a national and not a religious state. But one cannot avoid the overwhelmingly religious connotation of the term "Jewish," particularly in view of the fact that a great majority of the Jews in the world today are free and willing citizens of other countries and regard themselves as integral parts of other nations.

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While Jews all over the world have a common religious, cultural and historical heritage, they do not constitute a national political entity, since most of them owe their national allegiance to different nations. The American, or the French Jews, for example, are full-fledged and patriotic citizens of the United States and France, enjoying full equality of rights and duties with all their fellow citizens. Their sympathies for the plight of the Hebrew people are, naturally, very strong. They are, however, not part of the Hebrew nation, which consists only of the Hebrew people of Palestine and all Hebrews in exile who do not acknowledge allegiance to any nation but the Hebrew nation. In the interests of clarity the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation advocates the terminology which defines the term "Jew" as an adherent of a

religious faith, without political connotation, and the term "Hebrew" as a member of the Hebrew nation, without reference to religious affiliation.

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It is the opinion of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation that the placing of Palestine under a United Nations trusteeship would be extremely ill-advised. A trusteeship will not mean an immediate solution either to the problems of the displaced Hebrews of Europe or to the problem of Palestine. There is no reason why Palestine, which has the highest degree of civilization and development of all the Middle Eastern countries, should be the only one which has no self-government. A trusteeship would accentuate the possibility of dissatisfaction on the part of the Moslem residents of Palestine, whereas a permanent solution and a stable government would have the whole-hearted cooperation of all segments of the population to the exclusion of a few dozen professional agitators whose influence would easily be nullified by the government.

However, in view of the complexities that have been introduced and in order to assure world public opinion that a Provisional Government of Palestine, while being predominantly or even totally Hebrew, would insure the fullest equality of democratic rights to all its citizens, a strict form of international supervision has been proposed. This, of course, is a procedure quite distinct from trusteeship and should not hinder the recognition of Palestine's independence and its membership in the United Nations. It might be pointed out that India and the Philippines, while not yet completely sovereign, are both members of the United Nations and of the many of its affiliated bodies, thus rendering the greatest service to their peoples and speeding the process for complete independence.

The presence in Palestine of such a supervisory commission, which though advisory in its capacity, would nevertheless serve as a magnifying glass for all the activities of the Provisional Government, should suffice to satisfy all those genuinely interested in a solution of the Palestinian problem and all true friends of the common man in Palestine.

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The fact that Palestine has no representation in any of the agencies of the United Nations makes possible such scandalous happenings as: (a) the gift of three-fourths of the country by the temporary Mandatory Power to the absolute rule of a foreign emir proclaimed "king"; (b) the boycott of goods produced in Palestine and badly needed all over the Near East, imposed by intimidations of a small group of Nazi-indoctrinated and British-supported professional agitators; (c) more recently, the threats of direct military aggression by military adventurers in some neighboring countries.

We wish to maintain the most friendly relations with all neighboring countries on the basis of mutual interests, but we cannot admit foreign intervention in the affairs of our country by any other state. The argument for intervention that some of these countries have a majority of Moslem or Arabic-speaking population could be used, say, to justify the intervention of the Argentine in the affairs of any South American country, on the grounds that part of their population is Catholic and Spanish-speaking.

We propose that all boundary and other disputes between Palestine and its neighbors should be settled in a lawful and normal manner by international arbitration or an international court of justice.

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In addition to these necessarily terse comments, we call attention to the voluminous official communications and published matter of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation which over a period of two years have laid the foundation and developed the underlying principles and structure of the program here presented.

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