Chapter IV
THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Political Zionism bases itself on both ideology and expediency. The ideological orientation of Zionism involves a particular attitude of the Jews towards the Arabs. Apartheid was an ideal before the Zionists and they applied it, in full measure, against the Palestinian Arabs. The scheme of discrimination became a part of Zionist ideology because it would help in the achievement of its goal of establishing the Jewish state. The racial content of Zionist ideology was too strong to be ignored. Theodore Herzl and other leaders of political Zionism advocated for naked discriminatory treatment for the gentiles - here the Arabs. Herzl confided a plan to his Diary to "spirit the penniless population across the frontier by denying it employment". (1) The Zionists, as early as 1905, boycotted the Arabs and described Arab employment by Jews as "painful leprosy". The Arabs were treated as an inferior race just as the Jews were treated by Hitler. The Zionists were following Hitler's myth of racial superiority to its logical end and preparing schemes to exterminate Arabs or drive them out of their homes. The Zionist Hitlerite aggressiveness re-enacted Nazi brutalities in Palestine. The most significant aspect of the creation of the 'Jewish State' was that it was to be installed on the land which was already occupied by another people. The Jewish State could be formed only when indigenous people were expelled to accommodate Jewish immigrants. Such a situation was bound to give rise to perpetual conflict between two groups - the alien intruder and the victim of such intrusion.

The conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians became a prominent feature and even during the mandatory rule the two groups were always at loggerheads. Political Zionism was in alliance with British imperialism in its endeavours to colonize Palestine. The Zionists wanted the local people of Palestine to give willing approval to the idea of the Jewish state to be established in their own country. The people of Palestine saw the wickedness of the Zionists and refused to sign their own death warrant. The Zionists were not prepared for the refusal which would have meant defeat for their plan. They resorted to the use of violence against the innocent people of Palestine as the Palestinians resisted the Zionists and their push into their homeland. The Zionists were well armed and had definite plan to achieve the goal of the 'Jewish State'. They had the full support of Britain who encouraged the Jewish immigration into Palestine. The Zionists encouraged by Britain, financed by the United States of America, and armed by Eastern Europe, especially Czechoslovakia, kept up their pressure of terrorism and bloodshed on Palestinians. The Jewish National Fund was established in 1901 during the Fifth Zionist Congress. It was established to purchase land for the Jews. The Fund was devoted "to bring about the settlement of Palestine by Jews in steadily increasing number". (2)

The Jewish Fund had acquired 758,200 metric dunams by 1944 as compared with a holding of 16,379 metric dunams in 1917. (3) This

policy of land purchase meant eviction of the Arabs from Palestine. The Mayor of Nablus told the Shaw Commission in 1930: (4) "The object of Zionism is to get hold of Palestine—and the Zionist policy is to dispose of the Arabs in every possible way and to replace them with Jews".

The Arabs opposed the land transfer to the Jews and demanded the cessation of Jewish immigration. The mandatory power issued white papers restricting the exodus of the Jews into Palestine but not with much success. The Zionists gathered at Biltmore Hotel in New York in May 1942 and issued a call to the world Jewry to get back "to the Land of Israel". Ben-Gurion in the Conference declared: (5) "Immigration was the crucial problem on which there could be no compromise. No political opposition or obstruction on the part of the Arabs... will prevent Jews from getting back to the Land of Israel". The Biltmore programme was adopted and ship loads of Jewish immigrants started pouring into Palestine. Their arrival in Palestine had meant eviction and expulsion of the Arabs of Palestine. The Biltmore programme had discarded the concept of bi-nationalism. According to the programme, the Jews were the only race to live in Palestine and the Jews Commonwealth would not have room for a non-Jew. Yet Weizmann gave the Arabs of Palestine some assurances which were never kept. He said: (6) "If the Arabs

do not wish to remain in a Jewish State, every facility will be
given to them to transfer to one of the many and vast Arab count-
tries". The facilities promised by Weizmann proved a camouflage
for the Zionist terrorism and massacre. The Partition Plan of
November 29, 1947 was accepted by the Zionists as the "ultimate
minimum acceptable". The Zionist para-military organizations
carried out a fierce psychological warfare against local Arabs. The
Haganah established a communication network to make important
broadcasts to strike terror in the hearts of Palestinians and make
them leave their homes in panic. In 1948 it said: (7)

"We wish it to be known to every Arab in Jeru-
usalem - particularly in the Arab City - that we
are able to reach most of their houses and that
we shall find it an easy job to blow up any de-
sired number of houses in any one night".

The reign of terror continued unabated. The USA and other
powers viewed the situation with grave concern and wanted to find
a peaceful solution of the problem. The USA desired no violent
change in the status quo since it would be a severe blow to the US
national interest in the Middle East. The Secretary of State (8)
told the Armed Committee of the Senate on March 20, 1948:

"The grave international situation had emphasized
the compelling importance of preventing the out-
break of open warfare in Palestine. The interest
of the US in a peaceful settlement in Palestine
arises not only out of deep humanitarian consider-
ation but also out of vital elements of our national
policy".

The US coined with the idea of placing Palestine under the
Trusteeship System. The American proposal of trusteeship for

Palestine gave rise to grave apprehensions in the minds of Zionists who thought it was an attempt to undo partition and frustrate their design about the Jewish State. They stepped up their activities in Palestine, Haganah and other terrorist groups launched an undeclared war on innocent people of Palestine in an effort to confront the United Nations with a fait accompli. (9)

Ben Gurion was outlining the policy of extermination and expulsion of the Arabs when he spoke to the Mapai party in 1948. He said: (10)

"In the six, eight or ten coming months of the struggle many great changes will take place, very great in this country and not all of them to our disadvantage, and surely a great change in the composition of the population in the country".

The para military organizations were executing the plan of expelling the Arabs from those areas which were occupied during the hostilities in 1948. During the truce Israel did not abandon its policy of evicting the Arabs from their homes. With the cessation of hostilities most of the Arab population in the Jewish occupied had left their homes, land and property. Count Bernadotte summed up the causes responsible for Arab exodus: (11) "The exodus of Palestinian Arabs resulted from panic created by fighting in their communities by rumours concerning real or alleged act of terrorism or expulsion".

The policy of terror was responsible for the exodus of the Arabs. They had become panicky and abandoned their homes, lands

9. For brutal attacks and massacres, see Chapter I, pp. 69-70.
and property. Menachem Begin, the Commander of Irgun wrote that the Arabs "were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives.... The Arabs began to flee in terror even before they clashed with Jewish forces". (12)

Israel tried to put the blame for the Arab exodus on the Arab states and its leaders. The Israeli leaders held the Arab League, leading Arab newspapers, broadcasts from Arab capitals and secret Arab Radio Stations, responsible for creating panic among the Arabs by presenting to them an exaggerated picture of Zionist brutality. Gabbay accused the Palestinian leaders of having deliberately encouraged the Arab exodus. "The Arab exodus", wrote Gabbay, "however, would never have assumed such a wholesale character during April-May 1948 had it not been for the behaviour of the Arab Palestinian leaders - the Arab Higher Committee, the Municipal authorities, the local commanders, big landlords, wealthy merchants, doctors, lawyers, teachers, clergymen, etc. and to some extent the Arab Governments themselves". (13)

To say that the Arabs left their homes on their own or were asked by their own organizations to leave their homes is a blatant lie. Many objective writers have nipped this lie in the bud and asserted that the Arab exodus was "deliberate and essential part of Zionist scheme of expansion. Edgar wrote: (14)

"It was the Jewish policy to encourage the Arabs to quit their homes, and they used psychological warfare extensively in urging them to do so. Later, as the war wore on, they ejected those Arabs who clung to their villages.... The Israelis made no excuse for it as it was all part of their plan for the reconquest of their 'Promised Land', in which there was no room for large, hostile alien groups".

A British writer confronted the Israelis and asked them to show him the documentary proofs of their allegation against the Arab Governments and broadcasting houses ordering the Palestinian Arabs to evacuate their homes. "I asked to be shown", he wrote, "the proofs. I was assured they existed, and was promised them. None had been offered when I left, but I was assured again. I asked to have the material sent to me. I am still waiting". Erskine tried to check it with the records of BBC and found the charge was baseless and unfounded. "There was not a single order, or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine from any Arab radio station, inside or outside Palestine, in 1948". (15)

A prominent Jew Nathan Chofshi also ridiculed the Israeli allegation and wrote: (16) "How and in what manner we, Jews, forced the Arabs to have cities and villages... Some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Hamle, Bersheba, Acre from among numberless others".

Professor Khalidi is one of those few chosen Arab scholars who got access to some secret records of the Zionist activities. He

has published a vivid account of one of the most notorious plan called "Plan Dalat" which was undertaken by the Zionists to exterminate the Arabs living in Palestine and expel the remnants of Arab population. The capture of Haifa, Jaffa, Galilee, Tiberias and Jerusalem and complete annihilation of Arab population living in these areas was part of "Plan Dalat". (17)

The ruthless execution of plan 'D' resulted in the mass exodus of the Arabs. The "Partition Plan" had left the Jewish state with 495,000 Arabs to which another 397,000 Arabs added when Israel captured 3,496 square kilometers of Arab land during the truce and armistice. The total Arab population under Jewish control was 892,000 while the Jewish population was 655,000. The policy of expulsion and extermination was the only alternative for Israel to reduce the numerical superiority of the Arabs in order to avoid their political supremacy. The extermination and expulsion of the Arabs was a manifestation of Zionist ideology. The Zionists wanted to convert Palestine into a racial state exclusively for the Jews. Israel's chief aim was to avoid establishing a bi-national state in Palestine and make it an exclusive Jewish state; such an ideal could not be achieved if the Arabs were allowed to remain in Palestine. The only alternative was to expel the Arabs from Palestine and encourage Jewish immigration. The Zionists followed this alternative because it was expedient.


The number of the refugees in 1948, according to the estimate by Bernadotte was 330,000. The Acting Mediator's report of October 1948 put the figure as 472,000 and stated that the estimate made by the Arab States was much higher and ranged between 740,000 and 780,000.

In June 1949 the Secretary General of the United Nations presented his report before the General Assembly and his estimate of Arab refugees was 940,000.

In July 1948 the Arab League brought to the notice of the United Nations the refugee problem and asked the world body to view the problem with due urgency and undertake relief measures. Count Bernadotte, the United Nations Mediator took a special and keen interest in the refugee problem and requested the United Nations not to delay its measures of relief. He regarded the problem of the Arab refugees as inseparable from the Palestine Question. He wrote in his report: "It is, however, undeniable that no settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the right of the Arab refugee to return to home from which he has been dislodged". Count Bernadotte wanted that the refugees must be granted the right of repatriation and no political consideration should be allowed to stand in the way of its implementation.

On September 16, 1948 Bernadotte asked that Israel should be persuaded to agree to the repatriation of the Arab refugees.

"It would be an offence against the principle of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right of return to their homes... The right of innocent people, uprooted from their homes by the present terror and ravages of war to return to their homes should be affirmed and made effective".

The General Assembly was seized with the question of refugees and it was at Bernadotte's initiative that it met on December 11, 1948 and adopted a resolution. Bernadotte was assassinated in September 1948 but the General Assembly met to consider his and Ralph Bunche, the Acting Mediator's reports. On December 11, 1948 the General Assembly adopted a resolution which stated: (22)

"The General Assembly..."

"11. Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible. Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation".

The General Assembly resolution unambiguously asked for repatriation and compensation. The Conciliation Commission consisting of Turkey, France and the United States of America came into existence and was entrusted with the task of facilitating the process of repatriation of the Arab refugees. The conciliation commission failed in its efforts to secure the right of repatriation for the refugees because Israel defied all its directives and denied the Arabs their natural right to return to their own homes. Israel had also disregarded its obligations assured under the Lausanne Protocol which it

signed on May 12, 1949 and whereby Israel undertook the responsibility of receiving the Arabs back to their homes. The Protocol said:

"The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine anxious to achieve as quickly as possible the objectives of the General Assembly's resolution of December 11, 1948 regarding refugees, the respect for their rights and the preservation of their property, as well as territorial and other questions, has proposed to the Delegation of Israel and to the Delegations of the Arab States that the working documents attached thereto be taken as basis for discussion with the Commission".

The Commission tried its utmost to make Israel agree to repatriation and compensation but all its pleadings fell on deaf ears. Israel remained adamant. The Conciliation Commission admitted its failure and in its Third Progress Report on the refugee question it observed: (24)

"The Arab delegations continue to hold the view that the first step must be acceptance by the Government of Israel of the principle set forth in resolution 194 (III) of December 11, 1948, concerning the repatriation of refugees who wish to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours. The commission has not succeeded in achieving the acceptance of this principle by the Government of Israel".

Count Bernadotte also had tried before his assassination, to solve the refugee problem in keeping with the principles of justice but failed to persuade Israel to accept the refugees back in Palestine because, as he observed; (25) "The Israeli Government had a very great opportunity in connection with the Arab refugee question. It had missed that opportunity. It had shown nothing but hardness and obduracy towards these refugees".


The Israeli Government was guided by its own narrow considerations. The leaders of Israel were showing stubbornness and stating that the refugees were not Israel problem, they were the problem of the Arab State. According to Ben-Gurion, as shown in the 8th Progress Report of the Conciliation Commission, "a real solution of the major part of the refugee question lay in the resettlement of the refugees in Arab States". (26)

One Israeli writer made it very clear that with the expansionist policy of Israel it would be impossible to allow the refugees to come back to their homes. The Jewish immigrants had replaced them and occupied their homes so they could not be accepted. He wrote: (27)

"In Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Safad, Tiberias, Acre, and Ramleh, Arabs owned many modern houses. As a result of the great on-rush of Jewish immigrants during the last nine months, all houses fit for habitation have inevitably been taken over. There is not a house in the cities of Israel which is free to accommodate its pre-war owners, should they return. The same is true of the bigger and more prosperous villages".

Israel opposed the repatriation of the Arab refugees on racial grounds; it did not want to alter its exclusive Jewish character. Eban of Israel was exposing his Government's racialism and apartheid when he told the General Assembly: (28)


28. GAOX, 12th sess., November 27, 1957. (Political Committee)
"One cannot repatriate people in geography alone. To live in a modern state is to live not only within its landscape but also within its tradition and culture, its religious heritage and linguistic expression; its community values and its special impulses of patriotism and nationhood... In this sense resettlement in Israel would be not repatriation but alienation from Arab society and transference to the only state in the area in which Arab loyalties do not predominate".

Sharett of Israel had already rejected the proposal of repatriation on security grounds. He said: (29)

"The return of the Arabs to Israel would undoubtedly create an atmosphere of mutual suspicion which would conduce neither to the stability of the area nor to the contentment of the inhabitants. The repatriation of refugees was being urged as a means of creating within Israel a fifth column which would facilitate a future war of reconquest. Repatriation was impracticable and politically it would be an act of criminal folly".

Israel did not show any sign of accommodation and continued its policy of expansion and expulsion of the Arabs. During the Armistice Israel attacked and occupied many Arab areas and expelled Arab population.

The Security Council adopted a resolution on November 17, 1950, asking Israel to allow the expelled Arabs to come back to their homes but it did not listen to and comply with the decision. Israel's non-compliance with the directives of the United Nations was due to the fact that it had taken the Big Powers and their support for granted. Had the Big Powers, especially the United States of America chosen to exert a little bit of pressure on Israel it would have implemented the General Assembly resolution

Whenever the USA had exerted pressure on Israel compelling it to comply with the UN resolutions, Israel had always obliged the USA.

In May 1948 Israel received a note from the U.S. Government insisting that Israel should grant tangible concessions on the question of refugees failing which the US Government would reconsider its attitude towards Israel. The US Government's note "interpreted Israel's attitude as dangerous to peace". (30) Israel responded and immediately made an offer to the Conciliation Commission to permit the return of 100,000 refugees but the Commission considered the Israeli proposal "unsatisfactory" because "Israel reserved the right to resettle the repatriated refugees in specific locations". (31) Again, in 1953, the US Government discontinued financial assistance to Israel when it refused to obey the decision and authority of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. Israel had no other alternative but to yield to American pressure and abide by the decision of the UNTSO and stop its drainage work in the Syrian-Israeli Demilitarized zone. (32)

The United Nations, confronted with Israeli non-compliance undertook significant measures to provide relief for the Arab refugees. The conditions in which the refugees were living were of hardship and suffering. They did not have even sufficient food to eat but they were eager to return to their homes. Count Bernadotte presented a picture of refugee life at Ramallah: "Never have I seen

a more ghastly sight than which met my eyes here at Ramallah. The car was literally stormed by excited masses shouting with oriental fervour that they wanted food and wanted to return to their homes. There were plenty of fighting faces in that sea of suffering humanity". (33) In 1949, the United Nations relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) was organized for the time being to undertake relief measures. On December 8, 1949 the General Assembly adopted a resolution whereby the United Nations Relief and Works Agency was created and in 1950 it took over relief work for the Palestine refugees. The dual task assigned to UNRWA was to remove distress and promote rehabilitation. The most important thing UNRWA was struck with was the intense desire of the refugees to return to their homes. In its first annual report (34) to the General Assembly, UNRWA took note of their desire:

"The desire to go back to their homes is general among all classes; it is proclaimed orally at all meetings and organized demonstrations, and, in writing, in all letters addressed to the Agency and all complaints handed into the area officers. Many refugees are ceasing to believe in a possible return, yet this does not prevent them from insisting on it, since they feel that to agree to consider any other solution would be to show their weakness and to relinquish their fundamental right, acknowledged even by the General Assembly. They are, moreover, sceptical of the promised payment of compensation. This sense of injustice, frustration and disappointment has made the refugees irritable and unstable".

The Director of the Agency, Howard Kennedy in his foreword wrote: (35)

33. Bernadotte, Count, op. cit., p. 249.
34. UNRWA Annual Report 1951, p. 15. UN Doc. A/1905.
35. Ibid.
"The war in Palestine added to an area that formerly supported five million persons the crushing burden of a million Arab refugees. Over 800,000 were virtually destitute. There is a little margin between subsistence and starvation. Since the end of 1948, needy refugees, who have lost both their homes and livelihood as a result of hostilities in Palestine, have existed principally on relief by the United Nations, supplemented by private contributions from all over the world. Today, after three years, the refugees still wait to know what is to become of them".

UNRWA enjoyed close cooperation of the United Nations Specialized Agencies in carrying out its task of providing relief to the refugees. The Arab countries Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Republic have also shown respect and generosity in assisting UNRWA.

These Arab States have spent more than $100,000,000 mostly for education, health services, housing and road improvement. "The people of these countries", wrote Davis, former Commissioner of UNRWA, "have borne with courage the economic, social and other sacrifices and hardships resulting from the presence of large numbers of refugees within their borders. Contrary to much western thinking, the Arab host government have also helped qualified young refugees to obtain employment, both within the host countries and elsewhere".(36)

UNRWA did remarkably well in alleviating the sufferings of unfortunate people who were forcibly expelled by political conspirators. The refugees were always keen to get back to their homes, their sufferings had intensified their attachment to their original home. The Director General of UNRWA wrote: (37) "The great mass of the refugees continued to believe that a grave injustice has been

36. Davis, John, op. cit., p. 66.
37. UN Doc. A/3686.
done to them and to express a desire to return to their homeland". In another report the Director reaffirmed the strong desire of the refugees for repatriation. He informed the General Assembly: "The refugees in general strongly maintain their insistence on the idea and aspiration of returning to their homes. The refugees have also expressed the wish that they should be enabled to receive redress for the loss they have suffered without prejudicing their claims to repatriation". The Commissioner General of UNRWA also informed the General Assembly "of their feeling embitterment at their long exile and at the failure of international community, year after year, to implement the resolutions so often reaffirmed." (38)

In June 1951, John Blandford Jr. became the director of UNRWA. He submitted the famous 'Blandford Plan' to the General Assembly in 1952. According to the report of the Director, his plan was an alternative project for the resettlement of the refugees in the Arab countries. The Blandford proposals were phrased in such a manner that the "refugees interests in repatriation and compensation must not be prejudiced". (39) When the Blandford plan was taken up in the Ad Hoc Political Committee, the US representative supported it: (40)

"The experience thus gained had made it clear that all refugees could not be resettled in the areas in which they were currently located and that some of them would have to be moved to areas of greater economic opportunities. The plan is undoubtedly one of the most constructive enterprises ever sponsored by the United Nations".

38. UN Doc. A/5513.
The representative of the United Kingdom was of the opinion that repatriation was inimical to the interest of the refugees. He said: (41)

"The UK Government did not call in question the right of the refugees to return to their homes. What it did question was whether it was in the interests of the refugees themselves that they should exercise that right... The UK delegation felt that the bulk of the refugees would find a happier and more stable home, at any rate in the immediate future, amongst their Arab brethren".

The Arab States saw the snags clearly and they rightly opposed the "Blandford Proposal" which was aimed at denying the refugees their right of repatriation. The Saudi Arabian delegate said: (42)

"It was a mistake to believe that the problem of the Arab refugees of Palestine could be solved by resettling the refugees in the neighbouring countries. That was not a practicable solution because it failed to take account of the needs and feelings of the refugees or of the desires of their Arab and Muslim kinsmen... It was not a realistic solution because it failed to recognize the inherent qualities of the Arabs, who armed by the justice of their cause, had never bowed before their aggressors".

The Egyptian representative also advocated a solution which would not exclude repatriation. He said that the Blandford Plan "should not prejudice the right of the refugees to repatriation and compensation, my government considered them a practical means of relieving the plight of the refugees pending a final solution". (43)

The draft resolution was finally revised and a new provision was added which read "without prejudice to repatriation or compensa-

41. The Times, January 11, 1952.
42. GAOF, 6th sess., Ad Hoc Political Committee, 43rd Meeting.
43. Ibid., 44th Mtg., January 18, 1952, p. 245.
tion". It was adopted by the General Assembly by 47 votes to none and 7 abstentions. (44)

The resolution "endorsed, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of Resolution 194 (111) of 11th December 1948 or to the provisions of paragraph 4 of Resolution 393(4) of 2nd December 1950 relative to reintegration either by repatriation or resettlement, the programme recommended by UNRWA, which envisaged the expenditure of $50 million for relief and $200 million for reintegration over and above local contributions". (45)

The plan once adopted got support from the Arab States and the chief factor causing this change of attitude was the inclusion of the provision that it would not prejudice the right of repatriation or compensation.

The plan failed to alleviate the miserable conditions of the refugees and reasons for the failure were clearly spelled out in UNRWA report: (46) "The time has been short and the pace has been slow. Deep misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the new programme have had to be faced".

The United Nations and its specialized agencies were adopting measure to provide the refugees better living, better education and better housing. The real problem, however, remained, namely, repatriation or compensation. The Government of Israel, despite the

45. GAOR, Resolution No. 513, January 26, 1952.
best efforts and persuasion of the United Nations remained unconcerned
and adamant. The United Nations passed a resolution every year
calling for the return of the refugees or compensation to them, but
it always remained unheeded.

The Director of UNRWA confirmed Israel's non-compliance with
the directives of the United Nations. He wrote: (47) "The Govern-
ment of Israel has taken no affirmative action in the matter of re-
patriation and compensation." Israel had flouted its obligations
under the United Nations Charter. The Partition Resolution of November
29, 1947 clearly stated that the rights of the non-Jewish people living
in the Jewish State would not be violated. (48)

Israel flagrantly violated the provisions of the Partition
Resolution of November 29, 1947. Israel adopted not only worst
possible discriminatory attitude toward the Arabs living inside its
borders but also confiscated and appropriated Arab property. All the
property movable and immovable was seized by Israel in 1948. Israel
refused to cooperate with the United Nations Palestine Conciliation
Commission when it asked for relevant details about the seized Arab
property. Israel was repeatedly asked by the Commission to provide
information about the administration of Arab property but they kept
it a secret. "Much information concerning the use, amounts and dis-
tribution of abandoned Arab property and the government's policy
toward it was secret. Even the United Nations in spite of frequent
requests, was unable to obtain adequate information about Israel's
disposition of Arab property". (49)

47. UN Doc. A/3686.
48. See Chapter 1, pp. 59-60.
49. Peretz, Don, Israel and the Palestine Arabs. Washington,
The confiscation of immovable property of the Palestinians was done in a systematic manner. In 1948 the Abandoned Areas Ordinance was passed under which the Government of Israel was empowered to declare any occupied area as "abandoned" and confiscate it. Then came the Absentee Property Regulations 1948. Under this law the scope of seizure was extended and all property owned by the Arabs who had left homes was placed under an Israeli custodian. In 1950 another law the "Absentee Property Law" was enacted under which the Israeli custodian had the authority to sell vested property to a development authority established by Knesset. On July 31, 1950, the Development Authority came into existence to buy, rent or lease property.

The United Nations was supposed to look after the interest of the refugees but it failed to secure for the Palestinian refugees their natural right to go back to their homes. The Conciliation Commission for Palestine was established to try to bring conciliation between Israel and the Palestinians, but its efforts also failed to yield fruit because Israel was not willing to concede basic human rights to the original inhabitants of Palestine now living as refugees. In its Third Report the Commission listed the non-compliance of Israel as an obstacle in achieving a possible solution. It had devised measures to protect the property and interest of Arab refugees but Israel refused to obey the directives of the Commission. It again requested the Government of Israel to abrogate the notorious Absentee Property Law. "The Israeli delegation informed the Committee that its Government was unable to abrogate the Absentee Act or to suspend measures of requisition of Arab property". (50) The Conciliation Commission

for Palestine got a new directive from the General Assembly asking it to carry on negotiations regarding measures for the protection of the rights, property and interests of the refugees. The Conciliation Commission tried afresh but again failed to success for itself and justice for the Palestinian refugees. The Arab States wanted to safeguard the rights of their Palestinian brothers, and when the United Nations and its allied bodies could not do much to help them, they requested for the appointment of an independent custodian to look after the administration of Arab property. In 1961, a draft resolution was introduced but it was rejected. In 1964 again a draft resolution was introduced. The representative of Afghanistan while introducing the resolution, said: (51) "He could not see any reason why Moslem or Christian Arabs should not continue their ownership of property... To refuse them that right would be an act of racial and religious discrimination condemned by the whole world."

The representative of Israel opposed it on the ground that the Arabs had rejected the Partition Plan hence could not claim any right guaranteed under it. To him, such a step like appointing an independent custodian to look after the management of Arab property would amount to interference in Israeli internal affairs. (52) Israel had always tried to invoke the doctrine of "domestic jurisdiction" or "sovereignty" in its defiance of the United Nations resolutions. The

51. UN Doc. A/SPC/Sr. 456.
52. Ibid.
Israeli delegate pleaded before the Special Political Committee: (53) "The United Nations cannot be asked to dictate to a sovereign state who should be permitted to enter its territory. That is a matter for the Government of that state to decide in accordance with its laws and with security, economic and demographic factors". This emphatic assertion on the doctrine of "domestic jurisdiction" constituted a violent breach of the undertaking given to the United Nations by Israel at the time of its admission to the UN. Abba Eban very clearly stated: (54) "The Government of Israel will cooperate with the Assembly in seeking a solution to those problems... I do not think that Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, which relates to domestic jurisdiction could possibly affect" any problem. "My own feeling is that it would be a mistake for any of the Governments concerned to take refuge, with regard to the refugee problem, in their legal right to exclude people from their territories". Such assurances were offered to the world body not because Israel genuinely wanted to observe them but because it was expedient to get into the world forum. It flouted the General Assembly resolutions of November 29, 1947 and December 11, 1948 and invoked Article 2, paragraph 7, contrary to its assurances given to the UN. The resolution of December 11, 1948 spelled the principles of repatriation, the restitution of property of the refugees and compensation for loss or damage.

Israel's refusal to grant the right of repatriation to the refugees is the greatest hypocrisy committed by a state in modern time. The Jews on the one hand claimed statehood on the basis of their right

to return to the land of their ancestors but they on the other hand
denied the Palestinian refugees their natural right to return to
their original homes. Enlightened Jews have also pleaded the refu-
gees' cause and demanded for them the right of repatriation. The
Ihud Association of Israel said: (55) "In the end we must come out
publicly with the truth, that we have no moral right whatever to
oppose the return of the Arab refugees to their land. Political con-
quest cannot abolish private property."

No amount of condemnation and disapproval of Israeli deeds and
attitude could restrain it from adopting a policy of expropriation
and expulsion of the Arabs adding to the numbers of refugees. In the
aftermath of the war of 1967 and subsequent occupation by Israel of
the West Bank of Jordan, the Sinai, the Gaza and the Golan Heights
a new critical refugee problem emerged. "By December 1967, an esti-
mated 245,000 persons had fled from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
into the area of Jordan East of the river, 116,000 had left the
Israeli occupied area of Syria, and some 61,000 persons, including
11,000 from Gaza and 50,000 from the Sinai Peninsula had taken refuge
in Egypt. Of this total, about 145,000 were UNRWA supported refugees
who had been uprooted for a second time." (56)

During the June war of 1967 Israel personified the Nazi Ghost
of destruction of civil life and property. The people of Jerusalem
and other occupied areas were reminded of the old days of naked bar-
barism and wanton destruction. To give few examples of Israeli rampage

55. Quoted in Menuhin, Moshe, op. cit. p. 143.
56. Davis John, op. cit., p. 69.
one would cite Jerusalem. After the June 1967 war 135 houses in the
Magharibah Quarter, the area near the Wailing Wall were completely
dynamited and bulldozed by the Israeli authorities. Ambassador
Thalmann was appointed by the UN Secretary General to observe the situ-
ation in Jerusalem and report to him. Thalmann's observations veri-
fied the above report and this incorporated by the Secretary General
in his report wherein he informed the General Assembly that this
illegal action of Israel had rendered 650 Arabs homeless. (57)

The National Council of the Churches of Christ of the United
States sent a study team to Jerusalem to probe into the cases of destruc-
tion and brutality by Israel. In its report the study team said:
"The villages of Yalu, Beit Nuba and Emmas were occupied by Israeli
military forces on June 9, 1967. Within the next five weeks, all
homes and other buildings were systematically destroyed except for a
church and two Muslim shrines in Emmas which were later demolished.
The people of the villages, numbering over 4,000 have been scattered".
The Israeli officials stated clearly that "there is no plan to rebuild
the three villages or to return the inhabitants to their land". (58)
The Israeli policy of wanton destruction was a well calculated policy
intended to be used for its own purposes. Brigadier Shlomo Gazit,
the head of the Israeli Military Government for the occupied terri-
tories explained his Government's policy in an interview given to Kok
Israel. He said: (59) "The act of blowing up houses is essentially...

57. Report of the Secretary General under General Assembly Resolu-
tion 2254 (ES-V) A/6793, S/8146, para 113 (1967).

of the Deputation to the Middle East. 1968.

a deterrent action, a punishment which is supposed to deter others".

The Israeli policy of destroying Arab property was a gross violation of Article 53 of the Geneva Civilian Convention of 1949 which prohibited "any destruction by the occupying power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the state, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations". (60)

During the June war Israel followed the policy of mass eviction of the Arabs and individual deportation of Arab leaders in Gaza, West Bank of Jordan and Golan Heights. Between June 5, 1967 and May 30, 1968, a total of 399,248 Arabs from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were evicted to the East Bank. (61)

One Israeli newspaper also reported on June 13, 1967 that Israeli Major General Yosef Said had said that the "Israeli forces are endeavouring to persuade the Arab inhabitants... or to oblige them to cross the Suez Canal... and that many of them are afraid to leave their homes". (62)

On June 30, 1968, the total number of refugees registered with the UNRWA was 1,364,298. If 30 per cent refugees not registered with UNRWA are also added figure would amount to 1,800,000. Israel does not accept the children born to the refugees in relief camps on the ground that they were born outside Palestine. Since 1948, an average of about 30,000 children have grown to maturity every year. (63) It means that in two decades a total of over 500,000 young refugees

63. UN Doc. A/7213, p. 18.
64. Davis John, op. cit., p. 63.
have reached maturity. This logic of not accepting first generation of the refugees as Palestinians is fallacious. If the Arabs have forfeited all their rights to their original homeland because they are born in exile outside Palestine with what logic can Zionists claim Palestine as their homeland after the expiry of two thousand years.

The United Nations again moved and passed resolutions containing pious words promising better conditions for the refugees and asking Israel to allow the refugees to go back to their homes.

The Security Council on June 14, 1967 adopted a resolution which said: (65)

"The Security Council,

Calls upon the Government of Israel to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations have taken place and to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who have fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities".

Israel did not comply with this directive also and UNRWA in its September 1967 report to the General Assembly said: (66)

"After nineteen years the refugees have still had neither an opportunity of returning to their homes nor compensation for their property. Since the two issues of repatriation and compensation are linked together as alternatives on the resolution, the continuing deadlock over repatriation has had the result of denying the refugees any benefit from the property they left behind in 1948. It would hardly seem that this can have been the intention of the Assembly in adopting its resolution nineteen years ago. Suggestions have been made from time to time for measures to enable the refugees to receive compensation, irrespective of whether they would have opportunity of returning to their homes and without prejudice to this or any other political claims that may have; but these suggestions have not been pursued".

The General Assembly also adopted a resolution on July 4, 1967 confirming the Security Council resolution of June 14, 1967 and

calling on Israel to allow the refugees to return home. Israel continued to hinder the implementation of these resolutions and did not allow the refugees to go back to their homes. Almost 85% of those who had fled to the East Bank applied for return in keeping with the General Assembly resolution. Israel did not allow all of them; a very small fraction of applicants about 15,000 were admitted by Israel. Israel in the meantime had intensified its pressure on occupied areas which resulted in a mini-exodus exceeding the total number of refugees Israel had taken back. The UN Secretary General confirmed this when he said: (67)

"Since June 1967, further violent incidents, especially in the Jordan-Israel sector, have created a new displacement of refugees and other persons in Jordan, many of whom, having fled from the valleys, will be facing an even harder winter this year than they did last year, for they will be in tented camps on the hills, where climatic conditions are severe".

Israel has repeatedly been asked by the United Nations to allow the refugees to go back to their homes but to no avail. Israel has relentlessly gone ahead with its policy of unlimited Jewish immigration with a view to strengthen its military potential and Jewish character. It is believed that "the greater the population of Israel, the greater will be army. A million soldiers will safeguard the state of Israel against any Arab attack. No Arab country will dare to attack Israel if her army will be a million strong". (68) The Israeli policy of mass Jewish immigration constitutes the gravest


threat to the Arabs and it also means their permanent displacement. Israel's policy of expansion demands permanent displacement of the Arabs of the occupied area. "Israel's desire for land", wrote Davis, "and for minimising the Arab population on that land, is also reflected in its policy of land seizure and occupation following the fighting of June 1967". (69)

Levi Eshkol confirmed the Davis thesis when he announced "a comprehensive master plan" to develop East Jerusalem occupied in 1967. The Master Plan "will include about 1,000 to 1,500 housing units". (70)

The refugee problem constitutes one of the most crucial and explosive issues in Arab-Zionist confrontation. The people who have been uprooted from their original homes, were and are still living on international charity. "For twenty years", as the Secretary General of the United Nations has observed, (71) "the Palestine refugees - well over one million of them - have had no homeland, no future and even a detectable glimmer of hope on their horizon". The Arab refugees seem to have been condemned by Israel to permanent and perpetual homelessness. Lord Caradon had a little insight into the heart of the refugees when he said: (72) "There is no more terrible sentence than the sentence of leaving home and land to set out on an exile as harsh as it is apparently hopeless".

69. Davis John, op. cit., p. 70.
71. The Secretary General Statement, op. cit., p. 59.
Bertrand Russell, the world renowned philosopher, issued a message before his death where he condemned Israel for its aggressive postures against the Arabs. About the refugees he wrote: (73)

"Many of the refugees are now well into the third decade of their precarious existence in temporary settlements. The tragedy of the people of Palestine is that their country was given by a foreign power to another people for the creation of a new state. The result was that many hundreds of thousands of innocent people were made permanently homeless. With every new conflict their numbers have increased. How much longer is the world willing to endure this spectacle of wanton cruelty? It is abundantly clear that the refugees have every right to the homeland from which they were driven, and the denial of this right is at the heart of the continuing conflict. A permanent just settlement of the refugees in their homeland is an essential ingredient of any genuine settlement in the Middle East".

Israel has always ignored world public opinion and fabricated excuses for her unwillingness to solve the refugee problem along the lines suggested by the United Nations. It has tried to link up the solution of the refugee problem with political settlement with the Arab States.

The Israeli stand is untenable and cannot be accepted for two obvious reasons. Firstly, there exists no connection between the solution of the refugee problem and political settlement with the Arab States as the former is a human problem and Israel explicitly for its satisfactory solution under the Laussane Protocol. Secondly, the repatriation of the refugees is an obligation which Israel owes and should owe not to the Arab States but to the Palestinian Arabs whom it has deprived of their homes and property. To hope for peace in the absence of redress and rectification for the wrongs done to

73. International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Middle East Crisis, Documents, Cairo, February 2-5, 1970, p. 17.
innocent people amounts to wishing for a thing without having a genuine belief in it.

The point was emphasized by General de Gaulle in his letter to Ben Gurion on December 30, 1967 in which he accused Israel for blocking the way of peace in West Asia through its bellicose attitude. He advised him to persuade his people (74) "to see the path of reason and peace and to come to a settlement with their neighbours by providing a solution to the touchiest and most humane problem of West Asia - the Palestinian refugees."

The representative of Ceylon expressed his Government's stand on the refugee problem and he said that the obligation of Israel to allow the refugees repatriation or compensation had no moral connexion with a peace settlement." (75)

The Zambian delegate told the world body that the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees was an essential ingredient to any peace settlement in the Middle East. He said (76): "No peace was possible in the Middle East unless the Council ensured the restoration of the rights of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine."

Israel's efforts at linking peace settlement with the solution of the refugee problem are a part of her imperialist design. Whenever Israel has expanded into Arab lands and forcibly evicted Arab population of occupied areas, it has emphasized the need to have peace with the Arab States. According to Bertrand Russell (77) "For

74. AFP Dispatch, January 19, 1968.
76. Ibid., vol. VI, No. 5, May 1969, p. 4.
over twenty years Israel has expanded by force of arms. After every stage in this expansion Israel has appealed to reason and has suggested negotiations. This is the traditional role of the imperial power, because it wishes to consolidate with the least difficulty what it has taken already by violence. **Every new conquest becomes the new basis of the proposed negotiation from strength which ignores injustice of the previous aggression**.

The Israeli objective has always been to secure Arab recognition for its territorial gains. Until 1956 Israel sought Arab recognition of the Armistice Agreements as its borders. After occupying Sinai and Gaza the demands were stepped up. After the June war, Israel once again tried to obtain Arab acceptance of a peace settlement making it a condition for the solution of the refugee problem.

The Israeli pretence of linking the refugee problem with the peace settlement has now been abandoned for considerations of expediency. It is now openly said that the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees is impossible. Golda Meir declared in the Knesset: (78)

> Anyone who speaks in favour of bringing the Arab refugees back must also say how he expects to take responsibility for it, if he is interested in the State of Israel. Not everyone who talks in terms of bringing them back cares about how Israel can continue to exist with hundreds of thousands of Nasser's emissaries in our midst. It is better that things are stated clearly and plainly: we shall not let this happen.

This new line of Israeli approach was reaffirmed by Ben-Gurion who on October 11, 1961, rejected the proposal mooted in the United Nations to give the refugees a choice of repatriation or resettlement. (79)

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79. Ibid.
This position was further reaffirmed in the United Nations by the Israeli delegate, who said: (80)

"The solution to the problem lay not in Israel but in the Arab world.... Although it was natural for refugees to wish to return to their former homeland, that wish was irrational for in 1948 Palestine had ceased to exist as a territorial entity on the map".

The role of the United Nations and its two main political organs i.e. the General Assembly and the Security Council lacked effectiveness if not sincerity.

The life of the Arabs living in Israel is extremely suffocating because they are treated as fifth columnists. The Arab minority has been placed in a class 'B' category and their activities have been severely restricted. The Arabs are discriminated against in matters of jobs, education, health facilities and they are forbidden to form their own political parties. "The continuation of military government", says Don Paretz, "in many Arab areas hampers the free and healthy growth of an indigenous Arab political movement". (81)

In the field of education there is a wide disproportion between the Arabs and the Jews living in the Jewish state. A total of 369,247 Jewish students attended public schools while the number of Arabs was only 25,830. Arab students thus constituted 6.5% of the total student population, while the Arab residents of the state were over 11% of its total population. The statistics furnished by the Government of Israel to the United Nations further revealed that, of the total number of Jewish students, 4.6% attended secondary schools

while only 3% of the Arab students had access to secondary education; 4,500 Jewish students attended Universities while among the Arabs there were only 73 students who could reach the universities. (82)

James Warbug writing about the Arabs living in Israel has observed: (83)

"Nothing could be more tragic than to witness the creation of a Jewish state in which the non-Jewish minorities are treated as second class citizens — in which neither a Jew's Christian wife nor their children can be buried in the same cemetery as their father. It is a state based in part upon medieaval theocratic bigotry and in part upon the Nazi - exploited myth of the existence of a Jewish race".

Sabri Jiryis, a Christian Palestinian Arab lawyer and technically an Israeli citizen wrote a book on Arab minority which was first published in Hebrew in Haifa in 1966 and later translated into English in 1968. Detailing the life of the Arabs in Israel, he says: "Every single initiative in the field of social activity of all kinds and in all classes of Arab society is closely watched by the Military Governors or the defence services". Discussing the conditions of the Arab youth, Sabri wrote: "With daily close contacts with neglect and repression from the authorities, many young men have grown desperate and turn to drastic solutions, such as leaving the country". (84)

Israel has denied the Arabs not only political and social freedom but also religious liberty. The great majority of Islamic Waqf possessions have been confiscated by the Custodian of Absentees' Property. The

83. The Jewish Newsletter, November 30, 1959.
restrictions on religious activities of Muslims emanates from the Zionist contempt for Islam. Dr Azreili, Chief Editor of Maariv wrote in 1965: (85) "Islam is the enemy of all fruitful thought, all genuine initiative and all productive ideas. It represents darkness, reaction and imprisonment for five hundred million human beings".

Israel's attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs was a direct violation of the specific guarantees and fundamental human rights which the United Nations had extended to the Palestinian Arabs under the Partition Plan. The United Nations have, no doubt, uttered noble words and passed many resolutions affirming and reaffirming them in each subsequent year. What is the value of such resolutions if they cannot be implemented? The sufferers, the victims of injustice, do not require mere sympathy or verbal assurances, they require effective, and if needed, coercive measures to help them out of the quagmire of suffering and oppression. As John Davis rightly remarked: (86) "In the end, one must even be prepared to impose corrective measures on Israel against her will".

The Palestinian Arabs had all along hoped to get justice through the United Nations but they realized that they were hoping too much from the world body controlled by Big Powers which had a vested interest in the existence of Israel. They therefore resolved to carry out their struggle themselves and seek the restoration of justice denied to them into which they find themselves for no fault of theirs. Shukairy, Chairman of the Executive Committee for Palestine Liberation told (87) the world organization, "the Palestine problem exists in the

85. Quoted in Sabri Jiryis, op. cit., p. 144.
86. Davis, John, op. cit., p. 107.
United Nations and outside the United Nations and will continue to exist in the United Nations and outside the United Nations until the people of Palestine are repatriated to their homes and are repatriated to their homeland.

In 1963 the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization was a step in the direction of institutionalising the aspiration of Palestinian Arabs to return home. A spokesman of the Palestine Arabs told the Special Political Committee: (88) "After seventeen years of patient waiting" the Palestinian Arabs "had lost all faith in the United Nations but the establishment of the organization had reawakened their hopes and afforded them an opportunity to renew the struggle for their homeland". In 1963, Ahmad Shukairy again told the United Nations of its failures. He said: (89)

"For the last fifteen years, the United Nations has been reiterating its position in support of repatriation, but not single refugee repatriated. We cannot wait and sit indefinitely. There is a limit to our patience, and the self-restraint of any nation - any nation - is not without bounds and not without limits. When human patience is exhausted, man is bound to succumb to the counsel of desperation. Palestine could be the scene of a liberation movement and no one should be caught by surprise, for Palestine is our homeland and repatriation is our right - our inherent right".

The Palestinian refugee problem is an imperialist problem. It is a by-product of Zionist alliance with imperialism. There is qualitative difference between the Palestinian refugees and the refugees in other parts of the world. The problem of refugees in India and Pakistan, Korea, and other places should not and cannot be put on par with the Palestine tragedy and the refugee exodus. In India and

89. UN Doc. A/SPC/PV. 392.
Pakistan it was the result of the division which was mutually and voluntarily accepted but in Palestine it was something imposed on the native people by an alien power. The indigenous people were forcibly expelled from their homeland and dispossessed of their property. Ahmad Shukairy succeeded in drawing a dividing line between the Palestinian refugees and refugees in other parts of the world. He said: (90)

"In Asia and Africa, imperialism was a foreign domination, it was an alien exploitation. But the peoples, the native peoples, remained in their homes, remained on their farms, remained on their land. No doubt all sorts of hardships acts of repression and displacement were inflicted upon our brethren in Asia and in Africa, but here the native people in Palestine were uprooted, dispossessed and thrown out of their country by aliens, strangers, just like the clans who settled in Asia and in Africa. That is what makes the problem of the Palestine refugee of a unique character, more grievous than all the colonial issues that confronted the United Nations, because the Palestine problem has been beclouded by the highly organized and highly financed Zionist propaganda."

The Palestine refugee problem is an inseparable part of the Palestine Question and its solution can be sought only within the general framework of the Palestine Question, on the basis of the right of the indigenous people of Palestine to self-determination. Peace in West Asia depends on the solution of the refugee problem and would be tenable only when it is based upon the principle of justice - the right of repatriation for the Palestinian refugees. The United Nations has an important role to play in the solution of the refugee problem. The world body has passed many resolutions reaffirming them every year but could not compel Israel to comply with them. The Secretary General of the United Nations said: (91) "All

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90. Ibid.
91. The Secretary General's Statement, op. cit.
these twenty years the General Assembly has not found it possible to take any significant step towards a real solution of this great and tragic human problem. This fact reflects upon us all and certainly upon the United Nations. I believe, however, that the tragedy of the Palestine refugees, who three times in twenty years have known at first hand the cruel blast of war, demands that the United Nations should live up generously to its humanitarian duty towards them."

The activities of UNRWA were, no doubt, helpful in providing relief measures for the refugees but it had not been able to bring the refugees any closer to a basic solution of their problem. They must cease to be refugees and their homeland must be restored to them. The Palestine refugees are a determined and conscientious people who want to live and will not shrink from any sacrifice to safeguard their legitimate rights. The Palestine refugees are a proud and brave people who are prepared to shoulder the grave challenges without foregoing their cherished values - liberation, freedom and justice.

In 1968, The Times (London) brought out a poignant advertisement which read: "Wanted, another Arthur Balfour to provide a national home for one and a half million Arab refugees". (92) The Palestinian refugees are living in worst possible conditions but their national consciousness is being strengthened in exile. Norman Bentwich sounded a warning to Israel when he wrote: (93)

"Jews learn from their own history how national consciousness is strengthened in defeat and exile. It was in the first captivity, when they wept by the waters of Babylon, that Judaism took permanent form, and became a way of life of a people in exile. The Arab exiles of our time weep by the waters of Jordan. Israel may produce a Cyrus to bring back a remnant".


93. Ibid.