

Not a Palestinian-Arab – Zionist Conflict:
Deconstructing Canadian Support for the Partition of Palestine

By
Josie Gray

Supervised by
Dr. Penny Bryden

A graduating Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements, in the Honours
Programme.

For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

In the Department of History.

The University of Victoria

April 4, 2017

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Background to the Conflict.....	2
Establishing UNSCOP: April to May.....	7
UNSCOP: June to August.....	10
Meeting of the UN General Assembly: September to November	21
Meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine.....	24
The Sub Committees and Adoption of Partition.....	30
Conclusion	34
Bibliography	39
Secondary Sources	39
Primary Sources	40
Appendix A.....	41
The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917	41
Recommendations Approved Unanimously by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine	41

Introduction

In February 1947, Britain handed Mandate Palestine over to the United Nations (UN). Over the course of the year, the international community researched, debated, and proposed solutions to the conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Zionists over the land of Palestine. In many cases, the presentation of conflicting narratives and the manipulation of language shifted the way the international community understood the conflict, which undermined commitments to establishing a fair and equitable solution. Instead, the prioritization of international objectives, the use of racialized arguments by Zionist representatives, and the uncompromising stance taken by the Palestinian-Arab leadership led to an erasure of Arab arguments and Palestinian-Arab perspectives in favour of Zionist ones.

This was especially true of Canada's approach to the conflict, and due to the significant role Canada played at the United Nations during these months, it warrants a focused study. Canadian representatives participated in each step of the UN's approach to the Palestine problem and became advocates for the partition plan that was later adopted by the UN General Assembly. In the end, the actions of Canadian representatives during these months were defined by three things:

1. Canadian representatives wanted to play a meaningful role in the UN and felt personally invested in its success.
2. Canadian representatives were committed to the creation of a Jewish state of some sort in the land of Mandate Palestine.
3. Canadian representatives had little-to-no sympathy for (or awareness of) the Palestinian-Arab point of view.

For the most part, my analysis focuses on the roles of two individuals: Ivan Rand, Canadian Supreme Court Justice, and Lester Pearson, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs. Ivan Rand was appointed by the Canadian government to represent Canada on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which was tasked with researching the conflict over the summer months and presenting its findings to the UN General Assembly in September. Lester Pearson was a member of the Canadian delegation both at Lake Success in May for the Special Session of the General Assembly, and again in September for the official session of the General Assembly. In October, he was selected to head one of the sub committees at the UN that was determining a solution for Palestine.

These two people, although not the only Canadian representatives involved in this process, played the most significant roles and in the end, the experiences and priorities of both Rand and Pearson shifted the focus away coming up with a realistic and fair solution to a conflict between two peoples. Although labeled a Palestinian-Jewish conflict, when seen from a Canadian perspective these months resembled almost anything but.

Background to the Conflict

In his speech to the United Nations' Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine in October 1947, Mahmoud Bey Fawzi, Egypt's representative to the United Nations, said:

It may seem as if we are at the beginning of the end of the problem of Palestine. Let us hope that this is so. Let us hope that it is not, instead, only the end of the beginning, and that we shall not be thrown into the abyss of a still longer, a still uglier nightmare than one which we have seen.¹

¹ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, "UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings.

In that moment, Fawzi could not have known what would become of Palestine and the Palestinian-Arab people over the next few years, but he was familiar with the previous thirty years of conflict between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs in Mandate Palestine.

Zionism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in response to growing “secular nationalism and anti-Jewish prejudice” in Europe.² At the time, Zionism represented a wish for the establishment of an independent Jewish state. While there were some religious Zionists, this movement was predominately secular and political in nature.³ Although the first Zionist immigrants began settling in Ottoman Palestine in 1882,⁴ the birth of the organized Zionist movement is attributed to Theodor Herzl with the formation of the World Zionist Organization in 1897.

Herzl argued that Jews around the world would never be free from discrimination as long as they remained minority populations in their respective countries; they needed a state of their own.⁵ Initially, Herzl was open to any available territory. However, pressures from within the organization soon cemented the focus on Ottoman Palestine, the land of biblical Israel. Zionist immigrants to Palestine over the next few decades sought to establish an independent, socialist, agricultural-based society in Palestine. While many Jewish immigrants received funding from private investors, the World

Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 81.

² Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), 26.

³ *Ibid.*, 26. Smith explains that religious Zionists “viewed the matter [of their return to Israel] as one to be decided by God,” rather than something they could take into their own hands.

⁴ Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10.

⁵ Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 31.

Zionist Organization established the Jewish National Fund in 1901 to help new Jewish immigrants purchase land in Palestine.⁶

Arabs both within and outside of Palestine were aware of goals Zionism had for Palestine early on, and opposition to Zionist immigration and land purchase emerged before World War I.⁷ While the Ottoman government allowed for Jewish immigration and settlement “in scattered groups throughout the Ottoman Empire,” official policy did not allow for Jewish settlement in Palestine. However, that policy was easily sidestepped and ultimately ineffective.⁸

During World War I, British insecurities regarding the war effort resulted in a series of conflicting promises regarding the territory of Ottoman Palestine. The most significant of these was the Balfour Declaration, a letter to the head of the English Zionist Organization from the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, in November 1917, which promised the Zionist movement that the British government would “view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”⁹ This promise was given in an attempt to win over international Jewish support, based on the assumption that there were Jews who had the power to get their respective governments to help Britain in the war effort. In addition, several influential British officials were sympathetic to the Zionist cause.¹⁰

After the end of World War I and the breakup up of the Ottoman Empire, Britain established a mandate over Palestine. According to the terms of the mandate, which was

⁶ Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 33, 120.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 94. See Appendix A for the full text of the Balfour Declaration.

¹⁰ Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 58.

approved by the League of Nations in 1922,¹¹ Britain had a number of responsibilities as the mandatory power. First, Britain was committed to “the establishment of the Jewish national home” in Palestine based on promises made in the Balfour Declaration. Second, Britain committed to facilitating “the development of self-governing institutions” in Palestine, with the assumption that once Palestine established its own government, Britain would leave. And third, Britain committed to “safeguard[ing] the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.”¹²

In 1947, Britain still governed Palestine, but the mandate was nowhere near ready for self-governance. The last thirty years had been defined by protests, failed attempts at reconciliation, and escalating violence. Britain had brought in a number of commissions to investigate the problem and went back and forth trying to appease each side. In 1939, Britain implemented restrictions on Jewish immigration and land ownership.¹³ This decision was all the more significant due to the rise in persecution of Jewish people in Germany. By then, the world knew that the Nazi regime was targeting Jewish people but no countries were opening their doors to take in refugees.¹⁴

The aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust raised the stakes for Jews around the world. The Holocaust left two thirds of Europe’s nine million Jews dead, and no one had stepped up to help them. Zionists pointed to the devastation caused by Hitler’s Nazi regime as proof that Jews needed a state of their own in Palestine. This argument

¹¹Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 100.

¹² National Archives of the UK, *Archives Unbound*, “Resumption Of Palestine Conference, January 1947. Copy Of Plan Submitted By British Delegation. Passing Of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain To UN/UNSCOP Study And Report/Partition Resolution,” Memorandum, British Delegation, February 7, 1947, 5.

¹³ William Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” in *Canadian Maverick: The Life and Times of Ivan C. Rand* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 222.

¹⁴ Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 102.

was a persuasive one and convinced many—Jews and non-Jews—of the merit of Zionism.¹⁵ This argument would come to feature prominently later at United Nations’ debates regarding the future of Palestine as both Arab and Zionist representatives would reference it, although for different reasons, in order to make their case.

In February 1947, Britain made a final attempt to bring Zionist and Palestinian-Arab representatives together to determine a solution for Mandate Palestine. Both groups rejected the proposal. So, with no basis for negotiation, Britain sent out a telegram expressing its failure:

In our judgement, there is no prospect of acquiescence in these proposals and we have reached conclusion that it is impossible for us alone to arrive at peaceful settlement in Palestine on any basis. We have therefore come to the conclusion that the best course is to submit whole problem of Palestine to U.N.O Assembly.¹⁶

The UN General Assembly was not set to meet until September, so to accelerate a decision on Palestine, Britain recommended that the Secretary General call a special session of the UN to appoint a fact-finding committee that would study the problem and present its findings to the General Assembly in September.¹⁷

Louis St. Laurent, Canada’s Minister of External Affairs, sent a delegation under the leadership of Lester Pearson, the Deputy Minister of External Affairs, to participate in this special session.¹⁸ Pearson was joined by R.G. Riddell, George Ignatieff, and Elizabeth MacCallum. In a speech to the House of Commons, Louis St. Laurent

¹⁵ Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 107.

¹⁶ National Archives of the UK, *Archives Unbound*, “Resumption Of Palestine Conference, January 1947. Copy Of Plan Submitted By British Delegation. Passing Of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain To UN/UNSCOP Study And Report/Partition Resolution,” Telegram, February 10, 1947, 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Telegram, March 8, 1947.

¹⁸ National Archives of the UK, *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Session On Palestine, April 1947. Canadian Delegation To The Special Assembly. Passing Of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain To UN/UNSCOP Study And Report/Partition Resolution,” Telegram, April 20, 1947.

expressed optimism as this was “the first time in history [that] a great modern state confronted with a difficult international problem has turned voluntarily for guidance and assistance towards settlement.”¹⁹

Establishing UNSCOP: April to May

The United Nations took on the problem of Palestine in 1947 with high hopes, and many Canadian members of parliament believed that through international cooperation and collaboration the world could come up with a solution that both Palestinian Arabs and Zionists could accept.

The Arab League, a recently formed organization of Arab states, had a different response. Although it had considered recommending that Palestine be handed over to the United Nations in 1946, when Britain took the initiative to do so in 1947, “it promoted a reaction of anger and fear.”²⁰ Members of the Arab League could not agree how to approach the issue; while Egypt trusted Britain to handle it, Iraq wanted to take a hardline and demand that the UN immediately recognize Palestine’s independence or risk a fallout with the Arab states. In the end, the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), the political organization that represented Palestinian Arabs, would have a strong influence over the policy of the League. Its president, the Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Haj Amin al-Husayni, put pressure on the League to take “an aggressive approach,” and it voiced its objections “to the foundation of an inquiry committee.”²¹

¹⁹ Library of Parliament. “House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 6,” July 4, 1947, 5079.

²⁰ Elad Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition: The International Arena of Summer 1947,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no.2 (March 2007): 261.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 261.

The special session of the UN General Assembly met in Lake Success, New York, from April 28 to May 5 to consider setting up a committee to research the question of Palestine. Lester Pearson was selected to chair the assembly's Political and Security Committee.²² This committee was responsible for establishing the "terms of reference" for UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine), which would research the Palestine conflict for the UN.²³ Representatives from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria requested that the special session abandon the establishment of an investigative committee and instead consider the immediate "termination of the mandate over Palestine and the declaration of its independence."²⁴ Their proposal was rejected.

Not giving up, the Arab League continued to try to influence the committee's decisions on UNSCOP. When discussions about which countries would be on UNSCOP came up, it requested that an Arab delegate be appointed. This was rejected. Instead, debate focused on whether or not to include the five permanent Security Council members. Neither Britain nor the United States wanted that. Instead, the American delegation recommended that UNSCOP be a committee of "neutral" states; this automatically excluded Britain and all Arab states.²⁵ From there, the committee discussed what terms of reference would be put forward for UNSCOP. Zionist supporters wanted UNSCOP to be instructed to take into account the problem of Jewish-refugee and

²² Lester Pearson, *The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 2, ed. John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 212.

²³ Kaplan, "Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem," 225. "UNSCOP" was likely not named until after the discussions were completed. However, considering that I am now talking about a committee that is discussing the establishment of another committee, I will refer to the second committee as UNSCOP to avoid confusion.

²⁴ "The United Nations General Assembly," *International Organization Foundation* 1, No. 3 (Sept., 1947): 488.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 489.

displaced-persons camps in Europe. The Arab League strongly opposed this; they did not want the two issues connected.²⁶ Instead, it asked that UNSCOP's research be limited to the borders of Palestine and for UNSCOP to take into account the Palestinian-Arab desire for independence.²⁷ This too was rejected.

In the end, the UN General Assembly voted to create a committee of eleven "neutral" nations. This meant countries (excluding the permanent Security Council members) that had no significant interests in the Middle East nor a large, active Jewish community.²⁸ These countries were Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia.²⁹ UNSCOP was given "the widest powers to ascertain and record facts" and instructed only "to give the most careful consideration to the religious interests in Palestine of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity" and to have a report ready to present to the UN in September.³⁰ By giving the committee "wide powers," the UN Committee avoided being seen as favouring either the Zionist or Palestinian-Arab point of view. However, when the special session concluded, the Arab delegations left feeling powerless and angry.³¹

Those countries selected to sit on to UNSCOP were asked to "appoint persons of high moral character and of recognized competence in international affairs."³² The Canadian government selected Justice Ivan Rand of the Canadian Supreme Court. The Canadian government had been reluctant to become too involved in the Palestinian

²⁶ Elad Ben-Dror, "The Arab Struggle against Partition," 262.

²⁷ "The United Nations General Assembly," 488.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 489.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 4, May 22, 1947, 3315.

³¹ Elad Ben-Dror, "The Arab Struggle against Partition," 263.

³² House of Commons Debates. 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 4, May 22, 1947, 3315.

conflict, so it saw Rand as a strategic choice.³³ Canadian officials believed he would be well received by the Canadian public, and as a judge, he would be seen as non-partisan.³⁴ Most importantly, however, the Canadian government believed that by sending him in an independent capacity—as opposed to as a representative of the Canadian government—it could avoid being held to any proposals Rand might put forward if the Canadian government disagreed.³⁵

However, once the Canadian government accepted the appointment to UNSCOP, it publically embraced Canada’s growing involvement with the international community. When commenting on the role Canada had played at the special session of the United Nations and its membership on UNSCOP, Louis St. Laurent told the House of Commons, “I think it is striking testimony of our willingness to do everything that is within the power of Canada and the Canadian people to contribute to the reestablishment of world peace.”³⁶

UNSCOP: June to August

When Ivan Rand learned he was to represent Canada on UNSCOP, he expressed his utmost commitment to independence and impartiality. He told the Canadian government that he would take no instructions and promised “to satisfy, not the Jew nor the Arab, but the enlightened and intelligent conscience of mankind as represented by the

³³ Anne Trowell Hillmer, “Canadian Policy on the Partition of Palestine 1947.” (MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1981), 39. See also David J. Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 68.

³⁴ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 4, May 28, 1947, 3512

³⁵ David Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 73.

³⁶ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 6, July 4, 1947, 5079.

United Nations.”³⁷ However, Rand had little-to-no knowledge of the Palestinian conflict so Elizabeth MacCallum was instructed to give him a historical overview of the conflict.

MacCallum was the only member of the Department of External Affairs with any experience with the Middle East. She had spent a number of years in Turkey as a child and could speak both Arabic and Turkish. She is often described as being “pro-Arab”³⁸ as she regularly produced memorandums within the department to challenge Zionist narratives regarding the conflict in Palestine.³⁹ MacCallum was familiar with both sides of the conflict, and in her presentation to Rand, she provided a “balanced and neutral” account.⁴⁰ She described the conflict as one between two nationalisms, “both of which were born out of the tragic past of their respective peoples.”⁴¹ She believed that the UN’s ability to solve this problem would be directly related to its ability to “recognize that both Arabs and Jews [were] trying to escape from an intolerable past.”⁴² In her memorandum to Rand, MacCallum warned that even though Zionist representatives are experienced in the “ways of the Western world,” it did not make their stance any more legitimate.⁴³

Representatives to UNSCOP first met in Lake Success on May 26. Over the next few weeks, the committee decided upon its general procedure. It invited representatives from the Mandatory Power, the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), and the Jewish Agency for Palestine to participate in the Committee’s activities and it sent out letters to

³⁷ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 231.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 226.

³⁹ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴² DEA Files, file 8903-40c, ‘Memorandum for Mr. Justice Rand,’ 31 May 1948 [sic], quoted in Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 76.

⁴³ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 227.

organizations that had asked for hearings before the General Assembly, requesting that they submit their views in writing.⁴⁴

On June 13, the AHC announced that Palestinian Arabs would boycott UNSCOP. The boycott was ultimately decided on by al-Husseini. He had concluded that “although to the outside world an appearance of neutrality was put forward, quite a different activity was in fact going on underneath, the purpose of which was to bring about—eventually—the partition of Palestine.”⁴⁵ Events at the Special Session of the General Assembly had left the AHC convinced that UNSCOP was ultimately a Western organization with strong Zionist biases, and it did not want to risk legitimizing the committee by cooperating with it.⁴⁶

But, this decision had consequences and many historians have labeled it “a missed opportunity.”⁴⁷ Eban Ben-Dror,⁴⁸ an Israeli historian who studies the United Nations’ involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, argues that although the AHC was convinced that UNSCOP was fundamentally pro-Zionist from the start, committee members were actually “completely balanced” regarding their stance on the issue.⁴⁹ While some UNSCOP representatives were undoubtedly pro-Zionist/anti-British or pro-Arab/pro-

⁴⁴ “The United Nations General Assembly,” 490.

⁴⁵ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 265. This opinion was quoted from al-Husseini’s memoir, long after partition had been passed by the United Nations General Assembly. However, it is unlikely that at the time al-Husseini anticipated UNSCOP’s support for partition.

⁴⁶ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 230.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 232. See also Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition.”

⁴⁸ It should be noted that Ben-Dror’s article, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” is basically an argument stating that Palestinian-Arab representatives made a serious mistake during these months. Ben-Dror puts all of the blame on the Palestinian-Arab representatives and the Arab League for the final acceptance of the partition plan based on the uncompromising stance they took towards UNSCOP and again at the UN. While he defends this stance, I do believe it demonstrates a certain bias. As I quote this article often throughout this section, this is important to note.

⁴⁹ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 265.

British, the Western representatives were more in the middle. This included representatives from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Ben-Dror argues that, once UNSCOP arrived in Palestine, each side had “an equal chance to try and convince [UNSCOP] of their arguments.”⁵⁰

By not engaging with UNSCOP, the AHC lost the opportunity to present an alternative view to the one expressed by Zionist representatives, who took full advantage of their unfettered access to UNSCOP delegates.⁵¹ David Horowitz, a Zionist representative on UNSCOP, labeled the Arab boycott as “one of their more blatant and stupid tactical errors.”⁵² While the AHC may have been confident in the justice of its cause, “few of the UNSCOP members [including Rand]... were ready to accept anything on an *a priori* basis.”⁵³

UNSCOP members left for Palestine in the second week of June. Upon UNSCOP’s arrival in Palestine, Palestinian Arabs greeted them with a general strike. The AHC used threats to prohibit Palestinian Arabs from speaking to UNSCOP delegates or attending the public meetings UNSCOP hosted, and the Palestinian-Arab press was forbidden from reporting on UNSCOP activities. UNSCOP delegates made numerous attempts to break the boycott and get Palestinian Arabs to speak with them. They even tried travelling around the country, but the boycott was strictly enforced and wide spread.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 268.

⁵¹ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 231.

⁵² David Horowitz, *State in the Making*, trans. Julian Meltzer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), 160.

⁵³ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 81.

⁵⁴ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 269.

Over the next few weeks, “while the Arabs went out of their way to be unpleasant... and the British were acting like the unwelcome colonial occupier they had become, the Jews took a different approach: they laid on the charm, making committee members feel welcome and important.”⁵⁵ This conflicting treatment of UNSCOP members by the various groups in Palestine would come to be a defining feature of the trip for many UNSCOP delegates and Rand in particular.

The way that Palestinian Arabs treated Jews and UNSCOP members shocked and appalled Rand, and he could not understand why they refused to cooperate with UNSCOP. In many of the communities UNSCOP visited, black flags were raised in protest.⁵⁶ In addition, Rand’s biography describes an encounter with an Arab factory owner who had refused to admit the Jewish members of the committee.⁵⁷ The hostility shown towards Jews in Palestine by Palestinian Arabs raised “significant doubt” among UNSCOP representatives that Jews and Palestinian Arabs could ever live peacefully in the same state.⁵⁸

In addition, UNSCOP representatives witnessed the dwindling authority of the mandatory power and its increasing use of force; British rule in Palestine seemed not far off from martial law. UNSCOP members saw “road blocks, barbed-wire barricades, machine-gun posts, and armoured car patrols.”⁵⁹ The mandatory power had also passed a number of laws that increased policing powers in Palestine.⁶⁰ On July 18, the *Exodus*

⁵⁵ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 232.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁵⁸ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 270. See also Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 232.

⁵⁹ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 232.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

arrived in Haifa with 4,500 European Jewish refugees. At the time, the mandatory power had a ban on Jewish immigration so the Jewish passengers were forced to stay on the boat for weeks, until they were eventually sent back to Europe and forced off in Germany.⁶¹ This was done despite strong international criticism. On July 29, the mandatory power executed three members of Irgun (a Jewish militia that operated independent from the Jewish Agency) who had participated in a prison break. The next day, Irgun hanged two British soldiers that they had kidnapped.

UNSCOP representatives were also exposed to the stark contrast between Jewish and Palestinian-Arab economies, which were largely separate. Ben-Dror notes that “the impression received of the achievements of the Arab sector was negative and disappointing. Education, welfare, and health systems were in poor state, and the industry and agriculture were using outdated, inefficient methods... it became clear that the demand to allow [the Palestinian Arab community] to be independent and self-sufficient was disconnected from reality.”⁶² In contrast, the Jewish community offered “a perfect contradiction.”⁶³ Rand was astounded by the agricultural success of Jewish settlers and their economic and social accomplishments.⁶⁴

During this time, David Horowitz, one of the Zionist representatives to UNSCOP, established a close relationship with Rand in order to convince him of the justice of the Zionist cause. According to Rand’s biography, “the Zionist [representatives] identified Rand as a key delegate” to convince early on.⁶⁵ Over these few weeks, Horowitz gained a

⁶¹ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 273.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 270.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 237.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

staunch respect for Rand and later described him as “this obstinate, fiery, and explosive liberal, of broad outlook and deep intellectual and moral caliber, [who] sought truth, morality, justice, and humanity.”⁶⁶

According to Horowitz, Rand already believed in the connection between the Holocaust and the Zionist aim in Palestine.⁶⁷ From the Zionist point of view, this connection was crucial. Not only was the Holocaust a powerful example of the discrimination faced by Jewish people in Europe, it also helped justify a much larger Jewish state in Palestine than its present Jewish population would otherwise warrant. At the end of 1946, the Arab population was twice as large as the Jewish population in Palestine. In addition, Jews in Palestine only owned twenty per cent of the cultivable land and just over six per cent of the total land area.⁶⁸ For this reason, emphasizing the need for additional land to accommodate the Jewish refugees of Europe was an important point.

Horowitz and Rand shared a series of “frank and intimate conversation[s]” where they exchanged personal stories and beliefs.⁶⁹ During these discussions, Horowitz responded to Rand’s concerns about Jewish terrorism and emphasized that a Jewish state would bring an end to the violence and animosity that Rand was witnessing in Palestine. When Rand showed interest in partition, Horowitz agreed that it seemed to be the only option.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Horowitz, *State in the Making*, 162.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 188.

⁶⁹ Horowitz, *A State in the Making*, 167.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

Horowitz told Rand of the “spirit and idealism” of the Zionist movement, which wished to live “in close and friendly concert with [its] Arab neighbours.”⁷¹ Instead of framing this conflict as one between Palestinian Arabs and Jews, Horowitz pointed to the British mandatory power as the main problem. Horowitz told Rand of “the excesses of the British occupiers, and described, in heroic terms, the Jewish struggle for statehood.” This was a common feature of Zionist arguments during this time. They argued that once the British were gone, “Arabs and Jews could co-exist, but only on a basis of sovereign equality.”⁷² As they talked, Horowitz noted that “it was evident that the reservations concerning our movement which [Rand] had brought to the country were rapidly disappearing.”⁷³

Uncomfortable that it had still been unsuccessful in hearing from Palestinian Arabs, UNSCOP decided to approach the Arab League for testimonies. The League was divided on what its stance on Palestine would be, but agreed that its approach would not be dictated by the Arab Higher Committee’s boycott.⁷⁴ UNSCOP met with Arab representatives in Lebanon from July 21 to July 24.⁷⁵ Despite attempting to put forward a united front with demands for an end to Jewish immigration and a unitary, independent Palestinian-Arab state, the Arab states failed to convince UNSCOP representatives. Power struggles between and within the Arab state leaderships, as well as conflicting international priorities, caused the Arab League to look disorganized and divided.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Horowitz, *A State in the Making*, 168.

⁷² Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 237.

⁷³ Horowitz, *A State in the Making*, 168.

⁷⁴ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 274.

⁷⁵ All except Transjordan, which had its own priorities in this conflict and elected to meet with UNSCOP representatives separately.

⁷⁶ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 275-276.

In August, UNSCOP delegates retreated to Geneva to draft their report while a sub committee went to visit Jewish displaced-persons camps in Europe. Everyone agreed that the British mandate needed to end. However, no one was quite sure on the best way to make that happen. During their first meeting, the Australian, Czech, and Dutch delegates spoke in favour of a trusteeship to replace the British mandate, followed by a gradual transition to independence. At this time, only the Canadian and Swedish delegates were even seriously considering partition.⁷⁷

During those weeks in Palestine, Zionist representatives had had complete control over the narrative due to the Arab boycott, which significantly influenced Rand's perspective on the conflict in Palestine. Rand came to believe in the justice of the Zionist movement and wanted to ensure that the Jewish state in Palestine would be viable and could accommodate substantial immigration. Rand was strongly against a unitary state for either group; from his view, an Arab state would be a violation of the Balfour Declaration and the terms of the mandate, and a Jewish state would be a betrayal of the Arab people.⁷⁸ The rest of UNSCOP, excluding the Indian delegate, agreed on this.⁷⁹ Rand had seen the escalation of violence in Palestine and believed that partition was the only solution. He believed that "in the event Palestine became a unitary Arab state, or even a bi-national state, the killings, the retaliation, the illegal immigration, the political and military resistance of the Jews would continue."⁸⁰ Despite Rand's early support for

⁷⁷ Ben-Dror, "The Arab Struggle against Partition," 280.

⁷⁸ Kaplan, "Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem," 242.

⁷⁹ The Indian delegate was strongly against partition and wanted to see a unitary Arab state in Palestine. However, he recognized that because he had no other support in UNSCOP for a unitary Arab state, he would not push the issue.

⁸⁰ Kaplan, "Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem," 240.

partition, many of the other delegates did not agree that partition was the best option. As the deadline approached, UNSCOP members remained divided over what to do.

Rand began working on a proposal for two states joined by a “complex system of social and economic contacts and governed by a central authority run both by Arab, Jews, and outsiders.”⁸¹ However, this initial plan has been described as “unworkable, inconsistent, and unfair”;⁸² it was too complicated and too bureaucratic to be sustainable. Although the plan was rejected by the committee, Rand held on to its fundamental aspects: political division and economic unity.

As the end of August drew nearer, the committee remained divided. The Indian, Iranian, and Yugoslavian representatives had been drafting their proposal for a unitary federal state, and Rand continued to work on his partition plan. The other representatives were all resistant to partition, and Ben-Dror argues that at this time, even the slightest sign of a willingness to compromise from the AHC would have been heeded.⁸³ However, the AHC remained committed to demands for a unitary Arab state.

On August 26, many delegates still had not committed to a plan. Delegates from Canada, Sweden, Uruguay, and Guatemala did not want the federal plan to be the only option so they united around the partition plan that Rand had been working on, leaving out questions about borders and Jerusalem for the time being.⁸⁴ The next day, UNSCOP members agreed to send all recommendations to the UN, rather than deciding on one plan. With that determined, they voted on the two plans with seven supporting partition

⁸¹ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 280.

⁸² Kaplan, “Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem,” 243.

⁸³ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 281.

⁸⁴ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 284.

and three supporting federation. Australia abstained from voting.⁸⁵ Over those last few days, Rand worked with the Swedish, Uruguayan, and Guatemalan delegates to draw up borders with the “area of the Jewish state one of the largest versions ever proposed by the committee.”⁸⁶ The final details were approved on August 31, and the final reports were sent to the UN General Assembly.

The final report submitted to the United Nations General Assembly provided a detailed description of both plans. The Majority Report, signed by Rand, recommended partition with economic union. The Minority Report, signed by the Indian, Iranian, and Yugoslavian delegates, recommended a federal state. In addition, UNSCOP members submitted a list of eleven unanimous recommendations. Four of the most significant recommendations included an immediate end to the British mandate, a transitional period followed by independence, an international solution to the problem of Jewish displaced persons, and economic union in Palestine.⁸⁷ The Zionist leadership immediately accepted the Majority Report, while Palestinian-Arab representatives rejected both reports.

In the end, support for the partition plan did not emerge until the very end of UNSCOP’s work, and even then, support was reluctant. As argued by Ben-Dror, “the real achievement of Zionist diplomacy [was] the consistent presentation of a pragmatic and clear solution in relation to the Arab ‘all is mine’ demand.”⁸⁸ In contrast, Rand became a partition supporter much earlier. Not only did Rand wholly support partition, he also

⁸⁵ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 285.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁸⁷ See Appendix A for a full list of these recommendations.

⁸⁸ Ben-Dror, “The Arab Struggle against Partition,” 286.

fought to ensure the Jewish state would be as large as possible.⁸⁹ This was largely the result of a combination of the positive experiences he had with Zionist representatives and the negative impression he had of Palestinian Arabs. The development of a personal relationship with Horowitz facilitated the growth of Rand's Zionist sympathies, as well as the development of racialized perceptions of Palestinian Arabs and Jews in Palestine. On the Arab side, Rand saw uncompromising demands for a unitary Arab state, strong anti-Jewish sentiments, and poor working and living conditions. On the Zionist side, in contrast, he saw individuals who believed in this movement that seemed to represent a force of progress in Palestine.

Meeting of the UN General Assembly: September to November

Cabinet did not give Canadian representatives any specific instructions before the delegation left for the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in Lake Success in September. It stated that since Rand had acted in an independent capacity, the Canadian delegation "need not feel committed" to any of the proposals put forward by UNSCOP. However, Cabinet recognized that the delegation should keep in mind that "a distinguished member of the Supreme Court of Canada had arrived at certain conclusions after careful consideration of the issues involved." Cabinet noted that there was little point in supporting proposals rejected by Arabs or Zionists, but that they should "give support to any proposals which appear to it likely to bring about a solution to the

⁸⁹ Kaplan, "Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem," 247. Numerous sources describe Rand being the most influential contributor to this report. See Hassan Hussein, "A 'Middle Power' in Action: Canada and the Partition of Palestine," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no.3 (Summer 2008): 41; Ben-Dror, "The Arab Struggle against Partition," 283; and Heath Macquarrie, "Canada and the Palestinian People 1948-1983," in *Canadian Arab Relations: Policy and Perspectives*, Second edition, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael (Ottawa: Jerusalem International Publishing House, Inc., 1984), 62.

Palestine problem, provided that there is reasonable evidence that they can be put into effect.”⁹⁰

However, the priorities of the Canadian delegation over the next few months did not reflect this emphasis on a workable solution. In fact, Canadian priorities often did not relate to the Palestine problem at all. Instead, Canadian representatives used Palestine as an opportunity to establish Canada as an influential player on the world stage. In sources discussing events at the UN, it shows that “the Canadian delegation had, at the outset, taken a position in support of the majority recommendation favouring partition as the only feasible solution, and Canadian delegates had done everything possible to reconcile the views of other delegates.”⁹¹ Canadian representatives were optimistic about the potential of the UN, and they saw the Palestine conflict as a chance to prove how effective an international body could be at establishing peace. In this, Lester Pearson would come to be a major player.

For Pearson, the question of Palestine was directly connected to what to do with Holocaust survivors who remained in refugee camps in Europe. In his memoirs, Pearson said, “I must admit that I became emotionally involved in a very special way because we were dealing with the Holy Land, the land of my Sunday School lessons. At one stage of my life, I knew far more about the geography of Palestine than I did about the geography of Canada.”⁹² As a son of a minister, Pearson attended church regularly while growing up and his Zionist sympathies are undeniable. Pearson believed that any solution to the

⁹⁰ LAC. RG2 Privy Council Office. Cabinet Conclusions, “United Nations General Assembly; Canadian Participation; the Palestine Question,” 11 September 1947

⁹¹ National Archives of the UK, *Archives Unbound*. “UN, Canadian participation in the Palestine Commission.”

⁹² Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 213.

problem “was impossible without the recognition of a Jewish state in some form in Palestine.”⁹³

Once at Lake Success, the General Assembly created the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine to debate the recommendations and plans submitted by UNSCOP. Pearson was one of the people proposed to chair the committee. When Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King learned of this, he was quick to advise Pearson to decline. In addition to not wanting Pearson gone for so long, King worried about how major involvement in such a controversial issue could hurt Pearson’s future in Canadian politics. In his diaries, King wrote, “Pearson was certain to offend one section of the [Canadian] public opinion which would always be against him in the future... He should not be put into a position where he cannot defend himself.”⁹⁴ Instead, Dr. Herbert Evatt, the Australian External Affairs Minister, was appointed chair of the committee. After hearing this, King again expressed it would have been a “grave mistake” that risked “embarrassment” for the Liberal government if Pearson had accepted the post.⁹⁵ King was not comfortable with the increasingly prominent role that Canada was playing in the UN and he regularly expressed his misgivings in his diaries. He believed that Canada had too many problems of its own to be getting involved in international affairs, and he worried that involvement in such a high-stake conflict risked “minimizing [Canada’s] influence in the long run.”⁹⁶

Although Pearson declined to chair the Ad Hoc Committee at King’s insistence, he did not share King’s hesitancy about Canada taking a more prominent role on the

⁹³Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 217.

⁹⁴ William Lyon Mackenzie King, diary, September 22, 1947, (31290).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, September 26, 1947, (31292).

⁹⁶ William Lyon Mackenzie King, diary, September 19, 1947, (31277).

international stage. In January 1948, Pearson gave a speech on Canadian foreign policy, which casts light on his attitude toward the UN and the role he envisioned for Canada. He described the post-war era as an "interdependent, atomic age" where the "sovereign national state" was no longer relevant. He explained that with the end of World War II and the rise of communism, American and British policies "now usually march side by side," allowing Canada to "stride along beside them."⁹⁷ He believed that it was in Canada's best interest to support any organization that united Western powers. This speech demonstrates Pearson's commitment to, and hope for, internationalism – even if it was a Western-centric internationalism.

Meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine

Speaking to the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, the representative of the Mandatory Power, Arthur Creech-Jones, voiced the stance of the British government regarding the report submitted by UNSCOP. In addition to agreeing with the twelve general recommendations, he endorsed the first, second, and sixth recommendations specifically.⁹⁸ Creech-Jones explained that the British government would be willing to implement any plan adopted by the UN, on the condition that both Arabs and Jews accepted it, and that Britain would refuse to use force to implement a plan under any circumstances. If no settlement could be agreed upon, the British government would

⁹⁷ Lester Pearson. Speech. "Some Principles of Canadian Foreign Policy." January 1948, 70.

⁹⁸ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, "UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution," 62. These recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

“plan for an early withdrawal of British forces and of the British administration from Palestine.”⁹⁹

During the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, Chairman of the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, spoke. In this speech, he reiterated many similar arguments to those that had been made by the Zionist representatives to UNSCOP. These arguments “served to enhance the already dominant image in the Western world of the pristine innocence of the Zionist protagonist, while deepening the perceived iniquity of the resolution’s victim, the Palestinians.”¹⁰⁰ Silver argued that Palestine’s very existence as a “unit of human society” was due to its Jewish history as “the country lost its separate character with the Jewish dispersion and only resumed a specific role in history when the Palestine Mandate was ratified.”¹⁰¹ He argued that Palestinian Arabs had benefited economically from Jewish development. Like Horowitz had done for Rand, Silver emphasized the economic benefits that the Jewish community in Palestine brought to Palestinian Arabs.

Again, when promoting the Zionist cause, Zionist representatives drew on notions of Western superiority and Western definitions of civilization and progress. Edward Said, a Palestinian-American historian, argues that “so far as the West [was] concerned, Palestine has been a place where a relatively advanced (because European) incoming

⁹⁹ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 62.

¹⁰⁰ Walid Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” in *The Israel/Palestine Question*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2007): 108.

¹⁰¹ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 65.

population of Jews [had] performed miracles of construction and civilizing.”¹⁰² This type of racialized thinking about Jews and Palestinian Arabs existed in Canada as well. One Member of Parliament described the Jewish presence in Palestine as “the rebirth of human and spiritual values in Palestine. They have developed the economy of the country, established industries, and reclaimed land, which had lain barren for centuries.”¹⁰³

This type of racialized thinking about the Zionist movement tied in well with the context of the Holocaust and fears of being labeled as anti-Semitic. As noted by Said, Palestine was seen as a place where God and the Jews shared a “spiritual bond.”¹⁰⁴ When combining that with the fact that Jews were seen as a civilizing force in Palestine, “to oppose such an idea in the West was immediately to align oneself with anti-Semitism.”¹⁰⁵ In contrast, to support a Jewish state in Palestine “acquired a remarkable aura of moral prestige.”¹⁰⁶

In addition, Silver also made sure to draw attention to what he saw as British hypocrisy as he called out Britain’s refusal to support any solution that required force. Silver noted that the mandate power “had not hesitated to employ in recent years military force” and that in handing over the issue to the UN, the British government had already admitted that they believed a mutually agreed upon solution to be impossible.¹⁰⁷ Said

¹⁰² Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Times Books, 1979), 8.

¹⁰³ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 4th Session, Volume 2, February 25, 1948, 16. There were exceptions. For example, Norman Jaques was a vocal opponent of Zionism. However, he seemed to be an anomaly in the Canadian House of Commons, and he often complained about his views being silenced in public discourse.

¹⁰⁴ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings.

explains that this practice of focusing on British aggression was strategic, as “the great issue witnessed by the world was not, as a Palestinian likes to imagine, the struggle between natives and new colonists, but a struggle presented as being between Britain and the Zionists.”¹⁰⁸ This allowed Zionists to avoid being seen as the aggressor.

Silver accepted all of the unanimous recommendations made by UNSCOP except for the sixth one, which called for an international arrangement to deal with the problem of displaced Jews in Europe.¹⁰⁹ He rejected the minority proposal outright, arguing that it would just turn into an Arab state “in which the Jews would be frozen in the position of permanent minority.” However, he was not satisfied with the majority proposal either, as the proposed Jewish state was only allotted “one-eighth of the territory originally set aside for it.” However, despite these reservations and complaints, he announced that the Jewish Agency would accept the report “to make possible the establishment of a Jewish state and continuing Jewish immigration.”¹¹⁰

In contrast, Arab state representatives to the UN made repeated attempts to de-racialize the conflict in order to combat Zionist racialized narratives. Rather than condemning the Jewish people, their arguments for a unitary Palestinian state referenced international law and the Charter of the United Nations. They challenged the legitimacy of British imperialism and the Balfour Declaration. They also made sure to draw a

Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 65.

¹⁰⁸ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 23.

¹⁰⁹ This recommendation can be found in Appendix A.

¹¹⁰ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 65.

distinction between Zionism, which they described as a colonial and imperial ideology, and the Jewish people, with whom Arabs claimed to have no issue.

Mahmoud Bey Fawzi, Egypt's representative to the UN, saw the Palestine problem as divided into "reality" and "artificiality." He argued that, "if things [had taken] their natural course, there would have been no Palestine problem." However, artificial forces—British imperialism and Zionism—changed the course of Palestinian history to actively create this "artificial" problem. He argued that Zionism had "incited [Jews]... to become a majority and extort an empire from the hazy and far away recesses of an ephemeral past." In this way, Fawzi challenged the legitimacy of Britain as an imperial power and argued that Britain had no authority to pass the Balfour Declaration to begin with. From this point of view, Britain had never "owned" Palestine, and therefore had no right to give it away.¹¹¹ Said reiterated these challenges to the Balfour Declaration. He argues, "Balfour's statements in the declaration take for granted the higher right of a colonial power to dispose of a territory as it saw fit" and suggests that the only way that can be rationalized is by prioritizing "a superior idea (Zionism)" over a majority population.¹¹² However, despite entering an era of decolonization, colonial ways of thinking remained prominent among Western states, and Canadian representatives accepted the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration without question.

Arab representatives also made sure to address Zionist arguments directly. Jamal Husseini, Vice-President of the Arab Higher Committee, discounted those who connected

¹¹¹ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, "UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution."

¹¹² Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 16.

Biblical Israel and the Promised Land to modern day Palestine as evidence that Jews have historical right to Palestine. He argued that “world Jewry would not claim to be one race composed of the descendants of Israel.” Again, this is an example of an attempt to draw attention to the racialization of Zionist arguments. To help others relate to the Palestinian-Arab point of view, Husseini explained that, “the Zionist case is based on the association of the Jews with Palestine 2000 years ago. If that claim had any legal or moral value, the Arabs could have better and stronger claims over Spain, parts of France, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and even parts of India, Russia, and China.”¹¹³

With the Holocaust fresh in recent memory, every speaker who argued the Palestinian-Arab case made sure he explained that his arguments were not based in anti-Semitic sentiments. In his speech to the Ad Hoc Committee, Fawzi explained that “Arabs never had, nor have they now any quarrel with the Jews as such. They are only opposed to Zionism.”¹¹⁴ Fawzi urged members of the committee to separate the Holocaust and the problem of Jewish refugees from that of Palestine as “the persecutors have not been the Arabs; and the persecution has not taken place in Arabs lands. Nevertheless, the Arabs and their lands are aimed at for retribution.” Instead, he advocated for an international response to the Jewish refugee problem, which would take into account the proportional capability for various countries to take in Jewish refugees. Fawzi emphasized that Palestine did not have room for substantial immigration, especially immigration of those who are “uninvited.”¹¹⁵ Fawzi called on the UN to act on its promises to protect

¹¹³ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

minorities from discrimination and persecution based on religion or race, as “the problems of the displaced persons is a world problem. The burden of which is to be borne by the world as a whole.”¹¹⁶ Fawzi argued that an international response to the Jewish-refugee problem was their “inescapable duty; this, and not the heavy subsidising of a short-sighted, fanatic Zionism movement.”¹¹⁷ Without naming any countries in particular, Fawzi calls out the “many rich and vast countries” for their lack of action in support of displaced persons. However, despite Arab pleas for this recommendation to be taken seriously, the Western nations ignored it, including Canada. Walid Khalidi points to this when he challenges claims that those who supported the Zionist cause did so because they “were genuinely motivated to alleviate the plight of European Jewry.”¹¹⁸

The Sub Committees and Adoption of Partition

From there, the Ad Hoc Committee split into two sub committees to deal with the different reports directly. Sub Committee I focused on the Majority Report. Sub Committee II, made up mostly of representatives of Muslim- and Arab-majority states, decided to focus on drafting recommendations they thought would be acceptable to Palestinian Arabs, seeing as the Palestinian-Arab leadership had also rejected the Minority Report.

Pearson chaired Sub Committee I, which dealt with the Majority Report. Although Justice Minister J.L. Ilesley headed the Canadian delegation, Lester Pearson played the more significant role and historians argue that Pearson exercised significant

¹¹⁶ Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” 102.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

influence over these proceedings.¹¹⁹ Hassan Husseini argues that Canada used its status as a middle power “not necessarily to secure a lasting solution to the Palestine question but to further the interests of the Western alliance in the face of perceived Soviet encroachment in the region and internationally.”¹²⁰

Pearson focused on establishing Canada’s place in the UN and preserving good relations between the great powers, which often involved mediating between Britain and the United States.¹²¹ Some Canadian Members of Parliament (MPs) expressed uneasiness about deteriorating relations between the two countries during this time, as they believed that “the peace of the world depend[ed] more than anything on preserving good feeling between the British and United States.”¹²² Pearson’s prominent role in the UN during these months did not go unrecognized in the Canadian House of Commons, as MPs noted that Pearson’s “competence is highly recognized in all international circles.”¹²³

While recognizing the flawed nature of the partition plan, Pearson noted in his memoirs that it was the only solution on which “the USA and the USSR could cooperate, thereby preventing, at least for the time being, direct intervention in the area by Moscow or Washington on opposite sides.”¹²⁴ He also had great faith in the potential of the UN and wanted to be sure it succeeded. Defending his support for partition, Pearson argues that “rejection of partition at the UN would have resulted in even more violence and bloodshed. It would also have placed an even greater strain on Anglo-American relations

¹¹⁹ Husseini, “A ‘Middle Power’ in Action,” 41.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²¹ Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” 111.

¹²² House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 6.

¹²³ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 4rd Session, Volume 4, May 16, 1947, 3172.

¹²⁴ Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 214.

and an increased danger of exploitation of the situation by the USSR.”¹²⁵ Many shared Pearson’s fear of what would happen if the United Nations failed to agree on a solution for Palestine.

Although Pearson’s previously quoted comments appear in his memoir which was written many years later, they do reflect the feelings of the time. During this period, stakes were high. Palestine was seen as the “supreme test of the United Nations”¹²⁶ and one Canadian MP worried that “the failure of the United Nations would be the failure of peace and a victory for the gods of war.”¹²⁷ St. Laurent expressed similar sentiments when he recognized that the ability of the UN to come up with a solution for Palestine would determine the future of the organization.¹²⁸ This personal investment in the UN’s solution to the Palestine problem undoubtedly caused Canadian representatives at the UN to push for whichever solution offered the best chance of success—not the one that would be acceptable to both sides.

Sub Committee II’s members expressed their disapproval of the makeup of the two committees. The members of Sub Committee II included Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. Upon their first meeting, they agreed to send a request to Dr. Evatt, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, to put some “non-Moslem members” on the sub committee. They believed that both sub committees were too one-sided “to smooth off any rough edges of disagreement between the Arab plan and the UNSCOP Majority plan.”¹²⁹ Chamoun of Lebanon agreed that he would be

¹²⁵ Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 214.

¹²⁶ House of Commons Debates, 20th Parliament, 4th Session, Volume 2, February 25, 1948, 16.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 1, February 6, 1947, 170.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 6, July 4, 1947, 5079.

¹²⁹ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings.

willing to give up his seat on the committee to any other country “less concerned with the issue.”¹³⁰

In the end, Sub Committee II submitted a proposal for a unitary Arab state in Palestine, and Sub Committee I submitted a detailed plan of partition. The plan for a unitary Arab state was rejected by the Ad Hoc Committee, but the proposal of partition passed with a majority vote and was put in front of the UN General Assembly.¹³¹ On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted on the Sub Committee I’s partition plan. It passed with thirty-three nations voting in favour (including Canada), thirteen voting against, and ten abstaining. According to this plan, the proposed Palestinian state would have 818,000 Palestinian Arabs and 10,000 Jews on forty-five per cent of the territory. The Jewish state would have 499,000 Jews and 438,000 Palestinians on fifty-five per cent of the territory.¹³² Considering that less than thirty per cent of the population was assigned over fifty percent of the land, it is clear that those who supported the partition plan had rejected calls for an international response to the Jewish-refugee problem. The Zionist emphasis on the need for room to accommodate Jewish immigration proved to be a crucial point in ensuring a large Jewish state in Palestine.

While David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, was not happy with the partition plan, it was enough as it ensured that Jewish people would have an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Walid Khalidi points out that although there

Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 47.

¹³⁰ National Archives of the UK. *Archives Unbound*, “UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution,” 47.

¹³¹ Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 214.

¹³² Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (London: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2006), 35.

were others who demanded more—the Revisionists, for example, wanted the whole of Palestine, including parts of Transjordan—David Ben-Gurion’s acceptance of the partition plan cannot be labelled a “compromise,” as the Zionists were basically accepting their own demand. However, by accepting the partition plan while Arabs rejected it, Zionists “also wrapped themselves in the sanctimonious garb of moral superiority as adherents, in a posture of self-defense [sic], to the impartial will of the international community. By the same token, the Palestinians... were dubbed the aggressors for not meekly submitting to the dismemberment of their country.”¹³³

Conclusion

In his memoirs, Pearson said, “The Canadian government did not support partition without a great deal of heart-searching and careful consideration; and only after [it was] convinced there was no possibility of cooperation between Britain, the USA, and the USSR which might make possible any other solution.”¹³⁴ This statement demonstrates the degree to which Canada’s priorities focused on things apart from ending the conflict between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs. However, it is also misleading. Although the Canadian government may have been initially reluctant to take a stance on Palestine, Canadian representatives to UNSCOP and to the United Nations actively supported the partition plan.

Ultimately, this conflict in 1947 was a political one – as opposed to one of religion or race. However, contemporary actors who emphasized the justice of the Zionist

¹³³ Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” 110.

¹³⁴ Pearson, *The Memoirs* 2, 214.

cause often drew on racialized arguments to support their claims to the land of Palestine. The use of racialized arguments was an effective strategy for Zionists, and it worked to win the support of many Western representatives, including Canadian representatives. Zionist representatives emphasized that a Jewish state in Palestine constituted a Jewish “return” to the land of biblical Israel. Zionist representatives also demonstrated the success of Jewish agricultural development in Palestine in comparison to that of Palestinian Arabs. They described their movement as one of progress, development, and mutual support and emphasized the role that Britain played in creating the conflict. They argued that once Britain was gone, Arabs and Jews in Palestine could find a way to co-exist. Most significantly, Zionist representatives could point to years of persecution and violence against Jewish people in Europe. The example of the Holocaust, combined with the Western world’s lack of action to help Jewish refugees and displaced persons, acted as a powerful justification for a Jewish state in Palestine. Said explains that the Zionist cause has been framed in such a way so as “to make opposition to it both impossibly general and generally inadmissible,” which encouraged the growth of support among Canadian delegates.¹³⁵ In the Zionist view, the international community owed the Jewish people a state of their own, and both Rand and Pearson came to agree.

At the UN, Palestinian-Arab supporters attempted to de-racialize the conflict and draw attention to the racialization of Zionist arguments. The representatives of Arab States and the AHC at the UN appealed to international law and challenged the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration and British imperialism. They described Zionism as an aggressive colonial force and called for self-determination in Palestine. They also

¹³⁵ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 23.

directly challenged Zionist arguments that claimed Jewish people have a historic claim to the land of Palestine. However, this legalistic approach did not emerge until after partition was already on the table. Prior to that, the Palestinian-Arab leadership had refused to engage with the UN and simply emphasized its refusal to accept anything but a unitary Arab state in Palestine. As argued by Ben-Dror, this uncompromising stance hurt the Palestinian-Arab cause because it gave UNSCOP nothing to work with.

One way of understanding Canada's dismissive approach to the Palestinian-Arab point of view is by looking at the comparative power of Zionism to that of Palestinian Arabs. Zionism is ultimately a product of the West and was able to appeal to a Western audience in ways that Palestinian Arabs could not. While Rand was in Palestine, he was exposed to a very one-sided conception of the Palestine conflict. He got to know Zionist representatives on a personal level; he listened to their stories, points of view, and values, and he saw the prosperity in their communities. In contrast, Rand developed a very negative perception of the Palestinian-Arab community and, in the end, the Zionist version of events "served to enhance the already dominant image in the Western world of the pristine innocence of the Zionist protagonist, while deepening the perceived iniquity of the resolution's victim, the Palestinians."¹³⁶ In the end, Rand came to prioritize producing a proposal for a viable Jewish state in Palestine that could allow for future immigration; a viable Palestinian-Arab state was a secondary issue, and demographic realities were irrelevant.

¹³⁶ Khalidi, "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution," 108.

Hassan Husseini explains that after Rand returned to Canada, speeches he gave in favour of an independent Jewish state in Palestine were “short on legal justifications... and long on the superiority and the benevolence of the Jewish immigrants in comparison to the indigenous Palestinians.” Husseini quotes Rand as having said, “because Israel placed such importance on the value of individual freedom, the new state was providing a ‘beacon of light’ in an otherwise darkened section of humanity. Israel was also an anchorage in the Middle East for ethical values and civilizing influence of the West.”¹³⁷ This shows that while Rand arrived in Palestine with a commitment to neutrality, that neutrality gradually turned into staunch support for the Zionist cause and partition.

Canada’s final decision to support the partition plan at the UN must be understood as a combination of Canada being a Western nation and the desire of Canadian representatives to increase Canada’s role on the international stage. Not only did Canadian representatives not question the legitimacy of British imperialism and the Zionist cause, they seemed to take for granted that those were concepts that could be questioned to begin with. Pearson’s own personal commitment to Zionism illustrates this point. In addition, Canadian representatives wanted to play a meaningful role in the United Nations and felt personally invested in its success. This led Pearson to take on the role of an intermediary in Sub Committee I in order to make sure the Great powers cooperated on the partition plan. In the end, the actions and decisions of Canadian representatives during these months illustrate that their stance on the Palestine had more

¹³⁷ Husseini, “A ‘Middle Power’ in Action,” 51.

to do with their own preoccupations and priorities than solving the conflict in front of them.

Bibliography

Secondary Sources

- Ben-Dror, Elad. "The Arab Struggle against Partition: The International Arena of Summer 1947." *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no.2 (March 2007): 259-293.
- Bercuson, David J. *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A Study in Canadian Foreign Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
- Caplan, Neil. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- "The United Nations General Assembly." *International Organization* 1, no.3 (September 1947): 488-493, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2704247>.
- Hilmer, Anne Trowell. "Canadian Policy on the Partition of Palestine 1947." MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1981.
- Horowitz, David. *State in the Making*. Translated by Julian Meltzer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953. <https://archive.org/details/stateinthemaking027252mbp>
- Husseini, Hassan. "A 'Middle Power' in Action: Canada and the Partition of Palestine." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no.3 (Summer 2008): 41-55.
- Kaplan, William. "Rand Tackles the Palestine Problem." In *Canadian Maverick: The Life and Times of Ivan C. Rand*, 221-251. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Khalidi, Walid. "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution." In *The Israel/Palestine Question*. 2nd edition, edited by Ilan Pappé, 97-114. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Laqueur, Walter and Barry Rubin, eds. *Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*. 7th Edition. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Macquarrie, Heath. "Canada and the Palestinian People 1948-1983." In *Canadian Arab Relations: Policy and Perspectives*. Second edition, edited by Tareq Y. Ismael, 59-74. Ottawa: Jerusalem International Publishing House, Inc., 1984.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2006.
- Pearson, Lester. *The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 2. Edited by John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.
- Said, Edward. *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Times Books, 1979.

Smith, Charles D. *Palestine and the Arab-Israel Conflict: A History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.

Primary Sources

Canadian Parliamentary Historical Resources. Library of Parliament. House of Commons Debates. 20th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 1.

— . Volume 2.

— . Volume 4.

— . Volume 6.

Library and Archives Canada (LAC). "Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King."

LAC, RG2 Privy Council Office. Cabinet Conclusions, "United Nations General Assembly; Canadian Participation; the Palestine Question," September 11, 1947.

The National Archives of the UK. Archives Unbound: Middle East Online: Arab-Israeli Relations, 1917-1970. "Resumption Of Palestine Conference, January 1947. Copy Of Plan Submitted By British Delegation. Passing Of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain To UN/UNSCOP Study And Report/Partition Resolution." February 7-March 23, 1947.

— . "UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP): British Plans For Termination of Mandate and Withdrawal of Forces. UN Palestine Committee Meetings. Passing of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain to UN/UNSCOP Study and Report/Partition Resolution." September 26-December 2, 1947.

— . "UN Special Session On Palestine, April 1947. Canadian Delegation To The Special Assembly. Passing Of Responsibility For Palestine From Britain To UN/UNSCOP Study And Report/Partition Resolution." April 20, 1947.

United Nations. "United Nations Special Committee on Palestine: Report to the General Assembly." Volume 1. *Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly: Supplement No. 11*. Lake Success, New York, 1947. Accessed from <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/07175DE9FA2DE563852568D3006E10F3>.

Appendix A

The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

Quoted in, Charles D Smith, Palestine and the Arab-Israel Conflict: A History with Documents. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013), 94.

Recommendations Approved Unanimously by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

Recommendation I. Termination of the Mandate

It is recommended that the Mandate for Palestine shall be terminated at the earliest practicable date.

Recommendation II. Independence

It is recommended that independence shall be granted in Palestine at the earliest practicable date.

Recommendation III. Transitional Period

It is recommended that there shall be a transitional period preceding the grant of independence in Palestine which shall be as short as possible, consistent with the achievement of the preparations and conditions essential to independence.

Recommendation IV. United Nations Responsibility During the Transitional Period

It is recommended that during the transitional period the authority entrusted with the task of administering Palestine and preparing it for independence shall be responsible to the United Nations.

Recommendation V. Holy Places and Religious Interests

It is recommended that in whatever solution may be adopted for Palestine,

- A. The sacred character of the Holy Places shall be preserved and access to the Holy Places for purposes of worship and pilgrimage shall be ensured in accordance

with existing rights, in recognition of the proper interest of millions of Christians, Jews and Moslems abroad as well as the residents of Palestine in the care of sites and buildings associated with the origin and history of their faiths.

- B. Existing rights in Palestine of the several religious communities shall be neither impaired nor denied, in view of the fact that their maintenance is essential for religious peace in Palestine under conditions of independence.
- C. An adequate system shall be devised to settle impartially disputes involving religious rights as an essential factor in maintaining religious peace, taking into account the fact that during the Mandate such disputes have been settled by the Government itself, which acted as an arbiter and enjoyed the necessary authority and power to enforce its decisions.
- D. Specific stipulations concerning Holy Places, religious buildings or sites and the rights of religious communities shall be inserted in the constitution or constitutions of any independent Palestinian State or States which may be created.

Recommendation VI. Jewish Displaced Persons

It is recommended that the General Assembly undertake immediately the initiation and execution of an international arrangement whereby the problem of the distressed European Jews, of whom approximately 250,000 are in assembly centers, will be dealt with as a matter of extreme urgency for the alleviation of their plight and of the Palestine problem.

Recommendations VII. Democratic Principles and Protection of Minorities

In view of the fact that independence is to be granted in Palestine on the recommendation and under the auspices of the United Nations, it is a proper and an important concern of the United Nations that the constitution or other fundamental law as well as the political structure of the new State or States shall be basically democratic, i.e., representative, in character, and that this shall be a prior condition to the grant of independence. In this regard, the constitution or other fundamental law of the new State or States shall include specific guarantees respecting

- A. Human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of worship and conscience, speech, press and assemblage, the rights of organized labor, freedom of movement, freedom from arbitrary searches and seizures, and rights of personal property; and
- B. Full protection for the rights and interests of minorities, including the protection of the linguistic, religious and ethnic rights of the peoples and respect for their cultures, and full equality of all citizens with regard to political, civil and religious matters.

Recommendations VIII. Peaceful Relations

It is recommended that it shall be required, as a prior condition to independence, to incorporate in the future constitutional provisions applying to Palestine those basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations whereby a State shall;

- A. Undertake to settle all international disputes in which it may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered; and
- B. Accept the obligation to refrain in its international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

Recommendation IX. Economic Unity

In appraising the various proposals for the solution of the Palestine question, it shall be accepted as a cardinal principle that the preservation of the economic unity of Palestine as a whole is indispensable to the life and development of the country and its peoples.

Recommendation X. Capitulations

It is recommended that states whose nationals have in the past enjoyed in Palestine the privileges and immunities of foreigners, including the benefits of consular jurisdiction and protection as formerly enjoyed by capitulation or usage in the Ottoman Empire, be invited by the United Nations to renounce any right pertaining to them to the reestablishment of such privileges and immunities in an independent Palestine.

Recommendation XI. Appeal Against Acts of Violence

It is recommended that the General Assembly shall call on the peoples of Palestine to extend their fullest cooperation to the United Nations in its effort to devise and put into effect an equitable and workable means of settling the difficult situation prevailing there, and to this end, in the interest of peace, good order, and lawfulness, to exert every effort to bring to an early end the acts of violence which have for too long beset that country.

For the full report submitted by UNSCOP see:

United Nations. "United Nations Special Committee on Palestine: Report to the General Assembly." Volume 1. *Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly: Supplement No. 11*. Lake Success, New York, 1947. Accessed from <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/07175DE9FA2DE563852568D3006E10F3>.