At the meeting of the Cabinet on 15th January, the Foreign Secretary advanced the proposal that we should adopt, as the basis of our future policy in Palestine, the plan for Provincial Autonomy amended in such a way that it points towards an independent unitary State and incorporates as much as possible of the Arab plan. As the Minister responsible for the administration of Palestine, I must submit that, after much inquiry and discussion, I cannot see any hope of a settlement on these lines. I realise, of course, that major issues of an international and strategic character are involved in the adoption of any solution of the Palestine problem and in this memorandum I am dealing mainly with the position as I see it from the point of view of the administration of that country, though I am not unmindful of these wider issues. For this purpose I think that it may be of use to my colleagues if I first refer to the three plans now before H.M.G. (the Foreign Secretary's proposal is a combination of two of these plans) and state my views regarding them.

2. The three plans are: our own plan for a system of Provincial Autonomy; the Arab plan for a unitary Palestinian State under Arab majority rule; and Partition.

Provincial Autonomy

3. My colleagues are familiar with the main features of the Provincial Autonomy scheme. This plan was put forward by my predecessor, was adopted by the Anglo-American experts, and was announced in Parliament by the Lord President as the basis for consultation with the Arabs and the Jews. It was, however, always realised that the primary requirement of the Provincial Autonomy plan was the willingness of the two communities to operate it and unfortunately both communities have already voiced their refusal to do so. Without such willingness the plan is a paper plan only. Its success depends on the co-operation of the two communities and such co-operation cannot, in existing circumstances, be achieved nor is it likely to be achieved for a long time to come. So long as the plan leaves the ultimate policy to be pursued in Palestine for future determination it will continue to be rejected by both parties; if that policy is declared in advance it will be rejected even more vehemently by one of them. The Arabs would take no part in Provincial Autonomy
to be followed by Partition, the Jews would take none in Provincial Autonomy to be followed by a unitary State. It has become clear that the Jews will accept no solution which denies their claim to Statehood; moreover, the High Commissioner has pointed out the grave administrative difficulties inherent in the operation of the plan having regard to the present situation in Palestine. In view of the further fact that the Government of the United States has refused categorically to endorse it, I do not consider that it can any longer be regarded as a practical proposition.

The Arab Plan

4. The Arab plan visualises Palestine as a State under Arab majority rule, in the government of which the Jews would be represented in accordance with their numbers, i.e. one Jew to two Arabs. It is designed to give the Arabs full control both over the framing of the constitution and over any Government which may be constituted under it. It is practically a repetition of the plan embodied in the White Paper of 1939 but with additional restrictions on Jewish rights.

5. It has been argued, and not without force, that the Arab plan is founded on normal democratic principles since the will of the majority will prevail. It is also claimed that it is in conformity with the provisions of Article 76 of the Charter of the United Nations in that it spells progressive development towards self-government in accordance with the "freely expressed wishes of the people concerned", using the words as referring to the wishes of two-thirds of the population of Palestine.

6. On the other hand, while the plan can be defended in theory, there is not the slightest hope of its proving workable in practice. The Jews would not even be in a minority in Palestine in the sense in which a political party may be in a minority under an ordinary democratic system, with prospects of coming one day into power themselves and thus being in a position to implement their own policies. Future Jewish immigration, if any, being designated under the plan as a matter to be determined by the Arabs alone, the Jews would be condemned to the status of a permanent minority with no such possibility in view.

7. Not only does the plan incorporate every feature of the White Paper of 1939 to which the Jews then took exception, but it introduces new conditions equally repugnant to Jewish sentiment. These include the provisions that no immigrant arriving in Palestine shall have a vote until he has resided in the country for ten years and that the Jewish educational system shall be subjected to majority Arab control. It can be stated unhesitatingly that not even the most moderate Jew would be prepared to acquiesce for a moment in the state of affairs visualised in the plan. It would spell the cessation of immigration, the arrest of Jewish development in Palestine, and the permanent subjugation of the National Home, with its highly organised European population and its extensive commercial and industrial interests, to a backward Arab electorate, largely illiterate and avowedly inimical to its further progress.

8. While it might be possible to persuade the Arab States to agree to certain modifications of their plan, there is no
prospect of their consenting to waive any of its three cardinal conditions, majority control of the Government of Palestine, Arab control of Jewish immigration, and the early withdrawal of mandatory supervision. These features will be resisted by the Jews with every resource which they possess. Were effect given to the Arab proposal that the plan should be enforced regardless of Jewish opposition, the inevitable result would be an organised revolt on the part of the latter, coupled with a refusal to recognise or to pay taxes (of which they contribute at least two-thirds) to the Government thus constituted. The position in Palestine would thereby be rendered far worse even than it is today since the administration and the Armed Forces would have to deal not only with terrorism but with the organised opposition of the whole Jewish population. Implementation of the further Arab proposal that, having put the plan into operation, H.M. Government should withdraw and declare Palestine independent whether the Jews co-operate or not, would mean abandoning the country to civil war, a war which would have wide repercussions as it would probably lead to a wave of persecution, directed against Jewish communities elsewhere throughout the Middle East.

9. In my opinion, the cost of enforcing this plan would be disorder and bloodshed on a scale which we could never contemplate. It would raise an issue of first-class importance with the United States where the Executive and Legislature would probably vie with one another in denunciation. There would also be adverse reactions in the Empire itself. It would moreover, in my view, be impossible for His Majesty's Ministers to defend the resulting position either in Parliament or in the country. It would mean a gross betrayal of the Jews if, after undertaking responsibility for the original establishment and subsequent safeguarding of the Jewish National Home, we were to hand them over to the mercy of the Arabs as subjects of a State, of which, in all probability, the Mufti would be the Head, with no power of interference from outside. The policy would be in diametrical conflict with the undertakings given by the Labour Party, prior to its assumption of power, regarding the development of the National Home.

The plan proposed by the Foreign Secretary

10. The plan proposed by the Foreign Secretary is a combination of the two plans which I have described and, in my opinion, has most of the disadvantages of both. He suggests an initial period of Provincial Autonomy. I have already given reasons why, after consultation with my advisers and with the High Commissioner, I do not believe this to be possible. I am circulating to my colleagues a note by the High Commissioner setting out the objections from the point of view of the Palestine Administration. Jewish refusal to operate the plan would be even more vehement were it modified as suggested so as to point to a unitary State and so as to incorporate any of the main features of the Arab proposals. Nor do I believe that a unitary State in Palestine is a practicable proposition. The gulf between the two communities has become too deep. Such a State would mean the subordination of the Jews to the Arabs, and the complete frustration of Jewish national aspirations; any attempt at such subordination would, I am convinced, bring about a situation in Palestine in which the Jews would have to be held in subjection by force and by force alone.

Partition

11. In my opinion, the only reasonable solution of the Palestine problem is that recommended by the Royal Commission of 1936, namely the partition of the country between the Arabs
and the Jews. This solution possesses an element of finality which is elsewhere absent. It would give to each community a maximum degree of power to manage its own affairs and a minimum degree of power to interfere in the affairs of the other.

12. Certain of the objections to Partition are fresh in the minds of my colleagues from the last discussion and I need not repeat them here. I would merely say that I doubt whether this policy would evoke such serious repercussions as are sometimes forechallenged. In Palestine, because of the recent deterioration of Arab feeling, its implementation would undoubtedly cause some violence and disorder on the part of the Arabs, but this may not be on so large a scale as has sometimes been represented. If a decision is not too long delayed, it might even be confined to local rioting in the main towns.

13. I would be the last person to under-estimate the difficulties of Partition and more particularly of finding a plan of Partition which, while not demonstrably unfair to the Arabs, could be regarded as in any way satisfying Zionist aspirations. It cannot be denied that the scheme of Partition prepared by the Cabinet Committee of 1944 involves certain serious injustices to the Arabs. I have since had a revised scheme prepared which obviates, to some extent at least, certain of these injustices, but whether it does so to the extent necessary to make the plan acceptable to the United Nations I am unable to say. But I believe that our object should be to prepare a scheme of partition which does the maximum possible justice to both communities and then to stand upon this scheme as our future policy.

13. I realise further that under partition we may not get all the strategic advantages which the Chiefs of Staff require. It is not impossible that we may be refused facilities in the Arab area, should it not be linked with Trans-Jordan, or that the United Nations may consider that Jerusalem and the surrounding territory should be placed under a joint trusteeship in which His Majesty's Government would obtain no particular advantages. But these are possibilities which, in my opinion, have to be faced and regarded as the price of escape from our existing embarrassments.

14. In short, I can see in Partition a hope of the solution of the Palestine difficulties; I can see none in any other plan. It is the solution most in harmony with the trend of public opinion and of the Press in this country and is that most likely to win United States support and the endorsement of the Labour Party. Otherwise, I regret that I can see little hope of order or of sound administration.

Conclusion

15. It seems quite certain that we can put no new policy into effect in Palestine without reference to the United Nations. Such a reference is necessary in strict law if either the Arab plan or Partition is to be adopted; in the case of provincial autonomy a reference might be obviated for a short time, but we should almost immediately be challenged to produce a trusteeship agreement in respect of the territory. It is, moreover, probable that even before this challenge one of the Arab States would appeal to the Security Council. It seems to me therefore that the problem before us is not what policy we shall immediately implement in Palestine, but what policy we shall recommend to the United Nations for implementation.
16. In my opinion, we should now decide to make a last attempt to produce a plan of Partition which does the least injustice to both communities and, having produced such a plan, recommend it to the United Nations, indicating at the same time the difficulties inherent in the alternative schemes. I myself feel in some doubt how the United Nations will vote on this issue, but even on the assumption that it would be defeated, we should at least have recommended what seems to us to be the best solution, and the responsibility for rejecting it and for finding an alternative solution would rest fairly and squarely with the United Nations. It will be necessary to make it abundantly plain to them that, if they reject Partition, the onus of producing an alternative solution is on them. The present position in Palestine is intolerable and cannot be maintained; if the United Nations fail to find an answer which we deem acceptable it will be necessary to consider whether we should not announce our intention to withdraw from a situation which will have become impossible.

17. On the resumption of the Conference we should, I suggest to my colleagues, attempt to explore with both parties all the various possibilities open, explain the difficulties which each presents and try to lead them in the direction of a reasonable scheme of Partition as the best and most equitable solution.

A.C.J.

Colonial Office, S.W.1.
16th January, 1947.