

# Jewish Palestine Faces Tomorrow

By ABRAHAM REVUSKY

Jewish Palestine, the spiritual center of the martyred Jewish people, and a community which was itself on the brink of disaster in the course of the present war, is extremely happy at the approaching victory of the United Nations. The joy of victory there is however dampened by a deep anxiety over the fate of European Jewry. During the year 5704 the public activities of the Yishuv were largely devoted to the great problem of rescue. Led by their democratically elected Representative Assembly (Assephath Hanivcharim), Palestine's Jews repeatedly expressed their feelings in impressive demonstrations of protest and mourning, invariably accompanied by the demand for the opening of Palestine's gates to the victims of Hitler persecution. A petition for the free admittance of refugees to Palestine, signed by 253,000 Palestinian Jews, was presented to the British Government in London.

## Rescue Center

While these protests and demands could not break the rigid restrictions of the White Paper, they succeeded, at least, in making Palestine the most important center of practical rescue activities. Although the number of refugees admitted there is small compared with the horrifying scope of Hitler's extermination campaign, Palestine with an estimated immigration of 23,000 in 5704 absorbed more refugees than all the other United Nations. Most of them came from Nazi occupied countries, but a considerable part of them were Oriental Jews, who, feeling the increasing force of the anti-Jewish wave now rising in the Moslem countries, are seeking a haven in the National Home.

## White Paper Crisis

Yielding to the pressure of liberal public opinion, the British Gov-



ernment extended the deadline of April 1, 1944, provided in the White Paper for Jewish Immigration, and allowed the use of the unexhausted quotas after that date. In November 1943, when this concession was announced in the House of Commons, the number of unused certificates was 31,026. But in spite of all efforts of the Colonial Office to use these certificates sparingly and grudgingly and to stretch them for a possibly longer period, there are few left. When no more certificates will be available the fate of the White Paper will have to be decided. The prospect of a hermetically closed National Home at the time of increasing rescue facilities will bring the whole Palestine problem to a head.

## Reconversion Problem

The participation of Jewish Palestine in the Allied war effort continues on a comparatively large scale. Including the war losses replaced by new recruits, the number of volunteers contributed by the 580,000 Jews of Palestine has reached 35,000. This participation would be still larger if it were not for the acute labor shortage caused by the artificial restrictions of immigration.

After reaching its peak in 5703, Palestine's war industry remained stationary, and even began to decline. With the war now removed from Palestine's borders, the authorities are not as eager to use the war services of Palestine's factories. In many cases orders were not renewed after the previous ones were duly delivered. The transition to peace tasks which will presently confront the war industries everywhere has actually begun in Palestine.

While the problem of reconversion is a very serious one, and it may be aggravated because of Palestine's unduly inflated prices and production costs, Palestine's economists are confident that the country will cope with its difficulties. The greatest hopes are being placed on the accumulated need for housing, which was always one of Palestine's most important sources of employment. According to a recently published government estimate, Palestine will need in 1945-46 not less than 127,000 new rooms even if there will be no immigration at the end of the war. Most of this need will arise in the Jewish sector of Palestine's economy. The

postwar prospects of Jewish industry look much brighter than they seemed to be a year ago, when the British Administration of Palestine showed a definite tendency to stifle the industrial development by all means at its disposal.

## Expanding Frontiers

During the year in review, Zionist colonization continued on a comparatively large scale. Since the outbreak of the war, not less than fifty new settlements were added to the 240 existing in 1939. The food production of the Jewish farmers increased by 35%. This was a remarkable achievement in the face of the acute shortage of farm labor caused by recruiting and immigration restrictions.

The colonizers of Palestine show an increasing tendency to combine farming with industrial activities. Collective farms, originally devoted exclusively to agriculture, built during the year a number of small industries which are now an integral part of their economy. The same aim is being pursued by fisher villages which combine farming with fishing.

In spite of the war and the scarcity of pipes and other materials, the area under irrigation in the Jewish villages was essentially increased, and even more ambitious irrigation projects are being prepared for the future. The plan for a Jordan Valley Authority, first proposed by Dr. Walter Lowdermilk in the United States, is being intensively stud-

ied by Jewish experts in Palestine.

Palestine's citrus industry is still in the clutches of the severe depression caused by the cutting of its prewar markets. The Palestinian planters are bitterly complaining about the attitude of the British Government, which refused the Palestine citrus industry the kind of war help which it granted to the cotton planters of Egypt and the banana growers of the West Indies. There is, however, much hope that the next orange season which begins in December 1944, will break the long succession of "lean years."

During the year 5704, the mineral production of Palestine reached a new high. The Palestine Potash Syndicate which holds the concession for the extraction of the rich mineral deposits of the Dead Sea, became the largest producer of potash and bromines in the British Empire. For the first time, the local deposits of superphosphate are being exploited for the benefit of Palestine's agriculture. A chemical industry, largely based on minerals extracted in Palestine, made big strides.

While the war continues to require the main effort of Palestine (Continued on Page 25)

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