

The problem of Palestine is, of course, of paramount importance to the Jewish people, and that fact, I take it, motivated the General Assembly of the United Nations to extend an invitation to the Jewish Agency of Palestine to present its views. We thank all those who so warmly urged our admission for their goodwill and their gallant action. The Jewish Agency, you will recall, is recognized in the mandate for Palestine as a public body authorized to speak and act on behalf of the Jewish people in and out of Palestine in matters affecting the establishment of the Jewish national home.

It is the only recognized public body in the mandate. It is recognized as such, to quote Article 4, " . . . for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social, and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country."

Under Article 6, the Jewish Agency is entitled, further, to co-operate with the Administration in permitting " . . . close settlement by Jews on the land "; and by Article 11, it is given a preferred status in respect to the construction and operation of public works and the development of the natural resources of the country.

The Jewish Agency, which we have the honour to represent, therefore speaks not merely for the organized Jewish community of Palestine, the democratically elected National Council of Palestine Jews, who are to-day the pioneering vanguard in the building of the Jewish national home ; it speaks also for the Jewish people of the world, who are devoted to this historic ideal, for it was charged, by the same Article 4 of the Mandate, " . . . to secure the co-operation of all Jews who are willing to assist in the establishment of the Jewish national home."

I have spoken of "the Jewish people" and "the Jewish national home." In defining the terms of reference of the Committee of Inquiry which you are to appoint, and in all the Committee's future investigations, these, in my judgment, should be regarded as key terms and basic concepts. They were the key terms and the basic concepts of the Balfour Declaration and of the mandate under which Palestine is, or should be, administered to-day. To proceed without relation to them would be to detour into a political wilderness as far as Palestine is concerned. To treat the Palestine problem as if it were one of merely reconciling the differences between two sections of the population presently inhabiting the country, or of finding a haven for a certain number of refugees and displaced persons, would only contribute to confusion.

The Balfour Declaration, which was issued by His Majesty's Government as a " . . . declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspiration," declares : -

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

The mandate, in its preamble, recognized " . . . the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine " and " . . . the grounds for reconstituting "—I call your attention to the word "reconstituting"—"their national home in that country."

These international commitments of a quarter of a century ago, which flowed from the recognition of historic rights and present needs, and upon which so much has already been built in Palestine by the Jewish people, cannot now be erased. You cannot turn back the hands of the clock of history.