

A considerable reluctance to participate in the general discussion was noticeable on the part of most delegations at this stage, since neither of the two parties was as yet prepared to express a view on the Mediator's report and the situation in general. In the meantime the discussion of the Greek question intervened and it was some weeks before the Palestine problem was again on the agenda of the First Committee.

### *The Jewish Position*

On the resumption of the discussion, Mr Shertok, representative of *Israel*, made a general statement. Jewish independence, he said, had been restored after nearly nineteen centuries, this restoration being the crux of the Assembly resolution of 29 November, 1947. While appreciating the verdict of the Bernadotte report in favour of the recognition of *Israel*, he attacked it for seeking a further compromise between the 29 November plan, which the Jews had already accepted as a compromise, and the intransigent attitude of the Arabs.

The most startling expression of this trend was the proposal to "rob *Israel* of the entire area of the Negev." The Jews had made it clear that the area of their State as proposed in the resolution of 29 November, 1947, constituted an "irreducible minimum," yet it was now proposed to reduce that minimum by two-thirds—a "catastrophic shrinkage of their extremely limited territory." For the Jewish State the Negev was a "great reservoir of potential development" and the only area where there were land reserves for large-scale colonization. On the other hand, the exclusion of the Negev from the Arab State would hardly effect its population and would not at all prejudice its prosperity. The Arab world was over-endowed with deserts and had exhibited no capacity for putting them to fruitful use. Moreover, *Israel* must have access to the Dead Sea, which was the main source of mineral wealth in Palestine and the exploitation of which had been due to Jewish initiative and capital. Thirdly, *Israel* must be afforded a foothold on the Gulf of Aqaba, which was the "natural outlet for Dead Sea produce" and "*Israel's* gateway to the eastern seas."

With regard to Jerusalem, *Israel* must claim the permanent inclusion in its territories of the modern Jewish City in order to ensure what in the past year the United Nations had failed to achieve—the protection of life and property in that area. *Israel* would have no objection, however, to the internationalization of the old Walled City. To the Mediator's suggestion that Haifa port and Lydda airport should be declared free, Mr Shertok replied that the Government of *Israel* would accept no derogation whatsoever from the sovereignty which it exercised in these areas, but would be prepared to come to an arrangement with the Arab States on a suitable basis of reciprocity. *Israel*