

Mr. George C. Marshall
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.



May 7, 1948

Dear Mr. Marshall:

I apologize for troubling you again in an attempt to clear up what seems to be a persistent misunderstanding. I gather that reports are still current both in the State Department and in the White House to the effect that I had agreed to conditions for a military truce and political standstill in Palestine informally proposed by representatives of the United States Delegation. In my letter to you of April 29, I took the opportunity to point out that this was not the case. Indeed, I must emphasize that I had indicated all along that the provision for deferring the proclamation of a sovereign state was a major obstacle, particularly if it were interpreted as precluding the coming into existence of a provisional government for the area of the Jewish State.

It was my sincere desire to explore all avenues for an acceptable truce consonant with the preservation of essential Jewish interests. The fact, however, that with this in view, I continued to take part in the informal conversations, could not be interpreted as implying acceptance of the scheme proposed. There were some provisions to which I did not raise serious objection; but there were others to which I took strong exception; and I repeatedly indicated that the decision on the proposal as a whole would have to be taken in Palestine.

Our contacts with Palestine have unfortunately been very irregular, and in response to an urgent call from the Jewish Agency Executive there I am flying to Palestine for consultation. As things stand, I see no prospect of an agreement which would preclude the setting up of a Provisional Government for the Jewish State or entail the prolongation of British rule.

I know that individual Jews who have been in touch with the State Department or the President recently, have differed from the line taken by the Jewish Agency in this matter. All I can say is that while those concerned are perfectly entitled to their own private views, they do not represent the Jewish people of Palestine, they bear no constitutional responsibility for its future, and they are not in a position to give effect to the policy which they advocate.

At the same time, I must make it clear that it would be utterly wrong to impute to the Jewish Agency a refusal to enter into a truce arrangement. From the moment when, at the instance of the Mufti, the disturbances broke out, we declared repeatedly that we are ready to accept an immediate cease fire throughout Palestine provided the Arabs do likewise. We are likewise ready to negotiate a more comprehensive truce agreement, on the understanding that it would not jeopardize fundamental Jewish rights and place us, in relation to our defense preparedness, at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the Arabs.

I regret to have had again to obtrude on your time, but I felt obliged, in the interest of truth and clarity, to write you this letter.

Faithfully yours,

Moshe Shertok

MS:VK