The Roosevelt Palestine Policy, 1943–1945

An Exercise in Dual Diplomacy

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I

To understand the relationship between the Roosevelt Administration and the Zionist movement during the Second World War,¹ it is necessary to realize that Great Britain as the Mandatory Power and the Zionist Organization as the Jewish Agency for Palestine had already reached an impasse with regard to Palestine’s future when the war began. The British governments, both Tory and Labor, during the Mandate era reinterpreted the Balfour Declaration² and the Mandate³ by a series of White Papers in order to limit the political and economic development of the Jewish National Home.⁴ The culmination of this policy was the White Paper of 1939, promulgated on May 17, and ratified later that month by a slim majority of the House of Commons. The White Paper, in effect, froze the Jewish National Home in Palestine to permanent minority status by limiting Jewish immigration to a maximum of 75,000 up to March 31, 1944—15,000 per year—and thereafter suspending immigration altogether unless the Arabs consented to its continuance; by prohibiting, practically, the purchase of land by Jews; and pledging to establish

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³ Ibid., pp. 39–52.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 21–34, 64–85, 90–99.
within ten years a Palestine State wherein Jews would constitute a permanent minority.\textsuperscript{5} That the Jewish Agency for Palestine rejected this plan is understandable; to the astonishment of the British Government and the world at large, the Arabs did likewise. About three months later, on September 1, 1939, the Second World War began. In two years, it had engulfed mankind.

The grim situation of European Jewry received little attention in the turmoil that embroiled Europe. Despite the resultant tragedy and the pleas of the Zionist Organization, the British Government persisted in implementing the White Paper and insisted on maintaining the status quo until the end of the war.\textsuperscript{6} When the United States officially entered the war on December 8, 1941, the American Zionists were confronted with the same sort of perplexities as their colleagues in Britain. Washington, too, preferred to postpone the consideration of the Palestine problem to the peace conference—so much so that both governments at one point decided to bring pressure on the Zionist organs to cease public "agitation" until the end of the war. Obviously, there was a real danger that, with the cessation of hostilities, the Jewish people would be faced with an irreparable state of affairs and the Zionist objective in Palestine would be dead and buried in the debris of the Jewish National Home.

The Zionist movement, therefore, categorically rejected the implicit injunction to stand by idly and helplessly; on the contrary, it resolved to intensify the struggle to preserve the Jewish National Home in its original intent, to win the sympathy and support of public opinion in democratic lands, especially in the United States, and to obtain at least the commitment of these governments to a constructive Zionist solution of the Palestine problem to be implemented during the peace negotiations. Understandably, therefore, the Zionist movement centered its work in the United States. To this end the initiative was taken by the American Zionist organizations unified, after laborious discussions, in the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC).\textsuperscript{7} They, with the cooperation of prominent mem-

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pp. 100–11.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 348.
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
presents the case for a Jewish State before
the United Nations, 1947
bers of the World Zionist Executive then in the country, met in an extraordinary assembly in New York's Biltmore Hotel on May 9–11, 1942, to devise a plan of action.

While the Biltmore Program, as it came to be called, condemned the 1939 White Papers, its significance, historically, in- heres in its affirmative resolutions. It demanded that Palestine be constituted a Jewish commonwealth; for that purpose, the country was to be opened to unrestricted Jewish immigration and settlement under the control of the Jewish Agency for Palestine—a technical synonym for the World Zionist Organization—so that the Jewish population might make up, as rapidly as possible, a substantive majority. Within a short time this program became the platform of the Zionist movement—exclusive of the Zionist Revisionists, a militant minority grouping outside of the World Zionist Organization.

Once the Biltmore Program was accepted, there was general agreement that it would be more efficacious in influencing public opinion if it were approved publicly by all segments of organized American Jewry, Zionist and non-Zionist, and the American Jewish Conference was convened in New York on August 29–September 2, 1943. In essence, the Biltmore formulation was approved, but the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Labor Committee—two non-Zionist groups—dissented and subsequently withdrew from the Conference. Morris D. Waldman, the executive vice-president of the American Jewish Committee, later avowed: "We were led to believe by President Roosevelt and the State Department that a Jewish commonwealth resolution at the Conference was likely to arouse the hostility of the Arab world toward the Allies and throw that pivotal region into the lap of the Nazis."

There is incontrovertible evidence that Waldman's assertion is beyond cavil. Early in August, 1943, the leadership of the AZEC...
was warned by State Department officials that, unless the plans for the Conference with its scheduled endorsement of the Biltmore Program were cancelled, the governments of Britain and the United States would issue a joint statement informing their citizens that “it would be helpful to the war effort if public discussions and activities relating to Palestine would cease as it was not essential that the Palestine question be answered prior to the end of the war, excepting a friendly agreement was arrived at by the Arabs and Jews through their own efforts; otherwise, both Governments agreed that no decision on Palestine would be taken without full consultation with all concerned including Arabs and Jews.”

It is now known that this British-American declaration was not issued because the War Department refused to justify its publication on military grounds. In this connection, it is worth quoting part of a memorandum of August 6, 1943, prepared by Secretary of State Cordell Hull for the archives of his Department:

... Secretary [of War Henry L.] Stimson called me over the telephone and said he had investigated the matter and came to the conclusion that the security in Palestine was not so serious as to warrant any action from a military point of view, and that the War Department did not propose to take the matter up. I thanked him and said that ended it as far as the State Department was concerned. I added... intimations had been coming from some persons or officials in the War Department in favor of such proposals... these intimations were based upon reports from military authorities in the Middle East and upon reports from our diplomatic and consular officers which had been made available to the War Department, and that had influenced some of my associates in the State Department.

Incidentally, this memorandum clearly suggests that American diplomats in the Arab capitals at this time were substantial factors.

Originally the State Department proposed to Great Britain three alternative procedures for the joint statement: It might be issued by the United Nations, or by Britain, China, Russia and the United States or solely by London and Washington: FRUS, Vol. IV, 1943, pp. 790–92. The text of the final official statement is quoted in ibid., pp. 799–800. However, no such statement was ever made public. Hence the Zionists did not know its precise content.

Ibid., pp. 802–3.

These Arab protests, the comments of the diplomatic officers stationed in the Arab capitals, and the replies of the State Department can be read: ibid., pp. 768–90. It
in the decision of the State Department to join the British Foreign Office in issuing the proposed statement. The British quite naturally were distressed that the venture faltered. At their initiative, the issue was again considered at the first Quebec Conference in August, 1943, with the result that President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed "to hold the statement in abeyance on a month to month basis." After the Quebec Conference, Secretary Hull made a final effort to persuade Secretary Stimson to change his mind. On September 1, he wrote to the Secretary of War that the British were "greatly disappointed at the American decision," and enclosed for his study a "communication" regarding the Palestine situation that the British had submitted to the American delegation. Stimson remained steadfast. Thus the Joint Statement proposal became moribund to be revived whenever its publication would be judged desirable by both Governments.

II

Three months earlier, on June 11, 1943, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles had accompanied Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to the White House for a conference with President Roosevelt. Prime Minister Churchill and he, Roosevelt casually observed, had decided to invite representative Jews and Arabs to confer with them in an effort to reach a mutual understanding on the future of Palestine. Weizmann accepted the idea, but insisted that "the Arabs must be told that the reasons which have brought about the Balfour Declaration and the subsequent develop-

should be added that, after every pro-Zionist gesture of any branch of the American government—White House, Congress, or political party—there followed a cycle of Arab protests which the American diplomats forwarded to Washington with foreboding but approving remarks.

Ibid., p. 804, note 88.

Ibid., pp. 804–5.

Ibid., pp. 810–11. It must be noted that the decision not to publish the joint American-British statement was made at the Quebec Conference in August. Nevertheless, the Zionist leadership was not informed of the decision. On the contrary, the Zionists were still pressured to abandon the American Jewish Conference. Indeed, they did not learn of the Quebec decision till October.
ment in Palestine have not lost their meaning. On the contrary, they are more valid and pertinent.” He went on to emphasize “the necessity of doing things now and not waiting for the end of the war... for uncertainty is always contributing towards tension.” Welles concurred. Since the President, too, appeared to assent, Welles advised him to send a personal emissary to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia—a man regarded by the White House and the State Department as the principal political personality in the Arab world—“to prepare the ground.” They then and there selected Lieut. Col. Harold B. Hoskins of the U. S. Army, “a fluent Arabist and a close student of the Arab-Jewish problem,” for the post.¹⁸

It is astonishing that Welles, who professed to be a friend of Zionism, should have recommended this man for the mission. He was surely aware that Hoskins had returned a month before from a three-month survey tour of the Middle East and North Africa as the President’s official representative and that his report was utterly unfavorable to the Zionist cause and endorsed the Arab standpoint with regard to the Palestine problem. In fact, the Hoskins report served as the design for the chief features of the Palestine policy of the State Department: It suggested a text for a joint statement to discourage public discussion of the Palestine problem for the duration of the war and its justification as a military measure and assurances to the Arab world that no basic change in the status of Palestine would be made without prior and full consultation with all concerned, including Arabs and Jews; the complete separation of American “all-out aid for persecuted Jews in Europe” from “the extremely controversial proposal to establish a Jewish political state in Palestine”; and, finally, a post-war solution of the Palestine problem which should transform Palestine into a bi-national state within a Levant Federation, with the Holy Places constituting an enclave controlled by the United Nations, and “the cession of some specific territory other than Palestine for a Jewish State, possibly northern Cirenaica [part of Libya] which is now virtually uninhabited.” The State Department deemed the Hoskins document so significant that Secretary Hull, in a personal note to the President, dated May 7, 1943, urged him to study at least the enclosed “summary.” Incidentally, Hull also asked the President in this note for his approval of “the wording of the pro-

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 792–94.
posed UN declaration... which we could first discuss with the British and subsequently with other United Nations." It was originally contemplated, it should be recalled, that the Joint Statement be signed by the additional governments associated in the UN fighting against the Nazi and Fascist regimes.

As has been indicated, Washington regarded Hoskins as an authority on Arab-Jewish problems. It is, therefore, pertinent to provide a brief sketch of his background. He was born in Beirut, at the time part of Ottoman Syria, in 1895; his parents were Christian missionaries there for many years. In his middle teens he was brought to the United States for his prep school and university education. He retained his Arab contacts by repeated visits and business connections and served as a trustee, vice-president and chairman of the board of the American University of Beirut. He went to the State Department in 1941; the following year he became an officer of the American army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but continued his diplomatic work for the State Department. Hoskins resigned in 1945 to resume his business career. It is necessary to point out that Hoskins conformed to the general rule that State Department officers with missionary backgrounds in the Middle East have been, without exception, antipathetic to Zionist aspirations in Palestine.

After London agreed to his appointment, Col. Hoskins received his orders on July 7. They included this precise consideration: "Will King Ibn Saud enter into discussions with Dr. Chaim Weizmann or other representatives selected by the Jewish Agency for the purpose of seeking a solution of basic problems affecting Palestine acceptable to both Arabs and Jews?" Hoskins submitted his official report with regard to that directive to the State Department on August 31. It is important to note that he prefaced the document with extraneous details which aimed to exalt the king's wisdom and integrity, religious zeal and political acumen, and the cordial and comradely treatment he had offered his guest. As to the primary question, Ibn Saud's answer was a "clear and categoric refusal."

The king's reason for his unwillingness to meet with Weizmann or

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20 Ibid., pp. 781–85.
22 FRUS, 1943, p. 796.
any other Zionist personality is interesting and symptomatic of Arab psychology. According to Hoskins, Ibn Saud revealed to him a state secret: He hated Weizmann and his associates because, during the first year of the war, the Zionist leader had sent him St. John Philby, a British Arabist scholar and explorer who was an intimate friend and unofficial counsellor of the Arab ruler for many years before the war and afterwards, with an offer of a bribe of £20,000,000 to “deliver” Palestine to the Zionists, and the payment was to be guaranteed by President Roosevelt. Hoskins accepted this revelation as gospel truth; the greater surprise is that the State Department as well as the President did likewise, despite its unreasonableness. In fact, in his memorandum of September 27, describing his visit to the White House “to report in full” the results of his mission, Hoskins wrote:

The President expressed understanding of the King’s refusal to see Dr. Weizmann in view of the attempted bribe that had been made. The President also expressed surprise and irritation that his name as guarantor of payment had been in any way brought into this matter since there was of course no basis in fact for doing so.

At that time the tale created a sinister sensation. With the years, however, it has been recognized as an Arab fantasy based on grains of truth which have no relationship whatever to a bribery attempt. It seems that the king’s charge was based on a misreading of a plan which Philby brought to him early in 1940 on his return to Arabia from England. The plan devised by Philby—and agreed to by Weizmann—provided that Palestine become a Jewish state; displaced Palestinian Arabs were to be resettled elsewhere at the expense of the Jews; £20,000,000 were to be placed at the king’s disposal for this purpose. The *quid pro quo* was UN recognition of all Arab countries in Asia as independent sovereign states. Both Philby and Weizmann in their autobiographies record their recollections of this agreement. Though they differ on several of its aspects, they

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demonstrate beyond question that the bribery accusation was a fig-
ment of the royal imagination. Logically and psychologically, it is
inconceivable that Philby would be the bearer of a bribe offer to the
king. Arab leaders are noted for mingling fact with fiction when they
believe that the resultant fantasy will redound to their benefit.

Be that as it may, the précis of Hoskins' visit with the President on
September 27 is necessarily a significant historical document in that
it records the President's opinion on several aspects of the Palestine
problem—the future status of Palestine and the related question of
the resettlement of Jewish refugees.

One example of each subject must suffice:

1) The President's own thinking leaned towards a wider use of the idea
of trusteeship for Palestine—of making Palestine a real Holy Land
for all three religions, with a Jew, a Christian, and a Moslem as the
three responsible trustees. He emphasized that this idea "required
further thought and needed to be worked out in greater detail."

2) As to the Jewish refugee problem, the President had been assured that
the number of European Jews who will want to settle in Palestine after
the war may be substantially less than was originally anticipated. . . .
He was still working on the possibility of settling a certain number of
them in the trans-Andean portions of Colombia, in South America
. . . (Italics supplied). 27

It is astonishing to what degree the President's private views—if
correctly reported—reflected the opinions of the State Department
officials in charge of Middle Eastern affairs and even of the political
leaders of the Arab states as pictured in the current consular dis-
patches to Washington.

III

The Zionist Emergency Council, even though it had inklings of
the unfavorable views concerning Zionist hopes for Palestine held by
the State Department and the White House, intensified its political
activities to realize them. That this work was fruitful is evident from
the fact that, on February 1, 1944, a bipartisan commonwealth
resolution, identical in phraseology, was introduced in both Houses

of Congress:

Resolved that the United States shall use its good offices and take appropriate measures to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be opened for free entry of Jews into that country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization so that the Jewish people may ultimately constitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.28

At the time there was general agreement in Washington that Congressional support for the resolution was overwhelming. Indeed, Adolph A. Berle, the Assistant Secretary of State, informed a high-ranking official of the British embassy three days before the Resolutions were officially introduced "that they would be passed by a large majority, if not unanimously." 29

As a matter of formal courtesy, Congressman Sol Bloom, chairman of the House Committee for Foreign Affairs (HCFA), and Senator Tom Connally, chairman of the Senate Committee for Foreign Relations (SCFR), notified the State Department of their intentions. Thereupon its officials went to work to thwart the Congressional plans. As in the case of the joint statement, the Department officers were unwilling to raise political objections to the consideration of the resolution. They, accordingly, turned again to the War Department to provide adequate military reasons for inaction by the Congressional committees. This time the military reluctantly obliged, but only because the President requested it. Even so, the resolution was not shelved until March 17.

The relevant events of these weeks are intriguing. As early as February 8, Secretary Stimson wrote to Senator Connally:

...The subject of this resolution is a matter of deep concern to the War Department. I feel that the passage of this resolution at the present time, or even any public hearings thereon, would be apt to provoke dangerous repercussions in areas where we have many vital military interests. Any conflict between Jews and Arabs would require the retention of troops in affected areas and thus reduce the total forces that could otherwise be placed in combat against Germany. The consequent unrest in other portions of the Arab world would keep United Nations resources away from the combat zone.

29 Ibid., p. 561.
I believe, therefore, that our war effort would be seriously prejudiced by such action.  

Secretary Hull endorsed his colleague's stand in a note to Senator Connally, dated February 9, and added, "... it is believed that without reference to its merits no further action on this resolution would be advisable at this time."  

The resolution, however, remained on the agenda, mainly because the members of the SCFR insisted that Stimson's letter be published in order that the American people should know who was responsible for its tabling. This issue became so important that it was discussed at the Cabinet level on February 18. At this meeting, despite the fact that the President "expressed the opinion that it was important that the letter be made public," Secretary Stimson suggested that he would like to review the matter with General George C. Marshall, chairman of the combined chiefs of staff, who "was anxious that the letter not be made public," and also to try the "executive session method" in the hope that John J. McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War, and General R. E. Hardy, of the General Staff, would persuade the SCFR at such a session "to stop the matter." Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius was not satisfied with this delaying tactic and stressed "that the State Department felt it was important for the letter to be made public."  

At a subsequent conference, the President assured Stettinius that he "was hopeful that the McCloy-Hardy testimony may end the matter but if not... the Stimson letter should be published."  

In due course, the War Department officers, including Marshall and McCloy, testified. Their testimony reflected generally the views of the Department as outlined in an official memorandum prepared by McCloy. In this document he cited several military reasons which required peaceful conditions in the Middle East, since G-2 reports warned of "a high degree of tension in Palestine." Consequently, any action—and the passage of the resolution would be such an act—which would intensify and increase the unrest "would greatly com-

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Ibid., p. 563.  
Ibid., pp. 563-64.  
Ibid., pp. 567-68.  
Ibid., p. 569.
promise our military capacities.” His terse concluding remark tells its own story:

I do not intend to exaggerate the consequences which would flow from the adoption of this resolution as I cannot be certain that all these results will flow... but... I think it is quite apparent that from a military point of view we would much prefer to let sleeping dogs lie.

McCloy also advised the witnesses that in case they were pressed to suggest a substitute resolution, they should be “most reluctant to express any view,” for “what is provocative in the Palestine problem is a political matter” and is, therefore, “within the province of the State Department.” McCloy further informed his associates that, in his personal testimony, he intended to emphasize that the Department considered the problem exclusively from the military standpoint.84

Anyway, their arguments in camera had little effect. The senators insisted that they would proceed with the resolution unless the War Department made its objections public. Consequently, the dispute between the two departments about the publication of the Stimson letter of February 7 became quite acute on March 2, at an interdepartmental conference at which McCloy urged the State Department representatives to take a more active part in opposing the resolution “since it had political as well as military implications,” while the diplomats expressed their impatience with the tactics of the military. They had assurances that the President favored their stand and that the White House was embarrassed at the public support of the resolution.85

Actually, the State Department was so vexed with the troublesome delays that Stettinius, in a memorandum to the President, dated March 4, proposed the issuance of the dormant British-American statement on Palestine to postpone the debate on Palestine to the victorious end of the war. To persuade the President of the necessity for such action, the secretary urged that Hoskins be called to the White House for consultation about the subject and enclosed copies of the protests of the Arab governments against the resolution.86 He

84 Ibid., pp. 574-77.
85 Ibid., pp. 581-82.
86 The protests of the Arab governments and the comments of the American diplomats in their transmission of the Arab remonstrances to the State Department as well as Washington's replies are fully recorded in this section of the volume.
concluded that the British "would welcome such a statement" and that he was ready "to take up the matter promptly with them" once he obtained the President's concurrence. It was granted.  

Subsequently, the Department decided to raise this question in London since Stettinius and several of his assistants were scheduled to confer there, during April 7-29, with officers of the Foreign Office for a general and informal review of problems of mutual concern. As was to be expected, however, the drama dealing with the Palestine Resolution came to an end with a victory for the Administration; the last scene was not enacted in the SCFR, but in the HCFA. On March 17, after McCloy's testimony before the HCFA which included the reading of the pertinent parts of the Stimson letter, Chairman Bloom issued the following statement:

At an executive meeting held today by the Committee... and following the receipt of a letter from the Secretary of War, the Committee approved the issuance of the following statement: Advice and information given to us by those responsible for the conduct of the war have convinced the Committee that action upon the resolutions at this time would be unwise.  

Significantly, the Bloom statement and the Stimson letter were rushed in a midnight telegram, over the signature of Secretary Hull, to the American minister in Cairo with instructions to repeat the message "to Jerusalem, Jidda, Baghdad, Beirut and Damascus."  

Despite the alarming dispatches which poured into Washington at this time from its diplomatic officers in the Arab countries, the American minister resident at Jidda cabled the Department on March 23:

The contents of Department telegram, March 17 midnight, has been transmitted to King Ibn Saud. While local people have had their interest in proposed Resolutions stimulated by radio broadcasts in Arabic, there is nothing to show that there was any alarm nor that the standing of the United States was affected.  

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87 Ibid., pp. 586-87.  
88 Ibid., p. 591.  
89 Ibid.  
90 FRUS, 1944, p. 596.
Since 1944 was an election year in which the President planned to be a candidate for a fourth term, he acted to allay the public apprehension of the Zionists and their friends, provoked by the hostile attitude of the Administration to the “commonwealth” resolution. Therefore, he sought an auspicious occasion for a conciliatory gesture. On March 9, a dinner meeting of distinguished non-Jewish advocates of the Zionist cause—representatives of the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Committee for Palestine, the Christian Council for Palestine, and similar sympathetic groupings—was scheduled in Washington to voice support of the American people for the Zionist aspirations in Palestine in general and the “commonwealth” proposal in particular. On that very day the President received Drs. Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver, the two representative spokesmen of the American Zionist forces, and empowered them to make a public pronouncement. This they did as soon as they emerged from the White House, and they read it again that evening at the gala gathering:

The American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of 1939. The President is happy that the doors of Palestine are today open to Jewish refugees. When future decisions are reached full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home for which our Government and the American people have always had the deepest sympathy and today more than ever in view of the tragic plight of hundreds of thousands of homeless Jewish refugees.41

It must be recalled that, according to the White Paper of 1939, Jewish immigration to Palestine would end on March 31, 1944, and the Jewish National Home would be regarded as de facto achieved. This was British policy and law. Accordingly, the doors to Palestine were to be closed to Jewish refugees as soon as the authorized original quota of 75,000 was exhausted. Due to the exigencies of the war, some 30,000 entry certificates had not been utilized when the closing date was at hand—within a fortnight. The doors to Palestine were not open, but ajar to be slammed shut as soon as the quota was filled. In a technical sense only was the President’s statement correct; in

fact, the White Paper was in full force. Its disavowal by the President—five years after its promulgation—did not alter its legality and its implementation. And he was fully aware of the situation since the British government so informed the State Department, and its diplomats were for the most part in accord with that policy. Moreover, not a word was said in the statement about reconstituting Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth, as the Congressional resolutions proposed. For practical purposes the omission was a refutation of the "commonwealth" concept. The Zionists, helpless and frustrated, put up a brave front. Actually, they understood its "impreciseness" and its implication. The distinguished assembly of non-Jewish advocates of Zionism did not waver and did adopt a resolution endorsing the "commonwealth" plan.42

It is not surprising that Secretary of State Cordell Hull, in answer to a protest by the Egyptian government against the Wise-Silver declaration, instructed the American minister in Cairo, in a telegram of March 15, to present those very arguments to mollify that government. Importantly, the minister was to transmit the message to the American diplomatic officers stationed in the other Arab capitals to indicate to the several governments that the President's intent was really to repudiate the Congressional resolution:

.... You should point out that the statement of the Zionist leaders mentions a Jewish national home rather than a Jewish commonwealth as referred to in the resolutions recently introduced in the Congress... that while the American Government has never given its approval of the White Paper of 1939, it is also true that this Government has never taken a position in regard to the White Paper. You should, in addition, assure... that it is the view of this Government that no decision altering the basic situation of Palestine should be reached without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews.

Significantly, a marginal notation on the original draft of the telegram, apparently submitted to the President, reads: "Approved by the President." 43

About this time—mid-March, 1944—the State Department, in planning for the April London conference with Foreign Office diplo-
mats, placed on the agenda two documents dealing with the Middle
East for their consideration: The revised joint statement—a replica
of the aborted declaration of 1943—already approved by the Presi-
dent and the State Department, and a "just and equitable" plan for
the future of Palestine, prepared by the Near East Division. It recom-
mented that Palestine be constituted an international territory under
a UN charter, that a Great Power—Great Britain, of course—be
designated its Trustee, that a Board of Overseers, representing the
three world religions, serve as an advisory body and be recognized
in the Charter, and that two autonomous communities with local self-
government be provided for.44

Accordingly, at a meeting of British and American diplomats, on
April 11, 1944, Sir Maurice Peterson, Under Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs, declared categorically: "The White Paper of 1939
as far as the Foreign Office is concerned... will certainly be main-
tained during the war. However, it must be regarded as provisional
to be superseded by some definitive solution following the termina-
tion of hostilities." Then the American Trusteeship plan for Palestine
was considered. Sir Maurice, while not speaking for his government,
was certain that the Foreign Office "would go all out for this plan." 45

In sum, the diplomats of both governments were in essential agree-
ment on the future of Palestine, evincing a striking misconception of
the wishes and attitudes of the Arabs and Jews in and outside of
Palestine. At the same meeting, Wallace Murray, who was the di-
rector of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, raised the subject of
publishing the "joint statement." He explained that, in his view,
this action was essential to avoid a possible "explosion" in Palestine.
Sir Maurice disagreed with this analysis; he did not foresee serious
trouble from the Arabs or Jews—though he was less certain about
the latter—which the Palestine authorities could not control. He
promised, however, to submit this matter to his government.46

At a subsequent conference, on April 19, Sir Maurice, to Murray's
chagrin and amazement, announced that his government was of the
opinion that the publication of a joint statement at this time was in-

44 Ibid., pp. 592–96.

45 Ibid., pp. 600–603. It is pertinent that Peterson proposed an identical scheme for
postwar Palestine.

46 Ibid., pp. 603–4.
advisable—"it might do more harm than good"—even though his colleagues were worried about the continuance of the Zionist agitation in the United States. To this Murray responded, diplomatically, that under the circumstances "we would let well enough alone." As for the Zionist agitation in the United States, he felt that the stand of the War Department against the Palestine resolutions had eased the Zionist pressure, but the propaganda might "spring up again at any time." Sir Maurice, accordingly, suggested that the matter be kept in abeyance for future contingencies—a recommendation similar to that of the Quebec Conference of 1943. Nevertheless, this diplomatic dialogue clearly reemphasized the questionable assumption that Zionist propaganda in the United States endangered the armed forces of the United Nations in the Middle East by provoking Arab violence in the area. Certainly, such Arab reactions in 1944 were out of the question. Indeed, as will be indicated in due course, Secretary Stimson some months later withdrew the military objections which his Department had posed against the approval of the "commonwealth" resolution by the Congress.

V

Undismayed by political setbacks and the adverse attitude of government officials towards their activities, the American Zionists continued their quest for public support, and it again proved effective. In the summer of 1944, both political parties at their national conventions in Chicago—the Republicans on June 27, and the Democrats on July 24—adopted "commonwealth" planks in their platforms. The Republicans called for:

... the opening of Palestine ... to unrestricted immigration and land ownership so that in accordance with the full intent and purpose of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the resolution of the Republican Congress of 1922, Palestine may be constituted as a free and democratic commonwealth.47

The Democratic platform contained this precise plank:

We favor the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and

47 ITAB, June 29, 1944, p. 3.
colonization, and such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.\textsuperscript{48}

As was their habitual practice, the Arab governments reacted to these planks with diplomatic protests and veiled threats which the American diplomats gravely transmitted to the State Department. Pursuant to its instructions, they assured the Arab Foreign Offices

\ldots That a distinction is to be drawn between statements which may have been made informally by various persons in the United States, in Government circles as well as in private life \ldots and the formal attitude of this Government towards the Palestine question as set forth in such recent instructions as Department's telegram \ldots of March 15 \ldots and March 28 \ldots.\textsuperscript{49}

The spokesmen of the Arab governments, however, continued to insist that "pre-election commitments may have an influence upon post-election Government policies." Anyway, Secretary Hull felt obliged to write this naive note, dated July 25, to the President:

\ldots in view of the strategic importance to us of the Near East, I believe it would be advisable for the leaders of both parties to refrain from making statements on Palestine during the campaign that might tend to arouse the Arabs or upset the precarious balance of forces in Palestine itself.\textsuperscript{50}

Naturally, Hull's suggestion was not worth the paper on which it was written. In fact, as an experienced practical politician he did not expect to be heeded. Nor was he. However, due to the fact that the military objections to the Congressional "commonwealth" resolutions were still in effect, many of the top level men of both parties, and especially members of the Administration, hesitated to support the Palestine planks publicly. But with the approach of the final stage of the campaign, the leading politicians of both parties deemed it desirable that the War Department recall formally its disapproval of the "commonwealth" concept so as to avoid embarrassing the Presidential candidates who were waiting for the opportune occasion to endorse the Palestine planks of their respective parties. Actually, both President Roosevelt and Governor Thomas E. Dewey planned

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, July 23, 1944, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{FRUS}, 1944, p. 611.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 606.
to utilize, for this purpose, the forty-seventh annual convention of the Zionist Organization of America. It was scheduled to open in Atlantic City in mid-October and would draw all the national Zionist leaders and the key Zionists of all Jewish communities. In any case, Secretary Stimson, on October 10, wrote to Robert A. Taft, the Republican leader of the Senate, retracting his previous objections to the passage of the Palestine resolutions and explaining: “In my judgment political considerations now outweigh the military, and the issue should be determined upon the political rather than the military basis.” 51

So the road was open for the candidates’ action:

Two days later, on October 12, Governor Dewey announced:

I hereby endorse the Palestine plank of the Republican platform. Again I repeat . . . that I am for the reconstitution of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth in accordance with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 . . . I have also stated to Dr. [Abba Hillel] Silver that in order to give refuge to millions of distressed Jews driven from their homes by tyranny, I favor the opening of Palestine to their unlimited immigration and land ownership . . . . The Republican Party has at all times been the traditional friend of this movement.

As President I would use my best offices to have our Government working together with Great Britain to achieve this great objective for a people that have suffered so much and deserve so much at the hands of mankind. 62

Three days later, the President asked Senator Robert F. Wagner to convey the Presidential message to the Convention in person. It must be stressed that the President’s choice of Senator Wagner—not only a distinguished senator and an intimate friend, but also a distinctive advocate of the Zionist cause—gave extraordinary significance to the statement:

Washington, October 15, 1944

Dear Bob: Knowing that you are to attend . . . the convention of the ZOA, I ask you to convey to the delegates assembled my cordial greetings. Please express my satisfaction that, in accord with the traditional American policy and in keeping with the four freedoms the Democratic Party at its July convention this year included the following plank in its platform.

51 Ibid., p. 618, note 24.

52 Ibid., p. 617, note 21.
Efforts will be made to find appropriate ways and means of effecting this policy as soon as practicable. I know how long and ardently the Jewish people have worked and prayed for the establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth. I am convinced that the American people give their support to this aim and if re-elected I shall help to bring about its realization.\textsuperscript{53}

The President was re-elected on November 7. The Zionists were jubilant and hopeful. They assumed that the "commonwealth" objective was no longer a political issue, but a settled bipartisan policy in the United States. Above all, they had the solemn pledge of the President "to bring about the realization" of their quest "as soon as practicable." Moreover, the United Nations armed forces were in control of the war with victory in the offing. To create even a more favorable climate for action, steps were taken for the Congress to reconsider the Palestine resolutions.

VI

Immediately after the publication of the President's letter at the Convention, Chairman Sol Bloom of the HCFA announced that he planned to call his Committee together in mid-November

\ldots for the immediate consideration of the Palestine resolution. In view of the approval of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of War I have no doubt that the resolution will be favorably reported by the HCFA without delay.

He based his opinion on these facts:

Favorable action \ldots would be in accord with our Government's established policy towards Palestine and \ldots in conformity with the Palestine planks of the platforms of both the Democratic and Republican parties. I am looking forward to the speedy approval of this resolution.\textsuperscript{54}

He was an optimist. As soon as Murray noticed the Bloom announcement, he took exception to one of its parts and complained about it to Secretaries Hull and Stettinius in a memorandum of October 23:

While the recent letter of Secretary Stimson to Senator Taft \ldots might be

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 615.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{JTAB}, October 16, 1944, p. 3.
interpreted as indicating approval of the resolutions it is not of course correct that you have ever given your approval, and when the occasion arises you may accordingly wish to bring this to Mr. Bloom's attention.\textsuperscript{55}

In Murray's view, apparently, the President's public statement was not binding on the State Department. His two superiors in the Department, tacitly at least, accepted that standpoint since, according to the existent written evidence, they made no comment on the complaint. This is not at all startling in view of the fact that, after the elections, the President's public pledge of October 15 was ignored by the Administration and the basic Palestine policy of the Government remained unaffected by the public pledges of the Democratic Party and the President of the United States.

Though the HCFA, on November 29, approved the resolution, weakened by amendments to placate the State Department,\textsuperscript{56} the Rules Committee delayed to provide the essential rule to bring it to the floor of the House. It is now known that its chairman, Congressman Adolph J. Sabath, in a conference with Stettinius, then Secretary of State, assured him "very confidentially that he may be able to get his committee to defer action on the House resolutions."\textsuperscript{57} The SCFR began to consider its text on December 6, in an executive session at which Secretary Stettinius testified that the government was opposed to the passage of the resolution "at this time." Consequently, after political maneuvering, Senator Tom Connally, the chairman of the SCFR, announced on December 12 that the Committee voted to table the Wagner-Taft resolution on Palestine and that the State Department would issue a statement defining the reasons for its opposition to the resolution as presented to the Committee. The announcement was made the very day by the Department:

\ldots the SCFR has inquired as to the attitude \ldots towards these resolutions. The Department has the utmost sympathy for the persecuted Jewish people in Europe and has been assisting them through active support of the work of the War Refugee Board and in every other possible way. The Department considers, however, that the passage of the resolutions at the

\textsuperscript{55} FRUS, 1944, pp. 619-20.

\textsuperscript{56} ITAB, November 30, 1944, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{57} FRUS, 1944, p. 644 (last paragraph).
present time would be unwise from the standpoint of the general international situation and has so informed the SCFR.68

It is altogether proper to ask one question: Did "the general international situation" change so radically between October 15, when the President of the United States personally endorsed the Palestine plank of his party, and December 6, when the Secretary of State, with his express approval, opposed the SCFR resolution as "unwise"? The answer, of course, is that the international situation did not change, but the political scene in the United States did change. The national elections had taken place, and the pledges of the Democratic Party and its successful standard-bearer were—as often happens—ignored.

VII

The fact is that the President's letter of October 15 provoked anger and consternation among the officers of the State Department and the diplomats stationed in the Middle East capitals.59 The dispatches of the latter to Washington describing the reaction of the Arab officials were even more alarming than hitherto, though the official remonstrances were not unusually inimical. The popular Arab demonstrations on November 2, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, were annual affairs and not especially aimed at the United States.

Since the messages of Loy W. Henderson, the minister in Iraq, exemplify to a large extent the nature of the information transmitted to Washington by the other diplomats in the region, his reports between October 21 and November 7, 1944, are summarized: The implementation of the pre-election promises to the Zionists would without question seriously affect the relations between Iraq and the United States. Moreover, according to Western-educated Iraqis, Soviet influence was perceptively penetrating the Arab world as the American pro-Zionist Palestine policy became pronounced; it was bound to increase as the people learned that Moscow was opposed to

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., pp. 616–43. All these pages deal with the Arab protests to the President's statement of October 15, 1944, and the reactions to them by the American diplomats in the Middle East and Murray in Washington.
Zionism. Russian diplomats, aware of this trend, discreetly intimated that their government at the proper moment would announce its opposition to a Jewish state. American interests in the area, therefore, were bound to be progressively jeopardized as this Soviet policy was proclaimed and the United States' pro-Zionist position was maintained. Furthermore, the Iraqi government, to assure its independence from Great Britain, was desirous to cultivate the friendship of the United States in order that it might serve as a counterfoil to London. If the United States persisted in its pro-Zionist policy in Palestine, Iraq would "reluctantly" turn to Soviet Russia and seek to develop close relations with Moscow to achieve that purpose. 

It should be added that Henderson, in a personal memorandum to Murray, dated November 4, felt obliged to counteract the possible impression that he was "rabidly anti-Zionist." According to him, he was not. He felt duty-bound to secure American interests in Iraq. To this end, he "had come to the conclusion that he must inform the Department with force and bluntness of the situation here as I see it." At the same time, he repeated the argument that Soviet Russia would be the sole beneficiary in the Arab world as a result of the American pro-Zionist attitude.

Murray, fully agreeing with Henderson's conclusions, relayed these dispatches to Under Secretary of State Stettinius and added an urgent plea that Stettinius discuss the matter with the President "at the earliest opportunity."

The basic long-term American economic interests in Saudi Arabia will be seriously threatened and possibly jeopardized... as well as the future of the American oil concession in that country which is of incalculable value to the present and future strategic requirements of the United States. ... Another aspect of the matter which is disturbing is the effect that these developments will have... vis-à-vis... Great Britain and Soviet Russia. The British... welcome any development, such as this, which strengthens their position with the Arabs by putting us in an unfavorable light.

That Murray had lost his perspective is clear from these remarks:

I have come to the conclusion that the reaction in the Near East to recent developments in this country affecting Palestine is going to have so serious

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an effect upon our foreign relations as to make it advisable for you to discuss this matter with the President at the earliest opportunity . . . (even at this time ten days before election day). 62

Actually, this memorandum and others—dated October 27 and November 4 and 11—were a criticism of the President’s action with regard to Palestine. Murray accused the President of violating his pledge, repeatedly given to the Arab governments and especially to King Ibn Saud, that the future of Palestine would not be decided without prior consultation with them. The result of this policy, according to him, had been that Russia and Britain were given the opportunity to scheme to supplant American influence in the area. Thus, to drive home his point, Murray did not hesitate to sow seeds of distrust of the two principal American allies.

It is relevant to point out, in this connection, what the American chargé d’affaires in London reported to Washington—on November 2—that a Foreign Office diplomat had told him that, while it was obviously to the Allied interest that nothing should be done that “might lead to major disorders on the part of the Arabs,” the statements made during our Presidential campaign on the Jewish question had not aroused as much reaction among the Arabs as had been expected. 63 These Mid-East dispatches probably help to explain the behind-the-scenes political moves which, according to the available documents, accompanied the reconsideration of the Palestine resolutions by the Congressional committees.

Two days after the election, on November 9, Drs. Wise and Silver, the co-chairmen of the AZEC, confident of success, met with Stettinius to determine whether the Department would support the re-introduction of the Palestine resolutions during the current session of Congress. He answered that he would have to consult the President about it. On November 15, Congressman Bloom also asked Secretary Stettinius, pro forma, to define the Administration’s attitude toward the resolution which he intended to bring up that day in the HCFA. Thereupon the Secretary of State immediately consulted the President. And the decision was a negative one, since in a memorandum of the same date Stettinius notified the Department officers


63 Ibid., p. 630.
concerned:

The President felt it would be a mistake to have the Palestine resolutions introduced at this time. I have advised Sol Bloom and Dr. Wise to this effect.64

No reason for the decision is indicated. Nevertheless, as has been reported, Bloom did introduce the resolution; his Committee approved it, but the Rules Committee buried it.

On November 23, Senator Wagner put the same question to Stettinius by telephone. He received a detailed explanation: At Wise's request—there is no reference to Congressman Bloom—he had considered the subject with the President “only a few days ago.”

It was the President's considered judgment that in view of the recent murder of [the British resident minister] Lord Moyne in Cairo and the generally delicate situation in the Middle East it would be unwise to bring out the resolution at this time. . . . The President would meet some time in the future with high representatives of other governments and he was hopeful that at that time he could be helpful in arranging a suitable solution.65

According to this document, “Senator Wagner indicated that he would go along with the President's views.” Apparently, this appraisal was incorrect, for in a memorandum of December 5, written by Stettinius to the President, he pointed out that Senator Wagner and Dr. Silver had met with him that morning; that Senator Wagner, though he had received a personal note from the President not to press the resolution at this time, “insisted that no harm would be done by its passage since it does nothing more than endorse the statement you made to him on October 15.” 66

The resolution was introduced the next day, December 6. Seemingly, the Administration banked on Senator Connally to aid in killing it in the SCFR. Actually, Secretary Stettinius, in the same memorandum, informed the President that he and Senator Connally met that afternoon to review the matter, that the latter was told about

64 Ibid., p. 637, note 55.
65 Ibid., p. 640.
66 Ibid., pp. 641-42.
the President’s note to Senator Wagner which the Administration regarded as its official viewpoint, and that, while Senator Wagner continued to work for its passage, Senator Connally would “be able to persuade the Committee not to take action at this time.” The Secretary was also of the opinion that the Senator had the situation in hand and that he would not be required to testify.67 Stettinius was again mistaken. From his telegram of December 6 to the President, then in Warm Springs, Georgia, it is clear that the SCFR requested him to testify and he did so at a secret session that very morning “on five minutes notice.” Otherwise, Chairman Connally warned him “the resolution would be immediately voted out favorably and we [the Administration] would have to take the responsibility.”

His testimony is relevant both politically and psychologically:

I made clear that this was a highly delicate matter; that I would talk to them in all confidence; and that there might be serious repercussions if there was any violation of this confidence. I explained the delicate situation in the Arab world; that you had not yet had an opportunity to deal with this question as exhaustively as you had in mind; and that we felt that passage . . . now would tie your hands and not leave you in a flexible position.68

In the end, he admitted that, despite his testimony, the Committee would be willing to leave the matter in the hands of the Executive provided the Administration issued a public statement to the effect that “in our judgment the passage of this legislation at this time would be unwise from the standpoint of the general international situation.”

Senator Connally asked for a prompt answer as the Committee planned to resume its deliberations on December 8.69 The Committee met as scheduled. The chairman—according to the Stettinius telegram of that date to the President—read confidentially the Department’s prepared statement,70 which had the President’s approval,71 and assured the members that it would be made public “if

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., pp. 643–44.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., p. 644.
71 Ibid., p. 645, note 68.
necessary." After some discussion, the Committee decided to postpone final action on the resolution to Monday, December 11. That Secretary Stettinius was reluctant to make the statement public is apparent from his wire to Warm Springs: "Our decision as to whether to issue this statement will not be made until we see what happens on Monday." 72 It is interesting that the Department officials informed the Zionist leaders about the statement and that it might be published. As Stettinius' telegram informed the President, "they . . . hope very much that it will not be issued." He added with considerable glee:

It is possible, therefore, that between now and Monday they may indicate to Congressional leaders that they will not push for the passage of the Palestine resolution at this time. 73

Then, of course, there would be no need to publish it.

When the Committee convened on December 11, Secretary Stettinius, as part of his testimony, read the prepared statement and assured the Senators, in accordance with their insistence, that it would be given to the press forthwith. Thereupon they voted 10 to 8 to table the resolution. The State Department, true to its undertaking, made the statement public. 74 President Roosevelt, it is pertinent to note, expressed his admiration for the way the Secretary of State had managed the affair: "I think your course in regard to Zion resolution is just right. FDR." 75

Thus the drama came to an end. But for the Zionist movement there was an epilogue. The defeat of the resolution was not only a jolt to Zionist prestige, but created a dangerous internal rift among the Zionist parties and their leaders, represented in the AZEC. When the Zionist leadership was informed in mid-November by the State Department that the President again opposed the passage of the resolutions, the majority of the executive committee agreed to abide by the Administration's wishes because these men realized that a confrontation with the Administration was impolitic, unrealistic, and fraught with dangerous consequences. However, Silver, chair-

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 645, note 70.
75 See note 70.
man of the executive committee of the Council, continued to push for passage. He either misinterpreted the authority vested in him or, in all probability, misjudged the political power and temper of the executive branch of the government in this case. His conviction that he had the support and the votes to pass the resolutions in both committees led him to overestimate the ability and the willingness of the Zionist friends in the SCFR to resist the pressure brought to bear on them by the Administration.

The defeat brought the clash of opinion into the open with the resultant resignation of the executive committee. It required weeks of hard negotiations to restore a modicum of harmony. Wise, who led the opposition to Silver's militant policy, was necessarily elected chairman of the executive because he was in a position to reestablish the line of communication with the Administration. Silver, tacitly reprimanded, remained on the outside for some time. Apparently, the State Department, though somewhat surprised, was not unhappy with the unexpected calmness with which the Zionists faced the setback. Murray, in an explanatory note to Stettinius, dated December 19, supplied the correct reason:

The most likely explanation . . . is undoubtedly the split within the Zionist leadership, notably the difference of opinion between Rabbi Wise and Rabbi Silver. . . .

VIII

Toward the end of December, the President conferred with Stettinius about the Yalta Conference scheduled for February, 1945. At this meeting, the President "expressed the hope that he would not have to get into the Palestine situation again for some time." The secretary reported to his Department associates that he had not, consequently, given Roosevelt the Department's memorandum on the subject nor did he deem it wise to send it to him "for the time being." About the same time, Roosevelt arranged to meet with

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77 FRUS, 1944, pp. 651–52.
78 Ibid., pp. 655–57.
79 Ibid.
King Ibn Saud on his way home from Yalta "to bring about a rapprochement to the Palestine problem." He considered this meeting so important that he requested James M. Landis, then the American director of economic operations in the Middle East, to provide him with pertinent suggestions how to deal with the king because he was regarded by State Department officials, including the Secretary of State, as the key Arab personage to any solution of the Palestine problem. Thus, for example, on January 9, 1945, Stettinius, with a memorandum to the President, enclosed a telegram to the Department from Jidda, dated January 5, which reported that the king, in signing the Arab league protocol, stressed the need for two amendments: A military alliance to protect Arab states against aggression and a joint commitment to defend Arab Palestine against Zionism by force, if necessary. The king then added this personal vow: "he would be honored to die on the battlefield himself, a champion of Palestine Arabs."

Secretary Stettinius impressed on the President that the king's personal avowal was "of course of greatest significance." 80 As for Landis' advice, dated January 17, he painted the usual portentous portrait of the king: Ibn Saud was a religious zealot, fanatically opposed to Zionism and determined to die on the battlefield to preserve Palestine for the Arabs. To approach him at all on the Palestine question, the Jewish commonwealth project "must be given up" for it was, in any case, inconsistent with the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. As for the Jewish National Home concept, it had to be politically restricted, that is, Jewish immigration had to be adjusted to the economic absorptive capacity of the country, which, in the past, "has been grossly exaggerated by the Zionists." 81

Though the Palestine problem was not officially discussed at Yalta—probably because the President and Prime Minister Churchill preferred to keep the Middle East out of the range of Premier Stalin—President Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud, on February 14, 1945, aboard the USS Quincy in Egyptian waters. The first question the President raised dealt with the Jewish refugees, probably because of its general association with Palestine as a haven of refuge—and, as is well known, there was no other territory avail-

81 Ibid., pp. 680–83.
able. The king advised this solution: The Jews should return to live in the lands from which they had been driven. Those Jews whom their homelands could not accommodate "should be given living space in the axis countries that oppressed them." As for Palestine, it belonged to the Arabs. There was no room for cooperation with the Zionists in this respect. "The Arabs would choose to die rather than yield their lands to the Jews." 82

The President, at another point in the conversation, underscored his interest in postwar agricultural development by means of irrigation and other scientific tools to bring more land under cultivation and provide for living space for a larger Arab population. This was the king's response: "he himself could not engage with any enthusiasm in the development of his country's [Palestine's] agriculture and public works if this prosperity would be inherited by the Jews."

The President, seemingly equally impressed, replied: He would do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs and would make no move hostile to the Arab people. It was impossible to prevent speeches and resolutions in Congress or in the press which might be made on any subject. His reassurance concerned his own future policy as Chief Executive of the United States Government. That this "reassurance" was not a momentary pleasantry but an abiding expression of opinion was evident from his appearance on March 1 before a joint session of the Congress when he took occasion to interject in his address this thought:

I learned more about the whole problem of Arabia—the Moslems—the Jewish problem—by talking to Ibn Saud for five minutes than I could have learned in the exchange of two or three dozen letters.83

Naturally, this remark—even though the commitment on which it was based was then unknown—provoked anger and astonishment in many segments of American public opinion; the Jewish community felt humiliated.

Prime Minister Churchill at the time also met with the king of

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82 Ibid., pp. 2-3, 7-9. The first is a memorandum of the conversation between the king and the President aboard the USS Quincy; the second is a description of their meeting sent to the State Department on March 3, 1945, by William A. Eddy, the American minister in Saudi Arabia.

83 JTAB, March 2, 1945, p. 1.
Saudi Arabia to discuss the future of Palestine. Ibn Saud purposely revealed their conversation to the American minister at Jidda so that Washington would "know exactly what was said." According to the king, Churchill asked his assistance to solve the Palestine problem "on the basis of moderation and compromise." The king's answer—fanatical, irrational, and unbending, characteristic of the Arab leaders throughout the years of the conflict to this day—was as follows:

[Churchill's request] is an act of treachery to the Prophet and all believing Moslems which would wipe out my honor and destroy my soul. I could not acquiesce in a compromise with Zionism, much less take the initiative....

He then requested Churchill's assurance that Jewish immigration to Palestine "would be stopped." The prime minister refused. The king, nevertheless, insisted that the "formula" for future Jewish immigration "must be arrived at by and with Arab consent." 84

The king's shrewdness is beyond question. He purposely leaked this confidential conversation to William A. Eddy, the American minister accredited to him, so that it would reach the ears of the President and impress him with the king's intransigeant stand. Interestingly enough, Eddy regarded this shrewd "leak" as a compliment to the American government.

IX

Genuine glimpses of the President's personal views about several phases of the Palestine question were provided by Hoskins, the only guest at a White House family luncheon on March 3. By prearrangement, he described several verbal vignettes in a note to Paul Alling, of the State Department:

1. While the President confirmed that the future of Palestine was not discussed at Yalta, Mr. Churchill, in private conversation, was as strongly pro-Zionist as ever and, among other ideas, he wanted to put the Jews into Libya. Subsequently the President mentioned this to King Ibn Saud, who objected violently, saying this would be unfair to the Arabs of North Africa.

84 *FRUS*, 1945, pp. 689–90.
2. When Mrs. Roosevelt observed that the Zionists have done wonderful work in certain parts of Palestine, the President commented, except for the coastal plain, Palestine looked extremely rocky and barren as he flew over it.

3. She also expressed her belief that the Zionists felt much stronger and were perhaps willing to risk a fight with the Arabs at Palestine. With this possibility the President agreed, but reminded her that there were 15 or 20 million Arabs in and around Palestine and in the long run . . . these numbers would win out.

4. In answer to a direct question by Col. Hoskins, Mr. Roosevelt fully agreed that a Zionist State in Palestine could be installed and maintained only by force.

5. After Col. Hoskins outlined to his host the State Department’s plan for a Palestine trusteeship, the President thought such a plan might well be given to the UN after it has been set up to work out problems along these lines.

   The President’s opinion of Premier Stalin’s attitude towards Zionism in particular and Jews in general is significant: “He is neither pro-Zionist nor anti-Zionist nor the Jew-hater that he had been charged in some quarters with being.” 85 Yet on March 16—on account of the public protests provoked by his remark about Ibn Saud in his address to Congress on March 1, and by the prevalent belief that he had repudiated his public pledge to the Zionists—he received Rabbi Wise, the reelected head of the AZEC, in the White House and empowered him to make this announcement:

   I made my position on Zionism clear in October. That position I have not changed, and shall continue to seek to bring about its earliest realization. 86

   American Zionists, often disappointed and especially grieved by the tacit understanding between Churchill and Roosevelt to defer action on the future of Palestine until the war was ended, reacted to this latest assurance with an outcry “for action now.” Thus the AZEC, on March 21, put patience aside and made public an official plea to the President to take steps to implement his promise:

   ... The tragic plight of the Jewish people makes it imperative that the solution to which the President is lending the support of his great name

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85 Ibid., pp. 690–91. The report was received on March 3.

86 Ibid., p. 693, note 42; JTAB, March 18, 1945, p. 1.
and office be adopted and put into effect as soon as possible... there must be no further delay. We ask action now...87

As soon as the Roosevelt-Wise statement of March 16 became known in the Middle East, the Arab governments resumed their remonstrances, which the American diplomats transmitted to Washington with alacrity. The State Department forwarded these dispatches to the White House along with a prepared reply which—provided the President approved—it—the Department would require its representatives in the Arab capitals to present to the governments concerned:

The Reuter's report... is substantially correct and... refers to a statement issued by Rabbi Wise... following a conference with the President. ...No statement was issued by the President in this connection (Italics supplied)... the statement refers to possible action at some future time. ...You may state that the President is keeping in mind the assurances which were communicated on a number of occasions to certain Near Eastern countries... to the effect that in the view of this Government no decision altering the basic situation of Palestine should be reached without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews.88

The President “approved” this note89—according to Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew—and it was presented to the several Arab governments, about a week after the issuance of the pro-commonwealth declaration.90

87 JTAB, March 22, 1945, p. 3.
88 FRUS, 1945, pp. 693–97 and note 59, p. 698.
89 Ibid., p. 696, note 52.
90 Ibid., pp. 694–97. It is particularly important to call attention to the President's letter to King Ibn Saud, dated April 5 (ibid., p. 698). Therein he, as chief of the executive branch of this government, repeated his previous pledges about Palestine to the Arab governments, despite his pro-commonwealth promise to the Zionist movement. It was this letter as well as that of the king, dated March 10, which was released by the Truman Administration on October 18, 1945 (New York Times, October 19, 1945, p. 1). Its publication created a sensation. It was this exchange of letters between the President and the king that informed the world that the President had officially promised the Arabs that they would be consulted prior to any decision on Palestine's postwar destiny. These pledges in fact provided the Arab rulers with the power of vetoing any solution of the Palestine question favorable to the Jewish people. JTAB, October 21, 1945, p. 1, and October 22, p. 4; FRUS, 1945, p. 696, note 52.
Curiously, the President authorized the Wise statement without consulting or informing the State Department. Murray evidently found out about it from the press and substantiated it by calling the White House. He was so resentful of the President's action that, in a memorandum of March 20, addressed to Grew, he accused the President of jeopardizing "American interests throughout the area" and of possibly causing "bloodshed."

Specifically the result will be the undoing... of the good effect of the President's meeting with King Ibn Saud... particularly so in view of the assurances... that he would make no move hostile to the Arabs in Palestine...

King Ibn Saud made his attitude abundantly clear as to the determination of the Arabs to fight in defense of their position in Palestine. The President's continued support of Zionism may thus lead to actual bloodshed in the Near East, and even endanger the security of our immensely valuable oil concessions in Saudi Arabia...

The continued endorsement by the President of the Zionist objectives may well result in throwing the entire Arab world into the arms of Soviet Russia...

Grew ignored this outburst, but asked James C. Dunn, the Assistant Secretary of State, whether the Near Eastern office of the Department had a "specific recommendation to make to the President with a view to counter-acting the unfavorable impression caused in the Near East by his continuing to give encouragement to the Zionists."

Thereupon, Paul Alling, the Deputy Director of Near Eastern Affairs—in reality Murray's assistant—prepared a lengthy memorandum for Dunn, dated April 6, in which the Murray complaints and censures of the President were elaborated in great detail, though it was described as an "informational" paper "for the reason that the President's attitude on Palestine makes it difficult for us to follow any other course." A good example as to what Alling regarded as "informational" was his reaction to the President's pro-Zionist declaration of March 16, and the resultant explanatory reply given the Arab governments with the President's consent:

This reply will not satisfy the Arabs but it seemed the only constructive

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*FRUS, 1945*, p. 694.
course open to us... the situation is so serious and the adverse... so likely that we should reconsider the entire position, adopt a definite policy on Palestine, and obtain the President's concurrence with the hope of averting any future misunderstandings as to what our policy actually is. ... But we must adhere strictly to this position if we are to be of real assistance in working out an equitable future settlement. If we were actually to implement the policy which the Zionists desire the results would be disastrous...

Realizing that the document was too audacious to be placed before the President, Alling offered to have the memorandum rewritten if certain recommendations might be suggested to the President, as for example:

... that he make public on some suitable occasion the assurances we have given the Arab Governments that no solution of the Palestine problem will be reached without consultation with both Arabs and Jews.\textsuperscript{63}

This recommendation makes it evident that the assurances given the several Arab governments by the President and the State Department were not made public. The result was that the Arabs were aware of the President's pro-Zionist declarations and reacted to them immediately, whereas the Zionists were unaware of the commitment given the Mid-Eastern regimes.

Dunn wrote Alling on April 10 that he specifically "liked" the concluding recommendation and wondered "whether the occasion of a visit to the President by a Near Eastern Chief of State would be appropriate" \textsuperscript{94} to issue a public statement to the Arabs. Alling suggested that the impending visit of the regent of Iraq, Abdul Ilah, on April 19, would be an appropriate occasion to make public such a commitment to the Arabs.\textsuperscript{65} Apparently, Alling and his associates in the Department assumed that a public Presidential pledge to the Arab governments would be difficult for the White House to contravene. This assumption, however, was not put to the test, for President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945 in Warm Springs.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., pp. 698–703.

\textsuperscript{94}Ibid., p. 702.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., pp. 702–3, note 68.