

REVIEW ESSAY

**President Truman's Recognition
of Israel: Two Views**

Ganin, Zvi, *Truman, American Jewry and Israel, 1945-48*. New York, London: Holmes and Meier, 1979. xi, 238 pp.

Wilson, Evan, *Decision on Palestine: How the U.S. Came to Recognize Israel*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979. xvii, 244 pp.

I

As the United States continues to play a significant role in the Middle East and in normalizing relations between Israel and her Arab neighbors, scholarly, historical, and popular interest continues in the events leading up to the establishment of Israel and the role played by the United States, especially President Harry S. Truman, in facilitating this event. The latest two scholarly monographs dealing specifically with Truman and Israel, by Ganin and Wilson, both long anticipated, were published in 1979.

The basic context within which historians have explored American policy towards Palestine is, of course, well known by now — indeed it was created by the participants in the drama themselves, including Truman, who, by their rhetoric and for their own very different reasons, sought to establish the political framework within which their actions would be judged. Both these books examine American policy within this framework. Ganin outlines the basic question in these terms:

Who determined the national interest of the United States? Was this role entrusted exclusively to the Executive branch (the White House, the State department, and the Defense Department)? And was it legitimate for an ethnic group — whose perception of the national interest differed from that of the Executive — to attempt to influence foreign policy decisions? Obviously this was the position maintained by the leadership of American Zionism. The Zionists felt that a democracy should allow its members to organize and actively to lobby for its views. They sincerely believed in the compatibility of the creation of a Jewish state with the best interests of America. Consequently they viewed domestic policies as moving hand in hand with American foreign policy. (p. 154)

There has been considerable controversy on all aspects of this proposition. Although ethnic group pressures to influence United States foreign policies have always been regarded as a legitimate acceptable feature of the American political tradition, two factors have complicated the issue for contemporaries and historians concerning the Palestine question. The first, raised by Truman himself, suggested that United States Palestine policy was not simply a matter of the Executive's definition of the national interest in conflict with that of an ethnic minority. Truman

maintained at the time, and later, that there was a conflict within the Executive. The State Department did not follow out his policies as instructed, and this led to apparent vacillation in United States policy and confusion concerning his goals. The question of the position taken by the State Department, especially those in "middle management" positions (i.e. division and bureau heads) in relation to Palestine has been examined in some detail by Phillip J. Baram in *The Department of State in the Middle East, 1919-1945* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978). The second factor which led many including those in the State and Defense departments, to doubt the legitimacy of Zionist group pressure was its perceived strength. Not only were the Zionists seen as better organized, financed and located — and, as Ganin observes, by implication more sinister even unpatriotic — than any previous ethnic group, by virtue of their control of the so-called Jewish vote and the Democratic party's supposed dependence upon that vote, it was believed they exerted a vastly disproportionate influence on White House policy.

Ganin and Wilson both direct their attention to finding answers to these questions, and both considerably advance the state of our knowledge about the increasing United States involvement in the process that led to the establishment of Israel. They inform their investigations from widely differing perspectives. Ganin, who teaches at Beit Berl College, Israel, is a student of Ben Halpern, former Zionist publicist and editor, and Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Brandeis University. Wilson is a retired State Department Near East Desk and foreign service officer who participated in the formulation of State department policy in the years 1943 to 1947. Not surprisingly, they reach markedly different conclusions. Both, however, base their conclusions upon an impressive body of documentation. Ganin's is by far the best researched book yet to appear on the activities of American Jewry and the relationship between Truman and Jewish leaders prior to the establishment of Israel. In addition to the records in the Harry S. Truman library, which include the papers of Clark Clifford and others relating to Israel as well as the White House records, Ganin has utilized the archives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Council for Judaism, the American Zionist Organization, and Hadassah in New York, the State Department files in the National Archives, Washington, and has drawn upon the papers available of significant figures, e.g. Emanuel Celler, Felix Frankfurter, A. J. Granoff, Herbert H. Lehman, Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise, State Department Officers Joseph C. Grew and William Phillips, James Forrestal, Admiral William D. Leahy, and Robert A. Taft, and Robert Wagner. Of particular interest to scholars is Ganin's access to the David K. Niles papers, a privilege hitherto denied researchers including Wilson, and to the Jacob Blaustein papers in Baltimore. Ganin has, furthermore, used material from the Public Record Office in London (although sparingly), the central Zionist archives in Jerusalem, and the Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel. He has consulted the annual reports

of several of the leading Jewish organizations for the years 1944-48 (the American Council for Judaism, American Jewish Committee, American Zionist Emergency Council, Hadassah, Zionist Organization of America and the Jewish Agency) in addition to many periodicals, newspapers, memoirs, and diaries. He conducted over 35 interviews with participants in the events he describes, including Loy M. Henderson and Sir Harold Beeley the secretary to the British members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. Altogether, this is a most impressive research operation.

Wilson, too, based his account on a mass of primary material. Like Ganin, Wilson has made extensive use of the collections in the Harry S. Truman Library (especially the papers of Clark Clifford, Edward Jacobson, and Special Counsel to the President Samuel I. Rosenman), the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, the Zionist Archives in New York, the State Department files in the National Archives, Washington, and the Public Record Office, London. He, too, has utilized the very extensive periodical and secondary literature, memoirs and diaries. The strength of Wilson's documentation comes, however, from his detailed personal knowledge of the working of the State Department and the Division of Near Eastern Affairs where he served on the Palestine desk and of which he became Assistant Chief in 1946, and from his knowledge of, and interviews with, his colleagues, Loy W. Henderson, Gordon P. Merriam, Frazer Williams, and Robert M. McClintock. Indeed, Wilson states in his acknowledgements that "the resulting book is really a joint effort on the part of all of us." (p.xvii).

II

Ganin sets out, he tells us in his introduction, to explore two major themes relating to America's role in the establishment of Israel. First, "an examination of the fascinating interplay between the leadership of American Jewry (particularly Zionist), President Truman, and the State Department, in relation to the Palestine question . . . Second, it will attempt to elucidate the major aspects of Truman's attitudes towards Zionism and of his role in the creation of Israel." (p.xiii). Ganin devotes much of his book to an examination of the divisions within the American Jewish community, within American Zionist leadership, and to the conflicts between American Zionists and the leaders of European Zionism. Although much of this has been described previously, most recently by Melvin Urofsky in *We are One! American Jewry and Israel* (N.Y., 1978), Ganin's is the most detailed account thus far of the transformation of the American Zionist Organization from a small, although significant, group to an influential broadly based movement within American Jewry, and the conflict between Rabbis Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise over what tactics Zionism should pursue viz-a-viz Palestine. Ganin summarises his conclusions as follows: First, Zionist diplomacy had to overcome a basic weakness—lack of sovereignty and an absence of

political and military powers. This was achieved primarily by the Yishuv in Palestine and translated into political power by Zionist leaders in the United States using the pressure of public opinion and the "Jewish vote."

Secondly, Truman, despite his genuine concern for the plight of the Jewish Displaced Persons, initially had difficulty in sympathising with Jewish yearning for sovereignty in Palestine. Truman chose, therefore, "to chart a course of minimal involvement in the Palestine question. President Truman deviated from this line (notably in the case of his support for the United Nations partition resolution and his recognition of Israel) only when he could satisfy himself that his moves were compatible with American national interests. Furthermore — and unlike some officials in the field of foreign affairs — Truman was influenced by the strong support which Congress and large segments of public opinion had given the Zionist cause." (p.xv) Ganin argues that Truman's initial long range goals were to preserve Palestine as a Holy Land, to bring peace to that troubled land, and to help 100,000 Jewish Displaced Persons reach Palestine. Ganin further asserts that the President was greatly hampered in the pursuit of his goals "by sufficient control over the conduct of foreign affairs — as illustrated by the American retreat from the partition in March, 1948." (p.xv)

The third major conclusion of this book is that Zionist pressure was less effective than was assumed by its opponents. Although the Zionists did succeed in preventing some adverse decisions (e.g. the Morrison-Grady scheme) and in insuring the passage of the partition resolution, they failed on several critical issues such as arms shipment to the Jews in Palestine and enforcement of partition. Truman, despite his need for the Jewish vote, was not always vulnerable to Jewish pressure. Finally, Ganin concludes that the Zionist lobby under Silver's leadership was not nearly as effective as the quiet diplomacy of David Niles, Sam Rosenmnan, Eddie Jacobson, A. J. Granoff, and Chaim Weizmann, especially following the United Nations partition resolution of November 29, 1947.

In densely, if carefully, written chapters, Ganin examines Roosevelt's policy, the emergence of the "full consultation" formula, the Harrison report, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry and the Morrison-Grady scheme, Truman's 1946 Yom Kippur statement, the Palestine issue at the United Nations and the partition resolution, Ambassador Austin's temporary trusteeship announcement on March 19th, 1948, and finally Truman's recognition decision against a backdrop of the dramatic events in Europe, Great Britain and Palestine itself and the seemingly chaotic political manoeuvres of American Zionist leaders. It is impossible in the short space of a review essay to discuss fully the detail and evidence marshalled by Ganin to support his overall argument, but in view of the case put forward, and documented, by Wilson the following points made by Ganin should be noted.

Ganin is quick to point out that the idea of a Jewish state was opposed

by those who regarded it as a threat to American oil interests and “a disruptive element in the middle east and as complicating relations with the Arabs.” (p.xiv) Ganin briefly sketches the conflicting forces acting on the White House between 1945 and 1948. Foremost among the opponents of the idea of a Jewish state, he claims, were the officers of the Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) in the State Department, whose views were shared by the military, in particular Admiral Leahy, Truman’s Chief of staff, and the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal. There were, in addition, oil company executives, members of the O.S.S., protestant missionaries, the British and Arab state embassies, several influential newspapers and the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism who opposed Zionist aims.

Of the NEA, Ganin observes, “It pursued its aim with skill, zeal and tenacity. None was more persistent, almost fanatic, in his views than the NEA’s celebrated head Loy M. Henderson, who literally conducted a crusade against partition and against the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.” (p.125) In so describing Henderson, Ganin is echoing the cries of Henderson’s Zionist opponents at the time. For their part, the Arab states, according to Ganin, in their dealing with the United States government, “enjoyed tremendous advantages.” They represented a united front of five states, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt, they occupied a strategically vital area and Saudi Arabia and Iraq contained huge oil reserves coveted by oil-hungry Europe and America. (p.131) The Jewish side on the other hand, Ganin argues, started from a much weaker position. There was no high official in the American foreign policy-intelligence-military establishment committed to the Zionist cause. The American Jewish community was divided and the Zionists had to gain support for their position in Congress, the press, and the labor movement – which they did with considerable success. At the White House, Zionists had the assistance of Samuel I. Rosenman, most importantly David Niles, and later Clark Clifford. But, Ganin concludes, Truman’s support for partition and his recognition of Israel was less a response to Zionist pressure, and was based less on his need for the Jewish vote in the approaching 1948 elections than it was a positive response to the personal approaches of Wiezmann and Jacobson, the advocacy of his White House advisers, and finally, the realities on Palestine itself.

III

Evan Wilson reaches opposite conclusions to Ganin on almost all these issues, and where he does reach similar conclusions, his perspective is very different. Wilson begins his account with the adoption of the Biltmore Program by the Zionist organization of America in May 1942, and sets out to explain the role of the United States in the events between 1942 and the proclamation of Israel’s independence on May 15, 1948. Like Ganin, Wilson sets out to evaluate the conflicting pressures on the United States government “with a view to advancing a definitive interpretation

of our Palestine policy, as well as some thoughts for the future.” (p. xi) It should be said at once that this is less a definitive interpretation of U.S. Palestine policy than it is a carefully argued and documented defense of State Department actions, and the division of NEA in particular, against the charges of anti-semitism and attempts to subvert the President’s policy levelled at State. As such it is a much needed redress of the balance against the more strident attacks of Zionist participants. Wilson argues persuasively that, despite his strong opposition to a Jewish state, Loy Henderson was not motivated by anti-semitism. He relates, for example, that Henderson on becoming Near East Division chief encouraged freer more informal access to the Department by Jewish, including Zionist, spokesmen than had been the case previously under Wallace Murray. And a close reading of Henderson’s memorandum of September 22, 1947 against advocacy of the partition plan (which is included in full) reveals that Henderson was not opposed to the immediate Jewish immigration of at least 100,000 persons. (p.121) Wilson also strongly defends himself against this charge of anti-semitism: “I think I can honestly say that in taking up my duties on the Palestine desk I was conscious of no prejudice or bias one way or the other.” (p.xii) He believes his education at Quaker Haverford College, Oxford, and later Geneva, his observation of the working of the League of Nations, and his experience and knowledge of Nazi Germany provided him with a deep interest in world affairs, a concern for international conciliation and world peace, and enabled him to approach the Palestine problem with the goal of “trying to find an accommodation, a reconciliation, between the conflicting interests of the parties to the dispute.” (p.xii) .

Indeed the memorandum Wilson prepared in Lausanne on April 1946 while Secretary to the American members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (which is also published in full) is a compassionate, impartial, and masterful summary of the issues facing American policy makers. In this memorandum Wilson argues that:

It would seem a more logical as well as a more realistic approach to take for our basic assumption, in formulating our Palestine policy, the indisputable fact that there is a sincere and widespread sympathy in the United States for the Jewish National Home and for the idea that Jews should not be prevented from going to Palestine. (p.83)

He based this recommendation on the assumption “that it is in the interests of the Arabs and Jews themselves, of Palestine, of the Near East as a whole, and of the United States, that there should be a settlement of the Palestine question under which neither Arab nor Jew will be able to dominate the other.” (p.83) Wilson further argued that the NEA should have much closer and more cordial relations with the Zionists and that both sides “should make a genuine effort to discuss common problems in a frank and sympathetic manner.” Wilson reveals that what upset members of the NEA was the Zionists “irritating practice of going over the heads of the Near Eastern officers to the Secretary or the President when they want to get things done.” (p.84) Of course, the

Zionists continued this practice, and with the rejection by Truman and Bevin of the A.A.I.C. report of a bi-national state and the emergence of partition as the proposed solution, the NEA's and Wilson's opposition to the Zionists hardened: "I came to the conclusion," Wilson states, "that for our government to advocate the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine against the will of the majority of the inhabitants of that country (the Arabs) would be a mistake that would have an adverse effect upon world peace and upon United States interests." (pp.xiii, xiv)

In tracing the events which led the United States to support partition as a solution in the United Nations and then recognition, Wilson pursues two lines of argument. The first is that the State Department from 1944 on, even under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had less and less influence in the formulation of Palestine policy. The United States adopted a definite line of policy for the first time in 1943 with Roosevelt's letter to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia of May 26 in which he stated that "no division altering the basic situation of Palestine should be reached without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews." (p.34) In 1944, Palestine took on more importance in American domestic politics, and, Wilson argues, the Department's success in having the pro-Zionist Palestine resolution withdrawn from Congress in December was "one of the last occasions on which the Department could be said to have played the decisive role in our Palestine policy." (p.44) Secretary of State Byrnes attitude of leaving Palestine to the British further diminished the authority of the Department and enhanced that of the White House. "The early months of Truman's presidency," Wilson asserts, "represented the last time that the Department exercised a dominant role in our Palestine policy." (p.60)

Wilson goes even further in defending the Department's actions. He contends in a second line of argument that not only did the NEA officers not attempt to sabotage Truman's policy — especially in the case of the NEA's advocacy of trusteeship rather than partition following the November 29, 1947 United Nations resolution — they frequently did not know what American policy was. Wilson cites the Department's ignorance of Truman's August 31, 1945 letter to Prime Minister Clement Atlee concerning the Harrison report as an early example. (p.63) Most importantly, for Wilson, Truman "never gave a clear set of instructions to the Department or to our delegation in New York as to how to proceed." (p.149)

In explaining why the State Department took the position it did, Wilson stresses throughout the Department's belief that, viewed in the context of European and Middle East affairs, a Jewish state would not be in the interests of the United States, and the widespread (and, as it turned out, unwarranted) fear that American force would be required to enforce partition. In analyzing Truman's policy, while acknowledging the President's genuine humanitarian concern for the plight of the European Jewish displaced persons, he concluded: "I have been forced reluctantly to the conclusion that on certain key issues (October 1947) and May

1948) he [Truman] was more influenced by domestic political considerations than by humanitarian ideals.” (p.149) Wilson agrees with Ganin that the key people to influence Truman along these lines were Samuel Rosenman, David Niles, Clark Clifford, and Eddie Jacobson. (p.58)

Wilson’s book is important. It is the first by an insider to analyze State Department policy in detail. Yet, curiously, it is weakest where it should be strongest. Nowhere in the book is there a satisfactorily detailed analysis (apart from that contained in Henderson’s memorandum of September 22, 1947 opposing support for partition) of just what American interests in the Middle East were, and how United States support of the establishment of a Jewish state would adversely affect these interests, other than some general observations that American support would threaten the “long standing heritage of good will toward the United States in this area.” (p.32) Wilson, correctly, points out that American oil interests were not great at that time, although in view of the State Department’s well known position he is surely ingenuous when he observes that he and his colleagues “can recall no pressure on the part of the oil companies” to follow a particular line regarding Palestine. (p.152) No such representations were necessary. Furthermore, the oil companies did not regard American support for the Zionists as a threat to their concessions. The question remains, if the oil companies were aware that King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia would not cancel their concessions, why was not the State Department? And if State did know this why did it oppose the existence of a Jewish vote? Nor does Wilson always satisfactorily integrate State Department thinking on Palestine into policies being pursued elsewhere in Europe and the world. Certainly his international frame of reference is important, but frequently the connections (e.g. with American policy towards China) are not made explicit. Nor does he pay sufficient attention to State’s interaction with other cabinet departments, Congress, or public opinion at large.

Wilson’s discussion of British policy towards Palestine, and Anglo-American relations concerning the future of the Middle East is especially disappointing in this respect – as, it should be added, is that of Ganin. What is perhaps more surprising is the lack of attention given by Wilson to the State Department’s (especially Henderson’s) fears that the Arab states would turn to the Soviet Union should the United States support the idea of a Jewish state. State Department files indicate that fear of Russian incursion in the Middle East was by far the most potent force motivating the Department. This fear was further fuelled by the belief/suspicion that many of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine or the Jewish state were themselves either communists or communist agents.

Despite his attempts to be “fair minded,” Wilson reveals a bias, which if not anti-Jewish as such (it is certainly anti-Zionist!) none-the-less leads him to regard Truman’s policy as not in the best interests of the United States. Wilson acknowledges that successive Presidential statements from Woodrow Wilson to Truman had created an “American interest in the Jewish side of the Palestine dispute,” and he conceded in 1946 that

“there is a real sympathy for Zionism – on any definition – in our country and that this sympathy is constantly making itself known.” (p.83) Yet in December 1947, officers of the Near Eastern division instructed Ambassador Tuck in Cairo to tell King Farouk that the United States Government “had been ‘practically forced’ by public opinion” to support partition. (p.130) By 1948 this had become what Wilson describes as a humanitarian and domestic political “imperative.” Wilson’s bias is that of a member of the foreign policy elite – it is the belief that career diplomats, “the experts,” know best what is in the “overall American interest.” This emerges early in his account when Wilson observes: “In Near Eastern we very much had it in mind that Palestine was only one of more than a score of countries with which the Division had to deal.” He then quotes the opinion of one historian: “the passions aroused by Palestine have done so much to obscure the truth that the facts have become enveloped in a mist of sentiment, legend, and propaganda, which acts as smokescreen of almost impenetrable density.” (p.xiv) Accurate and clear thinking is, of course, the goal of all policy makers, but detachment does not necessarily ensure clarity of vision. Nor were the Department’s fears of communism or an aroused Arab world altogether rational or detached. What Wilson does not explain is the relative insensitivity of the State Department and the Near Eastern Division to the plight of European Jewry after the war, in view of their undeniable desire to settle in Palestine and the efforts of Truman, American Jewry, and United States public opinion to facilitate that process.

Reading Wilson’s book, one is reminded of George Kennan’s observations in his lectures *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (New York, 1950). Kennan describes what he regards as several sources of weakness in United States foreign policy. He complains first, that “a good deal of our trouble seems to have stemmed from the extent to which the executive has felt itself beholden to short-term trends of public opinion in the country and from what we might call the erratic and subjective nature of public reaction to foreign policy questions.” Public opinion in Kennan’s view “can be easily led astray into areas of emotionalism and subjectivity which make it a poor and inadequate guide for national action.” (p.93) The solution to this, Kennan believes, and this is a view shared by Wilson, is to “make much more effective use of the principle of professionalism in the conduct of foreign policy.” A second cause of worry to Kennan was “something I might call the legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems,” which he saw running through United States foreign policy for the past fifty years. Central to this approach was the belief that it should be possible “to suppress the chaotic and dangerous aspirations of governments in the international field by the acceptance of some system of legal rules and restraints.” (p.95) Wilson gives expression to this belief when he summarizes State Department Palestine policy: “As men who tried to be reasonable, we thought it should be possible to achieve a compromise, but the hard fact was that neither of the two parties in the dispute wanted a

compromise; the depth of nationalistic feeling on both sides precluded this.” (p.157)

IV

Politicians all too frequently confuse reality with rhetoric. The historian's task is to distinguish reality from the rhetoric, while trying to explain the course and cause of both. Unfortunately, both Ganin and Wilson have relied too heavily on the rhetoric of the participants on shaping their interpretations. This has led them, as we have seen above, to portray Truman as caught between conflicting advice from Zionists and White House advisers on the one hand and the State Department on the other. Wilson sees a Zionist victory based on political strength, and an American policy based on political expediency. Ganin sees recognition stemming from more weighty reasons than domestic policies. While Wilson does not go as far as Forrestal and Kermit Roosevelt who believed that the Zionists were basically unpatriotic, he clearly believes they were not acting in the best interests of the United States; Ganin believes they were.

A major problem with the kind of approach employed by Ganin and Wilson is the tendency to explain events in terms of who was the last to get the ear of the emperor. Thus both authors place considerable emphasis on determining whether it was Niles or Clifford on the one hand or Lovett or Marshall on the other who were “successful” in influencing Truman's actions. There are several pitfalls inherent in this approach. It assumes, for example, that Truman was the passive recipient of this conflicting advice, rather than an active decision-maker. This methodology further assumes that because Truman's subsequent actions followed or resembled a course of action recommended by one or more advisers that there was a direct causal relationship between these recommendations and Truman's actions. The weakness of this assumption can be demonstrated readily. Despite the massive amount of evidence available, on several key events Ganin is vague about the details. For example, on what could arguably be the most important decision in setting American policy under way; the appointment of Earl G. Harrison to investigate the conditions of Jewish Displaced Persons – a decision made not on the recommendation of Niles or Rosenman, but at the prompting of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. – Ganin observes: “But behind Morgenthau stood Weizmann's initiative *whose known details are still scant*. A tentative reconstruction of the story . . .” (p.29) (emphasis added). On several important issues [e.g. Truman's rejection of the Morrison-Grady scheme (p.80), Weizmann's contacts with Truman in 1947-8 (p.138)] not only is the role played by key advisers unclear, the details surrounding the event are vague. Truman was far from a passive President responding to this pressure or that. His presidency was characterized by his belief that certain decisions had to be made to ensure America's economic and political leadership in

the post war world, to combat the expansion of the Soviet Union, and his determination to make them. American support for the United Nations partition resolution, and prompt recognition of Israel were among them, rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding.

The conflict model employed by Ganin and Wilson leads to further difficulties in interpreting American policy towards Palestine. Both Ganin and Wilson overestimate the strength of the opponents of their proponents. This leads Ganin to portray inaccurately the State Department as implacably hostile to a Jewish state. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the Department was willing to accept a "viable Jewish state" and could support a solution "calling for partition on the setting up of a Jewish state" as early as December 1946. Wilson, for his part shows too little awareness of the divisiveness of Zionist politics and the weakness this created in dealing with the White House. Central to any discussion of Harry S Truman and the recognition of Israel is the question of the "so-called" Jewish vote. Ganin's treatment of this issue — although not comprehensive — is considerably more analytical than Wilson's, in as much as he describes the sometimes painful debate within the Jewish community concerning the desirability, and efficacy, of acting as a voting bloc to ensure Truman's support. Both writers, however, too readily translate this potential for political action into a reality, and then consider this "reality" the critical factor in Truman's final decision making.

Neither of these books is comprehensive. Abba Eban, in his memoir, *An Autobiography* (N.Y., 1977) provides a more complete analysis of British policy, and a fuller outline of the diplomacy of the Jewish Agency in Europe, Washington, and New York than either of these authors. As suggested earlier, Melvin Urofsky has a broader grasp than Ganin of the impact the discovery of the full extent and horror of the Holocaust had on American Jewry, and the implications for American Jews of the establishment of a Jewish state. Robert Donovan's discussion of the events surrounding Austin's March 19, 1948 speech to the U.N. (in his chapter on Israel) in his elegantly written study of the Presidency of Truman, *Conflict and Crisis* (N.Y. 1976), and his analysis of its impact on Truman and its significance in interpreting Truman's actions and policy is more perceptive than that of either Ganin or Wilson. The most mature and balanced judgments in the whole question of Truman, American Jewry and U.S. policy towards the foundation and recognition of Israel in this writer's opinion are to be found in Lawrence S. Kaplan's essay "Ethnic politics, the Palestine question, and the Cold War," in Morrell Herald and Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Culture and Diplomacy: The American Experience* (Westport, Conn., 1977). Kaplan reminds us that while the United States provided "psychic and material nourishment" in the question of the Zionist state, "Israel's survival at birth was not a consequence of that benevolence." (p.265)

There are, furthermore, some surprising omissions in both books. Apart from noting the importance of securing future oil supplies, economic considerations as a factor in policy making at the White House

and the State Department are almost totally ignored. Surely it is not without significance, for example, that Truman in approving the investigation of the Displaced Persons in Europe at the suggestion of Morgenthau, was acting on the advice of his Secretary of the Treasury. Truman, like Eisenhower in Europe and Marshall in Washington, was acutely aware of the cost to the United States of maintaining and administering the D.P. camps, and for a whole range of reasons was anxious to reduce this cost. Locating 100,000 Jewish DPs in Palestine was one method. There is little discussion by these authors, also, of the extent to which Congressional support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine reflected a desire to avoid what many Congressmen regarded as the potentially embarrassing question of admitting Jewish DPs into the United States with all the economic ramifications which would follow.

Both books are, nevertheless, important, and both should be read – together – by anyone interested in Truman, the State Department, American Jewry and Israel. They are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin. Ganin is, overall, the more detailed; Wilson's the better written. If, as noted above, Ganin does not fully appreciate the complexity of State Department decision making, Wilson does not fully comprehend the diversity within American Jewry. Both have photographs of (different) participants. Tellingly, Ganin includes a photograph of the raising of the flag of Israel at the U.N., Wilson one of the Union Jack being lowered for the last time in Haifa! Both share some annoying minor eccentricities in their notes and bibliography. Ganin does not always indicate the year or volume of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* he is citing, and Wilson, while the documents he includes in his appendices are useful, does not list his primary sources together, but instead describes those drawn on at the beginning of the notes to each chapter. Together, these studies will remain indispensable reading for all those interested in United States-Israel relations.

Ian Bickerton teaches American History in the School of History, The University of New South Wales, Kensington, Australia.

Brief Notices

Beckerman, Emma. *Not So Long Ago.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1980. 74 pp. \$6.95

Not So Long Ago, the title of this slim volume, refers to a period of time, over seventy-five years ago, when the author was a young immigrant from Austria growing up on the Lower East Side of New York. The book provides a very brief glimpse of the immigrant Jewish experience at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Browntree, David B., and Irene M. Franck and Douglas L. Brownstone. *Island of Hope, Island of Tears.* New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1979. xii, 307 pp. \$11.95

Island of Hope, Island of Tears is about the immigrants who made the journey from Europe to Ellis Island and America in the years before the end of open immigration in the early 1920's. "They sailed to a word — America," the authors tell us, to a world which was a "mythical promised land translated into a concrete destination that could be felt, grasped, possessed." The story of this journey, which was made by nearly two and one-half million Jews, is told in the words of the immigrants themselves.

Cogan, Sara G., compiled by. *The Jews of Los Angeles, 1849-1945: An Annotated Bibliography.* Berkeley, California: Western Jewish History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1980. xxi, 237 pp., Paper, \$14.94

This is the third critical annotated bibliography to be published by the Western Jewish History Center. As with the first two [*Pioneer Jews of the California Mother Lode, 1849-1880* (1968) and *The Jews of San Francisco and the Greater Bay Area, 1849-1919* (1973)], *The Jews of Los Angeles, 1849-1945* has been compiled and critically annotated by Sara G. Cogan, whom Professor Moses Rischin correctly calls "the preeminent bibliographer of the Jews of the West." The three volumes compiled by Cogan clearly mark the Western Jewish History Center as the premier institution of regional Jewish history in America with regard to the publication of primary and secondary sources available to scholars and students. There is a great need for such a volume as this — beyond its imposing list of more than 1,000 items and excellent index. As Professor Rischin makes clear in the *Foreword* to this volume, it is vital that we "better understand our urban past in all its manifestations if we are to better master our pressing urban realities." To understand the Jewish past of Los Angeles may help to shape our understanding of this sprawling Jewish community, the second largest in the nation, one, which in Rischin's words, is "a problematic Jewish lifestyle, post-Judaic, post-secular, and remote from even an earlier subculture of Jewishness."

It may even be an important lesson for those Jewish communities, at least a decade behind the Los Angeles life-style, who stand helplessly by, awaiting the inevitable invasion of "West Coast happenings" to reach their part of America.

Feibelman, Julian B. *The Making of a Rabbi.* New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1980. 508 pp. \$11.95

Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman (1897-1980) was a distinguished member of the Reform Jewish rabbinate in America. He was a congregational rabbi for over fifty years, serving first in Philadelphia and then in New Orleans. Feibelman's memoir is filled with wisdom and insight, garnered from a close observation of Jewish life in the South. His portrait of life at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati during the decade of the 1920's is especially vivid and informative.

Fried, Albert. *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980. xvii, 345 pp. \$14.95

In all the reminiscing that has accompanied the approach of the centenary of mass migration to America by East European Jewry, the world of the Russian and Polish *shtetl* has become Tevye land, where only the forces of the Czar and modernity mar an otherwise hard but admirable and sanctified life. Thus our attention has been drawn away from Jewish society in the larger Polish cities of Warsaw and Lodz, among others, where a strong and developed underworld of Jewish crime, including murder and prostitution, flourished at the turn of the twentieth century. In a similar sense, the American Jewish experience has been viewed so much in terms of adversity and triumph, filiopietism and the reaction to it, that the well-known existence of Jewish crime and criminals has been relegated to a footnote. Albert Fried has taken an important step, albeit a first one, in rectifying this serious omission in American Jewish historiography. His book introduces us to the likes of Lepke Buchalter and Murder Incorporated, to Monk Eastman, Kid Twist, and Dopey Benny, names which once put fear into many people on New York's Lower East Side. Fried also discusses the more recent Jewish criminals such as Dutch Schultz, Bugs Siegel and Meyer Lansky. Instead of existing through sheer violence, including vicious murders, as had their predecessors, these more sophisticated types joined or merged with non-Jewish elements in organized crime to control gambling, vice, and other illegal operations which were often hidden by "legitimate" business fronts. Fried declares that Jewish criminality, apart from a few "white-collar" types, is mostly dead, perhaps intimating that most Jews today realize that crime does not pay. But in a recent volume on interesting Jewish facts and figures, Meyer Lansky is listed among the wealthiest (and most respectable) Jewish men and women in America, and his net fortune is estimated to be in the many millions.

Hollinger, David A. *Morris R. Cohen and the Scientific Ideal.* Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1975. xv, 262 pp. Paper, \$5.95

This is a marvelous intellectual biography of Morris R. Cohen, (1880-1947), an American Jewish philosopher and cultural critic, who during several decades of teaching at the City College of New York influenced such important American scholars as Lewis Feuer, Sidney Hook, Joseph P. Lash, Paul Goodman, Louis Finkelstein, Morton White and Paul Weiss, among others. Many of Cohen's students went on to become outstanding academic and public policy thinkers, especially Morton White. Yet, although he gained fame as the first Russian-born Jew to achieve prominence as an American moralist and philosopher, and in a sense aided the East European Jewish accommodation to American culture, Cohen, in David A. Hollinger's view, turned out to be a "period piece" whose liberal philosophy no longer speaks to the present and whose ideas have not withstood the test of our cultural and political times.

James, Janet Wilson, Edited by. *Women in American Religion.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980. 274 pp. \$21.95

This very important volume marks the first comprehensive attempt to look at the role of women in American religion and to analyze the commonality of experiences shared by Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish women involved in the American religious experience. There are any number of excellent essays including an overview of women in American religious history by the editor of this book and an article (originally published in the *American Quarterly*) tracing the American Jewish woman's changing place in Judaism through the 1930's written by Norma Fain Pratt.

Jewish Book Annual. New York: JWB Jewish Book Council, 1980 (Volume 38), 263 pp. \$15.00

Among the many noteworthy contributions to the 1980-81 edition of the *Jewish Book Annual*, are three dedicated to the centenary of the mass immigration of East European Jews to the United States. Abraham J. Karp discusses the American reaction to the

East European immigrants, Aaron Soviv writes on the immigrant phase of American Yiddish literature, and Jacob Kabakoff describes the publication in 1881 of the Hebrew periodical *Hameassef Ba'arez Hahadashah* (*The Gatherer in the New Land*).

Kann, Kenneth. *Joe Rapoport: The Life of a Jewish Radical*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981. xix, 297 pp. \$17.50

In the modern American Jewish community we have had our antinomians, Jewish men and women whose peculiar radical faith in the vision of a better society, one of salvation, bucked the Jewish establishment for causes that were universalist in nature. So we think of the Jerry Rubin's, the Abby Hoffman's, the Mark Rudd's and the other relics of the nearly forgotten 1960's and 1970's. There are some American Jews, however, who can recall other antinomians, names which are only vague shadows of a half-century ago. Joe Rapoport is a very vague shadow, a rank and file Jewish radical of the 1920's and 1930's who grew up in a *shtetl* during the Russian revolution, emigrated to America in 1920 and became a labor organizer in the New York knitting trades before joining the extraordinary Jewish chicken ranching community in Petaluma, California. Joe Rapoport's struggle throughout the pages of this superb book, a struggle to reach an understanding between his Jewishness and his antinomianism must surely catapult him from being a shadow in time to a human being whose quest for answers to his spiritual dilemma makes him very relevant. Our contemporary "radical Jews" pale in comparison.

Lee, Albert. *Henry Ford and the Jews*. New York: Stein and Day, 1980. 200 pp. \$12.95

If we can believe the statement that even the most minor acts of international anti-Semitism ultimately lead to Auschwitz, then we can believe Albert Lee's charge that Henry Ford was "one . . . man who helped pave the road to Auschwitz." Lee demonstrates that Ford's obsession with a "Wallstreet Jewish Plot" to control international finance was not just the eccentricity of an otherwise great man. Indeed, there are too many American Jews today, whose memories of the genuine anti-Semite, Henry Ford, and his anti-Semitic newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, bring to mind a fear which few American Jews have experienced in the last half-century. Adolf Hitler called Henry Ford "my inspiration," and if there are numerous candidates for the title of "the man who gave Hitler his ideas," then Henry Ford must be counted as a leading candidate. Nothing impresses Americans like success, it is said, and Henry Ford was the epitome of the American success story. In light of what Albert Lee's findings reveal, this statement may well have to be placed under very strict scrutiny.

Narell, Irena. *Our City: The Jews of San Francisco*. San Diego: Howell-North Books, 1981. 424 pp. \$25.00

Where once "Jewish geography" — the game of do you know the following Jewish families in such-and-such a place? — was the rage of national Jewish conventions, within the last five years it has been replaced by another game — Jewish genealogy or "mishpochology." Irena Narell's book is really "mishpochology" at its consummate best. Narell has written the history of San Francisco's "Our Crowd" — the Gerstles, the Slosses, the Lilienthals, the Sutros, the Fleishhackers, the Haases to name some of the most prominent. As with New York's elite families of German-Jewish background, there is much interaction between the San Francisco connection, in terms of marriage, business and society.

Narell is quick to admit that her book is not a complete history of San Francisco's Jewish community. That volume is still a much needed one. The need will only be met when scholars of the American Jewish experience, skilled in the most sophisticated techniques of urban history, accept the challenge of reconstructing the social, demographic, business, and political histories of San Francisco Jewry in the manner necessary to effectively tell its story.

Ribalow, Harold U. *The Tie That Binds: Conversations with Jewish Writers*. San Diego, New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, Inc., 1980. 236 pp. \$12.95

A number of very talented Jewish writers discuss with Harold U. Ribalow in this volume their views on writing, Jews and Judaism, and on themselves. Among the authors interviewed are Charles Angoff, Chaim Grade, Chaim Potok, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Susan Fromberg Schaeffer and Hugh Nissenson.

Ross, Robert W. *So It Was True. The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980. xvii, 374 pp. \$20.00

In November of 1938, as the synagogues of Germany burned one by one during the infamous Crystal Night, the Protestant German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was confronted by students of an underground seminary of his Confessing Church who attributed the burning of the synagogues to the curse which had haunted the Jews since the crucifixion. Bonhoeffer categorically rejected this interpretation with the rejoinder that "if the synagogues burn today, the churches will be on fire tomorrow." Unfortunately, the collective Protestant press in America was unable to transcend, as was Bonhoeffer, the understanding of the Jews as a "deicide people." Instead, as the author makes clear, the persecution of the Jews in Germany was interpreted "in the light of [Protestant] doctrines, hopes and prejudices." The Protestant response to the "Terrible Secret" of the mass extermination of European Jewry was a "Terrible Silence" of action and reaction. The Protestant press knew and did nothing. In all fairness, however, the burden of guilt, of blame, will have to be distributed quite evenly, spreading out to American Catholics and Jews. Knowing and doing nothing was the great American disease of the Holocaust years.

Sell, Hans Joachim. *Briefe einer Juedin aus Cuzco*. Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1978. 131 pp.

In 1975 the German writer, Hans Joachim Sell, travelled for several weeks through the Latin American nation of Peru. There he met a Jewish woman, an emigrant from Nazi Germany whose family had fled that land in 1938 for the relative freedom of Peru. The letters in this volume are the letters of this woman. They are the letters of a European-born Jewish woman who has attempted to find a home in a Third World, largely Catholic environment. As Sell points out, for one whose life has been so much an experience of politics and sociology, the letters of the unnamed Jewish woman reveal much more a theological analysis of her adopted homeland, written as a Jew in overwhelmingly Christian surroundings.

Stack, John F. *International Conflict in an American City: Boston's Irish, Italians, and Jews, 1935-1944*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979. xiv, 181 pp. \$22.50

We have already seen how the hardships of the Depression years between 1929 and 1941 led to ethnic strife and conflict between New York's Jewish, Irish, German and Italian communities (Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians* reviewed in *AJA*, November, 1979). There the upward mobility of New York's Jewish community and its perceived threat to Irish jobs and political status as well as the growth of German and Italian fascism were shown to be crucial factors in that community's inter-ethnic troubles in the decade between the stockmarket crash and the entrance of America into World War II.

John F. Stack's well-written and well-researched book focuses on a nearly similar period of time and an equally similar set of ethnic troubles between the Irish, Italian and Jewish communities of Boston. The lack of a substantial German community in Boston, of course, eliminates an important group contributing to those troubles, as did the rise of the German-American Bund in New York. Nevertheless, Stack's book does point out the importance of ethnicity at a time when the melting pot theory was the accepted standard of American immigrant acculturation.

Stack also concentrates upon the influence of interest groups and ethnic communities in the making of foreign policy, a theory formulated by the German historian Eckart Kehr as the "primacy of domestic politics" and refined for the contemporary American scene by Paula Stern as "linkage politics" (Paula Stern, *Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, reviewed in *AJA*, November, 1979).