

---

# Eisenhower, American Jewry, and Israel

*Isaac Alteras*

While conducting research at the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, on a project dealing with the relations between the United States and Israel during the Eisenhower presidency, I came across a memorandum sent by the president to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on October 28, 1953, which sheds some light on Eisenhower's limited understanding of American Jewry's attitude and concern for Israel. Referring to the constant criticisms coming from leaders of Jewish organizations about the administration's policies toward Israel, Eisenhower wrote: "The political pressure from the Zionists in the Arab-Israeli controversy is a minority pressure. My Jewish friends tell me that except for the Bronx and Brooklyn the great majority of the nation's Jewish population is anti Zion."<sup>1</sup> These comments show ignorance of the feelings and concerns of the overwhelming majority of American Jewry toward Israel. They also provide a clue to how little attention would be paid by the Eisenhower administration to American Jewry's concerns in regard to Israel, especially during his first term in office. More importantly, the president's remarks require answers to some basic questions. First, who were the Jewish friends that might have given him that information, and what input, if any, did they have in the decision-making process concerning Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict? Second, how did the majority of American Zionists and non-Zionists feel about Israel, and how did they express their dissatisfaction with administration policies? Finally, how effective were they as a pressure group?

American Jewry's impact on U.S. policy toward Israel depended, in my judgment, on the extent it could convince American public opinion at large that support for Israel was in accordance with American strategic interests as well as moral interests. During the Eisenhower administration, at least in its first term, Jewish leaders were unable to convince either foreign policy decision-makers or large segments of informed public opinion that the best way to prevent the growth of Soviet influence in the Middle East was for the United States to back

Israel more forcefully in its foreign policy objectives.

Their lack of power had three main causes. First and foremost was the change to a Republican administration in 1953, which introduced a new foreign policy designed to forestall Soviet penetration into the Middle East by improving America's relationship to the Arab world by neutralizing U.S.-Israeli relations. Eisenhower and Dulles carried out a policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict identified as "friendly impartiality" toward both Israel and the Arabs. Since neither the president nor the secretary of state viewed themselves as responsible for the recognition of Israel as a state, they felt less compulsion to pursue the previous Democratic administration's formula of a "special relationship with Israel." Second, unlike his Democratic predecessors, Eisenhower won the presidency independent of any political obligation toward the Jewish community in the United States. Seventy-five percent of American Jewry voted Democratic in 1952, and an even higher percentage did so in 1956. He thus felt free to pursue a policy he perceived to be in America's national interest.

Furthermore, as Marvin Feuerwerker points out, Eisenhower had never been exposed to Jewish political pressures before his presidency, as he might well have had he served in Congress, as many presidents do before they reach the Oval Office. But he came to the White House from a military career. When he first encountered Jewish clout as president, he acted defensively as if provoked. In a cabinet meeting on November 12, 1953, when the subject of the Middle East came up, he told those present that he would "never use foreign policy for domestic political advantage as Truman had done."<sup>2</sup> During the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower wrote the following to his boyhood friend Swede Hazlett:

The administration had realized that Ben-Gurion might try to take advantage of the pre-campaign period to launch a war because of the importance that so many politicians in the past have attached to our Jewish vote. I gave strict orders to the State Department that they should inform Israel that we'd handle our affairs exactly as though we didn't have a Jew in America. The welfare—best interests of our country were to be the sole criteria on which we operated.<sup>3</sup>

The third reason for the weakness of Jewish influence had to do with the lack of direct access to the president by Jewish leaders, as well as the absence of individuals sympathetic to Zionist goals among the president's foreign policy advisers. While Abba Hillel Silver was close

to the Republican party, his support of Robert Taft for the party's nomination did not particularly endear him to Eisenhower.

A check of the roster of Jews serving in the Eisenhower administration reveals the following names: Max Rabb, secretary of the cabinet and liaison between the administration and the American Jewish community; Arthur Burns, economic adviser; Jack Martin, in charge of relations with Congress; Simon Sobeloff, solicitor general; Charles Metzner, executive director to the attorney general; Lewis L. Strauss, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission; Louis Rothschild, general counsel of the Federal Maritime Board; and Meyer Kestenbaum, member of the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Given the posts they held, in all likelihood they had no input in foreign policy formulations devised primarily in the State Department and carried out with presidential approval by Secretary of State Dulles.<sup>4</sup> Maxwell Rabb and Admiral Lewis Strauss were close to the president and might have won the president's attention on matters concerning Israel had they tried to influence him, but I found no evidence to that effect. Both were members of the American Jewish Committee, which, while not Zionist, was certainly not anti-Zionist. Rabb was chairman of the government division of the UJA from 1953 to 1958 and president of Congregation Temple Emanu-El in New York. Lewis Strauss was treasurer of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and a member of its executive committee; later he became a sponsor of the American Society for Technion Israel, the MIT of Israel. In all likelihood they told the president that most American Jews were non-Zionists, which was true then as it is today, and the president confused non-Zionism with anti-Zionism. Indeed, both Eisenhower and Dulles were far more comfortable thinking that the views held by the president of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism, Lessing Rosenwald, and its executive director, Elmer Berger, represented Jewish opinion in the United States. They supported the administration's position in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and were strongly anti-Zionist.

In a letter to the secretary of state after his return from a fact-finding mission to the Middle East during May 1953, Rosenwald concurred with Dulles's statement that "the Israeli factor and the association of the United States in the minds of the people of the area with French and British colonial and imperialistic policies are millstones around our neck. Today the Arab people are afraid that the United States will

back the new State of Israel in aggressive expansion. They are more fearful of Zionism than of Communism.”<sup>5</sup> According to Rosenwald, “one of the most dangerous aspects of Zionism has been the attempt by the Zionists to persuade vast numbers of American Jews of the logic that argues that the Arabs are the enemy of Israel and therefore the enemy of the United States. Nothing could be further from the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

The secretary of state often expressed the administration’s gratitude to the American Council for Judaism for its support: “I appreciate the support which you have constantly given to the President’s policy of sympathetic and impartial friendship in our relations with the Middle East.”<sup>7</sup> President Eisenhower praised the American Council for Judaism for its efforts, stating that it had “contributed greatly to a better understanding of the cultural, moral and special values of Judaism.”<sup>8</sup> ACJ conventions became forums for American senior officials to express their criticism of Israel. All in all, throughout the Eisenhower years, ACJ’s memoranda were eagerly received by the State Department. Yet, when American Zionist leaders such as Abba Hillel Silver, and pro-Israel but non-Zionists such as Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee, or Philip Klutznick, president of B’nai B’rith, in meetings with Dulles and in letters, protested the pro-Arab tilt in U.S. policy, they were politely listened to but their views carried no weight.<sup>9</sup> At least during his first term Eisenhower tended to look at those who disagreed with his Mid-East policies as Zionist “extremists” who did not necessarily represent the views of American Jewry as a whole. That, however, was far from the truth.

Even though the American Zionist movement in the 1950’s appeared to be fragmented and its formal membership dispersed throughout various groups within the Jewish community, its actions on behalf of the State of Israel found overwhelming support among the non-Zionist American Jews who saw themselves as “friends of Israel.”<sup>10</sup> Marshall Sklare’s Riverton Study in the early 1950’s showed that ninety-four percent of the adults and eighty-seven percent of the children felt positively about Israel, and he concluded that all Riverton Jews, even “those indifferent to Zionism as an ideological movement feel favorably disposed towards the State of Israel.” They saw it at least as a place of refuge for homeless Jews and recognized their responsibility to help their coreligionists.<sup>11</sup> Similar studies conducted in other Jewish communities showed the same results. Support for Israel

was demonstrated regularly by the success of fund-raising within the community. In 1947, the United Jewish Appeal raised approximately \$170,000,000, about half of it being allotted to Palestine. In the five years that followed, the new State of Israel received \$416,000,000 from American Jews, two-thirds coming from funds raised by the UJA.

The shared attitudes of Jewish identification and support for Israel bound together virtually all American Jewish organizations into a potentially strong pressure group, the low membership in the Zionist organizations notwithstanding. All that was needed was to translate feelings into action, galvanize all Jewish organizations, Zionist and pro-Israel, into one unified whole.

The emergence of some unifying central authority representing the majority of American Jewry began to take shape by late 1954 due mainly to two factors. Ironically, John Foster Dulles was instrumental in bringing about the first one! He urged Jewish leaders to unite in one group rather than having competing Jewish organizations repeatedly call on him.<sup>12</sup> He also claimed that his mail pointed to a serious division in American Jewry's attitude toward Israel, apparently according the same importance to letters from national Jewish organizations as to those coming from the infinitesimal American Council for Judaism. Dulles eventually regretted the powerful pressure a unified American Jewry put on the administration. Second, the Israeli government needed an agency through which it could consult and advise American Jewry on matters of mutual concern. In addition, Israel very much wanted to involve the powerful non-Zionist groups, such as the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith, in lobbying on its behalf.

Accordingly, on April 16, 1953, Abba Eban, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, met the presidents of some of the leading Jewish organizations. Subsequently, Nahum Goldmann, Maurice Eisen-drath, Philip Klutznick, Emanuel Neumann, and others organized an informal "presidents' club" which became the forerunner of the present-day Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations consisting of thirty-four members representing Zionists and non-Zionists, fraternal groups, welfare boards, and all three religious branches.

On March 5-6, 1955, leaders of sixteen Jewish organizations from twenty-two states convened an extraordinary conference in Washing-

ton to review the whole complex of American-Israeli relations. This general conference was the first to be called by a group of presidents of American Jewish organizations on matters pertaining to Israel. According to Philip Klutznick, president of B'nai B'rith and chairman of the opening session, the conference was extraordinary in another respect; for the first time since the creation of the State of Israel, representatives of the overwhelming majority of affiliated American Jews sought and secured the opportunity to sit in public session with representatives of the administration to consider the urgent aspects of American policy in the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> Such honor was previously reserved for the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism.

The purpose of the conference was to impress upon the administration the support of American Jewry for Israel to and hopefully revise U.S. Middle Eastern policy. In its resolutions, it called upon the U.S. government to make a determined effort to bring about direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries aiming at a peaceful settlement. In the absence of an Arab-Israeli peace, the conference urged the suspension of arms shipments to the Middle East, particularly in view of the fact that no arms were being given to Israel. Finally, it called for the inclusion of Israel in any defense arrangements for the region and for continued economic and technical assistance to Israel, something the participants credited and even praised the administration for doing.<sup>14</sup>

The significance of this gathering lay in the show of unity on behalf of Israel exhibited by the representatives of most of American Jewry. It became obvious to the participants that working together they would be far more effective than if ten or fifteen organizations separately expressed a common point of view with all the resultant overlapping confusion and waste of time and energy. The State Department became aware now more than ever before where the overwhelming majority of American Jewry stood in relation to Israel. And while the newly found expression of unity did not change basic American policy in the Middle East, it nonetheless helped prevent later on the imposition of economic sanctions on Israel and its complete alienation from the United States in the aftermath of the Sinai Campaign.<sup>15</sup>

The most extensive political activity by Zionist and non-Zionist organizations during the period of the mid-1950's centered on reaching political elites with the hope of bringing about American arms

sales to Israel as well as the development of some type of special security arrangement between the two countries which would ensure Israel's security needs. The main theme of pro-Israeli pressure on the administration and Congress was to emphasize that the Egyptians, having accepted arms from the Soviet bloc, had become a threat to the free world as well as to Israel.

Such calls gained support from important quarters of American opinion. On January 28, 1956, a group of Democrats led by Eleanor Roosevelt issued a statement urging that U.S. arms be sent to Israel. It was endorsed by other political figures, such as former President Harry Truman and labor leader Walter Reuther, vice-president of the AFL-CIO. While the administration still refused to conclude a full-scale formal arms arrangements with Israel, for fear of alienating the Arabs, such pressure had some effect. On April 11, 1956, Dulles and Eisenhower approved the sale of an additional twelve French Mystere IV jets to Israel. A day later, Dulles, in a telephone call with an aide, agreed to "license for early shipment of some anti-aircraft and radar which they [Israel] have applied for."<sup>16</sup>

But the most crucial test of the American Jewish community's support of Israel came during and after the Sinai Campaign. The Israelis launched their attack against Egypt on October 29, 1956, in collusion with Britain and France, after the Israeli prime minister, Ben-Gurion, had been advised by Eisenhower not to undertake any action threatening the peace. The president was furious that the British, French, and Israelis would have recourse to what he considered eighteenth-century methods of settling disputes. In private, Eisenhower and Dulles concluded that Ben Gurion had initiated the military action only a few days before the election in the United States because of his "overestimate of my [Eisenhower's] desire to avoid offending the many voters who might have either sentimental or blood relations with Israel. I emphatically corrected any misapprehension of this kind he might have."<sup>17</sup> The administration was irate and utterly uncompromising. It insisted on an immediate halt to the operation and took instant steps to enforce its decision.

In addition to issuing a series of direct messages to the three allied countries urging their withdrawal from Egypt, U.S. moves were channeled through the United Nations. Within the Security Council, Henry Cabot Lodge urged prompt "action to determine whether a breach of

peace has occurred, to have a cease fire ordered immediately and to obtain the withdrawal of Israeli forces." A resolution presented by the United States calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities in Egypt was vetoed by Britain and France. Then, on November 1, the United States introduced in the General Assembly a cease-fire resolution outlining a series of procedures for the withdrawal of forces, freedom of navigation, and the opening of the Suez Canal. A follow-up resolution (Nov. 7) created a U.N. Emergency Force. On November 7 additional resolutions were introduced for a cease-fire and demanding the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Egypt.

In light of the administration's anti-Israeli position, the Suez Crisis presented American Jewry with a major dilemma. A conflict of interest emerged pitting specific Zionist-Jewish interests for a secure Israel against the broader American policy objectives built on regional neutrality and world stability. In the first twenty-four hours of fighting it appeared to American Jewish organizations, unaware as yet of the British and French involvement, that the fighting was only between Israel and Egypt. Thus on October 31, 1956, the heads of the leading Jewish groups gathered in New York for an emergency meeting and attempted to justify Israel's actions as a war in self-defense in view of its encirclement following the signing of the Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian pact. They appealed to the U.S. government for a fresh approach to the Middle East conflict.<sup>18</sup> But on November 5, when the British and the French invaded Egypt, U.S. Jewry became aware of the wider scope of the operation, which at that moment seemed to be far beyond Israel's defense requirements. In view of the new circumstances they faced difficulties in explaining Israel's actions. Their loss of credibility made it easier for the State Department to disregard proposals and suggestions coming from the representatives of Jewish organizations.<sup>19</sup>

A split within the Jewish community took place as to the approach to be taken in dealing with the administration. The Zionist community and especially the Zionist Organization of America sought to identify entirely with Israel by developing an immediate and decisive propaganda campaign directed at the American public and designed to get the United States to extend "full and forthright support for Israel's defense."<sup>20</sup>

In a nationwide broadcast over all stations of NBC on November 4,

1956, ZOA President Emanuel Neumann noted that in going to war against the "Hitler of the Nile," the Israelis were simply continuing "an old war, launched eight years ago by the Arab states." He indirectly chided the administration by stating that Israel "had no military alliance and no security pact of any kind to fall back on." Abba Hillel Silver was somewhat more blunt as he said: "When the Suez Canal was seized by Nasser, . . . Mr. Dulles made sure that nothing would be done about it, the Administration gave Israel neither the security pact it had granted to some forty other countries, nor . . . did it grant the imperiled young state the right to acquire arms in this country to defend itself."<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the Zionist position specifically challenging and criticizing administration policies, the majority of Jewish organizations shifted their emphasis away from firm statements which justified the Israeli attack and focused instead on finding ways for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. As a result they placed themselves as mediators between Israel and the administration. On November 3, Irving Engel, Jacob Blaustein, and Joseph Proskauer, the president and honorary vice-presidents of the American Jewish Committee, wrote to Secretary Dulles urging him to encourage direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt. They contended that "to return to the *status quo ante* is to restore the very conditions which have caused bloodshed, misery and turmoil." The Presidents' Conference, meeting in emergency session on November 17-18, urged that direct peace negotiations be launched and called on the United States to assume the role as leader of the coalition of free peoples and seek to "lay the basis for direct Arab-Israeli negotiations."<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, the Presidents' Conference approach as a "mediator" in the crisis was far more practical in view of the fact that President Eisenhower had just been reelected by a landslide and polls showed that a majority of the American public supported the administration's policies insisting on immediate Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. In a mid-November 1956 Roper survey of 598 American respondents, only 18.5 percent replied in the affirmative when asked, "Do you think Israel was or was not justified in sending troops to Egypt?" While 49.6 percent had no opinion on the matter, 31 percent felt that the Israelis were not justified. A Gallup poll released on November 14 showed similar trends. Editorial opinions in newspapers of major cities in the

United States showed widespread disagreements with Israel's policies.

Needless to say, Israel's standing in American public opinion had suffered as a result of its attack on Egypt in coordination with Britain and France. Israel was no longer viewed as fighting for survival but perceived as using force for the sake of territorial aggrandizement, in this case the conquest of the Sinai.

This unfavorable public reaction to Israel no doubt induced the Eisenhower administration to proceed with plans for the imposition of sanctions against Israel as a means of bringing about its unconditional withdrawal from the Sinai in accordance with the U.N. resolutions. On February 5, 1957, Dulles announced that the United States would seriously consider the possibility of imposing economic sanctions on Israel through the United Nations. On February 16, Ambassador Lodge indicated that the question of sanctions against Israel would be introduced in the United Nations during the next few days. According to Sherman Adams, Eisenhower's chief of staff, the United States could no longer tolerate any further delays in the Israeli response to withdraw. In his words, such action by Israel "would endanger western influence by convincing Middle Easterners that U.S. policy toward the area was in the last analysis controlled by Jewish influence in the United States."<sup>23</sup> Eisenhower, in a conversation with Adams, went as far as preferring a resolution which would call on members of the United Nations to suspend not just governmental aid but also private assistance to Israel.<sup>24</sup>

Leaders of the Jewish community, shocked by the administration's new moves, went into action. On February 7, an emergency meeting of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform religious groups called for a general strike to protest against the possibility of sanctions. The Presidents' Conference drafted telegrams of protest to President Eisenhower. Individual Jews were called upon to send telegrams and letters of protest to members of Congress. Rallies were held, and non-Jewish organizations, such as the AFL-CIO, were called upon to protest the anti-Israeli policy. Such actions had an impact on Congress, public opinion, and ultimately the administration.

In this atmosphere of threats to Israel, a popular revulsion of feeling against unfairness to Israel by the administration erupted in the United States. For the problem was not Israel's unwillingness to withdraw but the tough, uncompromising insistence of the administration on un-

conditional Israeli withdrawal without any security guarantees. Israel's demand for such guarantees found a great deal of sympathy and understanding in the press and especially in congressional circles.

Helped by the shift in public opinion in Israel's favor, leaders of American Jewish organizations began their battle against the administration's proposed sanctions. They converged on members of Congress urging them to oppose administration policies. Foremost was Emanuel Neumann, president of the ZOA, who spent the first week of February in Washington meeting congressional leaders and some members of the administration. He noted that antisandctions sentiment was gathering strength, particularly on Capitol Hill, where congressional opinion on this issue was sharply at variance with that prevailing in the State Department. He was confident enough to predict that "if the Administration should attempt to go further, it is likely to run into a storm of protest."<sup>25</sup>

His work and that of others seemed to have borne fruit. On February 7, seventy-five Democratic members of the House of Representatives and forty-one Republicans called on the administration to refrain from imposing sanctions on Israel. On the floor of the Senate, many senators registered their disapproval of the policy of enforced sanctions. Among them were Senators Symington, Humphrey, Saltonstall, Sparkman, and Javits. On February 11, the Senate Democratic Policy Committee unanimously called on the administration to resist U.N. efforts in that direction. The same day the Republican leaders of the Senate called on the administration to abandon all efforts to support the United Nations in any economic sanctions against Israel.<sup>26</sup>

Faced with such an avalanche of criticism, the State Department was seeking a solution that would extricate it from the policy it had boxed itself into. On February 11, Abba Eban was handed an *aide-memoire* by Secretary Dulles declaring that the United States would help assure Israel the right of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba, consider the gulf an international waterway, and that the United Nations Emergency Forces should move into the area between Israel and the Gaza Strip. While this *aide-memoire* went some way toward meeting Israel's terms for withdrawal, it fell short of the overall Israeli demand. Such guarantees were offered to Israel *after* withdrawal, whereas Israel persisted in its demand for guarantees prior to full withdrawal. The *aide-memoire* in its original form was rejected by Israel, causing fur-

ther strain between Israel and the administration. Additional pressures on behalf of Israel were exerted on the administration.

The support of Lyndon Johnson, the Senate majority leader, a most influential senator and already a well-known supporter of Israel, was won when the Washington representatives of the American Jewish Committee, Nat Goldrich and Sy Kennen, director of AIPAC in Washington, met with Johnson's bureau chief. He advised them to have the Jewish community in Texas and their friends dispatch telegrams to Johnson's office urging him to do his utmost against administration policies. Kennen contacted Jewish leaders in Texas who delivered messages in synagogues to that effect.<sup>27</sup> Johnson contacted Republican Minority Leader William Knowland and in a bipartisan show of unity wrote to Dulles: "The U. N. cannot apply one rule for the strong and another for the weak, it cannot organize its economic weight against the little state when it has not previously made even a pretense of doing so against a large state."<sup>28</sup> Johnson and other Democrats applied political pressure on the White House by delaying Senate approval of the Eisenhower Doctrine—crucial to the administration's Mid-East policy. Knowland, after seeing the president on February 20, indicated that he would resign his position as a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations if this country chose to pursue a policy favoring sanctions.

A furious John Foster Dulles complained, as he put it, "how almost impossible it is in this country to carry out a foreign policy not approved by the Jews. Marshall and Forrestal learned that. I am going to try and have one."<sup>29</sup> In a conversation with Lodge, Dulles spoke of the terrific control the Jews had over the news media and the barrage and the pressure which the Jews had built up on congressmen.<sup>30</sup> Ninety percent of the mail received at the White House protesting the planned imposition of sanctions was from Jews.<sup>31</sup>

Faced with congressional and public opposition, the administration began to relent from its uncompromising position "that a nation which attacks and occupies foreign territory in the face of U. N. disapproval could not be allowed to impose conditions on its withdrawal." In laborious consultations between Washington and Jerusalem, during the final days of February 1957, Dulles presented Eban with final proposals. It stipulated U.N. responsibility for border security in the Gaza Strip along the international boundary between Egypt and Isra-

el. It offered international guarantees for noninterference with Israeli shipping in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. The United States also endorsed the Israeli position, "interference by armed forces with ships of Israeli flag exercising free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran will be regarded by Israel as an attack entitling it to exercise its inherent right of self defense under Article 51 of the Charter and to take all measures as are necessary to ensure the free and innocent passage of its ships in the Gulf and its Straits." Accordingly, on March 1, 1957, Golda Meir, the Israeli foreign minister, declared in the General Assembly Israel's withdrawal of all its forces from Sinai and Gaza under the terms agreed to in Washington.

Thus, for the first time since the creation of the State of Israel, the American Jewish community was united during a time of acute crisis and won a decisive political battle for Israel against a determined administration. But it must be stressed that it came only after Jewish leaders were able to make a compelling case and win Congress and public opinion to their side.

Having won one victory, Jewish leaders went ahead to plead Israel's case with Congress and compel the administration to introduce changes in its Middle East Resolution. In a statement prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, Dr. Israel Goldstein of the American Jewish Congress outlined the organization's response to the Eisenhower Doctrine which represented the views of the overwhelming majority of organized American Jewry. In his view the doctrine in its original form was inadequate because it did not address itself to the basic conflict in the Middle East; the doctrine failed to take into consideration the existence of such exacerbating problems as the blockade of the Suez Canal, the problem of the Arab refugees, and the conflict between Israel and the Arab states. Nor was there any reference to American willingness to defend Israel in case of an Arab attack against her.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of Johnson's intervention, the administration went along with an amendment proposed by Senator Mansfield which indirectly tried to allay Israel's security fears by stating that the United States strongly supported the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all countries in the Middle East. Secretary Dulles sought to reassure American Jewry when he stated that Israel was the bene-

fiary of the declaration made by President Eisenhower in April 1956, that the United States would come to the assistance of any country that was attacked.<sup>33</sup> This statement was implicitly formalized to Israel's benefit within the framework of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

And yet, during a meeting of the National Security Council on January 22, 1958, with Eisenhower present, Dulles critically referred to Israel as the "darling of world Jewry." He declared: "... the constant influx of Jewish refugees into Israel, swelling the population of that little country was regarded by the Arabs as a sure sign of eventual territorial expansion and that nothing he could think of would please the Arab states more than if some action could be taken by us and the British and the French to place a limitation of very drastic nature on further immigration to Israel."

George Allen, former assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs and now head of the U.S. Information Agency, agreed with Dulles. He even suggested the removal of tax deductibility from contributions made in the United States to Israel, as one method of limiting funds destined to help Jewish immigration.

Fortunately, Lewis L. Strauss, who happened to attend the meeting, took the unusual step of speaking out for the first time on a subject about which he previously had remained silent. Referring to the remarks made by Dulles and Allen, he lamented the refusal of the world, including the United States, to accept the survivors of Hitler's gas chambers, while only Israel accorded them a home and shelter. Moreover, he declared, persecuted Jews from the Arab countries could find a haven only in Israel. To hinder their settlement by limiting philanthropic activity in the United States through legal means "will be resented by people of both political parties, of all religions and all nationalities. I cannot more strongly urge that this is an impolitic and inhumane and an un-American proposal."<sup>34</sup> After a moment of embarrassed silence a stunned Dulles agreed that in all likelihood his proposal would not appease the Arabs. Turning to Strauss, he added, "you are undoubtedly right—in saying that, it is also unfair." Allen later apologized; he became convinced that his proposal was an "improper course."

Based on available evidence, Strauss's stand was the most eloquent and effective presentation on behalf of Israel made by a prominent American Jew and member of Eisenhower's inner circle. His coura-

geous intervention might well have prevented a disastrous situation in American-Israeli relations.

By early 1958 the strain in American-Israeli relations subsided. It became apparent to the administration that despite its condemnation of the British, French, and Israeli attack on Egypt and its successful effort to save Egypt from a military debacle, Nasser showed no gratitude for American favors. On the contrary, he rejected the Eisenhower Doctrine and undermined American interests in the area. Nasser was viewed by Washington as the Soviets' principal vehicle and ally. Nasser, and not Israel, stood in the way of checking the spread of Russian influence in the region.

Jewish leaders pointed to Israel's pro-Western, democratic character, trying to impress on the administration, Congress, and public opinion that support for Israel was not only morally right but also in American interests. Such an argument became more and more acceptable in view of the frequent crises in the Middle East due to Nasserite subversions of pro-Western governments. The United States began to appreciate Israel as the only stable pro-Western country in the region. The improvement in the relationship between the two countries was expressed in increases of American aid for development purposes and greater presidential sympathy and understanding for Israel's security problems.

Thus only by late 1959 and early 1960 had American Jewry succeeded in laying the basis for a special relationship between Israel and the United States with regard to Israel's military security and territorial integrity. That situation emerged gradually after a rather long period of Jewish lack of influence on U.S. Mid-East policies.

---

Isaac Alteras is an assistant professor of Jewish History and Contemporary Israel at Queens College. He is currently completing a book on the relations between the United States and Israel during the Eisenhower Presidency.

### Notes

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President, Ann Whitman File, D.D.E. Diaries, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1, October 28, 1953. (Deposited at Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.)

2. Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 67.

3. *D.D.E. Diaries*, Box 20, November 2, 1956.
4. Steven F. Windmuller, "American Jewish Interest Groups: Their Role in Shaping U. S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East. A Study of Two Periods, 1945-48, 1955-58". (doctoral diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1973). See also Michael Reiner, "The Reaction of U.S. Jewish Organizations to the Sinai Campaign and Its Aftermath." *Forum*, no. 40 (Winter 1980-81), p. 31.
5. Department of State, *Bulletin*, vol. 28 (June 15, 1953), p. 834.
6. William Zukerman, ed., *Jewish Newsletter, Independent Thinking on Jewish Problems*, June 22, 1953.
7. American Council for Judaism, *Council News* 2, no. 4 (April 1957).
8. *Ibid.*, Press Release, April 26, 1956.
9. John Foster Dulles Papers, Box 67, October 12, 1953 and December 30, 1953; also Dulles to Rabbi Hillel Silver, July 13, 1953. (Deposited at Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.) After seeing Dulles on October 27, 1953, Klutznick, in a letter to the secretary of state, made the following comments: "While I cannot bring myself to agree with the judgment reached by your department in the withholding of aid to Israel, I would be remiss in a sense of duty to myself if I did not express to you my sincere appreciation for the time that you took to discuss the matter with our delegation." The meeting did not influence or change U.S. policy in any way. These meetings between the secretary of state and Jewish leaders came as a result of what was viewed by many as a pro-Arab tilt in U.S. policy during 1953. For example, Dulles's call for the return of some Palestinian refugees to the "area presently controlled by Israel," his indirect appeal for the internationalization of Jerusalem, and strong American condemnation of the Israeli attack on the Jordanian village of Qiby during October 14-15, 1953. On October 20, in view of Israel's refusal to comply with the request of the chief of staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to suspend work on its hydroelectric project on the upper Jordan River, the United States cancelled economic aid to Israel. Even though the grant was reinstated, the fact remained that the United States used its economic power to coerce Israel.
10. For the exact figures of membership in the leading Zionist organizations in 1948, see Melvin Urofsky, *We Are One: American Jewry and Israel* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1978), p. 279.
11. Marshall Sklare and Mark Vosk, *The Riverton Study* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1957), p. 22.
12. Interview with Yehuda Hellman, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, April 16, 1982.
13. The two officials representing the administration were George V. Allen, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian and African affairs, and Norman S. Paul, regional director for Near East foreign operations administration.
14. Addresses and Statements to the Conference of Major Jewish Organizations, American-Israel Relations, Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C., March 5-6, 1955.
15. Thus, by the mid-1950's the operational structure of the organized Jewish community on behalf of Israel consisted of eighteen organizations that operated independently and at the same time belonged to three umbrella agencies functioning as coordinators for Jewish political action: the American Zionist Council, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and the National Community Relations Advisory Council, whose local branches engaged in pro-Israeli activity.
16. *D.D.E. Diaries, Dulles-Herter Series*, Box 5, Telephone Conversation with Gordon Gray, April 12, 1956.
17. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: The White House Years, 1956-1961* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 56.

18. *The New York Times*, November 1, 1956.
19. Michael Reiner, "Reaction of U.S. Jewish Organizations," p. 31.
20. *The American Zionist* 47, no. 2 (November 1956): 17.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.
22. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 18, 1956.
23. Sherman Adams, *First Hand Report* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 665.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *American Zionist*, February 1957, p. 8.
26. *New York Times*, February 12, 1956.
27. Reiner, "Reaction of U.S. Jewish Organizations," p. 36.
28. Herman Finer, *Dulles Over Suez: The Theory and Practice of His Diplomacy* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 476-477.
29. *D.D.E. Diaries, Dulles-Herter Series*, Box 6, February 12, 1957.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1957.
32. American Jewish Congress, "Statement of the American Jewish Congress on the Eisenhower Doctrine," February 4, 1957, pp. 1-4.
33. *Near East Report*, 1, no. 12 (November 15, 1957).
34. Memorandum for the files of Lewis L. Strauss, January 22, 1958. I am indebted to the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, for calling my attention to this very important document.