

## PRINCIPLE AND EXPEDIENCY: THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND PALESTINE, 1948

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*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948*, Vol. V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Part II.  
Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

“We have no long-term Palestine policy. We do have a short-term, open-ended policy which is set from time to time by White House directives” (p. 1222). So wrote a member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, Gordon P. Merriam, in July 1948. In a much-awaited volume of the *Foreign Relations* series, the truth of Merriam’s observation is driven home.

According to the conventional wisdom, the United Nations in effect established the state of Israel, doing so when the General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine in November of 1947. President Truman ardently and consistently believed in a Zionist state, and hence was taken aback when Warren R. Austin, American Ambassador to the Security Council, in March 1948 announced that the United States was abandoning partition and supporting a UN trusteeship. As Margaret Truman writes in her memoirs (*Harry S. Truman*, 1973), the President never formally committed himself to this plan. Even before the British mandate ended, Arabs launched massive assaults against Jewish settlements, never once seeking compromise with the Jewish Agency. Although some Palestinian Jews took the offensive, these were terrorists of the Irgun and Stern Gang, not the recognized Zionist forces known as the Haganah.

The scenario continues. When Truman recognized the state of Israel in May 1948, doing so as soon as David Ben-Gurion announced its formation, he did not do so for political reasons but for humanitarian ones. In fact, he had already written off New York State, where many Jews vote, in the forthcoming presiden-

tial campaign. Israel herself, always the vastly outnumbered party, fought against British-backed Arab armies to retain her sovereignty, although in so doing she gained additional territory. Fortunately for the United States, she was — from the outset — not only the “sole democracy” in the Middle East but a militantly anti-Communist nation, a country that served as a bulwark against Soviet penetration of the Middle East. Palestinian refugees were encouraged by their own leadership to leave; in fact they ignored Jewish pleas that they remain in the land of their birth. At no time did Arabs attempt to establish a state on the area allocated them by partition. Although Israel continually sought negotiation, the Arab nations would not even agree to recognize her existence, much less discuss peace.

The real story, of course, is a far more complex one, and the new *Foreign Relations* volume sheds indispensable light on this complexity. The volume itself begins in January 1948, in the wake of the partition resolution. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly had passed Resolution 181, which had recommended (a) the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states (b) an economic union between the two new states administered by a joint economic board and (c) an independent Jerusalem under UN trusteeship. A UN commission was to supervise Palestine’s transition from British mandate to two independent nations.

On January 20, 1948, the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, directed by George F. Kennan, found partition unworkable. As its memo noted, increasingly influential Irgun and

Stern elements within the Zionist movement were committed to far greater boundaries; the Arabs of Palestine and the Arab states vehemently opposed partition, much less the proposed economic union (although on November 29, the latter expressed their willingness to accept the principle of a federal state in Palestine).<sup>[1]</sup> Given Moslem proclamations of a *jihād* against the Jews and the irregular military units being organized in Arab states to fight in Palestine, war was inevitable. The UN made no provision for enforcing partition, so Soviet troops could intervene, causing the United States in turn to do likewise. America could well be outflanked in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The consequences of partition, the document continued, were ominous. The "more moderate and intellectual" Arab leaders might be replaced by irresponsible elements; hatred of Zionism might extend to include all Westerners; Russia might use the partition precedent to set up puppet regimes in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Macedonia; and Jews could be openly harassed in Moslem countries. Arab regimes could cancel British and American air bases, cease pipeline construction (and on February 21 the Arab League tentatively agreed to deny American firms pipeline rights until the US altered its Palestine policy),<sup>[2]</sup> drastically curb American trade, and close down United States schools and missions (pp. 546–554).

While finding "all of us" to blame for the Palestine imbroglio, Kennan claimed on January 29 that "the main responsibility will have to rest with the Jewish leaders and organizations who have pushed so persistently for the pursuit of objectives which could scarcely fail to lead to violent results" (p. 580). On February 24, the diplomat denied that the conflict had "direct relation to our national security", found "past commitments" of "dubious wisdom", warned against "domestic pressures", and called for "a fairly radical reversal of the trend of our present policy". Otherwise, he argued, the United States alone would be immediately responsible for protecting the Jewish population against the Arabs or witnessing a Russian presence in the area (p. 657).

Other State Department officials were also skeptical of partition. For example, on January 26, Dean Rusk, chief of the State Department's UN division, found "serious doubt that there is legal authority for the United Nations to impose a recommendation of the General Assembly by force upon the Arab inhabitants of the proposed Jewish state" (p. 558). And early in February, George Wadsworth, American Ambassador to Iraq, told Truman that Arab leaders were convinced that partition betrayed America's own principles of "self-determination and majority rule". Over forty per cent of the new Jewish state, he said, would be Arabs "whose ancestors had owned the land for many centuries" (p. 597).

State Department anxieties could only be confirmed by the report of Robert B. Macatee, US Consul General at Jerusalem, dated February 9. "The Government of Palestine", he claimed, "is admittedly in a state of disintegration". Vital government services were long interrupted, with both Jewish and Arab communities refusing to compromise (p. 606). Troops from Iraq and Syria carried out attacks on Jewish settlements, while Jewish armed groups took the offensive in Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Tireh. "Such activities are designed, according to the Jews, to force the Arabs into a passive state", so reported Macatee. The British, he continued, "cannot get out of Palestine too soon" (pp. 609–612).

Soon the State Department sought a UN trusteeship, said trusteeship substituting for partition and replacing the British mandate until Jews and Arabs could work out a *modus vivendi*. If the Policy Planning Staff still hoped for Arab acquiescence in partition (p. 621), it still suggested on February 14 that the United States simply give lip service to the partition resolution; it should not press the Security Council for its implementation (p. 629). The National Security Council, in a draft report dated February 17, opposed the sending of American troops to Palestine; partition, so the NSC claimed, should not be enforced "against the objections of the inhabitants of Palestine" (p. 632). The Central Intelligence Agency also denied that partition could be implemented (pp. 666–675). On February 21, the State Depart-

ment claimed that the UN Charter did not empower the Security Council to enforce partition (p. 639), and Austin spoke to this effect before the Security Council (p. 653).

On March 5, George C. Marshall told Austin to seek a trusteeship in the UN, one lasting until "the people of Palestine are ready for self-government". Although the United States, said the Secretary of State, should not "go on record as voting against partition", it should request "the Secretary-General to convoke immediately a special session of the General Assembly to consider the Palestine question further" (p. 681). Marshall hoped to embarrass the Soviets, strong supporters of partition, declaring that they should be made to show how partition could be carried out peacefully when Jews, Arabs and Great Britain were all taking irreconcilable positions (p. 702). The Soviet representative to the UN, Andrei Gromyko, professed ignorance on the topic, but still did not want the plan modified (p. 734).

Within the White House, however, opposition to a trusteeship was already developing. Early in February, Truman had referred to "the fanaticism of our New York Jews" (p. 593), and on February 19 he assured Marshall that "we could disregard all political factors" (p. 633). However, Clark Clifford, Special Counsel to the President, adamantly stood for continuing the partition policy. In a memo to the President dated March 8, he claimed that "the American people" opposed "acts of appeasement toward the Arabs" and listed various resolutions endorsing a Jewish homeland. (In quoting from the Balfour Declaration, he overlooked portions that provided continuance of "civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".) Clifford endorsed US cooperation with an international security force, one that would draw upon American volunteers; Russian troops, he said, would comprise no more than one-tenth of the total unit. Calling for the lifting of the American arms embargo, he claimed that such action would give "the Jewish militia and Haganah, which are striving to implement the UN decision, equal opportunity with the Arabs to arm for self-defense".

If the Arab states did not accept partition, he continued, they should be branded aggressors.

Oil diplomacy, said Clifford, would not be a factor. "The fact of the matter is that the Arab states must have oil royalties or go broke", he wrote, claiming that they could only get the dollars they needed from the United States. For example, he maintained, ninety per cent of Saudi revenues derived from American oil royalties. Arab states would automatically spurn Soviet overtures, he went on, acting in the realization that Russian influence automatically threatened "their social and economic structure". On the other hand, collapse of UN authority in Jewish Palestine might result in unilateral Russian intervention. Hence the United States should abandon "the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes". All such advice, he added, was "completely uninfluenced" by the forthcoming presidential elections (pp. 690-696).

Further protests came from Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, who told Under Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett on February 21 that an imposed trusteeship would merely create Arab violence and fortify Jewish extremists, while turning all Palestine into a united Arab state. The Jews, Shertok said, would be a minority, left to the mercy of the Arab majority (p. 646). On March 13, Shertok claimed that Palestinian Jews were ready to sign "any paper guarantee" that would assure Arab rights in the new state; however, "they preferred trust in their good faith and self interest". With so many "Jewish hostages throughout the world", Jews in Palestine would be "living in a glass house . . . under the severe light of world opinion" (p. 716).

Arab alternatives suddenly became visible. On March 14, some Arab delegates to the UN, including those from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, claimed that their own states, and the Arab Higher Committee, would agree to either a unitary or federalized state, or to trusteeship. Under the first two schemes, the state would be ruled by a bicameral legislature, with Jews equally represented in the Senate; up to 100,000 Jews could enter the new nation each year for

from two to three years, with a lesser number admitted each year thereafter (p. 724).

Four days later, the United States, France, and China called for a trusteeship (p. 740), and Willard L. Thorp, Acting Secretary of State, cabled Austin, telling him that the US would only support enforcement measures connected with such a policy (p. 742). On the following day, Austin addressed the UN. Coming out for trusteeship, he denied that partition could be enforced peacefully. (On February 16, the UN Palestine Commission had predicted that unenforced partition would result in "uncontrolled, widespread strife and bloodshed" [p. 631].) The editors of the State Department volume, drawing upon both Department memos and professional historians, imply that Truman had full knowledge of the trusteeship proposal and gave it his approval (pp. 744 - 750).

On April 1, the Security Council endorsed resolutions calling for both a truce and a special session of the General Assembly, its task being to consider the future government of Palestine (p. 777). On the following day, the State Department drafted its own trusteeship plan, one that would assure "the territorial integrity of Palestine" (p. 779) and use a plebiscite to ascertain the view of "the majority of the registered members of both the Arab and Jewish communities of Palestine". Both communities would have to approve any plan submitted to the UN (p. 796). To the State Department, at any rate, partition was dead, although Truman publicly declared on March 25 that he still favored partition for the future (p. 760).

Enforcement factors soon played their role. Loy W. Henderson, Director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, warned Marshall that enforcing a trusteeship might require "the shedding of American blood in Palestine" (p. 756). To reduce such dangers, Henderson continued, the United States must avoid "Zionist pressures", cooperate with the British, defuse the Palestine issue in the forthcoming presidential election, end illegal arms smuggling into Palestine, and bring Jews and Arabs together (p. 757). The Joint Chiefs, in a memo dated April 4, predicted that American military involvement would require 46,000 U.S. troops as well as the

same number from Great Britain. In addition, it would necessitate early implementation of selective service, over-extend U.S. armed forces overseas, and create additional expense (p. 800). On April 19, Secretary of Defense James A. Forrestal reported that any such troop allocation would leave no forces available for other areas (pp. 832 - 833). On the same day, Rusk told the General Assembly that the United States lacked the military capability to fight a war in Palestine (p. 833). However, Marshall warned the British ten days later that if Arab nations invaded Palestine, UN forces would have to intercede. And if these Arab troops included contingents from Transjordan, a British ally, the United States would hold the United Kingdom responsible (p. 865). Foreign delegates to the UN refused to commit themselves to a trusteeship until America expressed its willingness to send troops (p. 845).

Things were obviously in limbo. Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization and soon to be Israel's first president, wrote Truman on April 9. There was, he said, no assurance that "a trustee is available, that Arabs or Jews will cooperate, that the General Assembly will approve an agreement or that any effective measures can be improvised by May 15th", the latter being the date that the British mandate was due to expire. The Jewish people, he claimed, faced the choice of "Statehood" or "extermination" (pp. 808 - 809).

The Zionists obviously planned to go ahead with statehood. On April 15, Weizmann told American delegates to the UN that, if there were no two-thirds majority in the General Assembly for trusteeship, the Jews of Palestine had the legal right to establish their own nation. The Arabs, he said, were too weak to resist, and economic needs left them unable to cut off oil sales to the United States. Touching on a different point, Weizmann claimed that, since the 1920s, there was no possibility of the Jewish state going Bolshevik (p. 823). When Marshall told an off-the-record press conference on April 28 that an armistice had virtually been reached, Shertok told the Secretary the next day that the Jewish Agency opposed the proposed UN truce. It would defer statehood and thereby

prejudice "our rights and position" (p. 875).

The famous Deir Yassin incident was now reported. On April 13, the American consul at Jerusalem cabled Marshall, informing the Secretary that Irgun and Sternist forces attacked Deir Yassin, an Arab village several miles west of Jerusalem. "Attacks killed 250 persons, of whom half, by their [Zionist forces] own admission to American correspondents, were women and children", his bulletin said (p. 817). (Historian Howard M. Sachar calls Deir Yassin "the most savage" of Zionist "reprisal actions", as "more than two hundred Arab men, women, and children were slain, their bodies afterward mutilated and thrown into a well".)<sup>131</sup>

Then, on May 3, Consul Thomas C. Wasson reported from Jerusalem that Arab armies had not yet invaded Palestine; however, thousands of individual Arabs were fleeing the country. The recent battle at Jaffa, Wasson claimed, was started by the Irgun, with the Haganah "taking over in the midst of battle". (Sachar writes that when Zionists captured Jaffa on May 14, the local Arab population of 70,000 fled in terror.)<sup>14</sup> Referring to both Deir Yassin and Jaffa, Wasson reported: "Until recently Irgun started such operations; if successful were continued by Haganah; if not were repudiated by responsible Jewish quarters" (p. 890).

On the next day, Robert M. McClintock, special assistant to Rusk, drafted a memorandum (unsent) to Lovett. The refusal of the Jewish Agency to accept on-the-spot truce negotiations, said McClintock, clearly revealed its intent "to go steadily ahead with the Jewish separate state by force of arms". If the Jewish Agency, which had military responsibility, sought to round out the state after May 15, "the Jews" would be "the actual aggressor" against "the Arabs" (p. 894).

Meanwhile, on April 20, Austin called for a trusteeship in the UN (p. 836), but Henderson remained anxious. Two days later, Henderson told Lovett that the Palestine problem should "no longer . . . be treated as a football of domestic politics, but as a matter seriously involving the security of the United States". Marshall, he said, should meet with "the outstanding leaders of the Jewish Community in the

United States" and convince them to "prevail upon the Jews in Palestine to adopt a reasonable and conciliatory attitude". The Secretary should also tell Arab representatives that mass fighting in Palestine would create "political and economic disaster" in the Arab world (pp. 841 - 842).

One of the more interesting documents in the State Department collection concerns Marshall's conversation on May 4 with Dr. Judah Magnes, president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Magnes, who had long sought a binational state in Palestine, asked the United States to impose economic sanctions on both sides. Calling the Jewish community there "an artificial development", he predicted that sanctions could halt "the Jewish war machine" (p. 904).

But the White House was slowly shifting, moving eventually in the direction of recognizing the new Jewish state that Weizmann announced would be created on May 15. On May 11, Rusk claimed that rejection of a truce by both parties "cuts the heart out of trusteeship" (p. 966). At a meeting with various government advisers held on May 12, Clifford called for immediate recognition of the Jewish state, a suggestion that Lovett termed "a very transparent effort to win the Jewish vote". The United States, said the Under Secretary, would be recognizing a nation while the General Assembly was still considering the further government of the whole Palestine area. Marshall warned that if Truman followed Clifford's advice, he — the Secretary — would "vote against the President". Truman, acting over Clifford's objection, endorsed a State Department resolution to the General Assembly calling for a truce and a UN Commission (pp. 975 - 976), whose major task would include promoting "agreement on the future government of Palestine" (p. 979). Truman claimed to be well aware of "the political risks involved which he, himself, would run" (p. 976). Far from being a consistent and enthusiastic champion of the Jewish state, Truman was obviously wavering.

Nothing, however, had yet been resolved. Although the State Department draft resolution indicated that America no longer saw partition

as workable (p. 979), Weizmann pointed to the November General Assembly resolution as legitimizing the creation of his new nation (p. 982), and on May 12 the United States dropped support of the trusteeship plan. Clifford soon began making arrangements with Eliahu Epstein (later Eliahu Elath), director of the Jewish Agency's political office in Washington, to expedite American recognition (p. 989), and Truman recognized the Provisional Government of Israel hours after its birth (p. 992).

The State Department, of course, was resting uneasy all this time. Wasson reported on May 13 that, with the exception of the Irgun attack on Jaffa and Haganah occupation of certain areas on the Jerusalem – Tel Aviv road, Palestinian Jews had strictly observed the partition boundaries. He noted, however, that David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the provisional Zionist Council of State, "had always said that the main aim of Jews was to get all of Palestine", that Haifa was under Jewish domination and the former Arab city at Jaffa now deserted, and that "most representative Arabs have fled to neighboring countries" (p. 985). On the same day, Marshall told varied diplomatic offices that internal weaknesses made Arab activity in Palestine most difficult. Iraq, he said, had recently suffered from strikes, neither Lebanon nor Syria had any real army, the Saudis could barely keep their own tribes in order, and Transjordan depended on British officers (p. 983).

It was, however, Truman's recognition that caused the real consternation. Clifford pointed to "unbearable pressure" to "recognize the Jewish state promptly" (p. 1005), while Lovett feared that the President's action might lose "the effects of many years of hard work in the Middle East with the Arabs" (p. 1006). A General Assembly resolution of May 14, authorizing a UN mediator for Palestine, had involved no recognition of either Israel or partition (pp. 994–995). Henderson stressed that recognition was *de facto*; it did not necessarily involve U.S. commitment to the partition boundaries (p. 1002).

When the news of Truman's actions reached the UN, the American delegation saw its labors for truce and mediation undercut. Marshall

feared that the whole U.S. delegation might resign *en masse* (p. 993). On May 19, Austin declared that recognition had "deeply undermined the confidence of other delegations in our integrity". The "feeling" prevailed, he continued, that "the Jews . . . violated spirit of truce effort, and prevented conclusion of formal truce", with the United States tacitly endorsing such violations and thereby harming the UN effectiveness (p. 1014).

The British were furious. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin told American ambassador Lewis W. Douglas on May 22 that American recognition "had cut the ground from under the efforts which we were making, not entirely unsuccessfully, with the Arabs on the bases of these United States proposals" (p. 1034–1035). Two days later, Bevin denied that Transjordan's Arab Legion entered "any part of the area recommended for the Jewish state by the Assembly". Furthermore, Legion attacks on parts of Jerusalem resulted from "the breaking of cease-fire by the Jews" (p. 1038).

Kennan wrote another one of his analytical memos, this one expressing "deepest apprehension over the trend of U.S. policy". He repeated the warnings of the Policy Planning Staff that the United States should undertake no major responsibility "for the maintenance and security of a Jewish state in Palestine". Current American actions, he said, "threaten not only to place in jeopardy some of our most vital interests in the Middle East and the Mediterranean but also disrupt the unity of the western world and to undermine our entire policy toward the Soviet Union" (p. 1021). Lovett, in forwarding Kennan's recommendation to Marshall, concurred (p. 1022).

Israel wasted little time in seeking U.S. assistance. On May 25, ten days after Arab forces attacked Palestine, Weizmann sought American lifting of the arms embargo, declaring that the new nation-state of Israel needed "anti-tank weapons; anti-aircraft weapons; planes; and heavy artillery" (p. 1042). In addition, he desired a loan from the Export–Import bank (p. 1043). The Division of Near Eastern Affairs declared that Arabs would perceive the lifting of the embargo as "an American declaration of war", a move that

would "immediately evoke hostile and violent mob reaction against the United States" (p. 1060).

The new nation also wanted "the right kind" of diplomatic envoy. On May 26, Weizmann sought full exchange of diplomatic representatives (p. 1051), and Shertok wanted the United States to send someone of ministerial rank (p. 1074). Clifford opposed sending a career diplomat, preferring, he said, "a big calibre man of large reputation". When Truman chose James G. McDonald, a strong Zionist proponent, as Special Representative to Israel, Lovett immediately protested. The Under Secretary was soon informed by Clifford that the President would brook no opposition (p. 1311).

Now that the Zionist state was recognized, the State Department sought modification of its boundaries. On June 23, McClintock drafted a "Top Secret" memorandum calling for a new drawing of boundaries, one that followed the Peel Report of 1937. McClintock asserted that Israel's jagged borders ("a portrait by Picasso", he noted) were "fantastic" in the absence of economic union with an Arab state. He suggested Israeli control of the coastal area from Tel Aviv to Haifa, with a considerable portion of western Galilee included. In turn, Transjordan would receive areas of the Negev allocated to Israel by partition. Such "freezing" of Israel's boundaries, McClintock asserted, would guard "the Arab states against the wider pretensions of the Jewish revisionists and such fanatics as those of the Irgun who have pretensions to the conquest of Transjordan". McClintock also called for Jerusalem's internationalization under UN auspices: "to allow Jerusalem to be a Jewish capital", he wrote, "would incite reciprocal emotion in the Arabs" (pp. 1134 - 1138). Acting U.S. representative to the UN, Philip Jessup, concurred in such recommendations, to which he added official international recognition of Israel's *de facto* control of Jaffa (p. 1166). By September 1, Marshall had approved the bulk of these recommendations (p. 1368).

State Department recommendations concerning the Negev and western Galilee were somewhat similar to those proposals offered on

June 28, 1948, by UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte at Rhodes. Bernadotte differed in that he recommended the inclusion of Jerusalem into Arab territory (with municipal autonomy for the Jewish community), further consideration of Jaffa's status, a free port at Haifa, and a free air terminal at Lydda (p. 1154). He also called for the rights of refugees to return home without restriction, review of immigration at the end of two years, and common defense and economic cooperation with Jordan (p. 1153).

Both parties rejected Bernadotte's proposals, with the Arabs still holding out for a united state (p. 1192) and Israel particularly fearful of immigration restrictions (p. 1191). On July 9, Arab officials formally rejected a truce that lasted almost a month, and Zionist forces soon took the offensive, gaining territory in Galilee, the Negev, and northern Gaza. Israel was no "David" fighting an Arab "Goliath", as its committed troops — so a CIA estimate noted — outnumbered the Arabs over two to one. "The Jews", said the CIA, "may now be strong enough to launch a full-scale offensive and drive the Arab forces out of Palestine" (p. 1244).

In general, Bernadotte was pessimistic. Early in August, he noted that Israel demanded all Galilee by right of conquest, a corridor from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, and the return of the Negev, awarded it under the partition provisions. In addition, he learned that Israel would not negotiate on boundaries as a condition of the peace settlement (p. 1316).

Jerusalem was a particularly sticky point. On August 4, Consul General John J. Macdonald reported that Arab leaders in Jerusalem favored demilitarization of the city while the military governor of Jewish Jerusalem was obstinate in his refusal (p. 1277). The Israeli government argued in part that Christian indifference to the city justified its control (p. 1286). Israel, Bernadotte suspected, was merely using delaying tactics pending the time it could "demand Jerusalem be included in Jewish state" (p. 1287). Pessimistic concerning Jewish intentions in Jerusalem, Macdonald recommended that Israeli intransigence be criticized publicly by both the UN and the US (p. 1302).

The United States, however, continued to resist major responsibilities for Palestine, refusing Bernadotte's request for American marines in Jerusalem (p. 1235). On August 19, Forrestal told the National Security Council that troop deployment to Palestine would jeopardize connections to other parts of the world "vital to United States security" (p. 1322). Both Israel and Arab forces, so the State Department suggested, should contribute "small well-disciplined military units . . . to assist in demilitarization and to control possible extremist outbreaks" (p. 1305), also adding that "Palestinian Arabs should . . . have right of expressing their views in some manner" (p. 1305).

At this point the refugee issue started coming to the fore. As Professor Sachar notes, there were various reasons for the flight, an exodus that reached nearly 175,000 during the last weeks of the mandate. Despite Zionist claims, Sachar finds no evidence for the charge that the Arab governments themselves called for evacuation. On the contrary, he notes, the Arab League told Palestinians to stay put. Once on the offensive, Israel "encouraged" about 100,000 Arab inhabitants of Lydda, Ramle, and surrounding villages to flee, often doing so by spreading tough warnings ahead of them. By July 9, the number of Arab refugees reached 300,000, proof — writes Sachar — that "the Jewish republic" was "capable of waging ruthless and brutal warfare on its own".<sup>151</sup>

The State Department received similar reports. Aubrey E. Lippincott, Consul at Haifa, noted on June 23 that Arabs returning to Haifa were considered aliens. Since they had to obtain identity cards and swear allegiance to the Israeli state, the remaining Arabs determined to leave (p. 1138). Four days later, American Consul General Macdonald cabled that Shertok, now Israel's Foreign Minister, declared that Arabs could not return until a general political settlement was made, an attitude that — so Macdonald predicted — would only increase refugee bitterness (p. 1151). Upon hearing that Israel would bar 300,000 refugees, Jefferson Patterson, Chargé in Egypt, claimed that "such action can no doubt be justified as necessary security measure for new state";

however, its application would "convince Arabs that real intention of Jews is to dispossess refugee Arabs of property and enterprises in Israel in order to provide space and economic opportunities for Jewish immigrants" (p. 1155). Bevin called for international efforts to settle Jewish refugees elsewhere, so as to "remove feeling that world is trying to solve problem, which Arabs had no part in creating, at expense of Arabs alone" (p. 1249).

George C. Marshall was also disturbed. The Secretary of State called for gradual Israeli absorption of Arab refugees, declaring that otherwise Israel would be giving the impression that assimilation of Jewish immigrants was taking place at the expense of the former Arab inhabitants. Failure to partially repatriate the refugees "might create difficulties", wrote the Secretary of State, "for 265,000 Jews permanently residing in Arab states" (p. 1311).

Israel, however, remained intransigent on the issue. Early in August, Shertok told Bernadotte that Arab refugees would constitute a fifth column. According to the American Chargé in Cairo, Shertok said that "Economically PGI [Provisional Government of Israel] had no room for Arabs since their space was needed for Jewish immigrants", to which Bernadotte replied that it seemed anomalous for Zionists to demand the migration to Palestine of Jewish displaced persons when they refused to recognize the refugee problem "they had created" (p. 1295). Bernadotte himself had witnessed the seizure of Arab property by Jews (p. 1295).

State Department concern continued. Noting the Arab refugees who fled from Haifa on April 21–22, and from Jaffa on April 25, and recalling Jewish promises of safeguards for Arab minorities, Marshall accused Israel of "callous treatment of this tragic issue" (p. 1367). Rusk too was concerned, claiming that "Israel may be using the fate of these unfortunate people to enhance its bargaining position". "A substantial number of refugees", he contended, could be permitted to return "without prejudice to the domestic security of the state of Israel" (p. 1332). Epstein, now representative of the Provisional Government of Israel, confirmed Rusk's analysis, declaring



that "this question would be of importance to them [the Israelis] as a bargaining point" in negotiations with the Arab states (p. 1347).

By the middle of August, Marshall was becoming strongly critical of Israel. On August 16, Marshall sent Truman a secret memo in which he questioned Israel's desire to maintain a current peace. He listed several factors — military occupation of much of Jerusalem, systematic violation of the UN truce, continual sniping against Arab positions, reception of arms from France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia — that cast light on Israeli sincerity, noting as well Shertok's official proclamation that Israel would not currently accept those 300,000 refugees who, said Marshall, "fled from their homes and are now destitute in nearby Arab areas". Russia, so feared the Secretary of State, would take advantage of the crisis to "foment trouble" in Iran and Iraq, while Israeli hostilities against Transjordan might pit the U.S. against Britain (pp. 1313–1315).

Soviet strategy, as revealed by the Syrian minister to Moscow Zeineddine to Walter Bedell Smith, American ambassador to Russia, remained constant. Continued support for Israel, commented the Syrian, would lead to further Arab setbacks, which in turn would discredit the "ruling classes" in the eyes of their people. If the Arabs were given no other choice, they would seek aid from the Soviets (pp. 1370–1371).

Particularly intriguing is the "Jordanian connection". On March 12, in a conference of Truman and administration officials, it was learned that Shertok had recently hinted of a "behind the door" deal with Abdullah ibn Hussein, King of Transjordan. If Abdullah took over the Arab portion of Palestine, said Shertok, the Jews could establish their sovereign state without any need to make a truce with the Palestinian Arabs (p. 973). On January 3, 1949, the State Department continued its endorsement of a "Jordanian solution" (p. 1706). At the same time, Lovett dismissed what he called the "Arab Palestinian Govt" which, he said, was established without consulting Arab Palestinians and was dominated by the Mufti of Jerusalem (p. 1448).

The documents covering Bernadotte's pro-

gress report to the UN, given on September 16, show how he modified his original proposal by making concessions to Israel by seeking internationalization of Jerusalem, deleting economic union with Transjordan, and assigning all Galilee to Israel. However, his report included "the right" of Arab refugees to return at the earliest possible date. "The Arab inhabitants of Palestine", Bernadotte wrote, "are not citizens or subjects of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan, the States which are at present providing them with a refuge and the basic necessities of life" (pp. 1401–1406). They also cover Bernadotte's assassination (pp. 1414–1415) and Marshall's endorsement of September 21, without White House permission, of the UN mediator's new proposals (p. 1416).

Neither side liked Bernadotte's final suggestions. Most Arab representatives stressed that Haifa, Jaffa, and Galilee recently had a majority of Arabs (p. 1423). Yet Fawzi Bey, senior Egyptian delegate to the General Assembly, made no objection to the existence of the state of Israel. The Arabs, said Bey, no longer desired a unitary state in Palestine; indeed negotiations with Israel could begin once the Arab refugees were permitted to return home (pp. 1424–1426). Israel, too, opposed the plan, with Shertok claiming that Israel needed an "adequate area in which to live and grow" (p. 1453). All of Galilee, he told Marshall on October 5, was needed for defense, while the Negev was essential for absorbing immigrants (p. 1453).

Despite Marshall's endorsement, the White House warned against accepting the Bernadotte plan in its entirety. Clifford called Lovett from Truman's campaign train in Tulsa on September 29, telling the Acting Secretary of State that "pressure from the Jewish groups on the President was mounting and that it was as bad as the time of the trusteeship suggestion" (p. 1430). In a secret memo dated September 30, McClintock quoted Lovett to the effect that disavowing Marshall "would impugn the integrity of the United States" (p. 1438). On the same day, McClintock — noting the heavy Zionist pressure for the partition boundaries — claimed that the United States would have to

concede most, if not all, the Jewish settlements in the Negev to Israel (p. 1439).

When Lovett attempted to secure Truman's approval of the Bernadotte plan, the President at first endorsed it, doing so on October 10. However, on the following day, White House advisers vetoed it (p. 1466). The British, who wholeheartedly backed the Bernadotte proposal, soon found America backsliding, for Lovett began hinting at "minor modifications" (p. 1469). On October 15, Lovett — in what was a transparent political move — instructed the American UN delegation at Paris to "let others do the talking" (p. 1471). Three days later, the Acting Secretary received a request from Truman, personally delivered to his Washington home by Clifford, ordering American UN delegates to avoid any action on Palestine without Truman's personal authorization. UN debate, the President said, must be deferred until after the election (p. 1490). Forrestal soon accused Clifford and David Niles, Administrative Assistant to the President, of using the Palestine issue for "squalid political purposes" (p. 1501).

Hence, when Fawzi told Austin on October 17 that Israeli forces, in violation of the current truce, took military initiative in the Negev, the State Department merely replied that the United States would take no unilateral measures (p. 1492). Fawzi replied in turn that the situation was rapidly deteriorating, with the U.S. appearing "to be waiting on SC [Security Council] action instead of stirring SC into action". Egypt and Arab societies, he continued, were facing severe disruption, with "far-reaching repercussions" possibly in the offing (p. 1500).

Early in the presidential campaign, it appeared as if both parties would follow a bipartisan approach to the Palestine question. On October 2, Lovett reported a conversation with John Foster Dulles, leading foreign policy adviser to Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey and member of the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly then meeting in Paris. Lovett warned Dulles against Zionist efforts to play off "one party leadership against the other in the contest for votes", as such behavior could only subject America to

"contempt, acrimony and ridicule" in the General Assembly. Dulles claimed to understand the situation, promising to do all he could to influence the Republicans toward moderation (pp. 1448 — 1449).

However, not long after, candidate Dewey publicly repudiated the Bernadotte plan, doing so on October 23 when he backed the partition boundaries (p. 1507). Immediately Clifford — and Lovett also — urged Truman to reaffirm his support of the Democratic platform, said statement endorsing the partition boundaries and claiming that all modifications should be subject to Israeli (but not Arab) veto (p. 1503). Truman did so on October 24, stressing that any boundary modification must be "fully acceptable" to Israel and promising to expedite loans to Israel as well (pp. 1513 — 1514). Clifford rejoiced in the new campaign moves, saying that Dewey's initiation was "the best thing that has happened to us to date" (p. 1509).

During all this time, Israel was gaining territory in the Negev, going down as far as Beer-sheba (p. 1509). In the maneuver known as "Operation Ten Plagues", it broke the truce line of October 14. Israel, in fact, had dynamited her own trucks to create the incident needed for her troops to move swiftly. On October 23, Lovett acquiesced in Israeli domination of the northern Negev (p. 1508), although Marshall found it a "serious mistake" to publicize America's support. Public exposure, he said, would threaten General Assembly endorsement of the Bernadotte plan, harden Israeli desires to capture the entire Negev, and harm relations with Egypt, then losing major strongholds there (p. 1515). Ambassador Douglas feared that America's new Negev policy would play into Soviet hands, for it would destroy any chance for a Palestine settlement that year (p. 1516). The American delegates to the UN, he said, could not even mention the Negev without "giving the appearance of condoning Israeli military aggression across UN truce lines", and thereby creating "cynical reactions" in other countries. The entire Palestine situation, Douglas maintained, was "probably as dangerous to our national interest as is Berlin" (pp. 1516 — 1518).

On October 26, UN mediator Ralph Bunche,

successor to Bernadotte, ordered all troops back to the October 14 truce line (p. 1518). The British sought a Security Council resolution that would levy sanctions upon any defiant nation (p. 1525), although Lovett warned that the U.S. needed specific presidential approval before it could cooperate (p. 1523). On October 29, Shertok told Marshall that, even if the Security Council ordered Israeli compliance, Israel could not leave newly-occupied lands. Accusing Egypt of "wanton aggressiveness . . . in invading Palestine territory" and pleading "self-preservation", he called withdrawal an "act of suicide" (pp. 1526–1527).

Under such circumstances, fighting could only continue. On November 3, Marine Brigadier General W. E. Riley, chief of the U.S. truce observers, reported to Bunche that both sides were violating the truce, with "this attitude most pronounced in the Jews". Arab forces, Riley said, generally "have endeavored to comply with the cease fire"; their violations, he continued, consisted of retaliatory action. On the other hand, "willful and premeditated violations of the truce by the Jews are now routine". Israeli forces were far superior to all enemy troops and "could undoubtedly clear all of Palestine of Arab forces in a relatively short time" (p. 1541).

On October 29, the Security Council adjourned without voting on the Negev. Lovett, noting how the American elections affected UN conduct, wryly wrote, "Am told removal restrictions on normal procedures may be expected next week when silly season terminates" (p. 1528). On a more serious note, he told Marshall that "our past experience with formally approved positions and institutions which are subsequently and suddenly altered or revoked is dangerous and intolerable" (p. 1534). His concern was undoubtedly heightened when Truman ordered the American delegation to abstain on any UN vote, indeed to avoid taking any position on Palestine before election day (p. 1535). On November 4, the day after Truman was re-elected, the Security Council asked the belligerents — with American approval — to return to the truce line of October 14 (p. 1546).

After the American people went to the polls, Israel still remained intransigent. Weizmann, congratulating the President on his election victory, claimed that "sheer necessity compels us to cling to the Negev". Furthermore, he accused the British of using Arab states as "hired assassins" (pp. 1550–1551). (Denying such claims as Weizmann's, Ambassador Douglas maintained that "the meticulous observance by the British of the arms embargo . . . had reduced the Arab forces and the Arab Legion to a state of almost complete impotence" [p. 1537]. Even British military installations at Amman and Iraq, wrote Douglas on November 12, receive no English war materials [p. 1571].)

At this stage, Truman refused to back Israel totally. On November 10, he told Douglas and Lovett that support for partition boundaries by no means implied that the United States would support Israeli claims to Jaffa and western Galilee. However, he said, Israel "might well consider relinquishing part of the Negev to Arab States as *quid pro quo* for retaining Jaffa and western Galilee" (p. 1565). Yet on November 28, when Truman wrote Weizmann, he spoke somewhat differently. In a letter drafted by Niles, the President deplored any attempt to take the Negev from Israel and promised the nation low-term loans. He predicted General Assembly backing for the American position, which involved opposing "any territorial changes in the November 29th [1947] resolution which are not acceptable to the State of Israel" (p. 1633).

American diplomats were learning how unbending Israel had become. On November 10, Lovett met with Epstein and Michael Comay, Israeli representative to the UN. Comay, while welcoming any armistice, opposed both Bunche's suggestion of demilitarized neutral zones and the Security Council call for leaving recently-captured areas. Epstein admitted that the forthcoming Israeli elections made his government oppose withdrawal. Extremists, "still an important and dangerous element", might turn to Russia. Lovett saw Israel facing a choice: she could either lay claim to western Galilee and Jaffa, or justify domination of the Negev "on the grounds of right and justice" bestowed in the partition resolution. She could

not do both. Comay replied that he considered territory allotted by the partition resolution "as belonging to Israel by right, and considered that the territory militarily occupied outside this area could be a matter for discussion". However, Epstein backed Lovett's position, declaring that Israel wished to abide by UN decisions and negotiate directly with the Arabs (pp. 1562 - 1563).

The Cold War again entered into the Palestine controversy. In a conversation between Marshall and Shertok on November 13, the Israeli foreign minister claimed that his government sought to "steer a middle course" between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Although "many Israelis" wanted to "go along with the Russians", American support for Israel's position on negotiations, an armistice, and immediate admission to the UN would counterbalance such sympathy. (Weizmann pointed to a "dangerous" Russian influence if Israel was forced to "surrender" the Negev [pp. 1606 - 1607].) Marshall in turn told him that Israeli arms purchases from Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia increased Arab fears, and that open Israeli flouting of UN resolutions would affect her membership in that body, U.S. loans, and American *de jure* recognition (pp. 1577 - 1580). On the following day, Shertok wrote Marshall, claiming that when such "fundamental national interests" as the Negev were at stake, Israel had "no choice" but to ignore the Security Council (p. 1561). He found himself "deeply alarmed by the apparent determination to pursue the November 4th line to the bitter end" (p. 1582).

On November 15, the American delegation to the UN drafted a resolution on Palestine. It called for acceptance of Israel as an independent state, opposed any new General Assembly resolution on boundaries, and endorsed UN control of Jerusalem and a UN conciliation commission. "Arab Palestine standing alone", it continued, "could not constitute a viable independent state". Hence, it should "be transferred to one or more of the neighboring Arab states through the process of negotiation conducted by a UN conciliation commission, taking into account the wishes of the inhabitants of Arab Palestine" (p. 1596). Mc-

Clintock protested, declaring that the paper ignored almost all of Bernadotte's proposals and challenged Truman's desires as expressed on November 10 (p. 1600). On December 7, Ben-Gurion told Bunche that despite the Security Council resolution of November 4, which called for a truce and withdrawal from the Negev, he would not comply until Egypt was prepared to negotiate (p. 1653).

As winter approached, the State Department received hints of Arab bending. On November 10, Stanton Griffis, American ambassador to Egypt, reported that King Farouk favored direct negotiations with Israel (p. 1561). Then, a week later, British officials claimed that Arabs would back the Bernadotte plan provided the UN would assume responsibility for firm frontiers. The recent Israeli military success, so British officials feared, worsened prospects for talks, for at the outset of any such conversations, the Arabs would be bargaining "under duress". Sir Orme G. Sargent, British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for European Affairs, feared "another Munich", with the powers selling "Abdullah down the river for the sake of specious peace" (p. 1602).

The British were equally disappointed in American policy. According to Ambassador Douglas, Truman's statement of October 24 undercut British - American cooperation concerning Israeli boundary changes. Bevin in fact considered Bernadotte's proposals weighted against the Arabs, backing them only because Britain had hoped to "stand shoulder to shoulder" with the United States in pushing a general solution through the General Assembly. The United Kingdom was particularly concerned about the Negev. Not only did it serve "like a dagger blade dividing the Arab world"; Israel would obtain virtually all the arable land in what had been a predominantly Arab area (p. 1611).

British anxieties were soon realized. On November 20, Jessup qualified "general" U.S. agreement with Bernadotte's report by declaring that any modification of partition boundaries must be acceptable to Israel, and needless to say, the British reacted unfavorably. Jessup did declare that the Palestinian refugees should "be permitted to return to their homes,

with adequate compensation to those who chose not to return" (p. 1617).

On December 22, Israel again violated the Security Council truce resolution, this time by the Negev move known as "Operation Ayin". Israel acted, claimed Truman's Special Representative McDonald, because of a continued Egyptian threat to its south, financial strain, and the belief that only by such efforts could she gain "the territory in the Negev allotted under partition" (p. 1689). Lovett drafted a cable to McDonald, which was not sent, declaring that if Israel had indeed violated the truce, it could not be categorized as a "peace-loving state" and the United States would be forced to review support for her UN application (p. 1690). The British desired American cooperation for a Security Council resolution, one that would set a truce and time limit for Israeli withdrawal to her position of October 14 (p. 1691). Although the United States abstained in the voting, doing so along with Russia and the Ukraine, the British proposal passed eight to nothing (p. 1699).

During this time "the Jordanian connection" took a new twist. On December 29, Sir Alec S. Kirkbridge, British minister to Transjordan, reported that Elias Sassoon, former head of the Oriental Section of the Jewish Agency, and Colonel Moshe Dayan, commanding officer of the Israeli forces in Jerusalem, met with Abdullah el Tel, Transjordanian representative. According to Kirkbridge, the two Israelis told Abdullah that Israel was no longer interested in a mere armistice and that Transjordan must choose "either peace or war". Kirkbridge feared that unless Transjordan immediately agreed to peace negotiations, Israel would attack Iraq, thereby rendering Transjordan helpless (pp. 1699-1700).

The United States suddenly took a tough position, with McDonald instructed to meet with Ben-Gurion and Shertok. Israel, said Lovett, must withdraw from Egyptian territory and abandon her "threatening attitude" towards Transjordan or face "a substantial review" of American policy (p. 1704). Israel, Shertok responded, had no intention of seizing Egyptian territory and sought an armistice with Transjordan. McDonald reported the im-

mediate withdrawal of small Israeli units from the Egyptian side of the frontier (p. 1706).

Because the volume ends on the last day of December, readers might not realize that cease-fires took place early in 1949, with Israel's boundaries extending well beyond those outlined in the partition resolution. On January 19, 1949, the White House announced a hundred million dollar loan to Israel, and six days later the United States extended *de jure* recognition to Israel. The Palestinian war radicalized several Arab regimes, with a military coup in Syria in 1949, Abdullah assassinated in 1951, and Farouk overthrown in 1952.

The volume challenges recent claims made by Clifford, in material containing little documentation, to the effect that Truman never abandoned support for partition. Concerning the May 12 meeting, at which Truman supposedly backed Marshall and Lovett over Clifford, the former Special Counsel asserts that the President "simply did not want to embarrass General Marshall in front of the others". Clifford further maintains that various experts on the UN Charter found the Security Council having the authority to partition Palestine, that the State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser recommended an arms embargo on certain Arab states and the arming of a Jewish militia, and that he personally convinced Lovett of the wisdom of recognition before it was announced.

Clifford also finds "a note of anti-Semitism" in efforts of unnamed revisionists who see recognition as a partisan move, but he offers no evidence for this charge. (He does deny that the State Department or Forrestal were anti-Semitic.) He cites Arab "violence", though mentioning none by Zionists. He claims that politics played a minor role in Truman's recognition, for in May 1948 party strategists had already "written off" New York. Needless to say, he is silent about his own role in the fall campaign.<sup>171</sup> Thomas Paterson, reviewing the *Foreign Relations* volume in the *American Historical Review*, finds Clifford disingenuous, and this historian can only concur.<sup>181</sup>

The volume also challenges observations made by Ian Bickerton, particularly Bickerton's claim that Truman's actions

between May and November, 1948 do not suggest a course based on political expediency".<sup>101</sup> However, it supports the interpretation made by John Snetsinger, who explains Truman's moves in light of the "Jewish vote". Snetsinger notes a memo, written in Clifford's own handwriting, to the effect that on March 8, 1948, Marshall informed Austin that Truman had approved trusteeship. Concerning the controversial May 12 meeting, Snetsinger finds Clifford telling Truman not to pass up the opportunity to recover his reputation in the Jewish community. Throughout the whole campaign, Snetsinger notes, Clifford was in constant touch with Israel supporters.<sup>1101</sup>

Finally, at long last, we can begin to make our appraisals not on the basis of self-serving interviews and memoirs, in which selective memory is far too often at work, but on the basis of primary sources. For this we are indebted to the Historical Division of the State Department, for their volume is both thorough

and timely, indeed indispensable to our understanding of the diplomatic process.

## NOTES

1. Fred J. Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma* (2nd ed.; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976), pp. 54-56, 76.
2. Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 301-302.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 333-334.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 338.
7. Clark Clifford, "Recognizing Israel", and "An Exclusive Interview with Clark Clifford", *American Heritage*, XXVIII (April, 1977), pp. 4-11.
8. *American Historical Review*, LXXXII (December, 1977), pp. 1356-1357.
9. Ian J. Bickerton, "President Truman's Recognition of Israel", *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LVIII (December, 1968), pp. 173-240.
10. John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1974).