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Secret

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STRATEGIC FACTORS IN THE PALESTINE SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

In October 1946 President Truman enunciated United States policy on Palestine in the following terms:

" Meanwhile, the Jewish Agency proposed a solution of the Palestine problem by means of the creation of a viable Jewish state in control of its own immigration and economic policies in an adequate area of Palestine instead of in the whole of Palestine. It proposed further the immediate issuance of certificates for 100,000 Jewish immigrants. This proposal received widespread attention in the United States, both in the press and in public forums. From the discussion which has ensued it is my belief that a solution along these lines would command the support of public opinion in the United States To such a solution our Government could give its support In the light of the terrible ordeal which the Jewish people of Europe endured during the recent war and the crisis now existing, I cannot believe that a program of immediate action along the lines suggested above could not be worked out with the cooperation of all people concerned. The Administration will continue to do everything it can to this end."

In May 1947 Mr. Secretary Marshall declared at a press conference that the policy enunciated by the President in October 1946 remained unchanged.

The argument of this paper is that the rapid realization of the policy laid down by the President would not only respond to the dictates of humanity and justice but would also advance the special interests of the United States.

1. United States Interest in the Near East.

The objects to be secured by United States policy in the Near East are:

- (a) Freedom to develop and exploit certain resources, especially oil.
- (b) Free use of the communications which pass through the Near East.
- (c) Power to deny the use of the Near East to an enemy in the event of war and ability to use the area without restrictions as a base for the forces of the United States and its allies.
- (d) An atmosphere of sympathy with the interests and ideals of United States amongst those elements whose support in time of crisis is likely to be most effective.

The main considerations affecting Palestine in this connection are:

1. The Attitude of the Jewish Community.

The Jewish Community, at present, consists of 630,000 people; but this population would be doubled in a few years if the establishment of a Jewish State were initiated by the United Nations. It is the only western population in the Middle East with high standards of technical and scientific skill. In political thought it is fundamentally democratic, it abhors all forms of totalitarianism, and its dominant labor group is strongly anti-communist. Its sympathies with the United States are derived from common ideals, from the support given by American Jewry to Zionist development, and from the political support given by the United States Government to Jewish national aspirations.

2. The Attitude of the Arab Community.

- (a) The Arab peoples have displayed no particular affinity

with American ideals or the democratic way of life. During World War II this fact was illustrated by the Iraqi revolt, by Egyptian sympathy with Italian aims - a sympathy which required strong British counteraction in February 1942 - and by the collaboration with Nazism of Palestine Arab leaders, especially the Mufti of Jerusalem.

(b) Arab nationalism is hostile to any favored positions for Western Powers and is now engaged in attacking such favored positions as have already been established by treaty relationships.

(c) The Arabs are politically unstable and consider their salvation to lie in an attitude of "trading" neutrality, securing the alliance of one great power by threatening to secede to another.

(d) It is not necessary to impede Jewish effort in order to prevent the Arabs from seeking a Russian alliance. The feudal and dynastic leadership of the Arab League cannot accept Russian influence without undermining its own position. The Arabs need America more than America needs them. Nor is there any evidence that Russia is prepared to identify herself with Arab nationalism against the Western Powers.

3. Counteraction of Alien Influences.

The danger of communist influence in the Near East derives not so much from the subjective attitudes of its populations as from the objective economic and social conditions which prevail. These conditions are highly congenial to revolutionary doctrines in most countries of the Near East. The agrarian peasantry lives below the minimum levels of subsistence in the grip of squalor and disease and under the domination of an obsolete social system which cuts it off from all prospects of expanding prosperity. The contrast between the wealth of the few and poverty of the

many is more glaring than in any western society. In Iraq there is a 60% infant mortality, an average expectation of life of 27 years and a situation in which 80% of the population lives below the annual subsistence level of L 12 per head (Hashim Jawad, "The Social Structure of Iraq" pp.9-12). In parts of the Lebanon the villagers live on 4 piastres per day per head. (Fouad Saade's estimate). In Egypt the average standard of subsistence and the condition of public health are even worse. Here is fertile soil for the growth of revolutionary doctrines encouraged from outside but drawing their strength from internal conditions. It is the unanimous view of economists and sociologists that this area can only be insulated against communism by a process of economic and social reforms. Scientific agriculture, industrialization, the introduction of western techniques and the investment of capital in large development schemes would rescue the Near East from the dangers of upheavals uncongenial to United States interests. The Jews in Palestine are, at present, the chief representatives of this process of economic progress and social reform. Support of their effort is thus in full accord with the Truman doctrine which seeks to undermine communist influence by strengthening the economic foundations of democratic society.

4. The Strategic Factor.

It is politically impractical for the United States to maintain a standing army or even a garrison in the Near East against the contingency of war. The United States must, however, be eager in the interests of military preparedness to strengthen those forces whose assistance might be expected in the event of conflict. On the plane of strategy the chief factors affecting Palestine are:

(a) Geography.

Palestine has a central position in world strategy since it stands at the point where three continents converge into a land bridge which spans the three oceans of the ancient world - the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. To conquer the Near East is, sooner or later, the aim of every global aggression. In no other fashion can military conquest break the confines of a single continent and dominate intercontinental communications. To hold the Near East in potent defense is therefore to wield the power of veto against the ambitions of world conquerors.

(1) Palestine contains the only deep water port in the Eastern Mediterranean available to the Western Powers in the event of war, since Alexandria is almost certain to be neutralized shortly as a result of a revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936.

(2) Palestine is an important center in air communications between America, Europe, Africa and the Far East.

(3) In the event of aggression from the North, Palestine provides a potential air base both for defense and for operations against vital industrial centers.

(4) The Negev (the southern desert of Palestine) could accommodate an effective air base if brought under Jewish settlement. Without Jewish settlement it would lack the necessary utilities, water and food supplies and auxiliary manpower required for the operation of an air base.

(b) Military Potential of Jewish Population.

Manpower. With a population of 1,000,000 the Jews could mobilize three or four fighting divisions as well as a considerable supply and production potential; the degree of military training is high. There are many who were trained in European armies including 30,000 who served

in the British forces in World War II and thousands of others who have been well trained for home defense purposes. Palestinian Jewish soldiers, sailors and airmen saw service in the Middle East, East Africa, Greece and Crete, Italy, Austria and the Low countries. The Palestine Jewish Brigade Group fought in Italy under American command.

(c) Industrial.

The Jewish population contains a very large proportion of mechanical and technical workers. The industrial enterprises of Palestine Jewry contain a large amount of heavy technical equipment. The mechanical skill of the Jewish community is well organized in such bodies as the contracting agency Solel Boneh which undertook the construction of air fields at Lydda and Akir of heavy fortifications in the Dead Sea area, roads and camps in Syria, plants and installations in Iraq, Bahrein and Cyprus and oil refineries at Abadan in Persia. There are also numerous factories which could supply the local needs of troops many of which are convertible for munitions and other material. In World War II commodities supplied to the Armed Forces by Jewish industry included military equipment (e.g. anti tank mines and machine gun parts) as well as all forms of auxiliary supplies, clothing, foodstuffs, etc.

On the scientific and technical side the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Technical College in Haifa, the Sieff Institute at Rehovoth and Professor Goldberg's Laboratories in Tel-Aviv are capable of varied applied research of high standards.

(d) Naval Potential.

(1) More than 1000 Jews have received training in the British Royal Navy for seagoing duties.

(2) A Jewish port operating company of the Royal Engineers re-equipped the port of Tobruk and served in Greece. There is a naval school in Haifa under the auspices of the Hebrew Technical College and maritime activities are popular amongst the youth.

(3) Other coastal installations could be constructed to serve an amphibious operation. Minesweeping and landing craft were constructed during World War II at the Tel-Aviv port.

(e) Air Potential.

(1) The Negev, the southern desert, could, with Jewish colonization be made suitable for a series of air bases for all types of air craft. Jewish settlement would lead to road building, irrigation, power installation and probably a pipe line extension. None of these conditions, however, would exist if the Negev were left to its present desolation.

(2) The commercial air port at Lydda could be converted for military purposes.

(3) The Dead Sea and Lake Tiberias are suitable for sea plane landings.

(4) The Jewish community has considerable personnel trained during World War II for air duties and ground crew activities of the Royal Air Force.

(f) The Arab Potential.

The Arabs are not only unwilling to link their destiny with that of the United States; they are also potentially less effective as a military factor.

(1) No Arab State possesses any military force surplus to its requirements of local security. The Iraqi Army of two divisions is barely able with British assistance to hold a centralized state together

against the separatist aspirations of the Kurds. The ^{Eg}gyptian Army (about 2 divisions) is restricted both in size and effectiveness by the depressed health and social conditions of the population from which it is recruited. It played little or no part in the defense of Egyptian territory against invasion in 1942. In the Levant States even the police forces are barely adequate for routine tasks; there are no military formations capable of playing an active role. In Saudi Arabia the forces at the disposal of King Ibn Saud are trained only for the protection of settled areas against nomadic incursions. Of the Transjordan forces under British command the Arab Legion is purely a desert police force and its commander has a low estimate of its effectiveness in strategic operations. The Transjordan frontier force is a police formation not organized for military operations.

(2) The predominantly agrarian bias in Arab society, offers no basis for a supply or production potential such as that which the Jewish population of Palestine can command.

(3) The Arab League is a loose-knit political alliance of sovereign states with whom it would be impossible for the United States to conclude a military agreement to which all would remain faithful in an emergency. A Jewish State in Palestine on the other hand would reinforce the defensive power of the Near Eastern region and become an outpost and a bulwark of the democratic cause.

CONCLUSION.

The opposition which this policy would evoke in the Arab world would be limited both in extent and duration. If the support of the United Nations were secured for the United States policy, the Arab States as members

of United Nations would accept such an adjudication and forbear from violent reactions which would be contrary to the Charter. They are, in any case, in no position to challenge it; and since the object of their opposition would be to prevent such a solution, it would cease to be sustained once the solution became an accomplished fact. The Arab world then would have no vital interest in persistently challenging a settlement of this kind, since the existence and independence of the Arab nation does not depend exclusively on Palestine. For the Jews, however, the matter is one of national existence or loss of national identity; so that they, unlike the Arabs, could never acquiesce in a settlement which kept them in a subordinate position in Palestine, and would perpetually undermine such a settlement. Thus, whereas a pro-Jewish solution would evoke half-hearted and transient opposition, an anti-Jewish solution would yield perpetual and incessant turmoil to which the United States could not remain indifferent. The assumption that the United States is interested in limiting the duration of the Palestine crisis is a potent argument in favour of a swift realization of the declared United States policy.

Dated, May 29, 1947.