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101

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Folder
76

Hoskins, Colonel Harold, 1943.

Col. Hoskins

April 20, 1943

AHS File

THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE NEAR EAST

Part I -- THE FACTS

Duplicate

I. Purpose of Memorandum

The object of this memorandum is to summarize the facts and information collected during three and one-half months (November 1942 to March 1943) when, in compliance with instructions from the Joint U. S. Chiefs of Staff, I visited the Near East.

(see
Emergency
Council's
Reply -
Feb. 14, 1944)

II. My Mission

1. Itinerary:

Although physically familiar with most of the areas visited on this trip, I had not been in the Near East since the spring of 1939. Fortunately, it was possible on this visit not simply to hit the high spots in whirlwind fashion but actually to spend approximately two weeks in each country -- Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq. I also visited Turkey and Iran in order to get first-hand information on the attitude of these neighboring states toward the Arab world. In addition I motored over 800 miles through Egypt and Cirenaica along the coast from El Alemein to Bengazi. My return flight to the United States took me along the rest of North Africa via Tripoli, Algiers, and Casablanca to Marrakech and Dakar.

2. People Seen:

The facts and information given in this memorandum reflect conversations with:

- (a) British and Fighting French military and diplomatic representatives in the various countries.
- (b) American consular, diplomatic, and military representatives.
- (c) American missionary and educational leaders.
- (d) Arab leaders both in and out of political office.

In my contacts with Arab leaders I was assisted by a list especially prepared for me by President Bayard Dodge of outstanding graduates of the American University of Beirut living in the areas visited. I also renewed contact with many friends of my father and mother who had served as missionaries in Syria for 50 years.

3. Prodecure:

In all my contacts I explained that I was there to collect information not to give it, to listen and not to talk. I hoped that they cared to give me their views as the information which I was collecting was not for publication in any way but for the benefit of the United States Government. In gathering first-hand information I was naturally aided to a great extent by my ability to converse in

Arabic, or, where necessary, in French or German.

III. Background -- American Interests and Standing in the Near East

Although American interests in the Near East have centered primarily on the importation of tobacco and dates, and our exports have centered on films and automobiles, our main interests in the Near East, due to 100 years of missionary and educational efforts, have remained in the cultural field. The fact that these missionary and educational efforts were supported entirely by private philanthropic contributions rather than by Government funds has added to the prestige that the United States gained from those efforts. The standing and influence, for example, of the American University of Beirut and of Robert College in Istanbul and of their graduates is hard to realize except after a first-hand visit to the area.

As a result, American prestige has for many years been extremely high throughout the whole Near East. This situation was strikingly confirmed in 1919 when, from the Crane-King Commission's investigation, over 60 per cent of the petitions submitted by the people of this area gave the United States as their first choice for a mandatory power. This was over four times the request for Great Britain, which was the second power suggested.

At the same time, the fact must also be clearly recognized that American prestige has declined considerably in recent years and is still declining. Some of the reasons for this decline are suggested in the later sections of this memorandum.

IV. Outstanding Facts:

The outstanding facts developed in the course of my trip may be summarized as follows:

1. The most important and most serious fact is the danger that, unless definite steps are taken to prevent it, there may be a renewed outbreak of fighting between Arabs and Jews in Palestine before the end of the war and perhaps even during the next few months. Such fighting in Palestine is almost certain to lead to the massacre of Jews living in the neighboring states of Iraq and Syria as well as in other places in the Near East.

The tension is growing steadily and as a result the Arabs are likely to be goaded as their only effective means of protest into breaking the informal truce which has existed in Palestine since the outbreak of the war in 1939. The Arabs feel that the Zionists by continuing a world-wide propaganda for a Jewish State in Palestine have not kept their part of the bargain. There is therefore in the minds of the Arabs a growing fear that unless they do something, when the war is over, they will be faced with a decision already taken by the Great Powers to turn Palestine over to the Jews. This fear is, of course, one on which Axis propaganda to this area has constantly harped.

2. There is clearly a hardening of feeling on both sides which is reflected in an increasingly unyielding attitude by the extremist leaders of both Arabs and Jews in regard to any compromise solution, both sides are armed and indicate a willingness to fight.

It is common knowledge that the Zionist undercover military organization, the Hagana, has made plans and has stocks of tommy guns and machine guns as well as small arms. Much of this equipment was bought from French Vichy troops in Syria and has, during the past two years, been smuggled into Palestine.

The Jews particularly feel that with their increased numbers and with their increased stock of arms they can more than hold their own in actual fighting with Palestinian Arabs. However, from previous experience the Jews realize that, whenever serious fighting with the Arabs starts in Palestine, assistance from neighboring states will again pour in. It is this increased opposition that the Zionists admit they probably do not have the power to overcome without outside assistance from Britain or British and American military forces.

3. It is also increasingly clear that the growing interest of Jews and Moslems in all parts of the world in the Palestine settlement is now so large that it makes quite impossible any purely domestic or local solution that might otherwise have been arrived at by the Arabs and Jews living in Palestine itself.

4. The outbreak of internal conflict in Palestine is obviously one of the major objectives of Nazi propaganda in this area. It is aimed at precipitating Arab-Jewish fighting at a moment when combat troops of the United Nations can least readily be spared for putting down domestic insurrection. Furthermore, Axis propaganda in this area has of late become increasingly effective because the Nazis have played down reference to Axis interests and have laid their main emphasis on the one fact that, if the United Nations win the war, the Arabs can be certain that they will lose Palestine to the Jews. Nothing could be simpler or more readily understandable to the average Arab than the Axis three-point program which in their daily broadcasting promises:

- (a) the elimination of all alien control, whether British or French;
- (b) the liquidation of the Jews in Palestine; and
- (c) complete independence.

5. Traveling through Palestine one clearly realizes that it is not an unpopulated area into which an indefinite additional number can immediately be poured. For quick comparison, Palestine in area is a little smaller than the State of New Hampshire and already has a population four times as large. The figures, which, like all Near Eastern statistics, are only approximations, indicate the large growth that has taken place:

	<u>1920</u>	<u>1942</u>
Arabs	600,000	1,000,000
Jews	<u>70,000</u>	<u>500,000</u>
	670,000	1,500,000

6. There is an ever-present Arab fear of American support for political Zionism with its proposed Jewish State and Jewish Army in Palestine. This is now extending to the further fear of American support and the penetration of Jewish people into Syria and other neighboring Arab areas, once Palestine has been fully populated. The Zionist press in Palestine claims the support of public opinion in Britain and the United States for its aspirations and the Arab press makes no effective denial.

Although the State Department has taken no official position in the dispute as to the correct interpretation of the Balfour Declaration calling for a "national home for the Jews," the recurring petitions of members of both houses of Congress have been interpreted both by Zionists and by Arabs as indicating clearly where American sympathies lie. Furthermore, it should be clearly realized that every American statement in favor of Zionism is within a few hours widely broadcast by the

Axis radio to the whole Arab world in support of its main propaganda theme that a United Nations victory means for the Arabs the certain loss of Palestine to the Jews. For example, the December 1942 petition supporting the Zionist position signed by 67 senators and 180 congressmen was very widely broadcast by the Axis radio throughout the whole Near East. It was, of course, referred to not as a petition but an expression of government policy. It resulted in unprecedented demonstrations against the United States that culminated in Damascus in the closing of the bazaars for several days as a protest against the United States.

7. There is also a growing Syrian fear of American support for, or at least acquiescence in, a continuation of French control in Syria after this war is over. The Syrians remember that, after the last war and despite an overwhelming preference for the United States and specific objection to France, the mandates for Syria and Lebanon were nevertheless given to France. As a result many pro-American supporters in Syria have for years felt the displeasure of the French and claim that since that time they have been discriminated against or passed over in Government appointments.

In fact, the fear that already haunts all of the Near East is that at the end of the present World War the United States may again return to isolationism. Even today this is the cause of such worry that reference is made to it in almost every conversation held with private or official individuals.

8. Tension and difficulties with the Arabs in North Africa have already been reported to the War Department by General Eisenhower. On my return to the United States via North Africa I found in both the Eighth Army and the First Army American officers responsible for the security of American troops who were increasingly disturbed by the unenthusiastic, and in some place, hostile, attitude on the part of the North African Arab population toward the United States. They expressed fear of still further difficulties if the issues of a Jewish political state and of a Jewish Army continue to be pressed at this time. The uncooperative attitude of the North African Arabs reflected, in their opinion, the irritation of the Arabs at the behavior of some of the local Jewish populations in North Africa as well as the effectiveness of hostile propaganda which continued to claim that United States' successes in North Africa would only give greater support to the Jewish claims in Palestine.

9. From my trip through North Africa I also got the impression that American political efforts had, quite naturally and perhaps of necessity, concentrated on the problems of our relations with the various French groups or factions. The effect of our military occupation on the Arabs who form approximately 93% of the population and their attitude toward the United States had as a result not been given the attention it deserved. Furthermore such information on the attitude of the Arabs as was available to American officers had almost invariably been received at second hand from the local French authorities.

Obviously the situation of American or United Nations troops in the Arab or Moslem world has not yet reached a very critical stage. But it is definitely unhealthy and now is the time when steps should be taken to prevent a further deterioration. The unfortunate British experience during their retreat in Burma is only too recent an example of the serious effects that a hostile rather than friendly native population can have on military operations.

10. Since Zionist propaganda and political pressure in the United States is much greater than corresponding Arab pressure, it is important for the American people to realize that, in the Moslem world, Arab feelings remain uncompromisingly

against the acceptance of a political Zionist State in Palestine. The Arabs in Palestine have on many occasions fought both the Zionists and the British military forces sent against them, and there is absolutely no basis for assuming that they will not again fight when they feel it necessary. It should therefore be very clear that a Zionist State in Palestine can only be imposed upon the Arabs by military force.

*Supplied by H. Montor, Dec 1943, through Senator
Lodge of Massachusetts.*



COPY OF LETTER FROM THE HONORABLE ARTHUR H. VANDENBERG, UNITED STATES SENATE,
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, AUGUST 28, 1943.

Mr. Phil Slomovotz
The Jewish News
Detroit, Michigan

My dear Phil:

This will reply to your letter of the 23rd which has followed me to Grand Rapids. I do not know what can be done about the Smith matter. OF COURSE I have no "definite understanding." If he means he "knows where I stand" in respect to particular issues he has asked me about, he is correct. I always answer any questions from a constituent - and I always try to answer frankly. That goes for him or any one else. And everybody always gets the same answer. If they agree, I am glad. If they disagree, I can't help it. If his extremists agree with my position in respect to our foreign policy, then we certainly are making progress- because my position, as set out in the so-called Vandenberg-White Resolution in the Senate is dear and unequivocal. I stand for post-war co-operation between sovereign nations to end military aggression for keeps. I stand for American co-operation as determined by "due Constitutional process." I stand for an authentic regard for American interests as well as American responsibilities. And that is the only "understanding" I have with anybody. I can appreciate how you feel about the matter; and you may be very sure I shall never fail your loyal friendship in these connections.

I know something about the troubles which the Zionist Movement confronts. Indeed, I very intimately understand some of its latest hazards. In respect to some of my information I can only speak to you in complete confidence because it is of that nature. I recently spent an hour with an Army Colonel who has just returned from the Zion-Arab area and he gave me much distressing news about the imminence of possible Arab armed revolt, with possible repercussions in a general revolt of all their related religionists. I believe he was sent on his errand of inquiry by the War Department. The facts which he presumed to submit may be right or wrong. If they are right, we have a hazard on our hands which seriously involves the entire war effort. If he is wrong, he is an unconscionable alarmist. In any event, the actual situation, in these regards, ought to be clearly understood by all concerned; the truth ought to be clearly established for the good of all concerned, including the Zionist movement itself. If there is trouble ahead, we shall be wise to choose our own time to deal with it. It seems to me that the official leaders of the Zionist movement should be in direct contact with the State Department and the War Department in these regards so that we may all move in concert for the best welfare not only of the general war effort but also of the Jewish National Home. Manifestly that is not a subject which I can discuss publicly. But I think it MUST be paramount in charting our immediate policies.

So far as the Jewish National Home is concerned, I stand where I have always stood. I favor and sustain it as I have always done. I believe it is a national commitment to which both British and American honor are subscribed. I am prepared to say so at any time and in any way - as always. But I fear the present crisis is something which requires more than friendly pronouncements. Unless I am greatly mistaken, it requires real statesmanship on the part of the governments involved not only for the sake of the united war effort (without which everything is lost) but also for the sake of the long-range welfare of the Jewish National Home. Under such circumstances, I am frankly at a loss to know what I CAN say that would suit your present purpose and respond to your present request. After reading this letter, if you have any suggestions, I shall be glad to hear from you again - altho I shall be out of reach until September 10th when I return permanently to Washington. I repeat that I want to be helpful in any way I can; but I want to be sure that I am being helpful. I do not need to repeat that this letter is necessarily confidential because that will be obvious from its context.

With warm personal regards,

Cordially and Faithfully Yours,

(Signed) A. H. Vandenberg

COPY

THE JEWISH NEWS

2114 Penobscot Bldg.

Detroit 26, Michigan

Sept. 20, 1943

Dear Emanuel:

Thanks for your letter which reached me this morning.

I wrote to Vandenberg last week and frankly asked whether Hoskins was the man who approached him. His answer is as follows:

"My dear Phil:

This will reply to your letter of September 14th. The Army officer to whom I referred was Colonel Hoskins. I would have identified him in my previous letter except that I could not remember his name. Of course I shall be delighted to see you or your associates at any time when you are in Washington. I am sure you know that I entirely reciprocate the spirit in which you have written. With warm personal regards and best wishes,"

I am sending you a copy of the letter he wrote to me originally.

Be sure and keep me informed on decisions of the Emergency Committee. I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to save our position.

"With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

(Signed) Phil

PHILIP SLOMOVITZ

COPY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington

In reply refer to
RE

November 9, 1943

My dear Dr. Silver:

I have received your letter of October 29, 1943 referring to our conversation on the afternoon of that day. I am glad to have had the opportunity of seeing you and of discussing matters in which you are interested.

As you know, the Department is following closely developments in Palestine and is familiar with the interest of your Committee in a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Lieutenant Colonel Hoskins is now in London and it is expected that he will have an opportunity while there to discuss his recent visit to Saudi Arabia with Dr. Weizmann.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) E. R. STEPHENSON, JR.
Acting Secretary

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, D.D., Litt.D.,
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for Zionist Affairs,
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New York, New York

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December 7, 1943

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I assume that Montor already forwarded to you a copy of Colonel Hoskins' report, in accordance with my request. However, I am enclosing a copy of this report for your consideration.

This report was obtained by me unconditionally, so that it may be used in any way that you deem proper. (I acquired it through the office of Senator Lodge of Massachusetts. There is no need, of course, of mentioning his name.)

I understand that Nachum Goldmann is in possession of a copy of Hoskins' report. He was prevented from using it because he was pledged not to make it public in any way, shape, or manner. I should like to emphasize that you have full freedom of action with reference to it.

In my judgment, it is desirable to make it public in at least the Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish press so that our own people will thereby obtain a clear conception of the situation in Washington. I am reliably informed that it is this report that is the basis of the opposition of the military authorities in Washington, as well as in the Near East, to any attempt to disturb the status quo in Palestine, or to any modification of the White Paper. The reason for such an attitude is obviously apparent from this report. It seems that both the White House and the Department of State is guided in its attitude by the view of Colonel Hoskins. Moreover, if I am not mistaken, this Colonel Hoskins is presently in London as an official representative of the United States government, with reference to all problems regarding the Near East, including Palestine. If that be so, then our position is indeed an impossible one. All the work of our Public Relations, all our mass meetings, all articles and all our protest sink into insignificance when a pro-Arab and an anti-Zionist like Hoskins is the United States expert with reference to Palestine and he is the one who interprets the attitude of the United States both to the Colonial Office and to Downing Street. The Grand Mufti himself could not have chosen a better representative of the Arab point of view.

By his own disclosure, Colonel Hoskins reveals the astounding fact

that, while he was on an official mission "to collect information".....
"for the benefit of the United States government", he absolutely boycotted the Jewish people in the Near East and failed to establish any contact with the Yishuv in Palestine or with any representative of the Jewish Agency. After this report was delivered to the White House, to the Department of State, and to all important Senators and high military officials of the United States, in which report he has reached definite negative conclusions with reference to the Jewish National Home, he was nevertheless sent as a sort of impartial representative of the United States government for the purpose of conveying the American point of view with reference to Palestine to His Majesty's Government. It is imperative that Colonel Hoskins be discredited before the bar of American public opinion as a biased and prejudiced "expert" on Palestine. The average American has a sense of fair play and will find it difficult to understand how a man of Colonel Hoskins' type, whose mind is completely foreclosed, a priori, with reference to Jewish aspirations in Palestine, could act in a fair manner. This is not a square deal. I think if proper presentations are made, both at the White House and the Department of State, that at long last even in those quarters, the manifest unfairness of having Colonel Hoskins as the arbiter of the Jewish destiny in Palestine would be recognized.

I am writing to you at length in the belief that possibly next Sunday's conference may be used by you or somebody else as a forum to expose the Hoskins fraud, on the basis of his own statements, as contained in this report.

It is pathetic that the Colonel did not find it necessary to make any reference to the tremendous military aid given by the Jewish people in the Near East and particularly Palestine to the cause of the United Nations. The loyalty of the Jewish people to the cause of Great Britain during the critical days of the War, as compared to the disloyalty of the Arabs, finds no expressions in the report. Hoskins, the pro-Arab and the anti-Zionist, deliberately conceals this important and decisive fact. There is no reference to the Jewish achievements in Palestine during the last twenty years.

It is of the greatest importance to our cause that Colonel Hoskins be discredited as he deserves to be. For he succeeded in poisoning the mind of many a Senator and a Congressman when he persuaded them that the individual safety of the American soldiers in the Near East and the security of the military interest of the United Nations, and particularly the interest of the United States, demand that nothing be done in the direction of the Jewish people in Palestine; on the contrary, that everything be done to placate the Arabs, as a military necessity. Both the voices of General Eisenhower and that of General Marshall with reference to the Jewish aspiration in Palestine have been shaped by this ubiquitous Colonel. Hence it is imperative that we engage in a campaign of exposing this American pro-Arab patriot and render him harmless. If he is a member of any commission in London dealing with the Near East, representing the United States, it is our business to bring about his recall. I believe you can do it, calling it to the attention of American public opinion from the platform and through the press. The Department of State cannot do with the right hand one thing and with the left hand something else. All the fine utterances of the President and some high officials of the Department of State are meaningless so long as this spokesman of the Grand Mufti Party is permitted to determine and direct the policies of the United States with reference to the future of the Jewish National Home.

I am in Washington, endeavoring to do my small part in preparing the

ground for your visit next week. *etc.*

I am working in perfect harmony with Rabbi Feuer, who is a delightful fellow. With kindest personal regards and all good wishes,

Cordially,

Elihu D. Stone

Elihu D. Stone

EDS;njt

