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Brewster, Senator, 1944.



COPY — from Washington Office — for —

Elihu D. Stone

Abba Hillel Silver

Conference with Senator Brewster of Maine

Re: U.S. policy

CONFIDENTIAL

Pursuant to an appointment I called on Senator Brewster of Maine at his office on Friday, March 24, 1944. As he seemed to be prominent in the oil discussions, it was important to ascertain from him the relationship of the oil concessions in the Near East to the future of the Jewish National Home, as well as to make the Senator acquainted with our anxieties.

The Senator described the situation as a competitive one between the United States government and Great Britain - that both sides were wooing King Ibn Saud and are ready to pay the price. The Senator pointed out that it was indeed strange that in his correspondence with the Department of State with reference to Palestine because of his interest in the Jewish National Home, the Department somehow always diverted the subject matter of oil. The correspondence is of a confidential nature, but it seemed to the Senator that the paramount interest of our Secretary of State in the Near East is concentrated on oil.

I described to the Senator our fears lest the Jewish National Home be bartered as a sort of "burning offering" to King Ibn Saud. I pointed out to him that we were disturbed by rumors that General Hurley has made commitments adverse to the Jewish hopes in Palestine. I expressed the hope that those rumors were unfounded. Thereupon the Senator offered the information that he spent three hours in conference with General Hurley - that in a discussion of all the manifold problems involved in the oil concessions, the subject matter of the conversation was strictly confidential.

Cautiously and tactfully I tried to convey to Senator Brewster the value of any information he could give us on the subject - that the entire future of the Jewish National Home is involved, and that it is of tremendous importance for us to know the facts.

The Senator was good enough to say that your fears with reference to Gen. Hurley's attitude towards the Jewish National Home as related to the old question are not unfounded. Of course, there are no written agreements and there are no written records of the conversation between Gen. Hurley and Ibn Saud, asserted the Senator. However, continued Senator Brewster, Mr. Hurley definitely associates himself with the British policy with reference to the Jewish National Home, as represented by the White Paper of May, 1939. It is clear, stated the Senator, that in the conversations with Ibn Saud, the General conveyed his hostile views towards the Jewish National Home to the King, whom he was courting in his capacity as an American agent to work out the deal concerning the oil. To my inquiry as to in what capacity Gen. Hurley did act in his dealings with the Arab ruler, the Senator was unable to clearly define the status of Gen. Hurley in connection with the negotiations he was carrying on with Ibn Saud. He described the General's mission to Arabia as being both of a private and a quasi-official



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**Character.**

On the basis of the three-hour conference that the Senator had with the General, he asserted that the opinions expressed by Mr. Hurley to Ibn Saud and other Arab dignitaries were in their very nature the General's private views, and that he did not in any way make commitments for our government. The Senator emphasized, however, that those private views were the views of an important personality close to the government of the United States, and particularly to the President - that his views no doubt carried great weight in the mind of Ibn Saud.

Senator Brewster was good enough to say that during the confersation with Mr. Hurley he endeavored to set the General right on the Jewish National Home by pointing out to him that the honor of the United States is involved and that it is an "incongruity" for the United States to fight a war for justice for the common man and for the freedom of oppressed and persecuted peoples, and at the same time have spokesmen of the United States, in whatever capacity, do away with our policy in favor of the Jewish National Home as established by the United States Congress in 1922 as part consideration for the acquisition of oil concessions. General Hurley argued, however, that apart from the oil business Palestine has already done its share for the Jewish people and that the English government has fulfilled its obligation to the Jewish National Home by making it possible for so many Jews to come to Palestine and settle there.

Senator Brewster seemed to be familiar with the arguments pro and con relative to the White Paper and tried to meet the contention of the General, apparently without success.

Moreover, Senator Brewster stated that General Hurley conferred with President Roosevelt to whom he has definitely conveyed his views with reference to the Jewish National Home, and that those views of course were adverse to our position.

I regarded it as tactless to press the Senator with more detailed information with reference to the General's talk with the President, as he appeared to be somewhat reluctant to discuss it in greater detail, except to say that the report given to the President by Gen. Hurley with reference to Palestine was an unfriendly one.

The Senator from Maine was good enough to volunteer that he would do his best to uncover during the hearings before the Senate Committee now engaged in an inquiry with reference to oil in the Near East any and every angle that has relation to Palestine, and whether or not any commitments were made, official or otherwise, by any agent of our government, to Ibn Saud. He said, however, that this would be most difficult for the reason that those commitments, if made, were not matters of record, and those who have knowledge of them would be reluctant to make revelations.



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The Senator volunteered the information that England is strenuously engaged in an effort to divert the affection of Ibn Saud in their favor. Thus, he pointed out, the efforts to promote a conference for the purpose of establishing an Arab federation of states was no doubt initiated by Great Britain, and hopes must have been held out to Ibn Saud that the leading role in this federation would be assigned to him. Of course, he stated, these are speculations, but they are not unreasonable ones. Mr. Hurley reported to him that there are a large number of Britishers in Saudia-Arabia and they even have someone who is a new edition of the late Lawrence of Arabia, who seems to be active in the proximity of Ibn Saud.

It was the judgment of Senator Brewster that both the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of the Interior, who seem to be strongly in favor of the oil concessions in Saudia-Arabia, have not been made aware of the involvement of the Jewish National Home in connection with any hopes that might have been held out to Ibn Saud by any American spokesman in connection therewith.

Mr. Brewster suggested that we give him a memorandum on the entire subject dealing with the interest of Palestine and the Jewish hopes, as he is ready to use his good offices for the purpose of trying to uncover during the progress of the hearing the nature of the consideration offered to King Ibn Saud at the expense of the Jewish position in Palestine.

The Senator described the attitude of the President as being vague, and therefore unsatisfactory. Moreover, he stated that the situation calls for action and that "deeds" and not vague words count. He quoted Emerson in substance: Your deeds I see; your words I do not hear.

Senator Brewster developed during our conversation a novel approach, that is to say, a novel approach for an American. He maintained that the Jewish National Home could well become, and should become, an American outpost in the Near East, that if we are contemplating making great investments in Arabia, then it is in the interest of the United States to encourage the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, which would constitute a friendly spot in the Near East, and which in a crisis would be of great value to the United States. Moreover, the friendship of the Jews in Palestine could be acquired by America by cooperating with the Jewish National aspirations in Palestine, and by helping the Jewish people to make Palestine a Jewish commonwealth.

The Senator pointed out that the Jewish National Home has been developed by virtue of the financial support given by American Jews. Hence, this fact should be utilized by our government in order to cement a stronger friendship between the Jewish National Home and the United States, instead of alienating it by associating ourselves even passively with the British White Paper. In this connection he exhibited an advance print of an article "The Soviet Wooing of Palestine - Russian-British Competition in the Middle East", by Eliahu Ben-Horin, which will appear in Harper's magazine of April 24, 1944 and which advance proof is, of course, confidential.



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The Senator was visibly disturbed by what Ben-Horin has to say with reference to the influence of Russia in the Jewish National Home. The Russians, he said, are "realists" and they do not hesitate to reverse policies when that reversal serves their purposes, as evidenced by the change of attitude of Russia towards the Jewish National Home. The senator continued: If the policy of Great Britain is that of the White Paper, and if America acquiesces in the White Paper, then as a natural consequence the Jewish National Home would be driven to solicit favor from Russia, which, no doubt, will be a great factor in arranging the next peace.

Senator Brewster stated that the views expressed by Ben-Horin were substantiated by his own experience in Palestine and the Near East. He was tremendously impressed on his last visit to Palestine with the amount of Russian influence in Palestine to the exclusion of other interests. I endeavored to set him right, that is, not to confuse the Jewish cooperatives in Palestine with Communism; and the fact that the majority of the Jews of Palestine come originally from Russia does not in any way intimately associate them with the policies of Stalin; that it is conceivable that if the Jewish National Home is forsaken by its British and American friends, it would be compelled to engage in a search for other friends as a last resort.

However, it may well be stated categorically as a fact that there is a natural spiritual affinity between the Jewish National Home and America, and that Palestine has a genuine affection for the United States, as the Jews of Palestine are natural exponents of our democratic principles and the American way of life. Therefore, America could make Jewish Palestine a fortress of friendship and an outpost of true Americanism by the pursuit of a positive policy of friendship and encouragement.

The Senator requested me to give him a memorandum on the questions raised by Ben-Horin, as he regarded it as a new angle which could be utilized in favor of the Jewish National Home by causing America to realize the great value of such an outpost in the Near East for American interests.

I call your attention to the reply of Senator Brewster to Harper's magazine.

The conference was rather a lengthy one and I have endeavored to give you the substance of the conversation. I might add that Senator Brewster authorized me to convey to you personally the facts stated by him relative to the opinions of Gen. Hurley, and he was good enough to refer to you in most kindly terms.

EDS:ERG