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Publication of Roosevelt, Ibn Saud correspondence, 1945.

Copy

FDR

October 19, 1945

Emanuel Neumann, Esq.
Commission on Palestine Surveys
521 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Dear Neumann:

I assume that something will be done immediately to have some great oriental or biblical scholar, preferably a Christian, to answer the historical portions of the new "Arabic Protocols of the Elders of Zion", written by Ibn Saud.

You can imagine how astonished and pained I am by the reply of our late President for whom I worked so hard in all the four campaigns and in whose friendship we all had such implicit faith. Perhaps the great burdens of war, oncoming age, and advancing sickness were responsible for the indifferent and neutral reply that he sent to such a terrible indictment.

Yours very truly,

S. S. Wise

October 23, 1945.

STATEMENT BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Why are the rulers of the Arab States permitted to meddle in the affairs of Palestine? Why are their ministers in Washington permitted to threaten the security of the Jewish National Home which has been guaranteed by international law and which is being administered under a mandate which does not recognize the right of any Arab State to determine its status or its progress?

These spokesmen of foreign Arab States have been threatening violence and war. The American Government should clearly indicate to them that it does not intend to be intimidated or blackmailed in the carrying out of its own policies. The Arab peoples of the Near East are far more in need of the friendship and help of America than America is in need of theirs. America has become great and prosperous without the aid of these Arab States, while these Arab States are likely to remain backward, impoverished and disease-ridden without the help which friendly America and other free peoples can give them.

They are not making friends for themselves in America by spreading the kind of infamous lies such as King Ibn Saud stated in his letter of April 5th, or by violently resisting the rights of other people to life and liberty which rights were guaranteed them by the nations of the world, and which have been approved by the Congress of the United States, by every President of the United States since Wilson and by the American people as a whole.

President Truman has asked Prime Minister Attlee to make it possible for an immediate migration of one hundred thousand Jews to Palestine. This is in keeping with the terms of the Mandate under which Great Britain undertook to facilitate Jewish immigration to that country. President Truman was dictated by the highest humanitarian interests to help rescue at least that many of the tragic survivors of the Nazi slaughter. Why has Great Britain rejected this

request of the President? Why is the British Labor Party permitting a shocking repudiation of its own commitments made as recently as four months ago? President Truman has indicated that he is not inclined to press his request on Great Britain. Why not? Is the matter of such little importance? Is Palestine a colony of Great Britain, or are six million Jewish dead not enough? Must the remainder of the Jews of Europe perish in order to maintain Great Britain's imperial interest in the Near East?

Who will suffer by the admission of one hundred thousand Jews into Palestine? Not the present Jewish settlers of Palestine. They are prayerfully waiting to receive them. Not the Arabs of Palestine. Their conditions have been bettered and their standard of living has been greatly improved with every influx of Jewish settlers into the country. There is room in Palestine for at least another three million people.

But who will suffer if the President's request is rejected? The hundred thousand innocent men, women and children who have gone through the several hells of Europe in recent years, who are doomed to an inescapable fate if they remain in that war-ravaged and hate-ridden continent, and whose only hope for survival is Palestine.

Is it not time for the conscience of the people of America and Great Britain and of the remaining free peoples of the world to make itself heard?

* * *

Text of Memorandum submitted by the
American Zionist Emergency Council to the
State Department on the occasion of the meeting of
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Stephen S. Wise
with Secretary James F. Byrnes - October 23, 1945

1. The exchange of correspondence between President Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud which has now been made public and the statement by the Secretary of State of October 18 raise issues of fundamental importance in regard to the implementation of American policy on Palestine. Viewed in the light of the unequivocal and firmly established policy of the American Government and people as expressed in a long series of public and authoritative acts and pronouncements, that statement and correspondence, it is submitted, call for immediate clarification.

2. In March 1919 President Wilson, who was directly associated with the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, stated that:

"The Allied Nations, with the fullest concurrence of our Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth."

Every President since that date has given his support to the Jewish National Home objective. Most recently, in statements issued by President Roosevelt on October 15, 1944 and March 16, 1945, that is to say, almost contemporaneously with his correspondence with King Ibn Saud, the late President expressed his support for the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. In addition to these pronouncements by the heads of the Executive branch of the Government, the desires of the American people as to the policy to be pursued in Palestine have been repeatedly expressed in the clearest possible fashion. On two occasions, in 1941 and 1945, a majority of the members of both Houses of Congress joined in a declaration favoring the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. A similar declaration was made on July 4, 1945 by the Governors of 40 out of the 48 states of the Union. Further, the legislatures of 33 states, representing

85% of the population of the United States, have recently gone on record in favor of the Zionist objective. In the summer of 1944 the national Conventions of both major political parties adopted declarations favoring the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization and, in the words of the Democratic platform, "such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth." The late President Roosevelt, as well as President Truman, were elected on that platform. It must be recalled finally that our government's support of the Jewish National Home, is recorded legislatively in two Acts forming part of the supreme law of the land, namely, the Joint Resolution (No. 73) unanimously adopted in 1922 by the 67th Congress of the United States; and the United States-British Convention on Palestine, ratified by the Senate on February 20, 1925 and proclaimed in December of that year.

3. The policy therefore to which our Government and people stand deeply committed is clear and unmistakable. Of this fact, however, neither the letter of President Roosevelt nor the statement of Secretary Byrnes take any cognizance whatever. It is true that in neither instance is the traditional American position in fact repudiated. Nevertheless it is deeply disturbing that it should not have been found necessary to make affirmatively clear that American policy on Palestine has already been established by the public pronouncements of the Presidents of the United States and otherwise - a policy which is predicated upon the right of the Jewish people to rebuild their National Home through free immigration and the close settlement of Jews on the land. That omission can only lead, and has already led, to serious doubts and misunderstandings. It is not conceivable that the law of the land, the will of the American people and the repeated pledges of the heads of our Administration publicly made, should

thus be disregarded in official correspondence. The issues raised by the publication of this correspondence cannot be ignored and places upon our Government the responsibility of indicating in clear and precise terms whether or not it abides by, and proposes to act in accordance with, the policy so long and firmly established.

4. President Roosevelt's letter refers to assurances previously given to King Ibn Saud regarding the attitude of the United States with respect to the question of Palestine. The exact nature of these assurances is not disclosed, but it is respectfully submitted that whatever their tenor, they would not be valid if inconsistent with the publicly stated objectives of American policy or with the terms of the Palestine Mandate.

5. At the same time, it is deeply to be regretted that President Roosevelt's letter, while assuring King Ibn Saud that no action would be taken by our Government that might prove hostile to the Arab people, failed to point out that the policy of the Jewish National Home, envisaging as it does free Jewish immigration into Palestine and the ultimate establishment there of a democratic Commonwealth under the auspices of a Jewish majority, could not be conceived as hostile to the Arab people. The desire of the Jews to live in friendship and good neighborliness with the Arab countries and with the Arab inhabitants of Palestine is well known, and neither Jewish aspirations in Palestine nor the declared policy of this country in support thereof, nor yet the conduct of the Jewish people in Palestine resulting in great good to the Arabs can be construed as hostile to them.

6. The occasion will be taken separately to deal in detail with the contents of King Ibn Saud's letter and with the Arab claim to Palestine, a matter which had been considered fully by the Allied Nations in connection with the territorial settlements made at the end of World War I and the issuance of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate for Palestine. It is doubly regrettable that

the reply sent by President Roosevelt to that communication failed to repudiate its baseless attacks and its vilifications of the Jewish people. It is painful to observe that such calumnies as that the Arabs have reason to fear "a series of massacres" at the hands of the Zionists, that the latter "are preparing to create a form of Nazi-fascism" and that it is the intention to "do away with" the inhabitants of Arab countries, should have been allowed to stand unchallenged by one who knew how false those statements are.

7. It is sufficient to say here with regard to King Ibn Saud's letter that the Arabs have neither legal nor moral title to the sovereignty over Palestine. While they conquered the country over 1,300 years ago, Arab rule ceased as early as 1071. Throughout the centuries the role of the Arabs in Palestine has not been creative but destructive. In the eroded, poverty-stricken and disease-ridden country which within the last few decades the Jewish people set out to reclaim, it was difficult to recognize the land of milk and honey described in the Bible. In the twenty years between the two World Wars the Jews have done much to repair the ravages of the previous 1300. They have conquered deserts and swamps, revived agriculture and industry and established in Palestine a sturdy, self-reliant community. The Pan-Arab claim to Palestine is an attempt to add yet another to the immense, but for the most part thinly populated and undeveloped territories of the independent Arab states. This expansionist appetite has recently manifested itself also in the demands put forward by the Arabs for Eritrea, the Sudan and Cyrenaica. The great mass of the people in the various Arab states are kept down in ignorance and fanaticism, in dirt and wretchedness by a ruling class which shows little or no interest in the improvement of their miserable lot. As regards the ethnic claims, about 75% of the Arabic-speaking people in Palestine today are themselves recent immigrants or the descendants of persons who emigrated to Palestine in comparatively recent times. If Palestine exists as a separate concept, it is

because of its immemorial association with the Jews and Jewish History. At no time was there a Palestine Arab State. It was the Jewish people which produced in Palestine the civilization and religious culture which, along with that of Greece, molded the civilization and the spiritual life of the whole Western world.

8. In general, it is desired to protest against a procedure which seems to accord a right to the various Arab states to be consulted in the affairs of Palestine. The right of our own Government as one of the principal Allied and Associated Powers in the first World War as well as by virtue of the United States-British Convention above mentioned, to participate in the future disposition of Palestine is obvious and unquestioned. The right of the Jewish people to be consulted is likewise clear and undeniable and is legally confirmed by the League of Nations Mandate which, in recognizing the right of the Jewish people to reconstitute their National Home in Palestine, authorized also the recognition of the Jewish Agency for Palestine as representing the interest of all Jews in the establishment of the National Home. The Arab states are in this matter without legal standing of any kind and we submit that their attitude in recent years is certainly far from giving them a moral voice in this issue.

9. We feel constrained, at the same time, to make a frank statement of our views with regard to the course of action pursued by the Executive branch of the Government and the State Department in particular, over a period of years. Despite the unbroken chain of pro-Zionist acts, promises and pronouncements to which we have referred, the policy they express has not been translated into action. On the contrary, numerous acts and omissions have emboldened the Arab leaders to allege that the American Government was, in fact, withholding its support from the Zionist cause, and that the pronouncements made here from time to time were meant for home consumption. We have consistently disregarded these allegations as unwarranted aspersions upon the good faith and political integrity of our Government.

10. We are now compelled to review the situation in the light of the recent correspondence. We must recall that so far as we are aware, the Government took no effective action to protect the interests of the Jewish National Home, at the time of the issuance of the British White Paper in 1939, or to rectify that wrong in the years which followed. The Government did not energetically intervene even when opening the doors of Palestine became an urgent humanitarian necessity because of the wholesale slaughter of the Jews of Europe. It appears further that our Government failed to advise its representatives abroad, particularly in the Near East, that it was definitely committed to the policy of the Jewish National Home and to instruct them to be guided accordingly. The State Department has, on various occasions, appointed to positions of importance in the Near East, persons known as avowed opponents of this policy, and has had to rely in turn, upon reports and advices emanating from them. On two occasions the Executive branch exerted its influence to prevent the adoption by Congress, of a resolution reaffirming the traditional American Policy on this subject. Above all, our Government has failed to utilize the fluid political conditions created by the war and the process of political reorientation and re-organization under way in the Near East, for the purpose of insuring the status of the Jewish National Home in the context of its Near East policies.

11. On the other hand, our country has given generous support to Arab aspirations. It was among the first to recognize the independence of Syria and Lebanon. It has encouraged Arab States to make last-minute declarations of war against Germany on the eve of the San Francisco Conference, assuring them places of honor among the United Nations, irrespective of their war records. Nor has it withheld its support from the Arab League despite the fact that the League has declared its opposition to Jewish aspirations and has proclaimed the liquidation of the Jewish National Home as one of its major objectives.

12. The one gratifying positive act in relation to Palestine has been President Truman's recent request to Prime Minister Attlee, the outcome of which, however, is still uncertain. We take grateful note that the statement of Secretary Byrnes indicates that measures to facilitate immigration into Palestine of substantial numbers of the survivors of European Jewry should, and can be undertaken forthwith, and that such immigration does not affect the "basic situation" in Palestine. The "basic situation," is in fact that established by the Mandate, which calls for the facilitating of the immigration of Jews into Palestine and their close settlement on the land. We therefore earnestly hope that our Government will continue to press for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews from Europe in line with President Truman's request. But the statement of the Secretary is silent regarding the attitude of the Government in relation to the "basic situation." The only light which it sheds on that issue - which is the crux of the whole matter - is the statement that "it would be the policy of this Government not to reach final conclusions without a full consultation with Jewish and Arab leaders." This is a point of procedure rather than a definition of policy. Moreover, the statement indicates an intention to wait until "any proposals emerge," rather than to act on its own initiative in conformity with established American policy.

13. The point has now been reached, at which ambiguity and delay are no longer feasible. Millions of American citizens, who have a strong moral and humanitarian interest in this problem, look to the Administration for immediate and forthright action, which will once and for all dispel any possible uncertainty regarding its present position and future intentions. We cannot believe that the menacing words of the spokesmen of countries which did not lift a finger in their own defense during the war and which were, indeed, either actively or passively hostile to the democracies, should be allowed to deflect our country from a just

course of action. The request is made on behalf of masses of suffering humanity who cannot wait. It would be cruel to deny their last hope for individual and national rehabilitation; but it would be the very refinement of cruelty to keep them further in suspense, or to feed them with promises which turn to ashes in their mouth.

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QUESTIONS ASKED AT DR. SILVER'S PRESS CONFERENCE AT
AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS IN
WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER 23, 1945, FOLLOWING DR.
SILVER'S PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Q Dr. Silver, did you get any satisfaction from Mr. Byrnes?

A Well, I think we had a long, explanatory conversation in which these points which I indicated to you were gone into with considerable detail.

Q About how long was it?

A We spent 40 minutes with the Secretary.

Q Is the Secretary still disposed to wait until some further word from the British?

A He did not seem to indicate that the matter is closed.

Q Dr. Silver, in the event that some satisfactory solution is not reached on Palestine, have the Zionists given any consideration to other places where the European Jews might be settled?

A There are no other places. Attempts have been made time and again to find other places for settlements for Jews in all these years, and all these attempts have failed.

Q How about Australia?

A It would be very nice for countries to open their doors, but they do not open their doors. I would like to call your attention to what happened in this country when, a few years ago, the ship ST. LOUIS, carrying a cargo of human misery from Europe, refugees, got all through the Caribbean Sea and touched at any number of ports on the Atlantic Coast of our own country and these refugees were not permitted to land, and they had to go back to their countries in Europe where, I am quite sure, they were seized by Hitler's hordes and died in the gas chambers of his concentration camps.

Q When was that?

A Oh, this was shortly before the war. There are no places. And if you take empty places, it takes years to prepare such places for the absorption of large numbers of immigrants, while the urgency of these displaced persons is imminent. And Palestine is there, ready to receive them, if these political barriers were removed.

Q Doctor, your request seems to be for 100,000?

A The request of President Truman is for 100,000 as a first step.

Q In what period?

- A We could take care of them in a period of a year--in 15 months, if shipping were made available immediately.
- Q What happens to the other 1,300,000?
- A We would like to take them all out.
- Q You are only dealing with 1/14 of your problem. What happens to the other 1,300,000 in the meantime?
- A Your answer is as good as mine.
- Q Is there any scheme to deal with the other 1,300,000?
- A The only scheme is to give them as much material relief as possible, wherever they are, and to tide them over until such period as they can re-establish themselves elsewhere. Our conviction is that there will be no opportunity for these people to establish themselves elsewhere except in Palestine, and while we should like to take them all out, it is a physical impossibility.
- Q How would you select them?
- A Well, the recommendation of the President was that the first people to be moved are those in concentration camps.
- Q How many are those?
- A Well, there are 65,000 in the American zone alone. I don't know the exact figures--perhaps another 25,000 in the British zone of occupation.
- Q Then how would you decide who to send?
- A We would take the most miserable, those in greatest need, to emigrate at once. There are 90,000 Jews in Poland, the last survivors of the 3,000,000 who lived there before the war, who are living in a condition of insecurity and terror, and conditions of pogroms--now, after the end of the Hitler war. You have seen that in your own newspapers. Nearly all of them want to get out. I ask on page 2, if I may draw your attention to this simple question: "Who will suffer by the admission of one hundred thousand Jews into Palestine? Not the present Jewish settlers of Palestine." (Many of them are their own relatives) "They are prayerfully waiting to receive them. Not the Arabs of Palestine. Their conditions have been bettered and their standard of living has been greatly improved with every influx of Jewish settlers into the country. There is room in Palestine for at least another three million people. But who will suffer if the President's request is rejected? The hundred thousand innocent men, women and children who have gone through the several hells of Europe in recent years, who are doomed to an incapable fate if they remain in that war-ravaged and hate-ridden continent, and whose only hope for survival is Palestine."
- Q Are you taking this up with the British government?

- A Yes, representations have been made and are being made with the British government constantly. We have appealed to them directly to Prime Minister Attlee, to Bevin. The great organized body of public opinion in America have appealed to Great Britain--Mr. William Green of the American Federation of Labor, Mr. Murray of the CIO. I understand that nearly 50 large national labor organizations, the unions, have sent cablegrams to the British Labor Government endorsing this request of the President and asking for the opening of the doors of Palestine. Christian organizations, not to speak of the Jews of America.
- Q Dr. Silver, could you give us any enlightenment on what Mr. Attlee told President Truman?
- A I haven't the faintest idea, sir. The only thing I know is what Mr. Truman indicated in the press conference the other day, that his request has been rejected and that a small quota will be permitted. The figure of 1800 was quoted, and the President thought that Attlee's figure approximates that. Perhaps Attlee's figure is a little higher. Beyond that, we have no information whatsoever.
- Q Isn't it possible that Mr. Attlee said more than that in his letter?
- A Quite possible. We have no way of knowing.
- Q Is that information being kept secret until the negotiations are completed?
- A I don't know. We haven't got it. Whether the ^{British} government has it or our government has it, I am in no position to know.
- Q Did you ask the Secretary of State for a copy of the letter?
- A I did not. The President referred in his press conference to voluminous correspondence between himself and the Prime Minister on the subject. Are there any other questions you would like to ask, ladies and gentlemen?
- Q What is the attitude of Moscow toward the reception of displaced persons. Has that been looked into?
- A No, we have no way of knowing what Moscow's position is. There are 180,000 Polish Jews who fled during the war to the Soviet Union, many of whom have survived the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and are still there, but beyond that we do not know.
- Q How are they being treated?
- A So far as we know, as well as Jews are treated anywhere under modern post-war conditions in Europe.
- Q Would Russia give assent to more Jewish immigration?
- A There has been no indication that it would.
- Q Care to say what your date at the Capitol is?
- A Oh, seeing some of our friends in the Congress and Senate. I want to say that the attitude of the Congress and Senate has been wonderful. A kind spirit there, and a desire to be helpful.

Q Do you feel that President Roosevelt held the Jews out in this correspondence with the Arabian king?

A Let me put it this way: I think his letter to the Arabian king is very ambiguous and his subject^{to} most unfortunate interpretations.

Q What interpretation do you put on it?

A The interpretation that the President did not say in the letter all that he might have said. The omissions in the letter are what make it extremely damaging, as I point out in this memorandum. He could have referred to his commitments and to the commitments of the government and the party.

Q Do you have any reason for why he might have made those omissions?

A I have no reasons.

Q Do you think that letter can be reconciled with the letter to Senator Wagner?

A He might have.



STATEMENT FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT

FDR

The Department of State has recently received a number of inquiries as to whether it was true that the United States Government had on various occasions expressed the view to Jewish and Arab leaders that they should be consulted before a decision is reached respecting the basic situation in Palestine. In response to these inquiries Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, made the following reply:

"On several occasions this matter has been the subject of oral and written discussions with various Jewish and Arab leaders.

The substance of this Government's position has been that this

① Government would not support a final decision which, in its own opinion, would affect the basic situation in Palestine, without full consultation with both Jews and Arabs.

"At a press conference today President Truman referred to his exploration with Prime Minister Attlee of ways and means of alleviating the situation of the displaced Jews in Europe, including consideration of Palestine as a possible haven for some of these homeless Jews. There is general agreement that it is our duty to take energetic measures to assist these unfortunate victims of Nazi persecution.

② "As the President pointed out today, this matter is still under consideration. We shall continue to explore every possible means of relieving the situation of the displaced Jews in Europe.

1a "Should any proposal emerge, which in our opinion would change the basic situation in Palestine, it would be the policy of this Government not to reach final conclusions without full consultation with Jewish and Arab leaders. This policy was stated,

1b for instance, in a letter which President Roosevelt addressed to

King Ibn Saud on April 5, 1945, and the text of which I have been

to prove that consultation would take place. This is not a decision which affects the basic situation.

about passed Mar 10?

authorized to make available."

The text of President Roosevelt's letter of April 5 is as follows;

"Great and Good Friend;

"I have received the communication which your Majesty sent me under date of March 10, 1945 in which you refer to the question of Palestine and to the continuing interest of the Arabs in current developments affecting that country.

"I am gratified that your Majesty took this action to bring your view on this question to my attention and I have given the most careful attention to this statement which you make in your letter. I am also mindful of the memorable conversation which we had not so long ago and in the course of which I had an opportunity to obtain so vivid an impression of your Majesty's sentiments on this question.

even before getting
never mentioned it to us.
"Your Majesty will recall that on previous occasions I communicated to you the attitude of the American Government toward Palestine and made clear our desire that no decision be taken with respect to the basic situation in that country without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews. Your Majesty will also doubtlessly recall that during our recent conversation I assured you that I would take no action, in my capacity as Chief of the Executive Branch of this Government, which might prove hostile to the Arab people.

"It gives me pleasure to renew to your Majesty the assurances which you had previously received regarding the attitude of my Government and my own, as Chief Executive, with regard to the question of Palestine and to inform you that the policy of this Government in this respect is unchanged.

"I desire also at this time to send you my best wishes for your Majesty's continued good health and for the welfare of your people."

"Your good friend,
/s/ Franklin D. Roosevelt

His Majesty, Abdul Aziz bin Abou
Rahman al Faisal Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia, Ryadh

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