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Series II: Harold P. Manson File (Zionism Files), 1940-1949, undated.

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Truman, Harry S., 1948.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1948.

### ISRAEL AND THE NEGEB

The Israeli Government has protested, and we believe rightly, against that part of the proposals of the late United Nations mediator, Count Bernadotte, which would give the Negeb—the desert area south of Beersheba—to the Arabs. It is no reflection on the martyred Bernadotte's memory to say that he erred in suggesting this division. He was attempting, to the best of his abilities and with the utmost courage, to suggest a settlement that both parties to the Palestine dispute would ultimately accept. But what he did in this instance was to dash some of Israel's highest hopes.

The Negeb, from one-third to one-half of Palestine, depending on how Palestine is defined, may have supported as many as 300,000 people in ancient times. In modern times it has been largely uninhabited, except for a few thousand Arabs who raised and pastured camels there. Within the past few years Jewish settlers, pushing south, have irrigated a little of this long-sterile land. Like our own Southwest, much of it will produce crops if it can have water; and there is on paper a well-thought-out plan to bring water to it from the upper Jordan. It might support from half a million to a million or more pioneers, who would enrich the whole country without displacing large Arab populations.

Secretary Marshall has accepted the Bernadotte proposals as "a generally fair basis for settlement" and has urged the General Assembly to "accept them in their entirety." We believe this is one of those times when a bit of inconsistency will do our foreign policy no harm. The development of the Negeb by Zionist pioneers—and they are the only people likely to do it on a large and scientific scale—would enrich the whole Middle East. It would not injure the Arabs, unless they feel that any Israeli prosperity would hurt them.

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OCTOBER 12, 1948

# U.S. Support of Bernadotte Plan Is Criticized as Poor Expedient

**Welles Says Proposal to Give Negeb to Trans-Jordan Is Scheme to Restore British Power in Levant; Small Nations Urged to Balk Plot in U. N.**

By Sumner Welles

*Former Under Secretary of State*

The British and American attempt to stampede the United Nations into immediate adoption of the Bernadotte plan for Palestine was fortunately blocked. But the narrow margin by which the Assembly's Political Committee defeated this maneuver emphasizes the urgency of the need for a just and final settlement.

The failure of the United Nations to show itself capable of establishing an independent, secure and viable Israeli state diminishes confidence in its authority, increases doubt that justice inspires its proceedings and deprives the survivors of the European mass murders of hope for the future.

So long as uncertainty enshrouds the fate of Palestine the acts of violence that are due to that very uncertainty will help the sowers of hate to stimulate anti-Semitism here and be advanced as reasons why this country should disinterest itself in the fate of Israel.

The present situation can only incite Arab imperialists and Jewish terrorists to renewed aggression. It tempts both the Soviet Union and the Western powers to intervene in Palestine as a strategic move in their contest for control of the Near East.

Count Bernadotte rightly saw that the Palestine problem, as he said, was "a spark capable of setting off a mightier conflagration." By accepting the task of mediator he served the highest interests of humanity.

## Israel Called Justified

Yet the British government is disingenuous in claiming that his assassination constitutes any valid reason for the approval by the United Nations of his plan for Palestine.

The government of Israel is wholly warranted in rejecting the Bernadotte recommendations. The insuperable obstacle to their acceptance is the proposal to take the Negeb from Israel, and to reduce the territory of the Jewish state to less than one-half of that allotted to it by the Assembly's partition resolution of a year ago.

Were this proposal to be accepted, a basic feature of the original partition resolution would be nullified, for Israel would then be unable to provide new homes for more than a handful of refugees.

If a Palestine solution is to prove lasting, Israel must become a prosperous and a contented nation. With Israel deprived of the agricultural and mineral resources that the Negeb affords, of its port on the Red Sea, and of its opportunities for resettlement and for expanding development, the new state cannot even be viable.

The Negeb proposal represents the latest in the long series of attempts made by Mr. Bevin, with the support of the British Foreign Office and Imperial General Staff, and of the State Department and National Security Council in Washington, to restore British hegemony over the Near East. By the cession of the Negeb to Trans-Jordan, Britain would obtain the use of that territory for her own military and economic purposes.

If any major power is now per-

mitted to monopolize this strategic area, the peoples of Palestine can have no assurance of real freedom and there will be scant likelihood of peace in the Near East.

Secretary Marshall's indorsement of the Bernadotte plan affords further cause for dissension between the Soviet Union and the United States. It provides new and powerful motives for the growth of anti-American sentiment in Israel.

## American Policy Criticized

The United States was chiefly responsible for the Assembly's approval of the partition resolution of last November. Time and experience have demonstrated that this government was wholly justified in the official statement it then made, "that this partition plan . . . offers the most practicable and most just present solution of the Palestine problem." They have confirmed the wisdom of its further declaration that this partition plan represented "a decision which comes very close to being law."

Yet, in line with its sorry record of the past eleven months, the United States now again ignores what it so recently considered "the most practicable and most just present solution" for Palestine. It spurns a resolution which less than a year ago it termed a "decision which comes very close to being law." And under the guidance of those military influences now primarily responsible for American foreign policy, the United States supports Mr. Bevin in his insistence that Israel's boundaries be revised not for the sake of economic stability, not for the sake of justice, not for the sake of peace, but solely to suit Britain's strategic plans.

We are witnessing the same tragic spectacle as that seen in the League of Nations in the early thirties, when Britain and France placed momentary expediency above collective security by refusing to repress aggression. That subordination of the permanent interests of all peoples to what were so mistakenly considered national interests destroyed the League of Nations and made the second world war inevitable.

There is presented a great challenge to some courageous and far-sighted spokesman for the lesser powers, like Herbert Evatt, to arouse the smaller countries in the United Nations to the need of making their impartial judgment prevail over all efforts of the great powers to further their selfish interests at the expense of the long-term interests of humanity.

By demanding both in the Political Committee, as well as in the Assembly, that the original partition resolution be upheld, and by insisting upon its enforcement by the Security Council, the lesser powers can strike a mighty blow for the United Nations and for future peace.

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Truman 1948

## TRUMAN CONTINUED

be out of bed in six weeks or so. In May, however, her condition took a turn for the worse, and I spent 12 days with her in Grandview. By May 30, however, she was better again and all of us were reassured. On July 12 she was "feeling much better" and on the 19th Dr. Graham, who had gone to Grandview to see her and to consult with her physician, reported that she was recovering and that he would return to Washington.

Now, however, a new and adverse report had come. Early on the morning of July 26 word came from Dr. Joseph W. Greene of Independence that Mother was not expected to live through the day, and I asked to have my plane ready at once.

It was only a little after noon when, with a small party, I boarded the plane. An hour or so later a message was received by the pilot which General Graham handed to me. Mother, it reported, had passed away.

I had had more than an inkling of what I might expect, but no one can really be prepared for the passing of his mother. I read the words, but I could not describe my feelings if I would.

"Well," I remember saying to the general, "now she won't have to suffer any more."

Then I glanced at the message again.

"She must have passed away," I added, "just a little while after we took off."

Two days later she was buried beside my father in Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City, and little more than 24 hours later I was back in Washington.

When I succeeded Franklin Roosevelt, my mother had so wisely said it was no occasion for her to rejoice. She said that she could only feel grieved that President Roosevelt had died. But now that I had been elected directly by the people as President in my own right, it would have been a great thrill for her to be present as her son took the oath.

## THE TROUBLED BIRTH OF ISRAEL

The Palestine issue was one of the most tangled that Truman had to face in the immediate postwar years. Mr. Truman, who has received awards and testimonials from many national Jewish organizations (including the Zionist Organization of America and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith) in recognition of his help and friendship for the Jews, made it U.S. policy "to bring

THE Democratic National Committee had asked my approval for full-scale ceremonies for the inauguration and I agreed. Victory had been snatched from a predicted disaster and I thought the party was entitled to have its day of celebration.

Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, 1949, started with a breakfast with 97 veterans of Battery D, which I commanded in France in 1918. These friends of World War I crowded around me, shaking my hand and calling me "Mr. President," until I put a stop to it. "We'll have none of that here," I told them, and insisted that they call me "Captain Harry" as they had done in the Argonne 30 years before.

Our former regimental chaplain, Monsignor L. Curtis Tiernan, said grace before that breakfast, and then, with 30 years of memories to recount, we paid far less attention to our orange juice and our country ham, our hominy grits and fried eggs, than to each other. We fought the war again, as veterans always do, and I reminded them of the part they were to play in the inaugural parade. They were to be a kind of "guard of honor" for me, and were to march in two long lines beside my car all the way from the Capitol to the reviewing stand before the White House. No one knew better than I that they were not the physical specimens they had been three decades earlier, but "I'm sure," I told them, "that you can still make 120 steps a minute for a mile and a quarter."

More than a hundred thousand people, it was estimated, filled the great open space between the Capitol, the Supreme Court Building and the Congressional Library as Vice President Barkley and I made our way to the inaugural stand.

At 12:23 Associate Justice Reed swore Senator Barkley in as Vice President, and six minutes later I took the oath from Chief Justice Vinson. The words were the same that I had repeated three years and nine months earlier when I had been called so unexpectedly to the White House, but then only a handful of people were with me in the Cabinet Room.

about, by peaceful means, the establishment of the promised Jewish homeland" in Palestine "and easy access to it for the displaced Jews of Europe." The Zionists, however, pressed him to favor establishment of a Jewish state. Here he describes the controversy during the 1948 U.N. debates on partition for Palestine, and tells of an incident involving his old business partner, Eddie Jacobson.

I DO not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I had in this instance. The persistence of a few of the extreme Zionist leaders—actuated by political motives and engaging in political threats—disturbed me and annoyed me.

Individuals and groups asked me, usually in rather quarrelsome and emotional ways, to stop the Arabs, to keep the British from supporting the Arabs, to furnish American soldiers, to do this, that and the other. I think I can say that I kept my faith in the rightness of my policy in spite of some of the Jews. When I say "the Jews," I mean, of course, the extreme Zionists. I know that most Americans of Jewish faith, while they hoped for the restoration of a Jewish homeland, are and always have been Americans first and foremost. It was a discouraging prospect indeed. As I wrote to one of my assistants, "I surely wish God Almighty would give the Children of Israel an Isaiah, the Christians a St. Paul, and the Sons of Ishmael a peep at the Golden Rule."

The simple fact is that our

policy was an American policy rather than an Arab or Jewish policy. It was American, because it aimed at the peaceful solution of a world trouble spot. It was American, because it was based on the desire to see promises kept and human misery relieved.

As the pressure mounted, I found it necessary to give instructions that I did not want to be approached by any more spokesmen for the extreme Zionist cause. I was even so disturbed that

I put off seeing Dr. Weizmann, who had asked for an interview with me.

My old friend, Eddie Jacobson, called on me at the White House and urged me to receive Dr. Weizmann. Eddie, who had been with me through the hard days of World War I, had never been a Zionist. He was of the Jewish faith and was deeply moved by the sufferings of the Jewish people abroad.

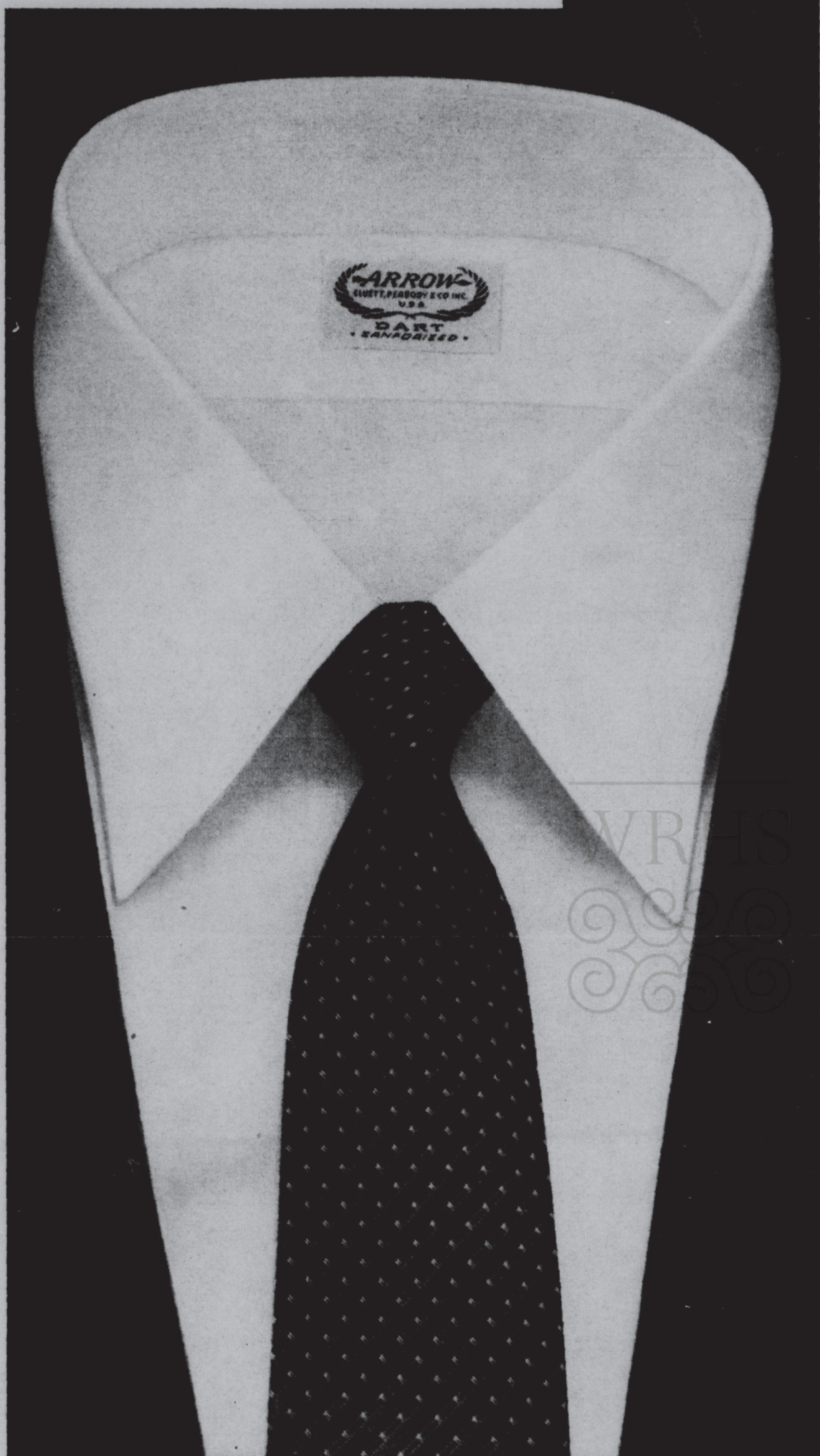
I was always glad to see him. Not only had we shared so much in the past but I have always had the warmest feelings toward him. It would be hard to find a truer friend. Eddie said that he wanted to talk about Palestine. I told him that I would rather he did not, and that I



NEW NATION'S PRESIDENT Chaim Weizmann was greeted at White House two months after hush-hush visit Truman describes.



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## TRUMAN CONTINUED

wanted to let the matter run its course in the United Nations.

I do not believe that in all our 30 years of friendship a sharp word had ever passed between Eddie and me, and I was sorry that Eddie had brought up the subject.

Eddie was becoming self-conscious, but he kept on talking. He asked me to bear in mind that some of the pro-Zionists who had approached me were only individuals and did not speak for any responsible leadership.

I told him that I respected Dr. Weizmann, but if I saw him it would only result in more wrong interpretations.

Eddie waved toward a small replica of an Andrew Jackson statue that was in my office.

"He's been your hero all your life, hasn't he?" he said. "I remember when we had the store that you were always reading books and pamphlets, and a lot of them were about Jackson. You put this statue in front of the Jackson County Courthouse in Kansas City when you built it.

"I have never met the man who has been my hero all my life," he continued. "But I have studied his past like you have studied Jackson's. He is the greatest Jew alive, perhaps the greatest Jew who ever lived. You yourself have told me that he is a great statesman and a fine gentleman. I am talking about Dr. Chaim Weizmann. He is an old man and a very sick man. He has traveled thousands of miles to see you, and now you are putting off seeing him. That isn't like you."

When Eddie left, I gave instructions to have Dr. Weizmann come to the White House as soon as it could be arranged. However, there was to be no press coverage of his visit and no public announcement.

Dr. Weizmann came on March 18. I told him, as plainly as I could, why I had at first put off seeing him. He understood. I explained to him that my primary concern was to see justice done without bloodshed. And when he left my office, I felt that he had reached a full understanding of my policy and that I knew what it was he wanted.

## Clash with 'career men'

I WAS always aware of the fact that not all my advisers looked at the Palestine problem in the same manner I did. The Department of State's specialists on the Near East were, almost without exception, unfriendly to the idea of a Jewish state. Like most of the British diplomats, some of our diplomats also thought that the Arabs, on account of their numbers and because of the fact that they controlled such immense oil resources, should be appeased. I am sorry to say that there were some among them who were also inclined to be anti-Semitic.

I was never convinced by the arguments of the diplomats.

On May 14 I was informed that the Provisional Government of Israel was planning to proclaim a Jewish state at midnight that day, Palestine time, which was when the British mandate came to an end. I decided to move at once and give American recognition to the new nation. I was told that to some of the career men of the State Department this announcement came as a surprise. It should not have been if these men had faithfully supported my policy.

The difficulty with many career officials in the government is that they regard themselves as the men who really make policy and run the government. They look upon the elected officials as just temporary occupants. Every President in our history has been faced with this problem: how to prevent career men from circumventing presidential policy. Too often career men seek to impose their own views instead of carrying out the established policy of the Administration. Sometimes they achieve this by influencing the key men appointed by the President to put his policies into operation. It has often happened in the War and Navy Departments that the generals and the admirals, instead of working for and under the Secretaries, succeeded in having the Secretaries act for and under them. And it has happened in the Department of State.

In the Palestine situation, as Secretary Lovett said to me after the announcement of the recognition of Israel, "They almost put it over on you."