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United States policy, miscellaneous, 1948.

AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL

Constituent Organizations

Hadassah, Women's Zionist Organization of America
Mizrachi Organization of America
Poale Zion-Zerie Zion of America
Zionist Organization of America

WASHINGTON BUREAU
1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.
EXECUTIVE 1060

AHS

U.S. policy

June 11, 1948

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
19810 Shaker Blvd.
Shaker Heights
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

1 - I spoke to Fahy about the matter of the American citizens prohibited from sailing on the Marine Carp, which you mentioned to me over the telephone. He did not know anything about it, but promised to take it up this afternoon with the State Department. I asked him to telephone the office as soon as he hears what it is all about, and Schulson will undoubtedly keep you informed.

In the meantime, Epstein was informed by the New York Office of the Agency that the prohibition applies to young men of military age. Other American citizens may sail. It is my feeling that the matter has to do with Bernadotte's ruling about immigration of men of military age rather than with anything else.

2 - Enclosed please find copy of the memorandum which I have prepared for Fahy on the basis of the conversation which I had with him yesterday.

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin Akzin

Benjamin Akzin

BA:ME

AHS
Mr. Silver

MEMORANDUM

June 15, 1948

Truman -
Democrats

CONFIDENTIAL

Messrs. Fertig, Koppelman and Moskovitz called on me before going to see Mr. Flynn as a delegation from the Zionist Organization of the Bronx. Following the meeting, they informed me about the proceedings.

In accordance with my suggestion, they took up with Flynn not only specific matters, such as the embargo, the blockade, the Marine Corp incidents, but also the general question of the President tolerating a state of affairs where his subordinate officials constantly sabotage his own policies on Palestine. They told Flynn that as long as this will last, the Jews will keep bothering him and the President every so often. They asked that he should do something in order to bring about a clean sweep so that there would be no more need to register one complaint after another.

Flynn attempted to justify the President by saying that it is difficult for him to enforce his will with the State Department. He added that America is a Protestant country and Protestants do not wish to do anything which would help either the Jews or the Catholics. He stated that he had in mind something similar to what our spokesmen wanted when he prevailed on the President to appoint General Hilldring to take charge of Palestine affairs.

According to Flynn, should the truce not result in peace, the President would lift the embargo and, within three to four weeks, Israel would get de jure recognition, a loan, and an exchange of diplomatic representatives. According to Flynn, Bartley Crum is likely to become the first American minister to Israel.

Benjamin Akzin

BA:AF

AHS

Dr. Silver

Bernadotte etc

July 21, 1948

Dr. Emanuel Neumann
521 Fifth Avenue
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Neumann:

I understand from Mr. Shapiro that you are coordinating at present the efforts to induce the Government to take a more favorable attitude in the Palestine issue. I shall therefore report to you the few thoughts I have on the subject.

You will have noticed, of course, that President Truman, busy as he has been of late with securing the Democratic nomination, planning the presidential campaign, deciding on the legislative program for the Special Session of Congress, and handling the Berlin crisis, has failed to exercise any effective control over the handling of the Palestine situation by the State Department. It is possible that he tried to exercise such control directly or through intermediaries, but since the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the performance of Jessup at the Security Council shows that White House intervention, even if attempted, was not effective. There is the further possibility that because of the implications of the Berlin crisis, the President has been persuaded anew not to endanger the American-British alliance and therefore not to go any further on the question of Palestine than the British Government is willing to go along. If this is the case, the situation is even more difficult than on the basis of the first hypothesis -- that of the President being too busy to give sufficient attention to Palestine -- and will require even more energetic measures. But let us, for the time being, proceed on the basis of the first hypothesis.

It seems to me that the State Department is making use of its "freedom from supervision" in a far more determined and forceful manner than appears at first glance. By bold and rapid maneuvering, the Department has contrived to make of the lifting of the embargo a dead issue which cannot be revived unless and until the Arab States renew hostilities. The wording of the new truce resolution is such that it will be very difficult to curb Bernadotte's tendency to interpret that document in the most unfavorable light possible. The possibility is far from excluded that Bernadotte, with the tacit consent of the American and British Governments, will create a fait accompli by compelling the withdrawal of Jewish troops from Jerusalem, ostensibly in order to organize the city's occupation by a small international force, but ultimately withdrawing that force by pre-arrangement so as to open the gates of

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the city to the Arabs. I would not be surprised if two other faits accomplis were being contemplated, i.e., the de facto internationalization of part of the port area of Haifa and of the flying field of Lydda, on the pretext that these areas are required to secure communications and to serve as bases for the operations of the U.N. observers and guards brought to Palestine by Bernadotte. You know of the imminent danger of American support, in veiled form, of the Syrian proposal to send the Palestine issue to The Hague. Finally, the extreme likelihood of a concerted attempt at the next Paris session of the General Assembly to revise the original partition resolution is a matter of general knowledge, and I don't need to dwell on this aspect of the situation.

It does not essentially matter whether all these plans have already matured in the hostile camp. If they have not, these plans, or others equally damaging to us, will undoubtedly be hatched in the immediate future if hostile elements have the impression that they can get away with them. I am afraid that if we wait even a little longer before taking energetic counter-action, we will be once more, as so often in the past, pushed into the defensive. Some or all of these schemes will have progressed to the point of some official action being taken or some official statement being made. We will then mobilize our forces for a desperate effort, but at best we will be able only to soften the attack and to prevent our enemies from achieving all of their objectives. But some of these objectives will be achieved by them, and our interests will have been considerably affected.

If the foregoing is correct, it follows that the maximum effort must be made immediately to reinstate effective Presidential supervision over the handling of the Palestine issue by the State Department and by the U.S. Delegation to the United Nations as well as over the official and unofficial channels of communication between U.S. officials on the one hand and the British Government and Count Bernadotte on the other.

The appointment of a sincere friend in the person of James McDonald as U.S. Representative to Israel does not, unfortunately, contribute much in this respect. If we are brutally honest with ourselves, we must admit that this appointment is more of a sop to Jewish opinion than an indication of American policy. Had McDonald been appointed to handle the Palestine policy from the Washington end, this would have been of tremendous value. But sending him out into the field merely removes him from the central scene of activities. Whatever reports he will send from Tel Aviv to the State Department and even to the White House will be largely discounted precisely because he has been labeled as partisan beforehand. How little he will be able to accomplish while in Tel Aviv you can judge by the fact that even during recent weeks, while he was still in this country, he was unable to prevent the U.S. Delegation in Lake Success from taking the line which it has taken in connection with the truce.

The job that, in my opinion, has to be done, and has to be done immediately, is to urge upon the President the extreme importance of forestalling any further hostile moves by the State Department at the present time rather than intervening at a later date when such moves will have begun to bear fruit. It may be possible to impress upon the President

the fact that it will be easier to prevent unpleasant facts accomplished at this juncture than to reverse a decision or a line of policy once such decision or line will have been publicly asserted by the State Department or by Bernadotte. One might remind the President of the parallel of the embargo: it would have been relatively easy to prevent the State Department from issuing the embargo in the first place; it proved impossible to reverse the decision once it had been made. It may also be possible to impress upon the President that the crisis of public confidence involved in another movement of hysterical mass protest will not do anyone any good, even if at the last minute the President will step in. It is precisely the suspicion that the President never does the right thing unless compelled to do so by public pressure that causes the crisis of confidence.

The next and probably crucial question concerns the identity of those people who could impress the President with the above arguments. I don't know through whom you are trying to approach the President, but I would urge that you call in everybody who, as things stand today, could prove helpful. I do not think that representations by Zionist leaders would be either necessary or helpful at this point, but I would suggest that advantage be taken of the reconvening in Washington of the Special Session of Congress. As I see it, what is necessary is that within the next week or ten days at most the following people should, in person or by confidential letter, get in touch with the President: Senators O'Mahoney, Barclay and Myers, Bernard Baruch, Sam Rosenman, Biddle, Governor Wallgren, Max Lowenthal, the two Swoopes, and James Farley. Baruch, incidentally, is still abroad, but according to the papers, he is due to return in a few days. You will notice that I have mentioned names of only those people whom the President likes. At the present juncture, there is no use trying to high pressure him through people who only succeed in irritating him. This may be necessary if we wait till the last minute, after the damage is done, but it won't help when it is a matter of taking preventive action. On the other hand, I would not rely on one or two men to carry the truth to the President. To move him at this point will require the combined efforts of a whole group of men.

Assuming that this series of conversations would lead the President to perceive the need for an immediate firm stand on the question of Palestine, there still remains the problem of doing it in an effective manner. The best, perhaps the only way of accomplishing it is still the installation of a convinced proponent of a pro-Israel policy in the State Department, to take charge of all aspects of the Palestine situation under the President, the Secretary and the Under Secretary. In view of the mutual relationship between the President and Secretary Marshall, it will have to be a man acceptable to both. Our friends close to the White House will know best who are the people who could best answer the description. I would certainly rule out any candidate of the type of Ben Cohen, who, as past experience has shown, would lack the guts to insist on his line of policy the minute he is placed in a position of official responsibility. Probably Hilldring remains the likeliest candidate despite his reported tiffs in high spheres. Other possible candidates may include Max Lowenthal, Brig. Gen. Klein, Frank Buxton, Charles Fahy, Ralph McGill, Jonathan Daniels, etc.

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Perhaps, but with great caution, one might consider two other candidates -- James Roosevelt and Ambassador Steinhardt. In the case of Roosevelt, I wonder how the President and Marshall would take to him; in the case of Steinhardt (who is now in this country), one ought to make first 200 per cent sure that he would be a firm friend rather than a Herbert Samuel the Second.

In addition to all other aspects of the situation, special attention has to be devoted to the way in which the delegations of Latin American and Western European countries are being conditioned for the Paris session of the General Assembly. I fear very much that informal talks with representatives of the State Department have already started the process of convincing those governments and their prospective U.N. delegates that a "new Palestine compromise" would be all to the good. If so, not a minute should be lost in getting the President to see to it that a contrary impression be conveyed to those governments. Even if I am unduly suspicious and this dirty work has not yet started, it is virtually certain that it will start anon unless the President takes speedy action to prevent it.

Everything said here is doubly urgent if the President has been prevailed upon to adopt a common front with the British on the question of Palestine as part of his over-all international policy. If so, all the friends whom I have mentioned before, plus such others as you can think of, will have to go to work to disabuse the President's mind.

I hope you will not mind my butting in with this piece of advice, but I feel that to a certain extent we are repeating now our performance of December 1947 -- being lulled into comparative inactivity despite our awareness of the impending danger.

Cordially,

BA:AF

Benjamin Akzin

P.S. There is another aspect of the gathering Anti-Zionist storm in which you may also be interested. I refer to the mounting indications that the Catholic Church is being wooed into becoming a major partner of the anti-Israel alliance. A memorandum which I sent to Dr. Silver on this subject some time ago is enclosed herewith for your information.--BA