

March 8, 1948

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT



It seems to me that much of the discussion about our foreign policy - and specifically the Palestine issue - does not touch the fundamentals of the problem. I am, therefore, taking the liberty of presenting to you my own views.

At the outset, let me say that the Palestine problem should not be approached as a Jewish question, or an Arab question, or a United Nations question. The sole question is what is best for the United States of America. Furthermore, one's judgment in advising as to what is best for America must in no sense be influenced by the election this fall. I know only too well that you would not hesitate to follow a course of action that makes certain the defeat of the Democratic Party if you thought such action were best for America. What I say is, therefore, completely uninfluenced by election considerations.

I

There are some who criticize your actions last fall in actively supporting partition in Palestine. They argue that this embarked the United States on a new policy; that this new policy

involves military commitments which we are unable to perform; and that, therefore, we should seek some other solution. This argument is completely fallacious.

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Your action in supporting partition is in complete conformity with the settled policy of the United States. Palestine was Turkish territory prior to World War I. It was captured by the Allies. The Balfour Declaration favoring "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people", was made November 2, 1917. Its text had been submitted to President Wilson and approved by him before its publication. It was publicly endorsed by the French and Italian Governments in April 1920. The principal Allied powers decided that the mandate for the government of Palestine should be entrusted to Great Britain and that the mandatory power was to be responsible for putting the Balfour Declaration into effect. The substance of the Balfour Declaration has been restated by Presidents Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt and yourself. The Balfour Declaration was approved by joint resolution of Congress June 30, 1922. It was reaffirmed in the American-British Palestine Mandate Convention of December 3, 1924. The Balfour policy was again approved in a declaration by members of the Senate and the House of the 77th Congress, which was submitted to the President November 2, 1942 signed by 68 Senators and 193 members of the House.

In 1944 both the Democratic and the Republican National Conventions adopted resolutions favoring the establishment in Palestine of "a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth".

Under date of July 2, 1945, a letter was addressed to you signed by a majority of both Houses of Congress, stating "that the time for action is now" and urged "all interested governments to

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join with the United States toward the end of establishing Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth at the earliest possible time." A letter to the same effect dated July 2, 1945 was addressed to you and signed by the governors of forty of the forty-eight states of the United States. On December 19, 1945, a concurrent resolution was adopted by Congress which resolved that the United States use its good offices towards the establishment of a democratic commonwealth in Palestine.

There are numerous other declarations of policy by the United States Government to the same effect. Your active support of partition was in complete harmony with the policy of the United States. Seldom has any policy of this government been so clearly and definitely established. Had you failed to support partition, you would have been departing from an established American policy and justifiably subject to criticism.

Partition unquestionably offers the best hope of a permanent

solution of the Palestine problem that may avoid war. The policy of drift and delay urged by opponents of partition makes absolutely certain the very military involvements that they profess they want to avoid. Your action on partition in no wise extended the military commitments of the United States. It was a high-minded, statesmanlike adoption of the one course of action that may avoid military involvement.

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II



Not only is partition in conformity with established American policy, not only is partition the only hope of avoiding military involvement of the United States in the Near East, but, in addition, partition is the only course of action with respect to Palestine that will strengthen our position vis-a-vis Russia.

One of the most fundamental objectives of American foreign policy is that no aggressive military power shall establish itself on the shores of Western Europe. Germany became a real threat to the United States when she moved to establish herself in Channel ports. Twice we went to war to throw her back from these.

Britain likewise has no desire to see an aggressive military power establish itself in Western Europe. But Britain also has primary interests all over southern Asia and Africa. Britain, therefore, must consider her military position on those continents. Economic exhaustion has necessitated the limitation of her military forces. To compensate for curtailment of her military forces in Asia and the Near

East, Britain is deliberately building up an alliance with the Moslem world. Such an alliance, she undoubtedly feels, will give her friendly populations from Pakistan west across Asia Minor and all along the shores of North Africa.

While the British-Moslem alliance is undoubtedly extremely important to Britain, a similar alliance between the United States and the Moslem world is much less important to the United States. Our primary interests demand alliances with the nations to the south of us and along the shores of Western Europe.

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III



Events have proved that, for the present at least, "one world" is impossible of attainment - either within the United Nations or otherwise. Normally, the cohesive force that holds an organization together is opposition from the outside. The absence of such opposition from the outside tends to cause the organization to break into factions. The existence of the Axis military was the cohesive force that held the Allied Nations together during the war. With the military collapse of the Axis, unity among the Allied powers ceased. When all the nations of the world unite in a peace organization, there is no outside opposition. We are in no danger from attack from Mars. Therefore, a world organization tends to break into factions. This is what happened to the League of Nations. It is also happening in the United Nations. The United Nations is now dividing between the Soviet faction and the United States faction.

The development of factions within the United Nations compels the United States to determine its course of action vis-a-vis the United Nations.

We must admit that the possibility of the United Nations affording adequate military protection to us becomes more and more remote. One course of action that the United States might follow would be to make less and less use of the United Nations machinery. This would inevitably lead ultimately to the collapse of the United Nations. Such a policy, in my opinion, would be tragic.

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In the first place, the United Nations is a God-given vehicle through which the United States can build up a community of powers in Western Europe and elsewhere to resist Soviet aggression and maintain our historic interests. It is the best conceivable mechanism to capitalize on the Marshall plan politically. We can cement alliances immediately through the United Nations mechanisms which could not be brought about by fifty years of diplomacy.

Secondly, a jettisoning of the United Nations would be calamitous to American morale. The American people want peace. They fervently believe that the United Nations offers the best hope for peace. They would go to war to sustain the United Nations as an instrumentality for peace. The cruel fact is that American morale is collapsing right around us today because the American people feel that their government is aiding and abetting in the disintegration of the United Nations - the one great hope of the American people for peace. Nothing has contributed so much to this feeling as Senator Austin's rec-

ent statement. In large part, it seemed to be the sophistries of a lawyer attempting to tell what we could not do to support the United Nations - in direct contradiction to your numerous statements that we mean to do everything possible to support the United Nations.

Not only do the American people see their government failing to back up the United Nation's position on Palestine but now they hear talk of our entering into military alliances with the powers of Western Europe with no reference to such action coming within the framework of the United Nations. The American people grasped at the

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United Nations, believing it would save them from being engulfed in World War III. Suddenly, they see what they thought was dry land begin to sink - sink because of what they regard as supineness of their own government.

All of this is causing a complete lack of confidence in our foreign policy from one end of this country to the other and among all classes of our population. This lack of confidence is shared by Democrats, Republicans, young people and old people. There is a definite feeling that we have no foreign policy, that we do not know where we are going, that the President and the State Department are bewildered, that the United States, instead of furnishing leadership in world affairs, is drifting helplessly.

I believe all of this can be changed.

V

Proposed United States Policy

1. While recognizing that the United Nations will not

afford us adequate military protection, we should nevertheless support it to the limit as an instrumentality for consolidating the anti-Soviet forces of the world. Here is an instrumentality already in existence which is well-nigh a perfect mechanism for such purpose.

Any military arrangement with Western European powers must be pictured as coming completely within the framework of the United Nations. If this is done, it will receive the support of the American people. If this is not done, we will see an isolationism develop

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in America that will make any military alliances or intelligent foreign policy well-nigh impossible within the foreseeable future.

2. In order to save the United Nations for our own selfish interests, the United States must promptly and vigorously support the United Nations actions regarding Palestine. We "crossed the Rubicon" on this matter when the partition resolution was adopted by the Assembly - largely at your insistence. A retreat now will be a body-blow to the United Nations. We cannot hope to cement alliances in South America and Western Europe if we back out now. Those countries would justifiably discount the value of any commitments we might propose to make in the face of our repudiation of a commitment we only made last November.

3. The British have announced that they intend to withdraw from Palestine by May 15th. Unless affirmative action is taken immediately by both the United States and the Security Council to preserve peace in Palestine, the withdrawal of Britain's military

forces on May 15th will be followed by chaos and bloody war.

4. There is no more certain way of having Russia move into the Arabian Peninsula than for us to permit war to develop between the Jews and the Arabs - and this is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun, unless we move promptly to prevent it. Furthermore, when this happens, Russia can move in unilaterally as the defender of world peace and champion of the United Nations. To permit this to happen would be disastrous.

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5. It is argued that our Arabian oil supplies will be imperilled if we support the Assembly's resolution for partition of Palestine. The United States and Western Europe can only get oil from Arabia if there is peace in Arabia. Peace in Arabia can only be maintained by backing up the Arabs or by backing up the United Nations. The time for new solutions or compromises ended when the Assembly adopted the partition resolution. It is utterly unthinkable for the United States now to back the Arabs and openly oppose a decision of the United Nations Assembly, arrived at at your own insistence. The only alternative is, therefore, to back up the United Nations so that there will be peace in Palestine.

6. There are those who say that such a course of action will not get us oil, that the Arabs will not sell us oil if we back up the United Nations partition plan. The fact of the matter is that the Arab states must have oil royalties or go broke. For example, 90% of Saudi Arabia's revenues come from American oil royalties. The Arab states have no customer for their oil other than the

United States:

- a) they must have dollars and can get dollars only from the United States;
- b) their social and economic structure would be irreparably harmed by adopting a Soviet orientation, and it would be suicide for their ruling classes to come within the Soviet sphere of influence;
- c) Saudi Arabia possesses the greatest oil deposits in this area. King Ibn Saud has publicly and repeatedly refused even to threaten the United States with cancellation of oil leases, despite his dislike for our partition position.

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7. America's security and its oil interests in the Middle East depend upon effective enforcement of the United Nations decision on Palestine. In terms of military necessity, political and economic self-preservation will compel the Arabs to sell their oil to the United States. Their need of the United States is greater than our need of them.

8. There are those who say that partition will not work and that another solution must be found. This comes from those who never wanted partition to succeed and who have been determined to sabotage it. If anything has been omitted that could help kill partition, I do not know what it would be. First, Britain, the Mandatory Power, not only publicly declared she would have no part of it, but she has done everything possible to prevent effective action by the Palestine Commission. Next, we have placed an embargo on arms to Palestine, while Britain fulfills her "contract obligations" to supply arms to the Arabs. Thirdly, our State Department has made no attempt to conceal their dislike for partition. Fourthly, the

United States appears in the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes. This has done us irreparable damage. Why should Russia or Yugoslavia, or any other nation treat us with anything but contempt in light of our shilly-shallying appeasement of the Arabs. After all, the only successful opposition to the Russian advance has been in Greece and Turkey. You proclaimed a

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bold policy and stood your ground. The Truman Doctrine, so far, has been the one outstanding success in a disintegrating situation.

In case you are interested, I am sending you herewith a separate memorandum detailing suggestions for action in the Palestine situation.



