

*Palestine*

September 14, 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR: William L. Clayton  
Acting Secretary of State

FROM: The President

In regard to a statement on  
Palestine, I have been very hesitant about  
saying anything on this subject.

I hope it will not be necessary  
for me to have anything to say. If I do,  
I'll certainly clear it with you.

*H. S. J.*

September 14, 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR: David K. Niles  
Administrative Assistant  
to the President

FROM: The President

Attached is a memorandum from  
Will Clayton on the Palestine situation,  
together with copy of my reply.

*W.S.J.*

Enclosures

~~SECRET~~

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON  
September 12, 1946

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Statement in Connection with Palestine ✓

Rabbi Wise and certain other Zionists are urging that you should issue at once a statement in favor of partition in Palestine. It is apparently the idea of certain relatively moderate elements among the Zionists that if the American Government does this, the Jewish Agency may be able to persuade the British Government to accept partition as the basis for the present London talks on Palestine, thereby enabling the Agency to participate in the talks with a view to working out an eventual settlement of the problem. These elements also hope that a statement of this kind will strengthen them against the more extreme and anti-Administration Zionists who insist on all of Palestine being converted into an independent Jewish state.

Upon consideration of this matter we do not feel that it would be advisable for you to issue such a statement at this time, for the following reasons:

1. We do not believe that any statement at all should be issued by this Government during the course of the present conversations. The situation in London is very delicate and without full knowledge of all the complicated elements in the situation we might do more harm than good by intervening at this time. This is evidently the view of such observers on the spot as Secretary Byrnes and Ambassador Harriman. In this connection you may wish to bear in mind the recommendation of Secretary Byrnes at the time the decision was taken not to take part in the British announcement of the Morrison-Grady proposals, to the effect that you might wish to avoid making any further public statements with regard to Palestine, and specifically with regard to the 100,000 Jews, for the time being. Ambassador Harriman also, in a recent telegram, expressed the view after talking to Prime

Minister

Minister Attlee, Foreign Secretary Bevin and other British officials, that in the circumstances we should not involve ourselves in the matter beyond the steps which we have already taken.

2. If we yield to the pressure of highly organized Zionist groups just now and make statements calculated to give support to their policies of the moment, we shall merely be encouraging them to make fresh demands and to apply pressure in the future whenever they conceive it to be in their interest for this Government to make further statements on their behalf. In any event, we do not believe that, without sacrificing the public interests, we shall be able to go far and fast enough in rendering them support to keep them satisfied very long. It seems to us that it would be wiser to make it clear to them now in a most friendly manner that the Government itself must determine when it is in the interests of the United States to make statements with regard to Palestine and that in the present instance, the Government is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of the United States and for that matter of the Zionists themselves for it to remain silent.

3. Any statement by this Government approving partition would mean that we had gone contrary to the recommendations both of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry and of the experts who drew up the Morrison-Grady scheme. This would undoubtedly give rise to the impression that we are adopting a policy on an important matter in order to satisfy a particular Zionist group.

4. The attitude of the Arab world toward the United States has become progressively hostile in the last few months. Our Joint Chiefs of Staff, who feel that the United States has a vital security interest in the Middle East, have urged that we take no action with regard to Palestine which might orient the peoples of the entire area away from the Western Powers. The Arabs have always been fundamentally opposed to the partition of Palestine and their adverse reaction to a statement by us favoring that solution would be intensified by the knowledge that we have taken such a position only after it has been adhered to by certain Zionist leaders.

It

It may be, however, that after considering the matter you may find that for other reasons it would be preferable for you to make another statement on the subject. We have accordingly prepared the attached draft, which in our opinion represents the most that should be said at this time.

*Will Clayton*  
Acting Secretary

Enclosure:

Draft statement.