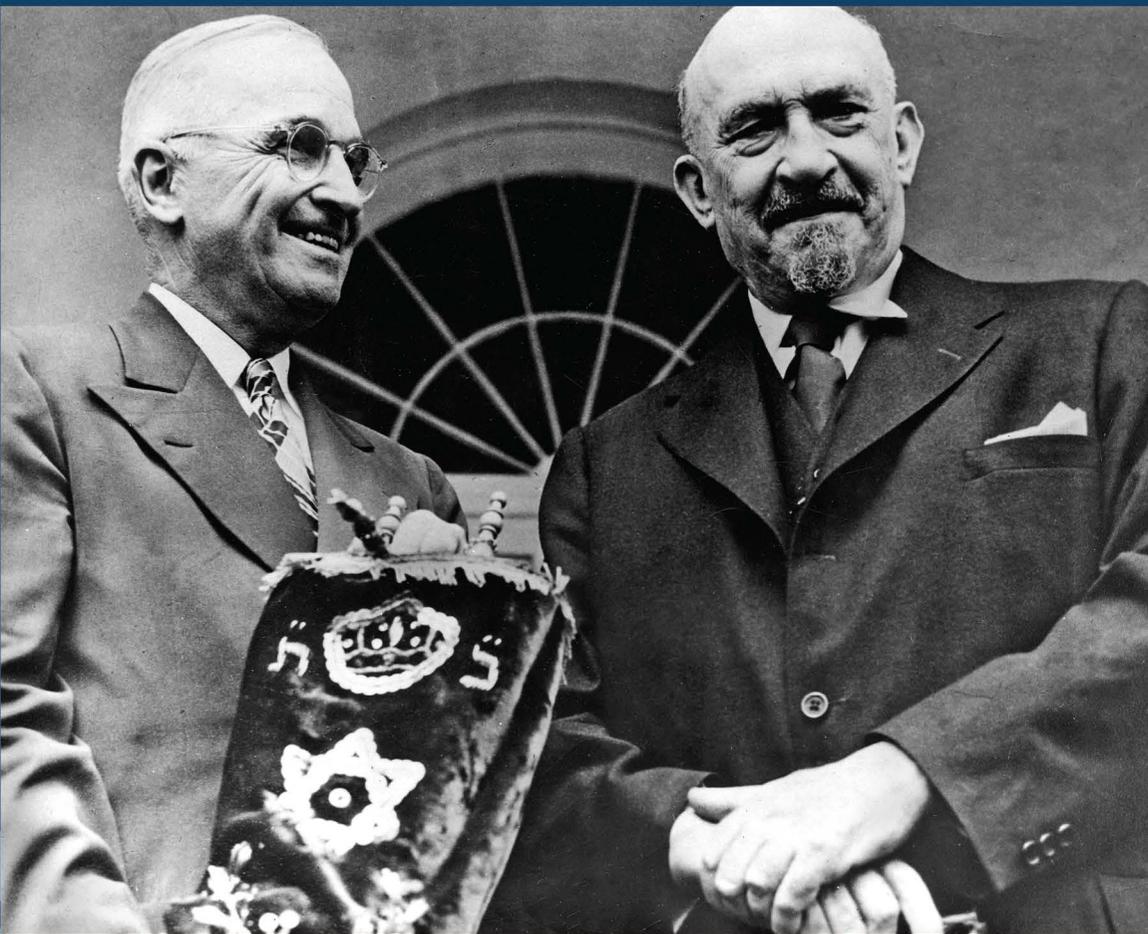




ISRAEL and the LEGACY of HARRY S. TRUMAN



Edited by
Michael J. Devine
Robert P. Watson
Robert J. Wolz

Israel and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman
The Truman Legacy Series, Volume 3

Based in part on the Third Truman Legacy Symposium
Harry Truman and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East
May 14, 2005
Key West, Florida

Edited by
Michael J. Devine
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Volume 3

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“But don’t think the decision to recognize Israel was an easy one.”

—Harry S. Truman, 1964

Screen Gems Collection, MP2002-344

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Preface

The region of the Middle East known as the Holy Land has vexed the leaders of nations for centuries. At the close of World War II, the new United States president, Harry S. Truman, found himself facing volatile and complex international situations left in the war's aftermath. The rising tensions with the Soviet Union, the new challenges posed by the development of nuclear weapons, the colossal civil war in China, the threatened collapse of Western European economies, and the tide of national liberation sweeping across Africa and Southeast Asia all confronted President Truman during a period that he would later characterize in the title of the second volume of his memoirs, *Years of Trial and Hope*.

Among the crises Truman confronted in the postwar years was the question of Palestine, which was controlled by Britain under a United Nations mandate due to expire in 1948. For many generations Palestine had been primarily an Arab land, but Jews, motivated by religious fervor and a desire for a homeland, had settled there in ever-increasing numbers during the first half of the twentieth century. After the Holocaust, many thousands of the survivors wanted to immigrate to Palestine as well. As tensions between the Arabs and Jews rose, Palestine was on the verge of civil war by early 1948.

Escalating violence between Jews and Palestinian Arabs, the decision of the British to abandon Palestine when their United Nations mandate expired, increasing Soviet interest in the Middle East, and the ever-present American concern for ready access to vast Middle Eastern oil fields located in neighboring Arab countries all contributed to placing the question of a Jewish state at the forefront of Truman's foreign policy agenda. Moreover, as 1948 was an election year, domestic politics had to be taken into consideration. Significant numbers of Jewish voters in key states, particularly New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, could be decisive in a close presidential election where every electoral vote would be precious, and Jewish American voters appeared nearly unanimous in their support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. While several leading Republicans, among them

potential presidential candidates, had expressed public support for a Jewish state in Palestine, Truman's advisors were divided on the issue. The president's key foreign policy and defense policy advisors, including Secretary of State George C. Marshall and Defense Secretary James Forrestal, adamantly opposed the recognition of a Jewish state and the likely disruption of relations with Arab nations. The president faced a critical decision that he knew would exacerbate criticism of his administration and anger many of his closest advisors.

Truman recognized the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, at almost the instant its existence was announced, because he believed that his decision was fair. Reflecting on his decision a decade and a half later, Truman recalled, "What I was trying to do was find a homeland for the Jews and still be just with the Arabs."¹ He also believed that the existence of Israel would lead to eventual peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

Despite pleas from many in the pro-Israeli lobby, Truman provided only de facto recognition, insisting that elections must be held in Israel before de jure recognition could be provided, and he refused to lift the United States arms embargo affecting Israel. Furthermore, he would not recognize the ambitious borders the new state had claimed. "There was a lot of Jewish people against me because they wanted the whole of Palestine," Truman stated.² At the same time that Truman recognized the new State of Israel, he made it clear that he was fully prepared to recognize a Palestinian state, and he expected to do so as soon as an identifiable government came forward. However, the warfare that erupted on May 15 between Israel and its neighbors, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, and the resulting flow of Palestinian refugees prevented the establishment of a Palestinian state during Truman's presidency.

Truman was fully aware that the immigration of Jews to Palestine and the recognition of Israel would upset the Arab world, and he took steps to mitigate the damage. In July of 1946, he wrote to King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, stating, "I am sincere in my belief that the admission to Palestine of 100,000 Jewish refugees this year would neither prejudice the rights and privileges of the Arabs now in Palestine nor constitute a change in the basic situation." Again, six months later, Truman sought to reassure the Saudi leader by stating that "in supporting the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine" the objective of the United States was to preserve "the fundamental rights of both the Arab and Jewish population of Palestine," and to create conditions in which "Palestine Arabs and Jews alike shall prosper and shall lead lives free of any

kind of political or economic oppression.”³ Following the establishment of the State of Israel and the immediate outbreak of war, Truman sought to reconcile Arabs and Jews by urging Israeli leaders to repatriate Palestinians displaced during the months of savage fighting. Truman’s pleas went nowhere. Israel did not respond to Truman’s argument that allowing just a fraction of the Arab refugees to return to their homes would allow him “to continue his strong and warm support for Israel and the efforts being made by its government to establish its new political and economic structure on a firm basis.”⁴

In October of 1948, Truman ordered American armed forces to provide food, clothing, and medicine to Palestinian refugees. He also offered United States support for one half of the costs of a United Nations allocation of \$32 million for Palestinian refugees. However, the Truman administration demonstrated little support for the work of the United Nations Trusteeship Council as it labored unsuccessfully over the final disposition of Jerusalem, and the ancient city remained divided. When *de jure* recognition was finally extended to the State of Israel on January 31, 1949, Truman, in a significant and symbolic gesture, announced the recognition of Transjordan on the same date. However, by this time the Truman administration was preoccupied with rising Cold War tensions in Western Europe and Asia, and it would be left to future U.S. presidents to continue the pursuit of an elusive peace in the Middle East.

Most of the presentations published in this volume were first delivered at a symposium entitled “Harry S. Truman and the Recognition of Israel,” which took place in Key West, Florida, in May 2005. The third in a series of Truman Legacy symposia, the 2005 program sought to examine Truman’s decision to recognize Israel in the politically charged atmosphere of 1948. Scholars, former government officials, and diplomats were invited to look at Truman’s actions from various perspectives and analyze how the president’s personal beliefs and policies, and his relationships with members of the Jewish American community influenced his decisions.

The Truman Legacy Symposium in May 2005 was produced through a partnership of the Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs, the White House Studies Program of Florida Atlantic University, and the Truman Little White House. Dr. Robert Watson, now with Lynn University, and many staff at the Truman Little White House labored long hours to assure the success of the symposium, and it was a delight to work with them on this endeavor. The Tennessee Williams Theatre at Florida Keys Community College proved to be a superb location for the

symposium. Support for the symposium was provided by Historic Tours of America, Monroe County Tourist Development Council, and the Lifelong Learning and Holocaust and Judaic Studies programs at Florida Atlantic University. The John D. Evans Foundation, Betty Zinman Foundation, and Larkin Family Charitable Trust all assisted in funding the program.

Special expressions of gratitude go to Ed Swift, Chris Belland, Piper Smith, and Monica Munoz of Historic Tours of America. Michael McPherson, Rebecca Tomlinson, and Lydia Estenoz of Florida Keys Community College assisted in logistics, as did Richard Yon of University of Florida, Scott Roley of the Truman Presidential Library, and Kathy Knotts of the Truman Library Institute. A special thank-you is also extended to Clifton Truman Daniel for his participation in the symposium.

We are especially appreciative of the labor provided by Bonnie Neeleman of the Truman Presidential Library, who typed and retyped numerous drafts and revisions of the manuscript for this book. Two additional Truman Presidential Library staffers provided valuable expertise. Dr. Ray Geselbracht offered excellent advice and editing assistance, as well as preparing the chronology presented in this volume. Dr. Randy Sowell, who was responsible for the bibliography, also edited the final draft of the manuscript.

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Robert P. Watson, Lynn University,
Boca Raton, Florida
Robert J. Wolz, Harry S. Truman Little
White House, Key West, Florida
January 2008

Notes

¹Screen Gems Collection, MP2002-344, Audio Visual Collection, Truman Library.

²Screen Gems Collection, MP2002-344, Audio Visual Collection, Truman Library.

³President Truman to the King of Saudi Arabia, July 13, 1946. *Foreign Relations of the United States*. Vol. 7, *The Near East and Africa, 1946* (Washington, DC; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 646; and President Truman to the King of Saudi Arabia, January 24, 1947, *Foreign Relations: Near East and Africa, 1947*, 5: 1012-13.

⁴Fred H. Lawson, "Palestine," in *Harry S. Truman Encyclopedia*.

THE \$64 QUESTION

John B. Judis

When he assumed the presidency in April 1945, Harry Truman inherited a war that was still raging in the Pacific, the stirrings of conflict with the Soviet Union over Eastern Europe, and an electorate weary of wartime austerity. But what sometimes befuddled him most was what was happening in British-controlled Palestine. During a meeting later that year with Truman's chiefs of mission in the Near East, Minister to Lebanon and Syria George Wadsworth, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, asked the president "what the American policy [was] toward political Zionism." "That is the \$64 dollar question," Truman replied. According to the minutes of the meeting, Truman lamented that "this question was causing him and [Secretary of States James] Byrnes more trouble than almost any other question which is facing the United States."¹

History has shown that Truman and Byrnes had good reason to be troubled. Of all the great questions that America faced after World War II, that of how to resolve the conflict between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine—and later the Israelis and the Palestinians—has proven to be the most unanswerable. Sixty years later, the conflict continues to rage, and the United States is no closer to answering Truman's \$64 question of what the United States should do about it.

Why has this conflict proven to be so intractable? Current commentators locate the source of the difficulty in what has happened since the Truman years. Some blame the Arabs and the Palestinians for their "extremist and shortsighted leadership which consistently rejected all compromise solutions." Others, pointing to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, charge that the Israelis are "victims" who became "victimizers." And still others blame the continuing

stalemate on a feckless diplomacy by the principal outside actor in the region, the United States.²

Although these different explanations are the subject of a sometimes fierce debate, there is truth in each one of them. The Palestinians have repeatedly rejected offers for compromise—only to accept them later after they were no longer being offered. That happened, notably, in 1947, 1979, and 2000. The Israelis, for their part, have been oblivious, if not hostile, to Palestinian nationalism and after the Six-Day War took control of, and began building settlements on, what remained of Arab Palestine. And American administrations have periodically either downplayed Arab threats to Israel—for instance, on the eve of the Six-Day War—or ignored or even encouraged Israeli attempts to create a “greater Israel.”

But part of the reason that the conflict is intractable is what happened before and during the Truman years. By the time Truman decided to recognize Israel in May 1948, much of the groundwork for the subsequent rocket attacks, intifadas, assassinations, bulldozed villages, all-out wars, and illegal settlements had already been laid. The failure of Palestinian leadership was already evident during the revolt against the British in the 1930s, and Israel’s territorial ambitions, which seemed to surface suddenly after the Six-Day War in 1967, go back to Zionist visions of the early 1900s. As for American policy, the equivocation and indecision and the reluctance to use American power to achieve peace between the two parties became fully evident during the Truman years.

What follows is necessarily a cursory survey of a century of conflict, but it is intended as a historical backdrop to the essays in this collection, which detail the special role that the Truman administration played in Israel’s founding. Understanding what went before Truman’s years in office puts into relief the obstacles that he faced in answering his \$64 question. And looking at what happened afterwards shows the extent to which the difficulties he encountered have persisted into the present century.

A HISTORIC DEBATE

In 1896, Austrian playwright and journalist Theodor Herzl published *The Jewish State*. Like many middle-class European Jews, Herzl, who grew up in Budapest and Vienna, had believed that Jews would eventually either be assimilated into European society or convert to Christianity, but the pogroms in Russia of the early 1880s, his own encounter with anti-Semitism at the University of Vienna,

and finally the Dreyfus Affair in France convinced him that European Jews were destined to remain a persecuted minority. Herzl realized that while Jews might see themselves as voluntary members of a religious group, they were in fact treated by Europeans as an alien people or nation. Herzl concluded that they could only escape persecution by acknowledging their existence as a national group and founding a state of their own in which they were the dominant majority. Herzl suggested either Palestine or Argentina; he organized the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 and members of the new movement decided on Palestine.

There were two factions in this movement: the one, political Zionism, led by Herzl and later Chaim Weizmann, sought to secure a Jewish state diplomatically through the sponsorship of an imperial power; the other, cultural Zionism, led by the Eastern European Lovers of Zion, sought to encourage immigration to Palestine and advocated the creation of a new Hebrew-speaking Jewish culture. On the eve of World War I, about 60,000 Jews lived amidst about 750,000 Arabs in Palestine. About half of those Jews were recent immigrants inspired by cultural Zionism. But in 1917, the two factions were united when Weizmann, promoting a Jewish state as an “Asiatic Belgium” that would be a buffer between imperial Britain and the Arab Middle East, secured the support of the British cabinet for the establishment after the war of a “national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.”³

The cabinet’s declaration, issued in the form of a letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, contained two important ambiguities and one significant omission that would become the basis of conflict among Jews, Arabs, and the British. First, the Balfour Declaration deliberately referred to a “national home” rather than a “state,” out of deference to Britain’s Arab allies in the region; and secondly, while Zionists themselves already envisioned a Jewish state of Palestine, the declaration talked of a home in Palestine.⁴ At the same time, the declaration omitted any specific reference to the national rights of the Arabs already living in Palestine. Instead, it merely pledged to respect the “civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”⁵

In other words, the British commitment to a Jewish Palestine was not unequivocal—and British equivocation after 1939 would lead to a clash between the Jews and the British. By the same token, the British simply did not recognize Palestine’s Arabs as a people worthy of self-determination. That was reflected in Balfour’s view that “Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in

HARRY S. TRUMAN AND JEWISH REFUGEES

Alan L. Berger

President Truman, whom Robert J. Donovan once described as “the most stubborn of Missouri mules,” left a profound legacy for all Americans. But for American Jews, his actions in office had special resonance on two vital issues. In addition to admitting Jewish displaced persons to the United States after the war, the president granted American diplomatic recognition to the newly emergent State of Israel just eleven minutes after the state was formally declared. Despite the opposition of his distinguished secretary of state, General George C. Marshall, whom Truman greatly admired, and the reluctance of most of the president’s other key advisors, Truman overruled the opponents within his administration who feared the creation of the modern Jewish state. Israel, they argued, would be inimical to America’s interests in terms of national security; in particular, access to oil reserves in the Arab states surrounding Israel. There were also concerns that recognition of Israel would complicate international relations and give the Soviet Union entry to the Middle East.

The displaced persons, or DPs (as they were called), issue and recognition of Israel are intimately related. However, Truman’s actions and his motives in making decisions on these two issues are clouded in the seemingly contradictory words of the president and the actions of the American government concerning Jews and immigration. In a 1943 speech delivered at the Chicago United Rally to Demand Rescue of Doomed Jews, the then Senator Harry S. Truman, expressed his outrage at what was taking place in Nazi-occupied Europe. After first attesting that “the history of America in its

fight for freedom and the history of the Jews of America are one and the same,” he noted that National Socialism intended “the systematic slaughter throughout all of Europe, not only of the Jews but of vast numbers of other innocent peoples.” Truman then issued a call to action. “We must,” he asserted, “do all that is humanly possible to provide a haven and place of safety for all those who can be grasped from the hands of the Nazi butchers.”¹ The subsequent tale of America and the displaced persons provides a revealing look at Truman, Congress, and American anti-Semitism—both during and immediately following the Holocaust.

Senator Truman’s remarks echoed—in tone if not circumstance—George Washington’s 1783 speech in New York. At that time, President Washington observed:

The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.²

Truman, like his eighteenth-century predecessor, led a country that had both noble principles and a deeply rooted nativism. To put the matter bluntly, general acceptance by Americans of DPs was one thing, Jewish DPs were quite another matter. While I am not an expert in psychohistory, nor, for that matter, do I claim credentials as an historian, I think it significant to note that Truman was an avid reader who claimed to have “read the Bible through many times,”³ and his profound personal convictions, not infrequently at odds with diplomatic and political considerations, favored the admission of Jewish refugees to America on humanitarian grounds.

It is important to recall two important facts when considering the DP issue at the end of World War II. First, the Jews were singled out in the Holocaust in an unprecedented manner. They were not political prisoners, dissidents, POWs, saboteurs, or armed members of an enemy force bent on conquering Germany. Their “crime” consisted in having been born. In the words of Elie Wiesel, “while not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims.”⁴ Related to this is the fact that the Holocaust, for Jews, did not end in 1945. The trauma continued in several ways; Jewish prisoners were frequently locked in DP camps with their former tormentors, and some Jews in the camps were actually given Nazi uniforms to wear. In addition, German personnel, many of whom were deeply anti-Semitic, were often put in positions

of authority by United States military commanders at the end of the war. The effects of these traumatic experiences on Jewish survivors are only now beginning to be recognized and commented on by historians. Moreover, anti-Semitic attitudes in America seemed to grow during the war years.

Second, compounding the trauma for Jewish DPs was the fact that certain high-ranking American military personnel were themselves anti-Semites. One thinks here of General George S. Patton, commander of the Third Army in southern Germany, an area that contained most of the DPs in the American zone. In a September 15, 1945, diary entry, Patton wrote that others “believe that the displaced person is a human being, which he is not, and this applies particularly to the Jews who are lower than animals.” Furthermore, there existed a belief that the DPs had to be treated as prisoners or else they would leave the camps, “spread over the country like locusts, and would eventually have to be rounded up after quite a few of them had been shot and quite a few Germans murdered and pillaged.”⁵ Robert Ross, writing in *So It Was True*, is absolutely correct in observing: “The last chapter in the Nazi persecution of the Jews was written in the displaced-person camps and in the emigration of survivors during the years after the war in Europe.”⁶

President Truman faced considerable pressure on the matter of Jewish displaced persons. However, the majority of the DPs were not Jewish, and the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry and the Morrison-Grady Plan concerning the emigration of 100,000 Jews to Palestine set off a political firestorm. Zionist, and even non-Zionist, Jews in America bitterly attacked the proposal, which would have in effect given the Arabs a veto over Jewish emigration. Jewish political pressure was intense and sometimes counterproductive. At one point, Truman was so angry and frustrated at what he perceived as his harassment by Jewish leaders on this matter that he said during a cabinet meeting, “Jesus Christ couldn’t please them when he was here on earth, so how could anyone expect that I would have any luck.”⁷ Clearly, this statement reflected Truman’s sense of exasperation at the time. It also mirrored the type of religio-cultural anti-Semitism typical of the midwestern America in which the president had been raised.

A more comprehensive portrait of the president’s personal feelings on the matter of Jewish emigration emerges from other sources. On November 24, 1945, he wrote, but never mailed, a letter to Minnesota Senator Joseph H. Ball, in which he stated, “What I am trying

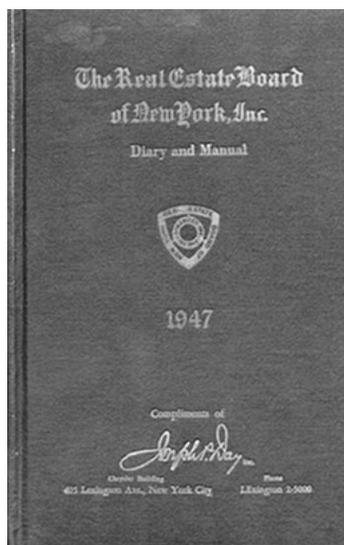
TRUMAN'S 1947 "ANTI-SEMITIC" DIARY ENTRY

Bruce S. Warshal

In July of 2003, the Harry S. Truman Library made public a hitherto unknown small diary written by President Truman during 1947. This amazing document had rested unnoticed on a shelf in the stacks of the library for decades in the covers of a booklet listing New York real estate agents and providing pages for daily entries of appointments and transactions. In that "1947 Diary" was a highly critical statement concerning Jews.

On July 21 of that year, after a ten-minute conversation with former treasury secretary Henry Morgenthau, in which the Jewish

The cover of a 1947 diary, bearing the title "1947 Diary and Manual of the Real Estate Board of New York, Inc.," that was sent to President Truman by Matthew G. Ely, the board's president in late 1946. Rose Conway, Truman's personal secretary, acknowledged the gift on December 27 and put the diary book "in the President's desk in office." A slip of paper interleaved in the diary book when it was discovered at the Truman Library in 2003, marked "President's Study," suggests that Truman used it in his oval study in the White House Residence. (1947, Diaries File, President's Secretary's File, Harry S. Truman Papers, Truman Library)



former treasury secretary pressured Truman on behalf of Jewish refugees attempting to enter Palestine, Truman wrote: "He'd no business, whatever to call me. The Jews have no sense of proportion nor do they have any judgment on world affairs." Truman then ranted:

The Jews, I find, are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as D[isplaced] P[ersons] as long as the Jews get special treatment. Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the underdog. Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very few who remember their past condition, when prosperity comes.¹

Is this the same man who, just ten months later, gave de facto recognition to the State of Israel merely eleven minutes after its birth? Could Harry Truman have been a closet anti-Semite? I personally doubt it and, to date, Jewish reaction has been muted. However, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen declared he "would have decked him,"² and *New York Times* columnist William Safire smugly declared that this was "more dismaying" than Nixon's slurs about Jews on his famous White House tapes.³ More generous was the response of Sara Bloomfield, the director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Truman's comments were, she said, "typical of a sort of cultural anti-Semitism that was common at that time in all parts of American society. This was an acceptable way to talk."⁴

In contrast to the diary entry, in 1976 Clark Clifford, special counsel to President Truman, wrote,

During 1947 and 1948 I heard President Truman express himself many times with reference to the Jewish problem. He had a deep, natural resentment against intolerance of any kind. He deplored the existence of Jewish ghettos and the cruel and persistent persecution. He never ceased to be horrified at the murder of some six million Jews by the Nazis. He was fully aware of the miserable status of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had been displaced by the Second World War. As a student of the Bible, he believed in the historic justification for a Jewish homeland, and it was a conviction with him that the Balfour Declaration of 1917 constituted a solemn promise that fulfilled the age-old hope and dream of the Jewish people.⁵

6:00 P.M. Monday July 21, '47
 Had ten minutes conversation
 with Henry Morgenthau about
 Jewish ship in Palestine told
 him I would talk to Gen.
 Marshall about it.
 He'd no business, whatever
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 Henry brought a thousand
 Jews to New York on a sup-
 posedly temporary basis
 and they stayed.

When the country went
 backward—and Republican
 in the election of 1946, this
 incident loomed large on
 the D.P. program.
 The Jews, I find are very,
 very selfish. They care not
 how many Estonians, Latvians,
 Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks
 get murdered or mistreated
 as D.P. as long as the Jews
 get special treatment.
 Yet when they have power,
 physical, financial or political

Entry written on three loose pages, interleaved in the diary book and dated 6:00 P.M. Monday July 21, '47.

Had ten minutes conversation with Henry Morgenthau about Jewish ship in Palestine [sic]. Told him I would talk to Gen[er]al Marshall about it.

He'd no business, whatever to call me. The Jews have no sense of proportion nor do they have any judgement on world affairs.

Henry brought a thousand Jews to New York on a supposedly temporary basis and they stayed. When the country went backward—and Republican in the election of 1946, this incident loomed large on the D[isplaced] P[ersons] program.

The Jews, I find are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as DP as long as the Jews get special treatment. Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the under dog. Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jew, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes baywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition, when prosperity comes.

Look at the Congress[ional] attitude on D[isplaced] P[ersons]—and they all come from D[isplaced] P[ersons].

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RECOGNIZING ISRAEL

“A Little Touch of Harry in the Night”

Michael T. Benson

There is a well-known anecdote about President Truman getting emotional when, following Truman’s recognition of Israel, the chief rabbi of Israel came to pay the president a visit. When I first read that account, I made a list of questions I wanted to ask the famous Truman biographer David McCullough. I spent a morning with Mr. McCullough out at Martha’s Vineyard when I was researching my book, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel*. He said President Truman was not one to show his emotion in public and he had only found two accounts where that happened. One was the rabbi’s visit. The other was at a cabinet meeting when President Truman was informed of a cheating scandal at the United States Military Academy. I think the reason he got so emotional on that occasion was because his poor eyesight had kept him out of West Point, and he was so disappointed that these young men, to whom much had been entrusted, had let down their country by cheating.

A footnote must be added to the story of Chaim Weizmann coming to the Rose Garden at the White House and presenting President Truman with the gift of state. The photograph of the event shows President Truman looking towards the scrolls while standing next to a smiling Chaim Weizmann. Dr. Weizmann was a renowned chemist. During World War I, he developed an acetone that the British used in production of war materiel and he was widely respected in the international scientific community. He didn’t smile all that often; when I interviewed Abba Eban back in 1992 he said that there was a story behind this picture. I said, “I don’t know the story. Will you please tell me?” He said, “Well, Dr. Weizmann shows up at the



Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of Israel, presents a Torah to Truman during a visit to the White House on May 25, 1948. (TL 59-848)

White House. He has a gift of state. He's now the new president of the new State of Israel and no one has any idea of what he's going to bring the president. So he shows up with this set of Torah scrolls wrapped in beautiful purple velvet with some bells hanging down from them. No one has any idea what they are. Dr. Weizmann is not well. His health is not good at all, and he's having a hard time carrying these Torah scrolls, which are actually quite heavy. Then he hands them to President Truman. I have to add parenthetically that no matter how many times Sam Rosenman told President Truman that Dr. Weizmann's given name was pronounced with a hard 'kha' sound, 'Chaim,' he always called him 'Cham.' So, Dr. Weizmann takes these Torah scrolls and hands them to President Truman. President Truman looks down at them and he says, 'Well, thanks, Cham. I've always wanted a set of these.' Right at that moment, the White House photographer snapped the picture and that's why you have both men grinning."

Studying the life and career of Harry Truman changed my life forever. The journey can be traced to a spring morning in 1992 when I entered the doors of the Truman Library for the first time. I hasten to add that my initial research visit was made possible by a generous grant from the Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs. I can state unequivocally that Harry Truman is my hero. For people of my generation, it might be tough to find many who list politicians among their heroes. As Truman was inclined to say, "A statesman is nothing more than a politician who has been dead for several years." But those of us who grew

up in America and witnessed its presidency transformed by Watergate and subsequent scandals harken back to an era when politicians were different. There is an element to Truman that is extremely rare in today's politics. Perhaps it is best summarized by a statement made by Eric Sevareid of CBS News. He said, "I'm not sure Truman was right about the atomic bomb or even Korea. But remembering him reminds people what a man in an office ought to be like. It's character, just character. He stands like a rock in memory now."¹ Indeed, Harry Truman does stand like a rock in our nation's collective memory, as we consider many of the decisions that, when made at a time of great international tension, were incredibly difficult and complex.

Many revisionist historians in the 1960s rushed to note our thirty-third president's faults and the inherent shortcomings of his policies. Their criticisms notwithstanding, year after year the courage of Truman's actions and decisions propels him into the ranks of near-great or great presidents as determined in numerous polls of America's renowned political scientists and historians. Not bad for a man who left Washington with a 23 percent approval rating during his final year in office. That is a lower rating than Richard Nixon had when he made his famous wave from the south lawn of the White House and boarded Marine One for the last time.

I serve as the president of Snow College in central Utah, a small college in a little town called Ephraim. We have a Jewish studies program, helped along by my good friend Rabbi Shumley Boteach. When Rabbi Boteach first visited our campus, nearly four years ago, he maintained that such a program was a natural fit in a town called Ephraim, which is located right next to Mount Nebo and just north of a city named Moab, which is on the way to Zion National Park. Clearly our Mormon settlers had a flair for the dramatic and named some of the towns of our state with beautiful names. Ever since I launched into my administrative career ten years ago at the University of Utah, I have taught a class in international relations or American history and government or the U.S. presidency each semester. I intend to do so for the rest of my academic career. Each course begins with some admonition, regardless of the year, or the course material, or the level of the students. I tell my class that President Truman often stated, "There is nothing new in the world, except the history you do not know."

In my book, I try to tell a side of Truman's recognition of the State of Israel that I believed was misrepresented and misunderstood

PRAGMATIC IDEALISM

Truman's Broader Middle East Policy

Tom Lansford

Harry S. Truman utilized a blend of pragmatism and idealism in both his domestic and his foreign policies. He sought lofty goals but was always aware of the limitations imposed by domestic actors and the changing circumstances of the world stage. Consequently, Truman's policy objectives were generally based on U.S. national interests. He also avoided overreach, that tendency of leaders to fail as they attempt too much. Instead, his administration pursued foreign and security objectives in the Middle East that were obtainable at a cost the American public, and Congress, would accept. Truman's recognition of Israel was demonstrative of his global idealism, while his broader Middle East policy reflected the president's political realism.

While the other sections of this book focus on Truman's recognition of Israel, this chapter concentrates on the president's overall Middle East policy. This is undertaken through an examination of the nexus of foreign and domestic policy within the United States. Robert Putnam summarized the interplay of foreign policy and domestic actors as a "two-level" game in which world leaders endeavor to meet the needs and goals of domestic groups while simultaneously achieving international victories that enhance the power and influence of their countries.¹ Hence, U.S. presidents play one game at the international level and another at the domestic level.² Failure to secure victories at both levels can cause gains in one category to be forfeited, as was the case with Woodrow Wilson's efforts with the League of Nations. Truman proved adept at both games and was able to develop the bipartisan consensus that not only undergirded his own initiatives in the Middle East, but laid the foundation for future

national security cooperation during the Cold War.

THE BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS

From his service in the Senate, Truman understood the necessity for bipartisanship in foreign and defense policy. The president and leading Senate Republican Arthur H. Vandenberg developed a close working and personal relationship that was especially important during the period when Republicans controlled Congress (and the era of some of Truman's boldest foreign policy initiatives, including the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan). Truman frequently suggested that his staff maintain contacts with leaders in both parties and he employed people on the White House staff regardless of party affiliation. Former Truman aide Ken Hechler wrote that "there never appeared to be any party loyalty test for White House staff members. Nobody seemed disturbed that I was a registered Republican when I went onto the White House payroll."³

Bipartisanship was both a means to accomplish goals and a goal in and of itself for the Truman administration. In 1949, the State Department issued a bulletin that declared the objective of the administration was "to achieve agreement on sound and publicly supported policy" and to "make it virtually impossible for 'momentous divisions' to occur in our foreign affairs."⁴ Bipartisanship meant that Truman had to contain the leftist members of his own party to ensure the development of centrist policies. The president would be criticized by members of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party who asserted that the administration attempted to use the spirit of bipartisanship as a means to gag debate within the party and eliminate alternative strategies to confrontation with the Soviet Union.⁵ Bipartisanship did not mean an end to legitimate policy differences, but rather it was the recognition that the goals and objectives of foreign and security policy were more important than minor political advantages. Truman wrote that "there were occasions when Senator Vandenberg disagreed with my policies but he never attempted to sabotage them."⁶ Vandenberg wrote that bipartisanship "means that we strive by consultation to lift foreign policy above partisan issue. It means that we attempt to hammer out the greatest possible means of agreement so we can speak to the world, not as 'Republicans' or 'Democrats' but as undivided Americans."⁷ It was not, however, a negotiation among equals. Truman was careful to maintain the supremacy of the presidency in foreign policy. In his memoirs, Tru-

man observed that “bipartisanship in foreign policy means simply that the President can repose confidence in the members of the other party and that in turn the leaders of that party have confidence in the president’s conduct of foreign affairs.”⁸

In practice, bipartisan foreign policy formulation meant frequent private meetings and consultations between Truman, his senior staff, and leading Republicans, as well as the appointment of Republicans to posts in the State Department. In 1951, Hechler wrote a synopsis of Truman’s bipartisan foreign policy that was published as a Senate report. In the document, Hechler outlined six main areas in which bipartisanship was demonstrated:

1. Frequent White House conferences with congressional leaders of both parties....
2. Bipartisan congressional representation on U.S. delegations to many international conferences.
3. The inclusion of leading members of both political parties on United States delegations to the United Nations.
4. Frequent consultation on major policies between the Department of State, and the bipartisan membership of various congressional committees....
5. The bipartisan planning and development of major policies with the assistance of congressional leaders of both parties, as well as private individuals and outside groups representing both political parties....
6. The appointment of leading members of the Republican Party to high policy positions in the Department of State, and in other agencies dealing with foreign policy matters....⁹

Truman endorsed Hechler’s report and encouraged the 1952 presidential candidates to read the document.¹⁰

Points 5 and 6 from Hechler’s report underscore the importance Truman attached to ensuring public support for his initiatives. By binding Republicans to administration policies, either because they helped craft the initiatives or because they helped implement them, Truman was able to forestall partisan criticism and bolster support for specific programs such as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In addition, by involving private citizens, he was able to expand the lobbying power of the White House. It also prevented embarrassing congressional defeats along the lines of the failed League of Nations. Bipartisanship assured the president of domestic wins in his two-level games. He could negotiate with, or confront, foreign leaders

AN ACT OF POLITICAL COURAGE

Asher Naim

In order to understand President Truman's decisions on the issues in the Middle East, including the recognition of Israel in 1948, one must look at the international political contest in the years immediately following World War II. The decline of the Western European powers, the expansionist policies of Marshal Joseph Stalin and the Soviets, and the assumption of a new role of leadership in international affairs by the United States are factors that must be considered.

At the end of the Second World War, the British Empire was in shambles. In succession, India, Burma, Egypt, Uganda, and Kenya all broke away in the decade or so after the war. The empire was nothing like what it had been before the war. Meanwhile, in Palestine the British faced a crisis. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 had called for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. British diplomacy brought about this declaration, and in Britain and elsewhere, it was endorsed by liberal organizations committed to establishing both an Arab and a Jewish state in Palestine. The British received a mandate after World War I to create a Jewish state in Palestine under a League of Nations resolution. In my view, the British failed to fulfill their obligation in the decades between the world wars; and in the years immediately following World War II, the British government began to back away from its commitment to the Balfour Declaration. They threw the whole issue of a Jewish homeland onto the newly created United Nations.

The United Nations was not a very self-confident organization in the mid-1940s, and therefore created a commission under UNESCO that called for a Palestinian state and a Jewish state, with Jerusalem under an international governing authority. The commission's resolution for partition passed by a two-thirds majority in the UN. I remember as a young boy in Tel Aviv counting the votes of

the member nations. About this time, Palestine had a population of about 1,200,000 Arabs and 650,000 Jews. Violence erupted all over Palestine. It was so bad one could not leave home or go to a place of work. Who was right? What was justice in this complex situation?

U.S. Secretary of Defense James Forrestal was adamantly opposed to partition and wanted the entire matter reconsidered by the United Nations. He seemed to be pushing for a new plan that would not include a Jewish state in Palestine. Of course, U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall also opposed partition and his view affected the entire U.S. State Department. The confrontation between the State Department and the White House became obvious in the United Nations, to the point where Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the U.S. delegation to the UN, threatened to resign her position.

Meanwhile, the majority of the United States House and Senate favored partition. They saw Israel's claim for a homeland as a legitimate aspiration. Of course, there were significant Jewish populations in states with large congressional delegations, namely New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, and the elected representatives from these states had to consider the Jewish votes. That is the way representative government works. Every group in a democratic society has the right to express its interests. Of course, Jewish votes were no different.

As for President Truman, he had a profound personal interest in the Middle East. His fascination was not only from his study of the Bible. Truman found the Middle East to be the most interesting and complicated area in the entire world, and he would frequently point out that there had been constant warfare in the region since ancient times. Truman felt it was a pity that political conflicts had kept the Middle East from economic development that would improve the lives of all the people in the region.

When Truman told his senior cabinet members that he planned to recognize the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, the day the last British troops were to depart from Palestine, there was concern that many U.S. State Department officials would resign. Secretary of State Marshall had expressed the strongest possible opposition to recognition, as had Secretary of Defense Forrestal. But Truman acted on his personal convictions rather than on the arguments of his closest advisors or on political expediency. He did what he thought was right; and given the pressure he was under, his decision demonstrated political courage.

THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE AND THE RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL

Pat Schroeder

When I was a little girl, I had a great-uncle who looked just like President Truman and the big buzz in our family was the possibility that we just might be fifth cousins to Harry Truman, or perhaps something like that. When you're a child and one of your favorite uncles looks like Harry Truman, strange things happen. You walk down the street and people come over and say, "Oh! Are you...?" So, I became very protective of this great-uncle. Let me tell you, life was really quite different at the time. I remember one man coming over and screaming at my uncle, "Why can't you call a shovel a shovel? Why do you insist on calling it a goddamned spade?" If you're eight years old, you're thinking, "Whoo! This is really interesting. People have some pretty strong feelings about this President Truman!"

When Harry Truman became president, the American people did not know him. At the 1944 Democratic Convention, the party leaders insisted on dropping Vice President Henry Wallace from the ticket, and Truman had emerged as their choice only as an available compromise candidate. Roosevelt accepted the political leaders' selection of Truman, but he didn't exactly put his arms around him and say, "This is my guy!" During Truman's eighty-two days as vice president, he and Roosevelt hardly ever met, and at no time was Truman allowed a public platform. Roosevelt continued to dominate the political landscape, as he had done for more than a decade. When the American people woke up one day in April 1945 and found out Harry Truman was president, they wondered, "Who is this fellow? How did he get to be president?"

In his first year in office, Truman was beset by almost unimagin-

able problems. In April 1945, he still had a horrendous world war on his hands and needed to end it. He had a bunch of mad liberals in his own party (and believe me, mad liberals can be a real load), and many in his initial cabinet and White House staff were Roosevelt men with no loyalty or particular liking for the new president from a small town in the Midwest with no Harvard education. In 1946, the Republicans took control of Congress and now the nervous Nellies among the Democrats were starting to ask, What's going to happen to our party in 1948? Whom can we find to run for president other than Truman? How can Truman lead us through these perilous times?

Truman was faced with numerous decisions on world affairs, the economy, racial relations, and atomic energy that would set the direction of the nation for the remainder of the twentieth century, and he faced his challenges with a steady and determined attitude. He had the wonderful ability to be himself. He never pretended to have gravitas. He did not try to play a role that was not genuine Truman. He was the real deal, and America at that time was not used to the real deal. His predecessor, FDR, had a carefully managed public image as a suave, sophisticated, solid, family man. So well-managed was his image that people did not even know that Roosevelt couldn't walk.

In 1947, Truman made a decision that would make the recognition of Israel possible one year later. That decision was to provide massive aid to the governments of Greece and Turkey, both of which were under severe pressure from the Soviet Union. In February of 1947, the British made it known that they planned to remove their military from Greece in six weeks. The British had 40,000 troops in Greece, and neighboring Bulgaria and Albania had already fallen under communist domination. So the removal of British military support for the conservative and anticommunist government of Greece presented a grim situation. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union demanded that Turkey cede part of Anatolia to the Soviet State of Georgia, and give up the Dardanelles as well. The Soviet threat to expand communism to Greece and Turkey was ominous, but the governments in these countries had few friends in the United States. Turkey had remained neutral throughout most of World War II, and the elements in the Greek government favored the Nazis before Greece was invaded by the Axis powers in 1941. It was hard to make a case for saving the Greek monarchy. While Truman was advocating assistance to Greece for strategic reasons, the mayor of New

York City stated that no American boy should die to save an unpopular Greek king. The mayor noted that during World War II we had communists helping us fight Nazism and now we were willing to help Nazis fight communists. The president not only had to push his Truman Doctrine through a Congress controlled by Republicans, he had to get members of his own Democratic Party on board. From Key West, Florida, where he sought much-needed rest, the president described his thoughts on the emerging Cold War in extremely personal terms to his daughter Margaret (even taking time to offer her a bit of encouragement after a disappointing concert performance):

Key West, Florida
March 13, 1947

Dear Margie:—We had a very pleasant flight from Washington. Your old dad slept for 750 or 800 miles—three hours—and we were making from 250 to 300 miles an hour. No one not even me (your mother would say I) knew how very tired and worn to a frazzle the chief executive had become. This terrible decision I had to make had been over my head for about six weeks. Although I knew at Potsdam that there is no difference in totalitarian or police states, call them what you will, Nazi, Fascist, Communist or Argentine Republics. You know there never was but one idealistic example of communism. That is described in the Acts of the Apostles.

The attempt of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, et al. to fool the world and the American crackpots' association, represented by Joe Davies, Henry Wallace, Claude Pepper and the actors and artists in immoral Greenwich Village, is just like Hitler's and Mussolini's so-called socialist states.

Your pop had to tell the world just that in polite language.

Now in addition to that terrible—and it is terrible—decision, your good old 94-year-old grandmother of the 1880 generation was unlucky and broke her leg—you—the “apple of my eye”—my sweet baby always had bad luck with your first appearance. Well daughter the dice roll—sometimes they are for you—sometimes they are not. But I earnestly believe they were for you this time. I am just as sure as I can be that Sunday night at 8:00 P.M. another great soprano will go on the air. So don't worry about anything—just go on and sing as you sang that “Home Sweet Home” record for your dad—and nothing can stop you—even the handicap of being the Daughter of President Truman!

Then you come back to the White House and let me arrange a nice warm rest for you and your lovely mammy and we'll go on from there.

You must learn self-discipline—that is you must eat what you should, drink what you should—and above all sleep at night and always give people the benefit of good intentions until they are proven bad. Don't put our comfort and welfare above those around you. In other words be a good commonsense Missouri woman—daughter of your mother—in my opinion the greatest woman on earth—I want you to be second.

More love than you can realize now.

Dad

The Truman Doctrine was ultimately approved by Congress, and the aid to Greece and Turkey saved those countries from communist rule. Truman's policy solidified the eastern Mediterranean and made it possible for the nation of Israel to come into existence.

Truman dealt with so many critical international issues during his presidency that it is simply amazing. How could such an unlikely leader emerge and provide enlightened and farsighted leadership? To me, Truman appears like Queen Elizabeth I in many respects. One of my favorite books (remember I'm in the publishing business these days) is *Elizabeth I, CEO*,¹ and I find Truman and Elizabeth have a lot in common. Like Truman, Elizabeth came to power under unusual circumstances. Her claim to rule was questioned by her own sister! Her divided nation had just emerged from a series of religious wars and she was forced to address all sorts of foreign threats that must have appeared overwhelming to her contemporaries. People initially questioned the ability of the little red-headed young woman, just as they questioned the one-time haberdasher. But they were both bright, open-minded, and determined to follow courses they believed to be right; and in the end, both were recognized as great leaders.

Note

¹Alan Axelrod, *Elizabeth I, CEO: Strategic Lessons from the Leader Who Built an Empire* (Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

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REMEMBERING PRESIDENT TRUMAN

Ken Hechler

I enjoy so much visiting elementary schools to talk about President Truman because the uninhibited comments that you get from second- and third-graders are so terrific. This is a little bit before peer pressure guides our conformity and political correctness. Not long ago, I was visiting a second grade and I was trying to explain to them about who Harry Truman was. I said he grew up in Independence, Missouri, and that was a very wonderful place to grow up because Truman was independent, and Independence is located in Jackson County. As a teacher, I always liked to engage the students with a little dialogue, so I said, “Which of you second-graders can tell me the great American after whom Jackson County was named?” And immediately a second grader in the back jumped up and blurted out, “Michael Jackson!”

I consider myself to be the luckiest man alive to have worked on the staff of President Harry Truman. I got to travel with him to Key West and also to go with him on trips. The president’s daughter, Margaret, used to tell the president that the Truman campaign train was the only campaign train that carried its own “heckler” right on board.

Reference was made earlier to a man for whom I worked for about a quarter of a century who was a close associate of both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman—Judge Samuel I. Rosenman. I asked Judge Rosenman one day, “What was the real difference between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman?” Now, Rosenman was a member of the New York Assembly when FDR was running for governor in 1928. FDR tapped him to be his chief speechwriter. He spent seventeen years with Franklin—valuable years. Harry Truman recognized his talents and retained him; and

Sam Rosenman was the architect of two great speeches: the 21-point program in the fall of 1945 in which President Truman came out for health care for all Americans, and the acceptance speech at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. Rosenman said something very perceptive; he said the real difference between Roosevelt and Truman was that Roosevelt usually considered the political effects of what he was going to do and that Harry Truman never considered the political fallout from his decisions.

Rosenman was succeeded by Clark Clifford, who was then succeeded by a very mild-mannered, soft-spoken North Carolinian named Charles Murphy. Murphy told me one day, "Don't ever try to mention, in any proposal that you make to President Truman, what the political advantage would be, because he would immediately reject it."

I think Truman's decision on Israel can be most easily explained by the second sign that he had on his desk. Everybody knows about the most important sign: "The Buck Stops Here." But the second sign was one that very few people know about. It was a quotation from Mark Twain, and was in Mark Twain's own handwriting. It sat on President Truman's desk and he followed it very religiously. That sign said, "Always do right. This will gratify some of the people and astonish the rest." This explains, I think, the decision on Israel. It also explains other tough decisions Truman made, such as the desegregation of the armed forces and the federal government through two executive orders. He did this without wide agitation in the country for what he did. In fact, he did this in the face of public opinion that was very much against both desegregating the federal government and integrating the armed forces.

President Truman had a genuine liking for all people of different religious faiths, and both his friends and his staff included many different types of people. Everyone is familiar with his close friendship with Eddie Jacobson, which started when they ran a highly successful canteen during artillery training before World War I, followed by their partnership in Truman's haberdashery business, which eventually failed. Jacobson later played a crucial role in arranging the important meeting between Truman and the highly respected Zionist Chaim Weizmann at a time when Truman was getting increasingly upset with the unreasonable pressure of radical Zionists in this country. Judge Rosenman was not only a high-ranking White House staff member, but also a social companion. Judge Rosenman and his wife accompanied the Trumans on a European

trip after Truman left the presidency. Among the Jewish White House staff members were David Niles, Assistant Press Secretary Irving Perlmeter, Special Assistants Milton Kayle and Richard Neustadt, and Personnel Officer Martin Friedman.

Truman's positive feeling toward Israel is predictable when considering the major address which he delivered on April 14, 1943, as a U.S. Senator, at the Chicago Stadium. In his address, he stated unequivocally, "Today—not tomorrow—we must do all that is humanly possible to provide a haven and place of safety for all those who can be grasped from the hands of the Nazi butchers. Free land must be opened to them."¹

It was certainly a wonderful thing to be able to come down to Key West here with President Truman. He used his time here at the Little White House not only to recharge his batteries, but also to think and read, and to develop the vision that he had for the future. It was on such occasions that he honed his determination to do what was right with relation to Israel, the Middle East, and other parts of the world.

Note

¹Harry S. Truman, Speech delivered at Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, April 14, 1943. 8 PM.1943. April 14, United Rally to Demand Rescue of Doomed Jews, Chicago, IL, Press Release File, Speech Files, Papers as U.S. Senator and Vice President, Harry S. Truman Papers, Truman Library.

UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

David Gordis

In 1948, fifty-seven years ago, I was a very young man, and at that time our lives were focused on the two epochal events in the life of the Jewish community: the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Related to these events, the incident I remember, one that is indelibly inscribed in my mind, was going to what was then known as Idlewild Airport (now evolved into John F. Kennedy International Airport). I was not flying anywhere at the time. The trip was simply to go up onto the observation roof of one of the few buildings to see the first airplane that bore the blue and white insignia of the Israeli airline. It was the only plane that El Al had, just a Bristol Britannia, a turboprop plane. However, what was dramatic about the plane was that it existed at all. In other words, the difference between having no planes and no airline and now possessing one plane is far greater—far, far more transformative—than having one plane and then having a hundred planes. That was an epochal moment. Now that single moment as a child, standing and looking at that plane with tears coming to my eyes, came after having heard not very many years earlier the reports of 1942 and 1943 about what was happening in Europe. Then came the news that the Jewish state was established. I also remember sitting by the radio and hearing the account of the United Nations vote, country by country, from Lake Success. As we listened, we wondered which country was going to put it over and approve the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state? These were moments which were, for me, unforgettable.

I want to recall another image, a photograph that has become something of a classic. It is the famous picture of President Truman

with the first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann was handing a gift—a Torah scroll—to Truman in gratitude and commemoration for what he had done. Here was this photograph of Weizmann, a scientist, a nonreligious Jew, handing to a Baptist, American president what was the only thing possible to represent the gratitude of the Jewish people for what had happened. It was this embodiment of the Jewish tradition, the Jewish religious tradition—a Torah scroll. If one thinks of the secular Chaim Weizmann giving, and the Baptist Harry Truman receiving, a Torah scroll, one sees a number of themes.

The author Lewis Carroll once said, “It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backward.” On the contemporary Israeli calendar, two days follow one another within a week—Holocaust Remembrance Day and Israel Independence Day. So within a short time span, a symbolic couplet is formed in the Jewish consciousness—depths of despair to redemption. There is even a program called *The March of the Living* where both American and Israeli teenagers are brought to the concentration camps to visit Auschwitz and Birkenau and see the depths of the Holocaust—what it cost the Jewish people. Following the visits to the camps they are reinvigorated in their sense of what the establishment of the State of Israel actually means. If we are going to be responsible in remembering the past with an eye towards the future, and if we are to come to terms with the enormity of what the transformation caused by the establishment of the State of Israel has meant for the Jewish people, we need to tell ourselves a number of different stories.

Perhaps the worst pathologies generated in human experience are the result of our ability to focus on only a single narrative—our own narrative—which is devaluating and dismissing of the narratives of others. The key to a more positive future, a future that will heal the torn fabric of the world we all inherit, is for us to attune ourselves to hear a variety of narratives other than our own. Here then are a couple of the narratives that we have to hear.

It was not an accident that the Torah was the central symbol that Weizmann, a secularist, would give to a Baptist president. One central narrative transformed by the establishment of Israel is a religious narrative. The State of Israel, established in 1948, is not the first Jewish commonwealth or the second Jewish commonwealth. There were two prior Jewish commonwealths. The first ended with the destruction of the temple in the sixth century BCE. The second Jewish commonwealth, to all intents and purposes, was destroyed

by the Romans in 63 CE. From that time, Jews lost their religious connection to their state. This was not trivial, because during the time of the first commonwealth, a major religious transformation took place. What had been groups of random tribes living in a relatively disorganized and fragmented way, were centralized during the seventh century BCE. At the same time, Jewish worship was standardized and centralized at the temple in Jerusalem. This was a great transformation, as described in the Bible; however, this transformation bore a heavy price. Because Jewish religious life came to be focused on the temple in Jerusalem, imagine the level of the tragedy when the temple was destroyed and the religious state, as people had come to know it, was no longer possible. This created a practical problem: How do you maintain a community without a center of worship?

The destruction of the temple in 63 CE also created a profound philosophical and theological problem: the problem of theodicy. If you are worshipping a God who is supposed to be just and good, how could God have permitted the destruction of his temple and his people to take place? From the destruction of the second commonwealth in the first century CE, in a time when both rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were created, a variety of approaches came about to explain how such a tragic thing could happen. Jews and others have struggled to explain how a just God could allow this kind of devastation to take place, especially if Jews were supposedly a chosen people (a difficult concept in itself). Remember that couplet, “How odd of God to choose the Jews?” But, if in some way, the Jews were chosen, how could they be subjected to this degradation and to this terrible loss? Obviously a theological problem. Various schools of thought sought to identify the sinfulness of the Jews. Later, in rabbinic Judaism, the loss of the temple and homeland was ascribed to ethical decline—people were no longer freed of hatred for one another and this generated the catastrophe. The whole concept of exile and explanation for exile became a fundamental theme in Jewish history and Jewish religious thought. The narrative of decline, of exile, of catastrophe and tragedy, has been transformed in modern religious circles. The establishment of the State of Israel is often referred to as *reshit t'zemichat ge'ulatenu*, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption. If the ultimate degradation and punishment was the Holocaust, then the establishment of the State of Israel is not just an historic event, it must be a transforming event in God's world, theologically, cosmologically, and historically, on the broadest possible

ISLAM AND THE QUEST FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Ahrar Ahmad

Assalamu alaikum. While 75 percent of the world's Muslims are not Arabs, that particular Arabic expression is the universal greeting used by all Muslims everywhere. In the spirit of this conference, I should also point out that the traditional Jewish greeting is *Shalom aleichem*, and in the old Latin church the usual greeting was *Pax vobiscum*. What is most interesting is that all three greetings mean essentially the same thing: May peace be upon you. One of the most delicious and dangerous ironies of history is that while the great faiths have talked peace, and taught peace, greeted peace, and fêted peace, unfortunately many of the faithful have not. They are more apt to say, "My religion is the religion of justice and compassion, mercy and love; therefore, I hate you."

In today's world of transitions and contradictions, that particular irony has gained surprising and poignant salience. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the world has become much smaller than it used to be thirty years ago. Trade and tourism, cultural contacts, informational resources, and emerging technologies have figuratively and literally put the world at our fingertips. But, while the forces of integration have been so powerful, the forces of disintegration, on the other hand, have been no less compelling. Today we see unprecedented levels of violence and conflict in the world, divided as it is along lines of caste and class, tribe and race, language and culture, region and religion.¹ The last is the most counterintuitive (because education, democracy, and human progress are expected to decrease such tensions) and has the most far-reaching consequences. And, to be honest, a great many current misgivings in the world

today surround the religion of Islam. Let me address at least some of those issues with the intention of clarifying some misconceptions that confuse and divide us. I am particularly concerned about those stereotypes popular in the West (e.g., Islam is undemocratic, regressive, unjust, violent, and intolerant of other religions) that are considered to present insurmountable obstacles to securing a fair and durable peace in the Middle East, particularly in the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Is Islam (which literally means “submission to the will of God”) inherently hostile towards Judaism and Christianity? Let me first point out that it is most impressive that the phrase “Judeo-Christian tradition” has acquired such wide legitimacy and popular currency. If those two faiths could overcome the deep and bruising scriptural and historical divisions that they have to contend with, it is entirely possible that Islam—much closer to either of them than they are to each other—can also be incorporated as part of that same tradition. Islam situates itself deliberately and self-consciously as part of a continuum in the evolution of the monotheistic faiths, not as a rupture but a completion, not a challenge but a culmination of a process that may not necessarily have begun with Abraham, but was dramatically shaped by him. Hence we find the centrality of Abraham in the narrative of the three faiths, as a common ancestor to all of them, both spiritually and genealogically.² He has left us a rather messy will, but that is our problem, not his.

But, instead of giving you some high-sounding rhetoric about the essential unity and humanity of all people, let me indicate to you precisely what the Quran—the Holy Book of the Muslims—says about this, and related matters.³ The reason I am quoting from the Quran is that it is considered to be the supreme authority for Muslims, the text that informs and inspires their entire existence, and which contains the exact and inerrant words of God that no Muslim can violate or change. To avoid misunderstanding, it is better that I quote from it directly than that I provide paraphrases and assertions. I would like to point out that I am using the Quran for evidence and argument, as a scholar’s tool, not a preacher’s weapon.

In chapter 29 verse 46, the Quran explicitly states, “And dispute you not with the People of the Book [i.e., Jews and Christians] but say, ‘We believe in the revelation which has come down to us, and in that which came down to you, our God and your God is one, and it is to Him we bow in Islam.’” Islam accepts the prophethood of Moses and Jesus (and others mentioned in the Tanakh and New

Testament), accepts the stories contained therein (Adam and Eve, Noah and the ark, Jonah in the whale, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.), accepts almost all the miracles and stories attributed to Moses and Jesus (the parting of the waters, the burning bush, the miraculous birth of Jesus, the curing of lepers, the raising from the dead, and so on). As a matter of fact when Muslims take the name of the prophet Muhammad, they say parenthetically, as a mark of reverence to him, "May peace be upon the Prophet." And when they take the name of Moses and Jesus, they say exactly the same thing. There is no doubt that both of them are revered as God's chosen messengers. However, Islam contends that it is possible that the books revealed to them, in human hands, gradually evolved in ways that could have compromised their original purity. It should be pointed out that, contrary to popular opinion, the Quran *never* refers to believing Jews and Christians as "infidels." The Quran tells us, "We believe in Allah, in what has been revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was imparted to Moses, Jesus, and the other prophets from their Lord, making no distinction between any of them, and it is to Him we submit" (2:136 and 3:84). In a similar vein, and more explicitly, the Quran states, "Those who believe in the Quran, and in the Jewish scripture, and the Sabians and the Christians, who believe in God, and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear nor shall they ever grieve," a refrain that is repeated in exactly the same language in two different chapters in the Quran (2:62 and 5:72).

But isn't Islam opposed to the other religions? Well, the Quran reminds the faithful that God has sent messengers to all the nations (16:36, 10:47), that all prophets, some mentioned by name in the Quran and some who are not (4:164), are bearers of divine law, teachers and reformers, engaged in similar ministries, and those who believe in them "and make no distinctions between them, will receive their just rewards" (4:152). Their messages and good tidings were to ensure that "humanity may not have a plea [or argument] against God" (4:165). The Quran itself proclaims that "if [Allah] so willed He could have made us all one people" (5:51) but He did not, and made us into various nations and tribes, with these diversities themselves representing a sign from God (30:22). These differences extend beyond physical characteristics, and the Quran asserts that "to each among you we have established a law and an open way," not to engender discord and confrontation but "so that we may know each other and not despise each other" and compete in excelling each other in virtue and

ENVISIONING PEACE BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

William A. Brown

In 1979, I stumbled into United States–Israel relations as the number two man at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. I worked for a great ambassador, Sam Lewis. During this period after the Camp David Peace Accords, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai, the Israeli air force’s bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, and Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon all took place. In this context, I dealt with Ariel Sharon, then Israel’s agricultural minister and the head of the water authority. My first introduction to him was via Ezer Weizman. Ambassador Lewis sent me over on a courtesy call to the defense minister. As we talked, a shadow—a large shadow—moved by, and Ezer called out, “Arik, come on in here. I want you to meet Bill Brown.” And in came Ariel Sharon, with a great roll of blueprints and plans under his arm. These were the plans of the settlements that he was planning to build in the months ahead. And, since I had come to meet with him in that capacity, he gladly rolled the plans out for me and told me exactly what he was going to do. It was mind-boggling. In those days, there were about seven or eight thousand settlers on the West Bank. There are now a quarter million. He laid the plans all out very openly, no surprises.

In those days, we in the American Embassy in Israel were forbidden to be in the West Bank. The United States government did not want Embassy personnel to be seen on the West Bank. This was because our presence there might be misinterpreted as American

On January 5, 2006 (six months after this speech was given), Ariel Sharon suffered a massive stroke that left him in a coma and permanently hospitalized.

recognition of what was going on there, that is, the building of settlements. Nevertheless, I drove my own car up to a site called Ariel and I saw the bulldozers moving around. I said to myself, "Wow! This is mind-boggling! This is not being constructed for a small group of Israeli pioneers. This is being constructed for thousands." Today there is a city of many thousands up there, with swimming pools, an auditorium, a university, and other amenities. In those days, Ariel Sharon was the settlement king.

In the later 1970s and into the 1980s, when Sharon was in various government positions, when he was defense minister during the Israeli siege and bombardment of Beirut in 1982, he and I went head-to-head. After I was named U.S. ambassador in 1988 (as a Reagan appointee and a career officer), I dealt with him as minister of commerce and industry (1988–91), as minister of housing later on, and later as minister of development. We had many lively conversations. In fact, I would say that before he became prime minister, I probably had more dealings with Ariel Sharon than did any other American diplomat. Maybe that is an exaggeration, but I certainly had a lot to do with him. I always used to tell stories about Sharon, to the shock of my liberal Israeli and American friends, because they had a stereotype of him as an awesome, threatening, bulldozing individual. He is a subscribing member of the Israeli Symphony Orchestra and he plays the violin. This would shock them; they didn't want to hear that because it didn't fit with their image of Ariel Sharon. Once, shortly after he became defense minister, my wife, Helen, and I were invited down to his farm. We had a wonderful time riding around his farm. Sharon was already the greatest farmer in Israel. His melons, vegetables, and fruits were being exported to Europe, and he employed an Arab shepherd who managed a thousand head of sheep. I kept wondering all day long, "Why am I down here? What does he want?" Eventually I found out: he wanted a trip to Washington, DC, to meet the United States leaders as the Israeli defense minister. That's what he wanted.

The question for us in 2005, now that Ariel Sharon has been prime minister for several years, is: How capable is he of the transformation necessary to achieve a lasting peace with this Palestinian entity? It's a big question with no easy answer. I will tell you, Sharon has a remarkable spectrum of experience—in war, settlements, industry, commerce, and highways. This is an extraordinarily intelligent man with wide-ranging experience. Whether he can bring himself, with the disengagement from Gaza, to the next step,

leading to final status negotiations, is a major question. Is disengagement from Gaza an attempt solely at unilateral action for U.S. and European public relations benefits, perhaps some minor adjustments to the disengagement plan for “coordination”? Then, perhaps there will be withdrawal from four small, distant settlements in the northwest of the West Bank, thereby presenting a de facto situation? Is the plan to withdraw from Gaza, but then consolidate the major Israeli settlements near the green line, along with an expansion of greater Jerusalem? If that’s the case, we’re all in trouble over the long term.

We need significant American engagement. I’ve gone all over that map questioning what the Israelis and the Palestinian Arabs each want for themselves. I’m back to square one. Without heavy American involvement, a permanent solution probably won’t happen. This is not just the problem of Sharon: it is the problem of Sharon and the Palestinians, with the hard-line Israelis and the hard-line Palestinians, the extremists on both sides. There must be American involvement at the highest level in order to provide the moral, economic, and political push on both sides.

Abu Mazen, the head of the Palestinian Authority, has a long history with Sharon. I do not claim that Abu Mazen is a moderate; however, he has consistently called for a nonviolent, negotiated approach. He now presides over a situation in Gaza that is absolutely chaotic. I remember my own trips there ten years ago and how dangerous it was. The situation now is much more troublesome as a result of the latest intifada. Hamas, with its extremist position and its suicide attacks on Israel, has scored great victories. It enjoys the prospect of being elected to significant seats, perhaps even a majority, in the Palestinian Authority. Can we negotiate with them? This remains to be seen; but if there is going to be progress, we need United States involvement. Let’s hope that we see really serious American involvement.

I was dead set against the invasion of Iraq. I’m an old Marine. I’m of an age where my old Marine Corps colleagues are deluging me with e-mails that show how brave our Marines in Iraq are, and how well they’re performing, along with all of the U.S. military forces. I fully accept and appreciate their bravery and heroism, and our government’s good intentions. However, what bothered me from the beginning was the initial mistake of invading Iraq (now remember, I’m a veteran of Saddam Hussein’s scuds). In my view, Iraq was nothing but an oil-dominated, oil-motivated entity. It was a

APPENDIX A

The View from the White House

An Interview with George M. Elsey

Michael T. Benson

George M. Elsey served both presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman in various administrative capacities. A graduate of Princeton and Harvard and a trained historian, Mr. Elsey first came to Washington, DC, as a naval aide in the early 1940s. In the Truman White House, he was an assistant to Clark Clifford, the president's White House counsel, and later administrative assistant to the president. Given Mr. Clifford's dramatic and pivotal role in the American recognition of the State of Israel—including his famed May 12, 1948, showdown in the Oval Office that pitted the young Clifford against the venerable General George Marshall—he was asked for an on-camera interview to record his remembrances of the Palestine episode. However, due to ill health, Mr. Clifford was unable to grant such a request. In his stead, he recommended Mr. Elsey for his intimate knowledge of the details and events of 1947–48.

BENSON: When President Roosevelt died in April of 1945, what was the feeling in the White House?

ELSEY: Roosevelt's death and Truman's sudden ascendancy to the presidency shocked the public at large far more than it did people in Washington, DC. Senator Truman had established a superb record as chairman of the War Investigating Committee.¹ He was very well-known on Capitol Hill and throughout the executive branch.

Interview conducted December 4, 1997, in Washington, DC, by Michael T. Benson. Edited by Robert Kirschner for the Skirball Cultural Center Los Angeles, California.

While people said, “Who is this guy? He’s totally unknown,” that wasn’t at all true. He had been featured on the cover of magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* and credited widely for his performance. He was regarded as one of the two or three most important men in Washington. The public at large was startled, but those in business and in government were well acquainted with the man.

But Truman knew darn little about some of the most sensitive issues that he would soon have to face, because FDR had not taken him into his confidence. Some things, such as the Manhattan Project² he knew absolutely nothing about until a few hours after he became president....

BENSON: When Truman assumed office, he inherited Roosevelt’s Middle East policy. How did his position differ from FDR’s?

ELSEY: Truman began his first days and weeks in office by assuring everyone that he was going to follow President Roosevelt’s policies. This was a general statement to reassure the nation, and the world for that matter, that there were not going to be any sharp deviations. It was a way of avoiding some of the more difficult decisions that he was [unintelligible] them to one side: “We’ll take care of that after the war.” President Roosevelt had been specific in meeting with King Ibn Saud³ of Saudi Arabia upon returning from the Yalta Conference. He assured Ibn Saud that the United States would not do anything in the Middle East without full consultation with the Arabs. That was a commitment that Admiral Leahy⁴ made sure President Truman knew about almost immediately. But from all the pressures he was getting from all sides, Truman realized that he was going to have to make some tough decisions pretty soon, decisions that were bound to upset some people.

BENSON: Where did the Palestine issue fit on Truman’s list in the critical year of 1948?

ELSEY: The early months of 1948 were some of the toughest of Harry Truman’s presidential years. He was being hit by all sides, domestically and internationally. On the world scene, Palestine was very much on his mind. He was aware that the British Mandate would soon be ending—his Jewish friends in this country would never let him forget what their problems were. He had to keep in mind, though, that we were facing critical problems in Europe on the continent. In March, the Soviets took over Czechoslovakia to

the shock and the horror of the Western world. We were so weak, militarily speaking, all around the world that Truman went to Congress and asked for the reinstatement of selective service, a difficult matter and a horror to the country to think that so soon after we demobilized we were going to have to go back to possible mobilization again.... There were problems in Germany: the Soviets began the first Berlin blockade—this was a short one, it didn't last—but it was a precursor to the big blockade that began later that year. Finland was under great pressure. It signed, on its knees, a defense agreement with the Soviets which made many people fear that Finland might suffer the fate of Czechoslovakia. The Norwegians appealed to the United States and England; they too were under pressure from the Soviets....

A year earlier, Truman had gone to Congress and asked for aid to Greece and Turkey to combat the Communist threats there, but it was a long, long way from solving those problems. The Communists still had the upper hand in most of the Balkan Peninsula. Italy was teetering. Italian elections were coming up in April of '48, and it appeared that the Communist Party had a good chance of pulling off a victory—they didn't, it was a very, very narrow thing. Europe was not the only place that worried us. South Korea was under pressure. In China, Chiang's⁵ forces were beginning to fall apart, and just a few months later, he had to flee with his forces to Formosa [Taiwan].

Of great concern to the military was not only our weakness in manpower but the instability in the Middle East. Uppermost in the minds of the Army and Navy was whether we could maintain access to Middle Eastern oil. While President Truman was feeling very sympathetic to the necessity of having a homeland for the Jews, he had to bear in mind also what he was hearing constantly from throughout the executive branch: Don't do anything that will lose us our access to Arab oil. So, these were the things hitting Truman twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in those early months of '48.

Of course, I haven't said a word about the domestic situation. The [Republican-controlled] Eightieth Congress was riding high, passing bill after bill that [Democrat] Harry Truman had to veto and then see his vetoes overridden. His famous civil rights message of February '48⁶ was splintering the Democratic Party, leading to the establishment of the Dixiecrats. He was at sea on whom he would want to run with him as vice president in the forthcoming campaign, assuming he could get himself renominated. So here was a guy

APPENDIX B

My First Forty-five Minutes with Harry S. Truman

Abba Eban

I believe a nostalgia for leadership inspires very many people when the name of Harry S. Truman arises in their minds. My first encounter with President Truman lasted for forty-five minutes and it made a profound impression upon me. I learned more in those forty-five minutes about President Truman, about his style, about his temperament, about his manner of expression than in all the subsequent years.

It occurred to me that I was sitting only a few yards away from the most powerful leader in the history of mankind, more powerful than the Babylonian and Persian emperors, than Alexander the Great, than Julius Caesar and Napoleon, than the rulers of the British Empire at its zenith, than the Russian and German dictators of the twentieth century. So here was I, a very young ambassador all of thirty-two years old, of a still younger country.

There had never been a time when one nation held such predominance of military and economic power as did the United States on the morrow after the Second World War. America had attained that primacy during a conflict in which all of the other participants had suffered defeat or devastation or exhaustion, or all three of them together. After the war, the United States had a monopoly on

Drawn from remarks made by Ambassador Abba Eban at a symposium sponsored by the Harry S. Truman Library Institute at the Library of Congress, October 25, 1995. Abba Eban was Israel's first ambassador to the United Nations, and from 1950 to 1959 he served simultaneously as ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations. Ambassador Eban's first visit with President Truman was September 5, 1950, in the Blair House.

nuclear weapons; it created 50 percent of the world's product, and it dominated the voting systems in all the newly established international agencies. Of course, in the traditional centers of diplomacy in Paris and in London, the governments of France and Britain might secretly believe that their experience and wisdom transcended the naive perceptions of American statecraft. But politics is principally about power—it is not principally about wisdom or experience. And in terms of power, even Britain and France had to recognize that America had no real competition.

So, the man whom I faced at the other side of the table held the ultimate decision in the deployment of overwhelming power. And, as I looked at Harry Truman, I wondered if power had ever been expressed with such total absence of pretension or pomp. He was about five feet nine inches tall, square shoulders, a long sharply edged nose, steel rimmed spectacles. The White House was undergoing repairs. Blair House was the house in which he would spend most of the seven years of his incumbency. The air conditioner was much more well-meaning than effective, and the presidential countenance was bathed in perspiration. His jacket was missing and his increasingly soggy white shirt was framed by suspenders of a stark red hue. If you passed him on the streets of a small town, you would imagine that he was on his way to a little office in a moderately sized building. If there was such a thing as the imperial presidency, nobody had broken the news to Harry S. Truman of Independence, Missouri.

The occasion for my encounter was the presentation of credentials as ambassador of Israel to the United States. Obedient, therefore, to the chief of protocol in your State Department, I had dressed in formal clothing with the conventional silver gray tie, and bore with me the bulky documents wrapped in leather, containing the letters of credence which would assure President Truman that I really was who I purported to be—namely the ambassador extraordinary and envoy plenipotentiary of the State of Israel to the United States of America. I confess that I was prepared for a more elegant and formal encounter. I had heard from my colleague the Israeli ambassador to London of the way in which he was transported to the royal presence by six horses of identical pedigree and shape, driving across the streets of London and leaving those streets in a rather disagreeable condition. The credentials are rarely noted for literary grace or innovation.

It was evident the president was afraid of something. He feared that I might follow tradition and actually declaim the text. In order to preempt that danger, he snatched the documents from my hands and said, "Let's cut out the crap and have a real talk." He then cast a triumphant glare at the disconcerted chief of protocol, who had prepared me for a much more elegant ritual. It was already plain to me that President Truman regarded his own State Department as a hostile foreign power.

The president's first inquiry to me was a deferential question about the health of my president, President Chaim Weizmann. This illustrated his tendency to see international politics in strictly human terms. President Weizmann had captivated Truman with his tact, dignity, and precision while the president was totally alienated from the official Zionist leadership. Now this caused us, and especially me, delicate problems. Real power in Zionism lay no longer with the deposed elder statesman, but with Abba Hillel Silver, the reigning chief of American Zionism, and with David Ben-Gurion, who was the undoubted leader of Palestinian Jewry. But Truman regarded Silver with severe aversion, regarding him not inaccurately as a supporter of the Republican Party, which came second only to the Soviet Union as a primary target of President Truman's distrust. Truman was quite indifferent to Ben-Gurion's qualities and met him only once during his presidency. It was quite useless to tell him that there were new leaders in Zionism. Truman seemed to believe that if you were president of the United States, you could decide with whom you would or would not hold discourse.

Once, in March 1948, when there was a crucial need to prevent a defection of American support from the idea of Jewish statehood, when only direct access to the president could achieve this aim, the Zionists had to bring the aged Weizmann, in a querulous mood, thousands of miles across the ocean. Even then, it had not been easy to secure the interview because Truman was firm in his refusal to have contact with any Zionist leader, suspecting them of what he called "emotionalism." In a handwritten note to a White House aide, he had included Arabs and Latin Americans in this accusation, adding a prayer to God that "the children of Israel would get an Isaiah and the Christians a St. Paul while the Arabs would get some insight into the Sermon on the Mount." It was possible to get Weizmann into Blair House on that occasion only if we allowed Harry Truman's former business partner, Eddie Jacobson, to persuade Truman that Weizmann corresponded in Jewish history to President Andrew

APPENDIX C

The Truman Administration and U.S. Recognition of Israel—A Chronology

Raymond H. Geselbracht

1945

August 24: The report of the Intergovernment Committee on Refugees, called the Harrison Report, is presented to President Truman. The report is very critical of the Allied forces' treatment of refugees, particularly Jewish refugees, in Germany.

August 31: President Truman writes to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, citing the Harrison Report and urging Attlee to allow a reasonable number of Europe's Jews to emigrate to Palestine.

October 22: Senators Robert Wagner of New York and Robert Taft of Ohio introduce a resolution expressing support for a Jewish state in Palestine.

November 13: At a press conference, President Truman expresses opposition to the Taft-Wagner resolution. He says he wants to wait and consider the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.

1946

April 20: The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry submits its report, which recommends that Britain immediately authorize the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine.

May 8: President Truman writes to Prime Minister Attlee, citing the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, and

expressing the hope that Britain would begin lifting the barriers to Jewish immigration to Palestine.

June 21: A Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee warns that if the United States uses armed force to support the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, the Soviet Union might be able to increase its power and influence in the Middle East, and United States access to Middle East oil could be jeopardized.

September 24: Counsel to the President Clark Clifford writes to the president to warn that the Soviet Union wishes to achieve complete economic, military, and political domination in the Middle East. Toward this end, Clifford argues, they will encourage the emigration of Jews from Europe into Palestine and at the same time denounce British and American policies toward Palestine and inflame the Arabs against these policies.

October 4: On the eve of Yom Kippur, President Truman issues a statement indicating United States support for the creation of a “viable Jewish state.”

October 23: Loy Henderson, director of the State Department’s Near East Agency, warns that the immigration of Jewish communists into Palestine will increase Soviet influence there.

October 28: President Truman writes to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, informing the king that he believes “that a national home for the Jewish people should be established in Palestine.”

1947

1947–48: The White House receives 48,600 telegrams, 790,575 cards, and 81,200 other pieces of mail on the subject of Palestine.

April 2: The British government submits to the General Assembly of the United Nations an account of its administration of Palestine under the League of Nations mandate, and asks the General Assembly to make recommendations regarding the future government of Palestine.

May 13: The United Nations General Assembly appoints an eleven-member Special Committee on Palestine to study the Palestine problem and report by September 1947.

August 31: The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine issues its report, which recommends unanimously (all eleven member states voting in favor) that Great Britain terminate its mandate for Palestine and grant it independence at the earliest possible date, and also recommends by majority vote (seven of the member nations voting in favor) that Palestine be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states.

September 17: Secretary of State George Marshall, in an address to the United Nations, indicates that the United States is reluctant to endorse the partition of Palestine.

September 22: Loy Henderson, director of the State Department's Near East Agency, addresses a memorandum to Secretary of State George Marshall in which he argues against United States advocacy of the United Nations proposal to partition Palestine.

October 10: The Joint Chiefs of Staff argue, in a memorandum entitled "The Problem of Palestine" that the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states would enable the Soviet Union to replace the United States and Great Britain in the region and would endanger United States access to Middle East oil.

October 11: Herschel Johnson, United States deputy representative on the United Nations Security Council, announces the United States' support for the partition plan of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.

October 17: President Truman writes to Senator Claude Pepper, "I received about 35,000 pieces of mail and propaganda from the Jews in this country while this matter [the issue of the partition of Palestine, which was being considered by the UN Special Committee on Palestine from May 13 to August 31, 1947] was pending. I put it all in a pile and struck a match to it—I never looked at a single one of the letters because I felt the United Nations Committee [UN Special Committee on Palestine] was acting in a judicial capacity and should not be interfered with."

ca. November: A subcommittee of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine establishes a timetable for British withdrawal from Palestine.

November 24: Secretary of State George Marshall writes to Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett to inform him that British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin had told him that British intelligence

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VOLUME 3

ISRAEL AND THE LEGACY OF HARRY S. TRUMAN

When he assumed the presidency in April 1945, Harry S. Truman inherited various international sources of turmoil, including the ambiguity of American policy toward political Zionism. Three years later, President Truman recognized the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, just 11 minutes after the announcement of its existence. These essays explore the methods Truman used to tackle this dilemma—one he is said to have considered more troublesome than almost any other issue plaguing the United States at the time. After 60 years of continuing conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, the legacy of Truman's struggle is reflected in the distinct voices of this collection's contributors, including scholars, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, Israel's representative to the United Nations, and a White House aide during Truman's presidency.

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