PRESIDENT WILSON AND PALESTINE

A Study in American-Middle East Relations 1914-1920

by

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CHAPTER I

AMERICAN-PALESTINE RELATIONS TO 1917

Early Twentieth Century Relations with Palestine and the Ottoman Empire

In the opening years of the twentieth century, the United States was content to pursue a course of diplomatic noninvolvement in the Middle East. America had emerged since the war with Spain in 1898 as one of the five or six leading powers in the world, eager to expand her economic control in Latin America, to protect her profits from open trading rights in the Far East, and to maintain her favorable balance of trade with Europe. The Middle East, however, had come only peripherally within the sphere of American business interests; as a result, diplomatic involvement had been minimal. Of all the area under Ottoman control, only Turkey herself was the major producer for American markets, and even she occupied but 1% of the total United States import trade after the turn of the century, while purchasing less than .05% of American exports.[1]

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[1] De Novo, John A., American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 38.

Other American interests were connected with the various schools, hospitals, colleges, and missions which were scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire, and with those American citizens who, for one reason or another, wished to settle on Turkish domains. Some friction had arisen between the two governments during the last part of the nineteenth century over expatriation laws and the right of foreigners to own land, and while a number of treaties were negotiated to remove the difficulties there was little resultant success. Turkish laws continued to pose a hindrance to American business and philanthropy up to the break in relations between the two countries in 1917.

One issue of contention was the colony of Jews in Jerusalem who had gained American citizenship by naturalization. The Porte declared that it did not recognize such naturalizations if the subjects returned to the Ottoman Empire, and that these members of the Jerusalem colony therefore came under Turkish law without the protection of capitulatory treaties. Decisive consular action in 1884 brought about a Turkish retreat, but the subject was revived from year to year until the outbreak of war in 1914.[2]

The particular problems of the American-natur-

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[2]Manuel, Frank E., The Realities of American-Palestine Relations (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1949), p. 90.

alized Jews in Palestine, however, demanded no major involvement of the United States Government. Consuls were instructed to oversee the welfare of the American community, and except for the issue of expatriation and property rights, American diplomatic representatives were given a considerable degree of autonomy. It was as if the State Department could not be bothered with involvement in the area. With one exception, the American Government undertook no plans to pursue an active policy in the Middle East, and remained content to exercise a laissez-faire diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire.

The single exception was the Chester Project of 1908 to which, for a period of three years, the United States actively committed itself in pursuit of the policy of "Dollar Diplomacy" under President Taft. The project involved the securing of railroad concessions in Turkey, but foundered when no agreement was reached between the speculators and the Turks. Several times the Department of State intervened in the issue to carry on negotiations with the Young Turk regime, but each time little material progress was made. By the end of 1911, after having had its fingers badly burned in the affair, the Department withdrew its support from the speculators and returned to its traditional policy of noninvolvement.

World War I: First Stirrings of Interest

By 1919 the Middle East and the Ottoman domains were areas virtually ignored by American diplomacy. The region was considered to be outside the realm of the nation's vital interests and far removed from the center of activity and importance. The United States avoided all involvement with the Eastern Question almost as a matter of course; and when war came to Europe in August of 1914 and the problem of Turkish neutrality arose, the State Department was only moved to instruct its representative in Constantinople, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, not to make any suggestions to the Porte in regard to Turkey's entrance into the war unless his advice were to be specifically requested. In that case the Ambassador was to indicate that the United States favored Turkish neutrality.[3]

Such a response was entirely in consonance with President Wilson's view of the war. Only the week before, on August 18, he had issued his appeal to the nation, calling for neutrality in the European crisis. "My thought is of America," he declared; "I am speaking, I feel sure, the earnest wish....that this great country.... should show herself in this time of peculiar trial a

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[3] Evans, Laurence, The United States and the Partition of Turkey, 1914-1924 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 26.

Nation fit beyond others to exhibit the fine poise of undisturbed judgement, the dignity of self-control, the efficiency of dispassionate action...."[4]

Between July and August, 1914, there was no essential change in American policy toward Turkey, although the reasons for maintaining the same stance had altered drastically. Before August, noninvolvement was the result of indifference; after the outbreak of war it was the result of a strict adherence by the United States to the doctrine of neutrality. It was a policy which the nation was to pursue, with minor exceptions, for almost three years, until she, herself, had become an active belligerent in the European war.

Only one attempt at engagement with the problem of the Ottoman Empire and the war was made during this period. On June 21, 1917, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, then in Washington, departed for Mediterranean waters with the intention of negotiating a separate peace with Turkey, thereby removing her from the conflict. Returned to the United States since the American declaration of war, Morgenthau had approached Secretary of State Robert Lansing in May and received through him President Wilson's approval for such a mission. With instructions to keep his true purpose secret, Morgenthau left under the cover

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[4]Scott, James Brown (ed.), President Wilson's Foreign Policy: Messages, Addresses, and Papers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 68.

story of a mercy mission intent on preventing Jewish massacres in Palestine, and with Felix Frankfurter and Lewin-Epstein - both Zionists - the entourage arrived at Cadiz on July 4.

Both the French and British had meanwhile been notified of the mission's purpose and had arranged to meet Morgenthau at Gibraltar. The former, essentially in accord with the idea, sent a Colonel Weyl; the latter, intent on diverting the Americans, sent Chaim Weizmann - then leader of the Zionist movement in England - with orders to "talk to Mr. Morgenthau, and keep on talking till (he) had talked him out of this mission."[6] At the time the British were in contact with several Young Turk leaders and had no desire to see an American bid weaken their position and complicate the negotiations. When a request came to the Foreign Office from Lansing for an envoy to meet with Morgenthau, it seemed to the British as if the solution had fallen very easily into their hands.

Weizmann spent two days in Gibraltar, and in that time managed to convince Morgenthau that his visit was both unnecessary and undesirable. The Zionist leader demonstrated that the mission upon which the American envoy had been sent was futile; and Morgenthau

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[6]Weizmann, Chaim, Trial and Error (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 196.

admitted to Weizmann that no useful discussions could be undertaken with the turks until another military defeat had been inflicted on them.[7] The Ambassador cancelled his plans to travel further east and proceeded instead to Paris, where a short and bitter series of cables was exchanged with a confused State Department in explanation of the aborted mission.[8]

In retrospect, it appears that Morgenthau's design was ill-fated from the start. Wilson appears to have given no specific instructions for the mission, and no points over which Americans and Turks might bargain had been discussed; nor does it seem that the Ambassador himself had any more than a vague idea of what might be accomplished when he arrived. It was a most indefinite portfolio and hardly a basis for negotiation. In addition, the secrecy of the mission had been breached at a relatively early stage. President Wilson's aides knew of its intent - Louis Brandeis, Wilson's advisor on Zionism and a personal friend, had transmitted the fact of its coming departure to Weizmann long before it left the United States. The British knew,

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[7]Stein, Leonard, The Balfour Declaration (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1961), p. 357.

[8]See Yale, William, "Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's Special Mission of 1917," World Politics, I,3(April, 1949), pp. 308-320; Weizmann, Chaim, op. cit., Chapter XVII; Stein, Leonard, op. cit., pp. 352-360. The latter is the best documented.

as did the French; and the press had been notified. It was inevitable that the Turks should realize what was in the wind. As a final irony, Morgenthau himself had terminated the mission by allowing himself to be dissuaded by Weizmann. Whereas the idea for its creation had originally been his, he had no instructions to reverse his position after it had been given Wilson's assent. His desertion was the final blow.

During the early war period, American policy toward Palestine was principally concerned with safeguarding the interests of the United States and those belligerent countries which had placed their interests in American hands, while at the same time steering clear of conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Almost immediately a minor crisis arose over the Turkish abolition of the capitulatory treaties which had, for over four and a half centuries, extended protection to foreign communities within the Empire.[9] Under the new order all foreigners resident on Turkish soil came under Turkish law and became subject to trial and punishment without recourse to their own governments. In spite of a sharp protest from Ambassador Morgenthau, the Turks remained intractable on this issue. Washington, in turn, refused to recognize the unilateral move but did not maintain pressure on

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[9]Van Dyck, Edward A., Report upon the Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire since the Year 1150 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), p. 15.

Constantinople to change her stance.

Turkey's abrogation of the Capitulations in October of 1914 opened the path for a campaign of persecution against the Jewish minority in Palestine. In December, six hundred Russian Jews were expelled from Jaffa and more deportations seemed imminent. In January the American Government despatched the U.S.S. Tennessee to the scene to carry some six thousand refugees to Alexandria, but the crisis continued for a further two months until the Turkish Government agreed to settle the issue peacefully.

From the end of 1914 until the spring of 1917, a series of events kept the issue of Palestine Jewry under the eye of the State Department. 1915 and 1916 were years of particular activity: Turkish expulsions had been halted but the Palestine settlements were now starving; the fuel for irrigation pumps had been exhausted and the colonies were in danger of economic disaster; the Zionist Organization was unable to transfer funds to the settlers; disease had broken out in the cities; Turkish soldiers had requisitioned food for their own needs and left the settlements in Jerusalem and Jaffa in an even more destitute state.

All problems of this sort pertaining to the Jewish community in Palestine were dealt with in turn by the Wilson administration, some with less success

than others. Yet as long as a threat to the Jewish community still remained, it became a problem which American Zionists placed directly in the hands of the President, the State Department, or Ambassador Morgenthau until action had been taken.

The concern which marked the United States Government's relations with Palestine in this period did not, however, overshadow primary American interest in maintaining neutrality in the war as a whole. Because of this diplomatic position, forceful means could not be used to protect the Palestinian Jews, and all matters had to be cleared through the normal channels of Turkish diplomacy. In spite of the publicity which it received in the United States, Jewish suffering could not assume more importance than the Ottoman Empire, of which Palestine was but a small part. American policy toward the area therefore remained within the framework of American-Turkish relations.

The period of direct involvement with Palestine ended on April 20, 1917, when Turkey broke relations with the United States two weeks after the latter had entered the war against Germany. No declaration of war was made by the Turks, nor did the United States issue one of its own against Turkey. From April, 1917, until the termination of hostilities in Europe the following year, relations between the two countries remained

severed but peaceful. The protection of the Jewish colonies in Palestine, meanwhile, passed out of American hands and into those of the British.

Great Britain, the Balfour Declaration, and the United States

The earliest expression of British interest in the establishment of a Jewish homeland during the war years can be dated to November of 1914 when, shortly after the entrance of Turkey into the conflict, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, remarked on the "strong sentimental attraction" which the idea had for him.[10] Zionists had begun to recognize soon after the outbreak of war that if their hopes in Palestine were to be realized British cooperation would be necessary. Accordingly, they began to prepare the ground which they hoped would prove fertile for a declaration of sympathy for their nationalist aims.

Throughout 1915 and 1916, Chaim Weizmann and British Zionists undertook an active policy of winning Government leaders to their side, generally keeping the issue before the eyes of British policy-makers, and pressing the argument for a homeland in Palestine whenever they could. At first there was little response.

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[10] Jeffries, J.M.N., Palestine: the Reality (London: Longmans Press, 1939), p. 93.

The Government was reluctant to undertake commitments to Zionism while a solution to the problem of Turkey's post-war status was still highly problematical, and although a number of ministers had indicated an undercurrent of interest there was as yet little apparent enthusiasm.

By the late spring of 1916, the situation was somewhat altered. The Sykes-Picot Agreement[11] had been signed at St. Petersburg in May, and the British Government then felt that it could exercise some claim to Palestine when the war should be concluded. Throughout the latter part of 1916 the Government became increasingly disposed toward the Zionist position until, in October, it was agreed that official negotiations should be undertaken between the two parties with the purpose of securing Palestine for the Jews.

Britain's motives were not entirely altruistic. The idea of setting up a pro-British buffer state directly east of the Suez Canal had definite strategic value, and the possibility of enhancing Britain's position in the war by an appeal to European Jewry

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[11]Promulgated on May 16, 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was a tripartite treaty, signed by Great Britain, France and Russia, stipulating the disposition of Ottoman lands when the war should be finished. Concluded as a secret treaty, its secrecy was nevertheless short-lived; soon after the November Revolution, the Bolshevik Government published the document to demonstrate the falsity of Allied diplomacy and to discredit Great Britain and France in particular.

held considerable merit in the mind of the Cabinet. The advantage, however, of gaining American support by espousing a Zionist cause was one of the most attractive rewards held forth by such a policy.

Earlier that year Sir Mark Sykes, Director for Near Eastern Affairs in the British War Cabinet, had attempted to influence American Jewish opinion in favor of the Allied position, but with little success. At the time he had been working through moderate British Jews who were unable to mobilize their American co-religionists to any firm anti-German stand, but in October he encountered a naturalized Armenian, a Mr. James Malcolm, who analyzed his problem:

> "You are going the wrong way about it,"he said, "the well-to-do English Jews you meet and the Jewish clergy are not the real leaders of the Jewish people," Political Zionism, or national Zionism, as Mr. Malcolm called it, was the key to influence over the Jewish body in the United States, and to more even than that. Mr. Malcolm said that there was a way to make American Jews thoroughly pro-Ally, and that he knew a man in America who was probably the most intimate friend of President Wilson. Through that man, if through anybody, the President's mind could be turned towards active participation in the war on the side of the Allies. (The man in question was Judge Louis Brandeis, of the United States Supreme Court.)
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> "You can win the sympathy of Jews everywhere," added Mr. Malcolm, "in one way only, and that way is by offering to try and secure Palestine for them."[12]

Sir Mark Sykes met shortly afterward with Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolov and agreed to send, through

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[12]Jeffries, op. cit., p. 135.

the Foreign Office and in cipher, a secret message to Justice Brandeis indicating that Britain would be willing to gain Palestine for the Jews in exchange for Jewish sympathy and for support in the United States. It was hoped that American feeling could be turned dramatically toward the Allied cause.[13]

An active correspondence developed between Weizmann and Brandeis on the subject of Zionism. Both men exchanged reports on the success of their efforts to mobilize their respective governments to the Zionist cause. At this point Weizmann had clearly achieved greater progress, and the initial negotiations with Mark Sykes had strengthened the Zionist position in England to a considerable degree. As Mrs. Blanche Dugdale, Lord Balfour's biographer, notes: "By the end of April (1917), the Foreign Office recognized, with some slight dismay, that the British Government was virtually committed."[14]

It was in the same month of April that Lord Balfour, Foreign Secretary in the Lloyd Government since the end of 1916, traveled to the United States to confer with President Wilson on the progress of the war.

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[13] Ibid., p. 136.

[14] Dugdale, Blanche E.C., Arthur James Balfour (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1936), II, 232.

America had formally entered the conflict on April 6, and the questions which needed to be answered concerned the most effective disposition of American forces and the terms of peace to be arrived at when the war was over.

In spite of the fact that Balfour also met with Brandeis and discussed the subject of Palestine with him, there is no record that it was brought bu between the Foreign Secretary and the President.[15] Balfour returned to England with the understanding that American Zionists preferred to see Palestine under British control, and resumed negotiations with Weizmann on the proposed Zionist program.

On September 14, 1917, Wilson was notified by Colonel Edward House, a personal friend of the President and his special advisor on international affairs, that Lord Robert Cecil had asked to "ascertain unofficially if the President favored a declaration of sympathy with the Zionist movement."[16] The President, after noting House's reserve on the matter, requested his advisor to inform the British that he did not feel the time was ripe for any statement - except, perhaps, one of sympathy without commitment.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Evans, op. cit., p. 45.

President Wilson's agreement to such a declaration was far more important to the British than their rather casual feeler implied. Negotiations had reached their final stages in London, and the Turks seemed about to complicate matters by launching a Zionist program of their own.[17] Also, well-intentioned efforts by the Government had considerably embarrassed British Zionists. During the summer, a War Office proposal for a Jewish Legion with an identity separate from the British Army had met with a storm of disapproval from non-Zionists and Zionists alike, and the controversy seemed about to split Zionist ranks and unseat Weizmann from his position of leadership before the plan was dropped. Assimilationist Jews formed the vanguard of an anti-Weizmann vendetta, and raised objections strong enough to imperil the entire Zionist platform.

A somewhat frantic cable dialogue took place between Weizmann and Brandeis on the subject of the President's assent, during which Brandeis suggested that the

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[17] The German Foreign Office had, in the summer of 1917, attempted to ease Turkish suspicions of Zionism when Djemal Pasha visited Berlin. The Young Turk leader indicated that there could be no compromise on the matter: Jews could settle anywhere in the Ottoman Empire they pleased, but not in Palestine. Djemal did indicate, however, that he might conceivably change his mind. This remark, reported indirectly to the British, may have started speculation as to a Turkish-Zionist rapprochement. See Stein, op. cit., pp. 536-7.

French and Italians be asked to inquire about Wilson's position. While the advice was not taken, a comment was still not forthcoming from the latter.

Finally, on October 13, Wilson wrote to House: "I find in my pocket the memorandum you gave me on the Zionist movement. I am afraid I did not say to you that I concurred in the formula suggested by the other side. I do and would be obliged if you would let them know it."[18] Three weeks later, on November 2, 1917, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration.

Fifty years later it appears ironic that Wilson's offhand reply, which in no sense could be considered as an act of planned diplomacy, was to have been of such consequence for Zionism. As Weizmann later noted: "(Wilson's support) was one of the most important individual factors in breaking the deadlock created by the British anti-Zionists, and in deciding the British Government to issue its declaration."[19]

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[18] Evans, op. cit., p. 46.

[19] Weizmann, op. cit., p. 208.

CHAPTER II

1917 TO 1919: THE INVOLVEMENT DEEPENS

The Aftermath of the Balfour Declaration

Even though the Balfour Declaration was issued far too late to encourage America to enter the war against Germany, its effect in the United States was immediate and widespread. American Zionists swiftly demonstrated their enthusiasm for the proclamation, and their joy at having achieved such success by its creation. Mass celebrations were organized to show Zionist solidarity and strength and hundreds of telegrams were sent across the Atlantic in a general outpouring of gratitude to Great Britain. The unique position of Brandeis as President Wilson's confidant naturally encouraged Zionists to indicate that they had the favor of the Government and the attention of the President and this, combined with the rumor that the President had given his endorsement to the Declaration, caused numerous pro-American demonstrations in European cities, which further reinforced the Zionist position within the United States.[20]

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[20]Manuel, op. cit., p. 171.

Much of such sentiment was premature. Wilson had not endorsed the Balfour Declaration, nor did he seem readily inclined to. Recognizing this, Louis Brandeis and other Zionist leaders, with the encouragement of Chaim Weizmann, began to campaign for a proclamation of active support from the President. Some five weeks after the issuance of the Declaration, on December 13, 1917, Secretary Lansing wrote Wilson, noting that considerable pressure was being generated by the Zionists to have the American Government issue a declaration of its own on the disposition of Palestine. Lansing then recommended a cautious approach to the issue on the basis that: (1) the United States should preserve its neutrality with Turkey; (2) the Jews were not united in their belief in Zionism; and (3) recognition of Zionist claims would anger many Christians who credited the Jews with the death of Christ. The Secretary's suggestion was that the President decline to announce adherence to such a policy. The following day, Wilson replied that he agreed with Lansing, but very unwillingly; and he went on to say that "he had an impression that we had assented to the British declaration regarding returning Palestine to the Jews."[21]

Lansing had for the time being kept the President

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[21] Ibid., p. 173.

from publicly approving a Jewish National Home, and the Secretary's stand became the State Department's position for the rest of the war.

It was not long before the American Government's immobility began to prove a depressant to the entire Zionist movement. In the spring of 1918, Chaim Weizmann organized a commission to Palestine in an attempt to allay the fears of Arabs who had become restive over the Declaration. Justice Brandeis was originally considered as a participant in the commission, but had to decline membership because of his Government's position. It was a blow to Weizmann, who had counted on Brandeis to arrange for American representation. On January 28, 1918, he cabled the American Zionist leader: "Our work this critical time rendered extremely difficult through lack of information from you. Your apparently changed attitude quite inexplicable...."[22] Weizmann was later informed by Brandeis of the realities of this particular situation: that such a commission was semi-official in context and extent; that for an advisor to the President to be a member was to implicate the United States Government; and that this would seriously jeopardize American neutrality toward Turkey.

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[22]Stein, op. cit., p. 581.

It was one instance where American Zionists had run afoul of their own design. Justice Brandeis had proved an invaluable aid to them in being a close friend of Wilson; in his position he had been able to advance Zionist arguments more effectively than any other American. Yet, when a policy decision had been reached, he was bound to conform to the President's stand on the issue. It was, in any case, a small price to pay for the rewards already gained.

Secretary Lansing's recommendations to Wilson concerning the Weizmann commission to Palestine were sent at the end of February, 1918. At the same time he argued against the despatch of an American Zionist medical unit to the Middle East, but on this subject he was overruled. The President could see no political connection between such a group and American involvement in the partition of Turkey, and no objection was raised to its departure in July.

For almost ten months, from the date of the Balfour Declaration through the summer of 1918, no official pronouncement was forthcoming from the President on the Zionist issue, nor did it seem that any sympathetic statement was imminent. Finally, on August 27, Rabbi Stephen Wise was given an interview with Wilson. The occasion was prompted by a rumor of growing anti-Zionist

agitation within American Jewish ranks, and Wise took the opportunity to plead the Zionist case once again. He first attempted to allay the President's fears that the United States would be compromised by the issuance of a declaration similar to Balfour's; he then asked for a note of sympathy in time for the coming Jewish New Year, then only four days away.

This time Wilson took action. On August 31 he wrote to Rabbi Wise:

> I have watched with deep and sincere interest the reconstructive work which the Weizmann Commission has done in Palestine at the instance of the British Government, and I welcome an opportunity to express the satisfaction I have felt at the progress of the Zionist Movement in the United States and in the Allied countries since the declaration by Mr. Balfour on behalf of the British Government....[23]

Wilson's letter, while informal, was public. The question which it immediately raised was whether it was to be understood as a statement of policy or simply a personal endorsement and nothing more. On one hand, Zionists proclaimed that the President had finally come out in favor of a Jewish National Home, and Justice Brandeis went so far as to state that opposition to Zionism could henceforth be considered disloyalty to the United States.[24] On the other, the State Department

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[23] Manuel, op cit., p. 176.

[24] Ibid., p. 178.

refused to accept Wilson's note as an executive order and continued to regard it only as an expression of personal opinion. It should not be understood, they felt, that every Presidential statement automatically constituted a declaration of policy.

The foreign press considered Wilson's remarks to have somewhat more significance. "This letter," wrote the Washington correspondent of The Times,

> ....is taken as tantamount to a recognition by the United States of an American interest in the Zionist venture, such as France and Italy as well as Great Britain have already given. If this interpretation is correct it marks a considerable forward step in American policy regarding the peace settlement in general and the Near East in particular.[25]

In sending his August letter to Rabbi Wise, Wilson seems to have broken Lansing's bonds of caution which theretofore had restrained him from extending himself on the Zionist issue. In January, 1919, the President met with Weizmann and assured him that in the coming Peace Conference the Zionists could count on his personal support, and not long afterward he received a group from the American Jewish Congress and allowed himself to be quoted as favoring an even more pro-Zionist stance than Lord Balfour. As it appeared in the press,

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[25] The Times (London), September 7, 1918, p. 5.

Wilson's statement was indeed extreme:

> I am persuaded that the Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.[26]

Secretary Lansing, then in Paris, wrote to Wilson in April asking if the statement were authentic and, should it not be, if he could deny it immediately. It was of considerable importance to the American Peace Commissioners to know exactly what had been said and what the President's position now was. Wilson answered Lansing:

> Of course I did not use any of the words quoted in the neclosed and they do not indeed purport to be my words. But I did in substance say what is quoted, though the expression "foundation of a Jewish Commonwealth" goes a little farther than my idea at the time. All that I meant was to corroborate our expressed acquiescence in the position of the British Government with regard to the future of Palestine.[27]

It was hardly a direct reply to the query, nor was it able to still the questions already raised about Presidential sentiment and national policy. The only matter which Wilson had made clear was that he, personally, was in favor of the Balfour Declaration. There is no indication, however, that he was willing to reinforce this position, no record of how far he was prepared to go to defend his stance, no rebuttal to Lansing's earlier

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[26]Stein, op. cit., p. 596.

[27]Evans, op. cit., p. 130.

arguments about the compromise of American interests over Zionist ones - except that he was forced to agree on the points raised by the Secretary, but "very unwillingly". Finally, no specific instructions concerning the Zionist issue were sent to the State Department, nor were the Commissioners to the Paris Peace Conference briefed on the matter. It was as if the President, now that he had assented to the Declaration, had been overtaken by a malaise of indecision which even he was unable to resolve.

One other matter tangent to America's position on Palestine was the rapid growth of anti-Zionist feeling among American Jewry after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. Antagonism had always existed between assimilationist Jews and Jewish nationalists, and as the war in Europe progressed an increasingly bitter dialogue had emerged between the American Jewish Committee, led by Louis Marshall, and the Federation of American Zionists - renamed in 1918 as the Zionist Organization of America - under Justice Brandeis.

The Balfour Declaration served to polarize the issue more strongly than it ever had been in the past. Anti-Zionist Jews began to express their fears of Jewish nationalism more openly, and long discussions of the assimilationist viewpoint began to appear in the press.

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, never enthusiastic about Zionism and, perhaps, still smarting from his encounter with Weizmann at Gibraltar earlier in the year, wrote to The New York Times to explain his position. After first expressing his happiness at the liberation of Palestine, he went on to sound a note of warning to his co-religionists:

> The fact that has vital significance to me, and, I believe, to a majority of those of my faith in America, is that we are 100 per cent Americans, and wish to remain so....[28]

"We have now come to a great crisis in the history of the world," he continued:

> Let me ask my co-religionists, face to face and heart to heart, how many of you would be willing to forswear the great duty we have here and the great task which history gives us of being true, real, unalloyed American citizens.... in order to devote your entire lives to the upbuilding of....Palestine?[29]

Throughout the war, the argument of dual allegiance had been the most effective weapon which the anti-Zionists possessed, and they now continued to use it in an attempt to halt the growing influence of the Federation of American Zionists and its associated groups. Their effect was limited somewhat by the fact that they had few advocates in the President's confidence -

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[28] The New York Times, December 12, 1918, p. 14.

[29] Ibid.

Morgenthau being almost the only exception - but the restraint placed upon Wilson by Lansing and Colonel House until the latter part of 1918 more than made up for the weight of Brandeis' influence at the other extreme.

Yet in all, it cannot be said that American anti-Zionist Jews contributed greatly to the formulation or alteration of America's Middle East policy. They did not have the same organization at that of the Zionist group, nor were they inclined to be as energetic. There was little support from Europe, as that which the Federation enjoyed and, finally, it became manifestly clear that the President did not feel their cause to be of sufficient importance for him to maintain non-recognition of the Balfour Declaration. Assimilationism had been overtaken by the new tide of nationalism; it would never again dominate the outlook of American Jewry.

An American Mandate for Palestine

Almost all of the discussions in the United States leading up to President Wilson's concurrence in the Balfour Declaration had been carried out between Justice Brandeis, Colonel House and the President. The State Department had not been consulted, nor had Secretary Lansing been a party to the talks. This divided executive policy cleared the Department of any responsibility

in the matter; and it could therefore maintain that the United States had never formally approved the Declaration before its issue.[30]

This was a fine point, but an important one. Without an official public endorsement of the document the United States was not committed to active support of its provisions. Wilson's concurrence meant simply that the Government would not object to British policy on the matter. The President may well have had little idea as to what principles he was concurring in - between Lord Cecil's inquiry of September 14th and mid-October the content of the proposed message had been altered a number of times - but this was unimportant in terms of American policy. The significant point was that the United States remained uncommitted to British Palestinian policy and had retained its independence of action in regard to the question of the post-war disposition of the Ottoman Empire.

By the summer of 1917, American policy toward a Turkish settlement was as yet unformulated. During Lord Balfour's visit to Washington in April and May, it had been agreed between Colonel House and the President that the problem of peace terms would be left undiscussed.

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[30] Manuel, op. cit., p. 167.

It was feared that if this somewhat delicate matter were considered seriously, Wilson would have to give Balfour his approval or disapproval of the secret treaties[31], of which he was substantially aware, thus committing himself to them in the former case or causing irritation in the latter.[32] The question of the disposition of Turkey was raised informally between the President and Lord Balfour on April 30, at which time the Foreign Secretary mentioned the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, but Wilson took no definite stand on the issue.

The reason for the President's reserve was more closely connected with retaining America's freedom of action after the war than with any uneasiness about partitioning the Ottoman Empire. Wilson and his advisors recognized very early in the war that Turkey would be divested of most of her possessions in a final settlement.

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[31]The "secret treaties" noted above and referred to hereinafter were: the Constantinople Agreement (March 18, 1915), the Secret Treaty of London (April 26, 1915), the Anglo-Franco-Russian Agreement (March-April, 1916), the Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 16, 1916), and the St. Jean de Maurienne Agreement (April 17, 1917). All were attempts to evolve a system by which Turkey might be divided after the war to the mutual satisfaction of the Allies. See Cumming, Henry H., Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-War Near East, (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), Ch. III.

[32]Evans, op. cit., p. 54.

This view was not publicly expressed, however, nor were efforts made toward the realization of this end.

Until 1917, the United States was content to see Turkey's dismemberment carried out by England, France and Russia. On January 22 of that year, however, a statement publicly advocating this course was almost included in Wilson's "peace without victory" speech delivered to the Senate.[33] The final version of the address did not include mention of Turkey specifically, but it should be noted that by this time the United States had far fewer scruples about dividing up Ottoman domains.

This willingness of America to involve herself in those questions tangent to the war's outcome was undoubtedly noted in Great Britain with a certain amount of relief. Now that the United States had become interested in a post-war settlement, might it not be possible to entice her into a share of the spoils? If it could be done the United States would not be able to assume an anti-imperialist stand, she would take part of the burden of colonial rule off Great Britain, and she might prove to be a satisfactory counterbalance in the Middle East to France, whose ambitions British leaders were suspicious of in any case.

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[33] Ibid., p. 31.

Before negotiations for the Balfour Declaration had begun in earnest in 1916, Lord Balfour himself had intimated to Weizmann in an informal conversation that he would prefer American sponsorship of the Jews in Palestine. If such a course were taken, Great Britain could not be suspected of using Zionism to further her own imperialist ends.[34] Even after formal discussions on the proclamation of sympathy had progressed to the point where Balfour must have realized that the Zionists strongly favored a totally British administration, he was unable to abandon the idea. In March, 1917, he suggested the possibility of an Anglo-American protectorate to Weizmann, and in June noted: "personally, I should still prefer to associate the U.S.A. in the protectorate should we succeed in securing it."[35]

Shortly after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration the subject of American involvement in Palestine was broached by Colonel House to Lloyd George and Lord Reading, an intimate friend of the Prime Minister, in London. During one of the conferences which were then

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[34]Stein, op. cit., p. 606.

[35]Dugdale, op. cit., p. 232.

in process, he noted:

> ....I pinned the Prime Minister down to a statement of the British war aims.
> What Great Britain wants are the African colonies, both east and west, an independent Arabia under the suzerainty of Great Britain, Palestine to be given to the Zionists under British, or if desired by us, also under American control....[36]

It is not clear from the statement how enthusiastic the British were to share a protectorate in Palestine. Taken by itself, it would seem a polite offer, conditional upon American assent. This was followed up a month later, however, by a discussion on the subject which took place between Ambassador Walter Hines Page and Lord Robert Cecil. In a telegram to Washington, Page recorded Cecil's remarks:

> An internationalized Palestine must be under the protection of some great power. Lord Robert speaking only for himself feared that the continental powers would not agree that any one of them should hold the protectorate and some of them would object even to England's holding it. Still speaking informally and only for himself he hoped that the United States would consent to be the protecting power when the time comes, and he felt sure that all the powers would gladly agree.[37]

It was not an unpopular attitude in Great Britain. While Lord Cecil was speaking only in his private capacity

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[36] U.S., Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Supplement 2: The World War (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), I, 344.

[37] Ibid., p. 483.

at the time, he reflected an opinion held by a number of his colleagues, that the United States should take a share of responsibility for the disposition of Turkish territory after the war. Even the British Governor-General of the Sudan, Sir Reginald Wingate, felt moved enough on the subject to approach the American Agent in Cairo, William Yale, to register his impression that America should be the controlling power in Palestine. Yale duly reported this to Washington, adding his comment that he felt Sir Reginald's opinion to be the view of the British Government.[38]

Further efforts to solicit American involvement were made during the course of 1918 - a suggestion being offered at one point of an American trusteeship of German East Africa - but all were received by President Wilson without enthusiasm. In spite of the President's awareness of the necessity of partitioning the Turkish Empire, he nevertheless totally rejected any act which would associate the United States with the secret treaties signed by the Allies. As a result, he was inclined to reject as well any idea of carving up Turkey and distributing the parts as spoils of conquest. Had he assented to such a plan it would seem that the

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[38]Evans, op. cit., p. 64.

United States had endorsed all similar designs, and this was exactly what the President wished to avoid. To Wilson, the question was not one of principle but of national interest.

Both Colonel House and Secretary Lansing were in accord with Wilson's viewpoint, and their messages to the President and his other representatives reflect an acute suspicion of British overtures to entangle America with responsibilities in the Middle East. House remarked to Wilson after the East Africa scheme was suggested to him that the British would like the United States to take something so that they, in turn, could take what they wanted more freely, and Lansing noted in a message to General Tasker Bliss that Britain and France would gain a decided advantage on the question of imperialist interests "if they could succeed in tarring us with that stick."[39]

By the end of 1918, British opinion had worked its way around to preferring an entirely British mandate for Palestine. Lord George Curzon addressed the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet in December of 1918 to explain the change of mind. Curzon noted that many members of the Cabinet had at first felt that Britain should limit her post-war commitments in the Middle East and

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[39] Ibid.

that America was the most acceptable candidate for the position of trustee, the idea of French control of Palestine being totally unthinkable. However, Palestine was strategically important to the defense of the Suez Canal, abutting on it almost directly, and American control would cause friction with both British and French. Also, Americans were inexperienced in governing territories; "Americans in Palestine," stated Curzon, "might be a source, not of assistance, but very much the reverse, to ourselves in Egypt."[40] Finally, Britain had a mission to help the Arabs of Palestine by keeping them in contact with their Arab neighbors and by not allowing an intervening state to be placed in their midst.

In this discussion, Zionist arguments occupied little part. The Committee recommended that Great Britain accept such a mandate were it to be offered them; the decision, it seems, was made on the basis of British interests, rather than because of any commitment to secret treaty arrangements or the Balfour Declaration, and the idea - originally British - of an American mandate for Palestine was for the time being put quietly to rest.

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[40]Stein, op. cit., p. 611.

CHAPTER III

EARLY AMERICAN ZIONISM

The First Phase 1897-1914

As a political movement, American Zionism was slow to organize. Earliest indications of Zionist feeling in the United States can be traced back to such writers as Emma Lazarus (1849-1887) and Mrs. Rose Sonnenshein who, schooled in the tradition of nineteenth century romanticism and nationalism, espoused the creed of a Judah reborn. Various individuals joined newly-founded Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) societies, but in general there was only desultory enthusiasm.

Reasons for this inattention can be found in the reluctance of the American Jewish community to join any movement advocating the colonization of Palestine. Reform Judaism, most prevalent in the dominant German Jewish sector, was based on the principle of Judaism as a religion rather than as a national bond between members of the faith, and Zionism found little support within this group. Its followers were mostly to be found among new immigrants from the Russian Pale of

Settlements, the poorer Eastern European Jews who had seen promise in the ideas of Hirsch Kalischer and Leon Pinsker.

Not until 1897 was a formal pan-Zionist organization in the United States created. In that year, the Federation of American Zionists was founded by Dr. Gustave Gottheil, his son, Dr. Richard Gottheil, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise in New York.[41] All were convinced of Zionism as a political philosophy and were strongly motivated by Theodor Herzl, who had the year before published his celebrated work, The Jewish State.

"The movement is beginning in America," wrote Herzl shortly afterwards with delight.[42] It seemed initially as if a new and fertile field had been found for the Zionist idea, but such hopes were short-lived. Whereas the Federation had joined the World Zionist Movement soon after its creation, from the outset it played an insignificant role in the European organization and was able to contribute little to Zionism as a whole.

In the United States it was unable to gain the support of established Jewry, which was by nature assimilationist, and it chronically suffered from lack of

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[41] de Haas, Jacob, Louis D. Brandeis (New York: 1929), p. 28.

[42] Herzl, Theodor, The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, ed. Raphael Patai (New York: Herzl Press, 1960), II, 552.

financial resources and the fact that its administration was employed only on a part-time basis. As before, Zionism found its greatest sympathy among immigrant Jewry, and not among the more affluent established order; not until a middle class had evolved from the new arrivals could the movement grow to any proportion.

While Herzl maintained leadership of the World Zionist Movement, American activities retained a semblance of cohesion and strength, aided both by design - such as the constant correspondence which European Zionists kept up with their American colleagues - and by circumstance, such as the Kishineff massacre and Russian pogroms of 1903, which drew many Jews into the Zionist camp because of the latter's nationalistic appeal. 1904 marked the height of the Federation's popularity in this early period; yet it was also the year in which Herzl died, and from this point until 1914 American Zionism drifted, losing appeal in the Jewish community, indifferently led, with successive years marked by successive conventions evidencing poor attendance and dwindling enthusiasm.

It was a period in which several important divisions occurred in the Zionist following. One group, led by Louis Goldman, attempted to create of the Federation a sponsor for the Poreah colony of Jews in Palestine.[43]

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[43] de Haas, op. cit., p. 29.

Another segment revolted from the Herzlian belief, prevalent since the Basle Congress of World Zionism in 1897, that a Jewish state in Palestine should arise full-grown by decree of the Turkish Sultan. Led by Dr. J.L. Magnes, these American followers of Ahad Ha'am, a Russian Jew, believed in the slow, illegal penetration of Palestine and rejected the doctrine of immediate statehood through diplomacy. Both of these groups were opposed to the more orthodox subscribers to the Basle Program, and whereas the latter eventually prevailed, a split had occurred in the American Zionist camp which was to have important repercussions later.

By 1914, then, when the Federation met for its annual convention at Rochester, New York, the future of American Zionism seemed bleak. It had mustered little support, registered fewer than 15,000 members, and operated with insufficient financing: the annual budget for 1914 called for an outlay of only $12,150.[44] The movement had been challenged from without by hostile Reform Jewry, and had been broken from within by dissension in its own ranks.

Most important, however, was the fact that Zionism was still a European, lower class movement, strengthened primarily by immigration and as yet substantially rootless

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[44] Halperin, Samuel, The Political World of American Zionism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961(p. 11.

in the soil of American Judaism. It had not struck a sympathetic chord in the established order and had effectively been rejected by the leaders of the Jewish community. As a political creed it was alien; as a movement, ineffectual.

Expansion, 1914-1917

On August 30, 1914, an extraordinary convention of American Zionists was held in New York City. The conflict in Europe, nearly a month old, was threatening to engulf the organized World Zionist Movement, whose headquarters was in Berlin. At the minimum, war would nullify its effectiveness as sponsor of the effort to gain statehood in Palestine.

Accordingly, to confront the international problem and to cement together the divergent Zionist forces in America, a Provisional Executive Committee for Zionist Affairs was created, with Louis D. Brandeis elected as chairman. Among the first acts of the Executive Committee was the decision to raise $100,000 to cover obligations to Palestine for the next two years. $14,000 was immediately collected at the meeting for this purpose.[45]

The Committee from this point on assumed the position of primary responsibility for the entire World

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[45] The New York Times, August 31, 1914, p. 12.

Zionist Organization, of which it theretofore had been but an auxiliary branch. World War I had brought about the shift in fortunes of the American group; nevertheless the transfer of power was one which the World Zionist Executive felt was necessary and readily acknowledged. Shmarya Levin, a desciple of Chaim Weizmann, was present at the New York convention (Weizmann notes that Levin participated in the formation of the Brandeis group), and shortly afterwards was instructed: "The American Provisional Executive Committee should be given full power to deal with all Zionist matters, until better times come."[46]

An immediate growth of popularity accompanied the new status conferred upon the American Zionist group. Brandeis, then aged 57 and shortly to be appointed to the Supreme Court, was to no little extent the cause. He undertook extensive tours throughout the country to create foci of Zionist activity, continually and categorically refuting the argument of dual allegiance which non-Zionist American Jews had raised in dissent of Jewish nationalism. His presence lent dignity to the movement. Respected members of the Jewish community began to join - men such as Felix Frankfurter, Lincoln

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[46] Weizmann, op. cit., p. 165.

Kirstein, Justice Julian Mack. They in turn encouraged the confidence of middle-class Jewry in the cause. The enormous effect which the Brandeis regime had upon the movement is best seen in the dramatic increase in Zionist membership, which rose from approximately 12,000 in 1914 to 173,000 in 1919.[47]

Perhaps the most significant occurrence during Brandeis' early leadership of the Federation was the creation in the Zionist organization of a small but powerful group of men who enjoyed excellent relations with the American Government and who had ready access to the new Democratic Administration. Brandeis, as has been noted, was a close friend of President Wilson, and Felix Frankfurter, Rabbi Wise and other Zionists had broad connections with Washington officialdom. Whereas little high diplomacy was carried out by Zionists prior to 1917, a powerful interest group had nevertheless been formed which, from the time of American intervention in the war through the Peace Conference period, was to have considerable influence in shaping American attitudes and policy toward the Middle East.

The years immediately following the creation of the Provisional Executive Committee were occupied by the rapid expansion of the Zionist movement in America.

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[47]Stein, op. cit., pp. 188-9.

The catchword was organization; the slogan of the new campaign, coined by Brandeis, was: "Organize, organize, until every Jew in America must stand up and be counted - counted with us - or prove himself one of the few, who wittingly, are against their own people."[48] Efforts were made to broaden the base of the movement by recruiting Western and mid-Western Jews who, until 1914, had been even less sanguine about Zionism than those from the eastern cities. A strong overture was made to youth to join: in October of 1915 a University Zionist Society was created, and this was followed in 1916 by the establishment of an Intercollegiate Zionist Association at the Federation's national convention.

Since the Provisional Executive Committee had undertaken the responsibilities of the World Zionist Organization, great emphasis was naturally placed upon financing Zionist activities and underwriting various projects for the relief of Palestinian Jews. Efforts were made to raise large amounts of money for Palestine relief from Federation sources, and the Joint Distribution Committee - a Jewish but non-Zionist philanthropic organization - was successfully pressed for generous gifts to the Middle Eastern settlements. By the end

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[48] Haber, Julius, The Odyssey of an American Zionist (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956), p. 156.

of May, 1915, $346,834 had been sent to Palestine, and a year later total receipts had mounted to $1,500,000.[49]

As long as the outcome of the World War was indefinite and as long as neither German nor British could directly control the Middle East, American Zionists remained the custodians of the Palestine account. When, toward the middle of 1917 and after American entrance into the European conflict, it seemed that the Central Powers would suffer inevitable defeat, the Zionist campaign in England to influence the British War Cabinet was intensified. While American Zionists concentrated on sustaining those colonies of Jews already in Palestine, British Zionists under Chaim Weizmann's leadership concentrated on obtaining Palestine for Zionism through a constant diplomatic effort, aided in great part by various members of the Cabinet.

The latter offensive was so successful that, by early 1917, the British Administration would have been unable to abandon the Zionists without acute and damaging embarrassment.[50] As it was, the initiative

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[49] de Haas, op. cit., p. 71.

[50] Baumgartner, P.M., "The Origins of the Balfour Declaration" (unpublished Master's thesis, American University of Beirut, 1955), p. 59.

to gain recognition of Zionist claims in Palestine never afterward left European hands until the British mandate was secured.

From late 1917 on and in the face of seemingly inevitable British control of Palestine, the tide of power within the World Zionist community began to ebb away from the United States, toward Weizmann and the European group. American Zionists had played their part when the entire movement was threatened by war; now that the struggle was almost over they slowly reverted to the status of secondary members while the diplomatic battle for Palestine was continued in the European theater.

American Zionist Diplomacy

Prior to 1914, American Zionist approaches to the United States Government had generally been brief, intermittent, and indifferently received. Zionism was a new movement. Its base was strongest among immigrants and members of the urban-industrial classes. It had few ties with established Jewry, and fewer still with those most apt to have the ear of an American administration.

Occasional letters were sent to the President and Secretary of State by individuals interested in the success of a Jewish state in Palestine, but these were generally shelved without comment or publication. The

State Department felt that Zionism related primarily to countries other than the United States, involved interests which were essentially non-American, and had within it the seeds of potentially dangerous international repercussions. The prevailing attitude of the Department was one of hostility: Zionism was an irritation, a movement which seemed intent on muddying the waters of American-Turkish relations and involving the United States in issues which were clearly beyond its province.

Whereas the reserve of the State Department was never overcome or greatly modified by American Zionists, Brandeis was able to make a strong impression within the Government after his accession to the chairmanship of the Provisional Executive Committee. Aside from his friendship with President Wilson, Brandeis had easy access to various members of the Administration and was able, with some success, to press Zionist arguments. As the war years progressed, and as the ranks of the Federation expanded to include more influential members of the Jewish community, contacts automatically became easier for American Zionists; at a minimum, they found that they had a mild sympathy toward their problems.

The changed character of the American Zionist movement after the election of Brandeis to its leadership became manifest to the State Department shortly after

the outbreak of war, during the crisis over the expulsion of Russian Jews from Palestine at the end of 1914.

When the Allied representatives left Constantinople in August of 1914, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau was given charge of their residual interests in the Ottoman Empire, including those matters involving persons having Allied nationality. He was almost immediately confromted with the threatened deportation of some 50,000 Russian Jews from Palestine, on the basis that they had refused to become Ottoman citizens. An immediate outcry in the press prompted Secretary of State Lansing to obtain full information from the American Consuls in Jerusalem and Cairo, and Ambassador Morgenthau in Constantinople.

Brandeis, with the concurrence of the Executive Committee and the Federation, cabled Morgenthau via Lansing, asking him to transmit to the Turkish authorities the offer of a food-ship in trade for a reprieve for the Russian Jews. Further pressure was placed on Morgenthau by alarming reports cabled directly to the Ambassador from Jaffa by Palestine Zionists, and President Wilson was asked for a direct plea to the Sultan by Jewish refugees in Alexandria, using the facilities of the U.S.S. Tennessee which had just transported them

from Palestine.[51]

The problem was finally resolved by March, 1915, when the Turkish authorities dropped the issue and agreed to a peaceful settlement. The sudden reversal of Ottoman policy was most probably brought about through negotiations in Palestine and through direct appeals made in Constantinople by the German and American Ambassadors, but the latter were to no little extent motivated by Zionist feeling in Europe and the United States. The point to note is the speed of Wilson's and Lansing's response to the situation, and that Brandeis had been able to communicate with the Porte through the offices of the American Ambassador.

This was the first time that the State Department's wall of opposition had been breached by the Zionists. It had occurred at the top, with the aid of the Chief Executive, and from this point American Zionism found the achievement of its objectives in Palestine - excluding that of statehood - relatively easy. As Professor Manuel notes:

> The agency of the United States Government was crucial.... From the very beginning of the war the official hostility towards Zionism which had once found expression among some division chiefs in the State Department disappeared. Brandeis was the

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[51]Manuel, op. cit., p. 127.

> key to the transformation. Telegrams and cables between the Zionists in America and the World Zionist representatives in Turkey were sent in cipher when necessary through the State Department and the embassy. American officials viewed Zionism primarily as a work of humanitarianism, though the political implications of many of the messages surely did not escape them. The frequency of the communications - literally hundreds of instructions and despatches - on the relief of Palestine is proof enough that this was no casual aspect of American policy. With rare exceptions, the requests of American Jews to the Department involving preservation of the Palestinian settlements led to formal diplomatic proposals to Turkish, German, Austrian, English, French, or Italian officials. First failures were followed by renewed attempts to get funds transferred and food ships through the blockade. When commercial bottoms were not available, American naval vessels in the Mediterranean were commissioned once the legal difficulties involved in a liberal interpretation of the appropriations acts were overcome.[52]

Initial talks on the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, carried out between Weizmann and the British Government in late 1916, were followed closely by Brandeis in the United States. Through him American Zionists were directed to elicit, if at all possible, a declaration of sympathy from their own government.

At the time, Weizmann's leadership was accepted as absolute, and there was little dissent in America as to how the negotiations should be carried out, or what recommendations might be submitted to the British Government. Brandeis' loyalty to Weizmann seems to have been complete at this stage - for when Lord Balfour

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[52] Ibid., p. 138.

approached Weizmann in early 1917 on the subject of an Anglo-American condominium for Palestine, the latter was assured of American Zionist support for his belief in a totally British administration of the territory.[53]

Weizmann was particularly anxious to have American backing. In the spring of 1917, Russia and the United States were taking strongly anti-annexationist stances, and as Weizmann felt that the creation of a Zionist state could only be brought about through a British protectorate, he welcomed what support he received from Brandeis. In April of 1917 he wrote to the leader of the American Zionist movement:

> We look forward here to the strengthening of our position both by the American Government and American Jews.... An expression of opinion coming from yourself and perhaps from other gentlemen connected with the Government in favor of a Jewish Palestine under a British protectorate would greatly strengthen our hands.[54]

There is little evidence of how successful Brandeis was in influencing the Government to Weizmann's position at this point. Even though the American Zionist had meetings both with Lord Balfour when the latter visited the United States in May, and with Wilson, the Foreign Secretary apparently did not bring up the question

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[53] Weizmann, op. cit., p. 189.

[54] Ibid., p. 193.

of Zionism with the President. Diplomatic reasons may have been involved. Wilson could have been unwilling to broach the subject for the same reasons that he refused to discuss either mandates or the secret treaties with Balfour: an understanding on such matters at this early date could have compromised American peace aims. For his part, the Foreign Secretary may well have been reluctant to interest the United States Government in an issue which had been all but resolved by the British at the time. Evidence suggests, however, that other matters of business were more important at the conference than Zionism, and that the Jewish National Home had simply been shelved temporarily until it could be discussed at a more opportune time.

Further talks were carried out between Brandeis and the President in the months immediately following Balfour's visit, but no response was forthcoming on the Zionist issue. In October, Weizmann cabled Brandeis, urgently asking him to move Wilson to a declaration of sympathy similar to one the British were shortly to release; Jacob de Haas, Secretary of the Federation, and Lewin-Epstein also received notes to this effect.[55]

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[55]Manuel, op. cit., p. 168.

As it happened, Wilson's caution concerning American involvement in a political Zionist cause overrode his sympathy toward the movement as a humanitarian, and it was not until ten months had followed the issuance of the Balfour Declaration that the President was disposed to give his personal approval to the note. Even then, his greatest concern was that his endorsement involved no compromise of the ownership of Palestine, and that such an important matter would be left for determination at the Peace Conference.

The Peace Conference was the single most important item of business on the Zionist agenda by the fall of 1918. In preparation for the approaching discussions at Paris, American Zionists had assembled their own delegation to travel to Europe with the express purpose of winning the Conference representatives to their position. The delegation consisted of Rabbi Wise, Jacob de Haas, Felix Frankfurter, Howard Gans, Bernard Flexner, Louis Robinson and Mrs. Joseph Fels, and these were later joined by Justice Julian Mack leading a large group from the American Jewish Congress.[56] Because of obligations in the United States, Brandeis remained behind, but in June of 1919 he, too, joined the Zionist delegation.

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[56] Ibid., p. 207.

In late 1918, Zionist leaders conducted interviews with officials who were connected with the American Delegation to the Peace Conference, arranged appointments with others most likely to be consulted on matters relating to the Middle East and Palestine, and in general did everything in their power to elicit statements of interest from those who would later deliberate on the future of a Jewish homeland. In the United States the Federation of American Zionists, now renamed the Zionist Organization of America, collected letters relevant to the Zionist cause from some three hundred Congressmen. These, in turn, were to be used to aid the campaign of persuasion in Europe.

The only cloud on the horizon was a growing rift between American and European Zionists over the proposed policies to be applied to a Jewish state in Palestine. In a sense, it was a struggle over the disposition of power. American Jews had held authority in the Zionist movement since 1914; now European Zionists were attempting to resume the position of leadership. Throughout the Conference the level of irritation never abated, although a unified front was maintained behind Weizmann while the negotiations were in process.

In spite of the fact that the Zionists had enjoyed significant success in courting American leaders

and had been given the use of Government machinery for the relief of Palestinian Jews during the war, they now confronted the American Delegation with the matter of political Zionism and the question of a Jewish nation in the Middle East - and these were problems on which the ministers were most reluctant to commit themselves.

President Wilson was particularly wary of any move which might commit the United States to an undesirable policy. He had made no definite statement as to American intentions; nor had he made his feelings on the subject known to the delegation which he headed - although it must have been clear that he personally favored Zionism. Colonel House, while loyal to the President, was unenthusiastic about Jewish nationalism. Secretary of State Lansing reflected the State Department's view that Zionism hoped to involve the United States in an area and with a policy which were not in the nation's best interests. The majority of the other delegates were uncommitted, unconcerned, or unwilling to take a definitive stance which might cross the President's position.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEACE CONFERENCE PERIOD

Preparations

The United States had entered the European war in 1917 because the conflict had become a threat to the national interest. America undertook the war with no restrictions: she was committed to none of the Allies, nor was she bound to any Allied policy either in the conduct of the war or in its outcome. Her primary identification with the Allied cause was the desire to utterly destroy the capacity of Germany to make war again, and to remove this largest of all threats to American security.

The Administration's view of the Turkish question fell within this framework. As long as the Ottoman Empire retained strength enough so that she, in combination with Germany, might continue to endanger peace, Turkey posed a problem which had to be resolved by the United States in a post-war settlement. American interest in a peace conference was centered on the issue of destroying the power of Germany and her allies, with the

ultimate aim of prevention rather than retribution.

By the end of 1918, however, it was clear that this primary objective had been attained. Germany was shattered. Austria-Hungary was in a state of disintegration. The Ottoman Empire had been occupied and dismembered ipso facto. The wartime threat had disappeared; now that the principal goal of American foreign policy had been successfully reached, the need for American participation in a general settlement had vanished.[57]

America's immediate post-war policy was therefore governed by a secondary objective. The President felt that the European conflict had involved the United States too vitally for her to easily withdraw. The lesson had been made clear: America had entered the war to defend her national interests; she must participate in its aftermath to ensure their protection. With this in mind, the President began in November, 1918, to assemble the delegates who were to represent the United States at the coming Peace Conference in Paris.

Policy discussions on American peace objectives had already taken place between Wilson and his closest advisors during the war, but on problems concerning the disposition of Turkey no decision had as yet been reached.

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[57] Evans, op. cit., p. 91.

It has been noted that Wilson and House were careful not to discuss the specific terms of a settlement with Lord Balfour when the latter came to Washington in the spring of 1917, and by the end of 1918 there had been no change in this attitude. While the President, House, Lansing, and several others in the Government were informed of the secret treaties between the Allies, they were careful to publicly indicate no knowledge of their existence. As a result, the Allies were faced with the burden of having to establish the place of such treaties in the settlement, and the United States was relieved of the necessity of having to object to their inclusion.[58] It was clear that America had no intention of being bound to any final agreement in which her interests were not represented.

Aside from the desire to protect American interests at the Peace Conference, President Wilson was interested in attending the discussions for a more personal reason, albeit one necessarily involving the consent of the powers in Paris. During the course of 1918 he had evolved the idea of a League of Nations as a safeguard against all future wars. As planned, it was to be an integrated international system, an asso-

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[58] Ibid., p. 58.

ciation of nations which would provide legal methods for settling disputes so that wars might be stopped before they were begun. The control of territory conquered by the Allies during World War I could best be vested within such a League, the President felt. While in Paris in January, 1919, Wilson further refined his plan, including in it the suggestion that the administrative authority for such areas might be delegated to individual nations under a League mandate.

Preliminary Discussions

It became clear fairly early in the Conference that the President would face certain opposition in having such a mandate system accepted by the Allies. While the British might have agreed to such League-owned trusts, the French had taken a strongly annexationist line and were far more favorable to the direct control of conquered territory without supervision by any international system. The issue was resolved with some difficulty, but the resultant mandate system was a compromise: annexationism was forsworn, but those territories under mandatory protection were to be allowed no great measure of self-determination in the conduct of their internal affairs.

The first two weeks of the Conference marked a

singular advance in American diplomacy. As Laurence Evans notes:

> When the conference opened, the American position in territorial questions was vague and, in some cases, nonexistent, due, not to any failure on Wilson's part, but to the political conditions existing at the time.... The Fourteen Points (proposed by the President as a basis for peace, delivered to Congress January 8, 1918, and accepted by those participants in the Peace Conference) did not....guarantee American participation in territorial matters. As for Turkey and the Arab lands, the United States had not been at war with the Ottoman Empire and had no standing in the Near Eastern settlement. Now with the mandate system accepted, Wilson could speak in territorial questions with authority equal to that of the representatives of any of the powers.[59]

At the same time that the mandate question was under discussion, the Peace Conference began to deal in earnest with the problem of the Middle East. Primary importance was given to two questions: (1) was the Ottoman Empire to retain its territorial integrity, and if not, how was it to be divided; and (2) which of the European powers should be given what section of territory for administration, should the Conference decide to partition the Ottoman domains?

All were in general agreement with the basic premise that the Ottoman Empire should be partitioned, and it was almost a formality that note was made to this effect in a draft resolution on mandatories adopted by

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[59] Ibid., p. 106.

the Council of Ten on January 30: "....the Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia must be completely severed from the Turkish Empire."[60]

The major discussion on the Ottoman question had come as a result of disagreement about the problem of mandates. President Wilson was intent on placing any action taken by the Conference on Turkish domains within the framework of the mandate system, and it was with a certain amount of gratification that Wilson saw his views incorporated into the resolution drafted by General Jan Smuts of South Africa and introduced to the Council by Lloyd George. The plan called for three categories of mandates. Each involved a different degree of self-determination with areas such as South-West Africa and certain South Pacific islands to be administered as integral members of the mandatory power, and with the former colonies of Turkey at the other extreme, whose "existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory power until such time as they are able to stand alone."[61] The

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[60] U.S., Department of State, op. cit., 1919: The Paris Peace Conference (1943), III, 795.

[61] Ibid., p. 796.

Smuts draft eventually became the basis for Article Twenty-Two of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The question of Turkey's dismemberment had been settled and the system of mandates established to apply to all problems of a territorial nature. The issue of which powers should be given what mandates followed naturally. To decide this, the Council of Ten called for representations from the various parties interested in the outcome.

The first petition came from the Emir Feisal of the Hedjaz, on February 6. Feisal had previously, on January 1 and 29, submitted memoranda to the Peace Conference outlining the Arab position in terms of political autonomy and territorial claims. He recapitulated the contents of his two notes before the Council and, under questioning by President Wilson, stated that he had come to ask for the independence of his people and for their right to choose their own mandatory. He had remarked earlier that he himself could not assume the responsibility of choosing which type of mandate the Arabs preferred: it was a question which the people themselves must answer; he could not decide for them.[62]

On February 13, the Council of Ten heard from

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[62] Ibid., p. 892.

Howard A. Bliss, then President of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. Bliss substantially backed Feisal's views on Arab independence, and placed before the Council his own plea for an inter-Allied commission to visit Syria and determine the wishes of the people. Shortly after his address, the Council heard testimony from a delegation of Syrians who rejected Feisal's position and asked for a French mandate. The American Delegation, already notified by Bliss that the Syrian group represented French and not Arab interests (their leader had not been in Syria for thirty-five years), was unimpressed by their arguments and recalled Bliss in private conference on February 26 to hear again his opinions on a commission of inquiry to the Middle East.

In general, the Arab nationalist views were well received by the American Delegation. Feisal had given an excellent first impression during his presentation on February 6, and Secretary Lansing was moved to remark on the "noble Arab....his voice seemed to breathe the perfume of frankincense and to suggest the presence of richly colored divans, green turbans and the glitter of gold and jewels."[63] Bliss, too, had made a favorable

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[63]Manuel, op. cit., p. 227. Also see Lansing, Robert, The Big Four and Others of the Peace Conference (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), pp. 161-177 for a further lyrical description of the Arab leader.

impression on the Americans. He was known by the President, who had initially asked him to speak before the Council, and had been able to plead effectively the case for Arab independence. Opposed to him and Feisal, the pro-French Syrian delegation registered unfavorably on Wilson, Lansing, and the two other American representatives then present. Bliss' presentation had been the last on the Middle East to be heard by Wilson in the Council before his departure from Paris on February 14 for a month-long visit to the United States.

The Council of Ten continued to meet in spite of the President's absence, however, and on February 27 it heard petitions from the Zionists. Secretary Lansing and Henry White were representing the American Delegation at the time.

It was an occasion for which the Zionists had long been in preparation. As claimants before the Conference, they were numbered among the "small nations" asked to deliver statements before the Great Powers.[64]

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[64]See Temperley, H.W.V. (ed.), A History of the Peace Conference of Paris (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920), I, 257, for an evaluation of the importance of such presentations to the Conference as a whole: "....these statements, though interesting, were in one sense a waste of time....(they) were merely a repetition of arguments which could be more easily studied in print. The examination by the statesmen of the Great Powers was perfunctory, and without point, as the claims admitted were immediately referred to Commissions of the Great Powers for report. At the same time the dignity of the Small Powers was flattered, and a vent, as it were, provided for their energies."

Enormous efforts had been made to influence the conferees toward their position beforehand and to ensure a sympathetic reception when they were heard. Accordingly, the most persuasive of Zionist leaders, Nahum Sokolov, and Chaim Weizmann, were on hand to state their case.

Sokolov spoke first, outlining the historic right of the Jews to Palestine and indicating the boundaries of the proposed territory which, he felt, would best be entrusted as a League mandate to the British. Weizmann then followed to submit Zionist claims in regard to the immigration of Jews into Palestine, stating that the Zionist solution "was the only one which would in the long run bring peace, and at the same time transform Jewish energy into a constructive force, instead of its being dissipated into destructive tendencies or bitterness."[65]

Lansing posed the only question to the Zionist delegation at the meeting. Did the words, "Jewish National Home", he asked, mean an autonomous Jewish Government? Weizmann replied in the negative, and indicated that he wished merely for an administration under which seventy to eighty thousand Jewish immigrants might enter Palestine annually, and the right to set up a Jewish nationality within the country by degrees.

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[65]U.S., Department of State, op. cit., IV (1943), 164.

Lansing's interruption in the Zionist presentation actually came as a blessing to Weizmann. A Mr. Sylvain Levi had been addressing the Council for the Zionist delegation and had, in effect, thrown a bombshell into the Weizmann-Sokolov platform. Levi informed the Council that (1) the Jews would tend to dispossess the Arabs in Palestine; (2) the greatest number of immigrants planned - Russian Jews - were of an "explosive" character; and (3) the creation of a Jewish National Home had raised the problem of dual allegiance. Weizmann was stunned by Levi's performance. It was at this moment that Secretary Lansing wrought what the Zionist leader would later call a "miracle", in posing his question and giving Weizmann an opportunity to rebut Levi's arguments.[66]

Without Wilson's presence or any Presidential instructions on the matter, the American Delegation was of necessity vague on the question of Palestine. As early as September, 1917, an inquiry was set up at the suggestion of the State Department, to explore those subjects with which the United States would be confronted at the Peace Conference. Later, at the end of 1918, an Intelligence Section was created for the American Delegation. It inherited both the duties and the facilities

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[66]Weizmann, op. cit., p. 244.

of the inquiry committee, as well as the material upon which the inquiry's studies had been based, and it was not unnatural, therefore, that its own report on Palestine and the Middle East would be as pro-Zionist as that of its predecessor. On January 21, 1919, the Intelligence Section's Outline of Tentative Report and Recommendations was delivered to the American Delegates, indicating in part:

> That the Jews be invited to return to Palestine and settle there, being assured by the Conference of all proper assistence in so doing that may be consistent with the protection of the personal (especially the religious) and the property rights of the non-Jewish population, and being further assured that it will be the policy of the League of Nations to recognize Palestine as a Jewish state as soon as it is a Jewish state in fact.[67]

An anti-Zionist ground-swell, however, began to develop within the American Delegation in the same month that the Outline was issued. W.L.Westermann, head of the West Asia Division of specialists attatched to the Delegation, began to express grave misgivings about the Zionist program, feeling that the Jewish National Home concept had progressed far beyond the meaning implied by the Balfour Declaration and assented to by the President. He was particularly disturbed that Zionism implied a basic denial of Wilsonian self-determination

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[67]Manuel, op. cit., p. 119.

and would be bound to cause difficulty with the Arab population of Palestine. He was seconded in this by David Hunter Miller, one of the Delegation's legal advisors, who pointed out to Wilson that "the rule of self-determination would prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine."[68]

By the end of February, 1919, when both Arabs and Zionists had presented their pleas, the American Delegation was sharply divided on the question of Palestine. Only the President had actively expressed his sympathy with the Zionist cause; the others either saw the movement as an instrument of the British in furthering their imperialist designs, or were for the most part unconcerned. The fact that the recommendations of the Intelligence Section had been strongly challenged by various individuals in the Delegation contributed further toward a state of confusion of the issue.

The Inter-Allied Commission: an American Mandate Revived

One item which had clearly emerged from the Conference hearings on the Turkish question was the evident desire of a number of the "small nations" for the creation of an investigatory group to examine closely

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[68] Howard, Harry N., The Partition of Turkey (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1931), p. 226.

the problems of their own areas of interest, and to determine exactly the will of the peoples involved. Feisal had placed the matter before the Council of Ten when he testified on February 6, and Howard Bliss, in a letter to the President sent the following day, suggested an international commission as the best method of arriving at an equitable solution. Bliss went on to state his opinion of the outcome:

> I believe that the report of any Commission.... would show that the Syrians desire the erection of an independent state or states under the care, for the present, of a Power, or of the "League of Nations". I believe the power designated by the people would be America, for the Syrians believe in American disinteredness; or England, for the people trust her sense of justice and believe in her capacity.[69]

France, Bliss believed, would be rejected as a mandatory. The Syrians had no confidence in France's administrative ability and felt that she would exploit their country for her own material and political advantage. "If America should be indicated as the Power desired," he continued, "I earnestly hope that she will not decline."[70]

Such an inquiry was not an entirely new idea to the American Delegation. Discussions had taken place

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[69] Howard, Harry N., The King-Crane Commission (Beirut: Khayat's, 1963), p. 25.

[70] Ibid.

the week before on the subject of an American Commission to the Middle East, and President Wilson had appointed a Dr. James L. Barton and Frederick Howe to carry out the investigations. In spite of Bliss' entreaties for immediate action, however, the Commission had not left by February 14, when Wilson departed for America, and three weeks later it was cancelled by Lansing, who was not clear as to the interest of the United States in subsidizing a group whose purpose was to gather information on the entire area of former Ottoman control.

Bliss had, however, made his point at the meeting of the Council of Ten in January. After some hesitation by Lansing, in late February Bliss had been able to impress on the Secretary and Henry White the need to determine the wishes of the Syrians before the country was handed over to a mandatory power.[71] Lansing and White concurred in this opinion, but the former indicated that no decision on the matter could be made at the time. The President was not due to return to Paris until mid-March.

On March 20, 1919, the Council of Four, consisting of representatives of the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy, met to discuss the secret treaties on

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[71]U.S., Department of State, op. cit., Vol. IX (1946), p. 77.

the disposition of the Ottoman Empire which had been concluded during the war. Almost immediately Great Britain and France became locked in debate on the question of mandates, with the French asking for the administration of Syria, and Lloyd George for Great Britain stating that such a course would be very difficult to sanction in view of British promises to the Arabs. The French reply was that they could not be bound by agreements in which they had taken no part and of which, in any case, they had been ignorant at the time they had been drafted.

At this point President Wilson intervened. His only interest, he said, was the establishment of world peace, although he was a friend to both parties in the controversy.

> The point of view of the United States of America was, however, indifferent to the claims both of Great Britain and France over peoples unless those peoples wanted them. One of the fundamental principles to which the United States of America adhered was the consent of the governed.... Hence, the only idea from the United States of America point of view was as to whether France would be agreeable to the Syrians. The same applied as to whether Great Britain would be agreeable to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. It might not be his business, but.... the only way to deal with it was to discover the desires of the population of these regions.[72]

After further discussion of a Syria under French

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[72] Ibid., Vol. V (1944), p. 9.

control, during which General Allenby expressed his opinion that to such a mandate "there would be the strongest possible opposition by the whole of the Moslems, and especially the Arabs," Wilson laid his plan before the Council. An inter-Allied Commission, he suggested, should be formed with the purpose of investigating the state of opinion in those areas contemplated as mandates, including those parts of the Middle East other than Syria.

The French agreed "in principle" to such an inquiry, but emphasized that the Commission should not confine itself to Syria; mandates, after all, were also required for Palestine, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and other parts of the Turkish Empire. Lloyd George had no objections to the proposed inquiry and, in closing the conference, requested President Wilson to draft instructions for the Commission.

On the same day that the Council of Four decided on a Commission of Inquiry, the American Delegates met and authorized a sum of $18,500 for their own section, to consist of five officials and four field clerks. By the end of the month the President had chosen two Commissioners to lead the American group: Henry C. King, President of Oberlin College, and Charles R. Crane, a

Chicago manufacturer. Both were members of the American section of the Conference's Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey, as Wilson felt, primarily because they had no foreknowledge of the Middle East.[73] The tentative date of April 15 had been scheduled for their departure. On March 22, Wilson's instructions to the Commission had been drafted, and on the 25th they were accepted by the British with mild support and by the French, again "in principle".[74]

In actuality, there was strong opposition from several quarters to the sending of such a Commission. The French, aware that of all proposed mandatory powers they were the least wanted by the Arabs, had no desire to see a democratic opinion of their ability and intentions written into the Conference proceedings. Throughout the period when the Commission was in preparation they attempted to temporize and obstruct the venture, and applied continued pressure in Paris to solve the Syrian question - in favor of themselves - before the Commissioners left.

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[73]Zeine, Zeine N., The Struggle for Arab Independence (Beirut: Khayat's, 1960), p. 94.

[74]Howard, The King-Crane Commission, p. 34.

The Zionists were in a state of confusion at Wilson's plan. They had thought that their presentation to the Council of Ten in February had been successful, and they had felt their security ensured by the President's most recent remarks, made in the United States earlier in the month, that the American Government was agreed to the establishment of a "Jewish Commonwealth". Now a Commission was to sample public opinion in Palestine, which was 90% Arab and overwhelmingly anti-Zionist. Wilson had apparently forgotten his promises. His instructions to the Commission gave no privileged status to the Jews, but requested instead that the Commissioners formulate a definite opinion as to which plan would most likely "promote the order, peace and development of those peoples and countries."[75]

Felix Frankfurter, on behalf of the Zionist Organization, called on Colonel House shortly after the plan was announced, to determine how much of a danger the Commission was to the Zionist program. House attempted to reassure him, intimating that the Balfour Declaration would be honored whatever the situation, and Frankfurter departed with the feeling that the Commission was merely a delaying device.[76]

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., p. 37.

The first three weeks of April were critical to the life of the Commission. It became increasingly evident that the French had no wish to participate, and their continued temporization threatened to kill the issue before any progress could be made. The question of a purely American Commission had again occurred to the American Delegates, but there was opposition to this on the grounds that such a group could not effectively furnish the necessary data and, moreover, might well cause the inhabitants of the countries visited to entertain false hopes of an American mandate in their area.

On April 22, though, after reports indicated that the Middle East had responded strongly and positively to the idea of such a Commission, and after some pressure by Feisal and House on the matter, Wilson had a change of mind and decided that the group had best be sent. Following some further delay in preparation, the King-Crane Commission left Paris for Jaffa at the end of May.

For nearly six weeks, from June 10 to July 21, 1919, the Commission traveled through Palestine and Syria hearing petitions from representatives of various sectors of the Middle Eastern community. On June 12 a preliminary

report was drafted which included the following findings:[77]

1. The non-Jewish population, about 80% of the whole, were "unanimously opposed to the Zionist plan,"

2. The Arabic groups were against a Palestine-Syria separation.

3. A large percentage felt that Syria was capable of self-government.

4. All elements, excepting the Latins, favored an American mandate, the United States having "fewer permanent interests in the country."

The report was drawn up in Jaffa by Professor Albert H. Lybyer, one of the advisors to the Commission. he noted that the British assumed that Palestine would be given to the Zionists in some form; to do this, the least troublesome method of implementing the Balfour Declaration would be used. He added that the Zionist representatives who had been interviewed tended to assume that their claim had been settled by the Declaration and President Wilson's pronouncements, and that plans needed only to be made for the administration of Palestine.[78]

On June 16, the King-Crane group met with members of the Zionist Commission in Jerusalem. The Zionist Commission had been organized by Chaim Weizmann at the

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[77] Ibid., p. 93.

[78] Ibid., p. 94.

suggestion of the British Government in 1918 (see p. 20), and had been sent to Palestine to realize the provisions of the Balfour Declaration. In Jerusalem, its representatives proceeded to outline the necessity of a Jewish National Home to the American Commissioners, stating that every precaution would be taken to avoid difficulties with the Arab inhabitants.

When the King-Crane Commission departed Palestine for Syria on June 27, its members were split on the question of Zionism. Captain William Yale, now a technical advisor for the Southern Regions of Turkey, felt that opposition to Zionism was useless and that a compromise could be arranged between Zionists and Arabs. Yale's counterpart for the Northern Regions of Turkey, Dr. George R. Montgomery, was inclined to be sympathetic to Jewish nationalism. The rest of the Commission, however, were impressed by the unanimity of opinion among the Moslems and Christians against Zionism and for the independence of a united Syria.

At the end of August, the final report of the King-Crane Commission was submitted to the Peace Conference in Paris. In its recommendations for Palestine, the Commission sketched briefly the Zionist position and that of the Arabs, noting that initially its members

had been disposed toward Zionism,

> ....but the actual facts in Palestine, coupled with the force of the general principles proclaimed by the Allies and accepted by the Syrians have driven them to the recommendation here made....
> ....with a deep sense of sympathy for the Jewish cause, the Commissioners feel bound to recommend that only a greatly reduced Zionist program be attempted by the Peace Conference, and even that, only very gradually initiated. This would have to mean that Jewish immigration should be definitely limited, and that the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up.[79]

The report was so hostile to French as well as Zionist wishes that it was not published until 1922, and even then it appeared in an obscure publication, Editor and Publisher, normally devoted to the writing profession.

The King-Crane Commission's report pointed up one other important fact: that, should a mandatory power be appointed by the League of Nations for the Arab lands, the United States was considered by the inhabitants as the most desirable for the position. The question of an American mandate for Armenia had already been broached a number of times by the British who, less anxious for American participation in Palestine than they had been in 1917, were still interested in seeing the United States assume responsibility for some Middle

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[79] U.S., Department of State, op. cit., Vol. XII (1947), p. 795.

Eastern area. In spite of the fact that American sympathy for the Armenians was strong, President Wilson was extremely reluctant to take action until he had clear approval from the Senate. He considered that an American mandate for Armenia might be the necessary price for the mandate system as a whole, but in general he was not interested in the idea.[80]

Wilson expressed his views on the question of an American mandate before the Council of Ten on January 30, 1919, when he stated that, while he had succeeded in getting the United States to do many things, and while he might succeed in getting her to shoulder this burden as well, "the people of America would be most disinclined to do so."[81] This attitude was for the most part unchanged on March 6, when Lloyd George and Clemenceau discussed with Colonel House the possibility of placing Constantinople and Armenia under American control. House indicated that the United States might be prepared to take such mandates in view of her feeling that she could not shirk the responsibility, but she was not in the least anxious to do so.[82]

In terms of American control of one of the Arab

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[80]Evans, op. cit., p. 128.

[81]U.S., Department of State, op. cit., III, 788.

[82]De Novo, op. cit., p. 116.

regions, Howard Bliss' letter of February 7 to Wilson, stating his feelings that the United States would be the most acceptable power for a Syrian mandate, may well have been the first intimation to the President that responsibilities might have to be assumed elsewhere than in Armenia. It was not an important point at the time. Wilson maintained opposition to all ideas of direct American control in the Middle East and was not interested in encouraging hopes of such involvement. Nevertheless, he had proposed the sending of an inter-Allied Commission to the area, and he was obliged to at least consider its findings seriously.

The matter became important when the King-Crane Commission found overwhelming support among the Arabs for an American mandate of their territory. Professor Lybyer had noted in his preliminary report that, with the exception of the Latin group, all elements in Palestine seemed to favor American participation; and after the end of the Commission's work in Jerusalem, Mr. Crane arrived at the conclusion that there was very little tolerance for a French mandate but a very great attraction for the United States.[83] The story was much the same in Syria, where the majority of the Moslems favored an American mandate above both British and French, if independence

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[83]Howard, The King-Crane Commission, p. 99.

could not immediately be procured.

In its final report the Commission noted:

> ....there were abundant assurances that an American mandate would be satisfactory to practically all. The members of the Commission can entertain no doubt of the genuineness of the desire for the United States as mandatory power, in view of the countless earnest appeals, both by individuals and groups, and of the manifest enthusiasm shown on many occasions, in spite of the Commission's discouragement of demonstrations and evidence of every form of ostentation....[84]

Its recommendation was brief:

> From the point of view of the "people concerned", the Mandate should clearly go to America.[85]

The King-Crane Commission posed a single vital question to the United States: how deeply was America willing to take responsibility for the Middle East? Both the King-Crane Commission and the Harbord Commission[86] recommended flatly that America supervise Asia Minor, Constantinople, Armenia and Greater Syria - almost the entire domain of the former Ottoman Empire. Clearly such

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[84] U.S., Department of State, op. cit., XII, 855.

[85] Ibid., p. 796.

[86] Appointed on August 13, 1919, to investigate those factors of a social, political, economic and military nature which might be involved in the consideration of American responsibilities toward Turkey, the Harbord Commission spent six weeks in Anatolia and Armenia before returning to Paris in November. Its conclusions as to the esteem in which the Middle East held the United States were basically the same as those of the King-Crane Commission, and its most emphatic recommendation was for an American trusteeship of Armenia. See: U.S., Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, (1934), II, pp. 841-874, for the complete report.

an enormous mandate was out of the question. The fact remained, however, that through the two investigatory groups the strongest possible appeal had been made for American involvement in the Middle East. The issue was squarely placed before President Wilson and the nation as a whole.

CHAPTER V

THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL

The Negation of Internationalism

By the summer of 1919 the United States was beginning to show signs of dissatisfaction with the entire question of international involvement. The war had been ended for a year and the nation was beset by all the problems attendant upon rapid demobilization: unemployment, inflation, a reversion to peace without accompanying prosperity. Opposition to the President and the the Administration's post-war policies had been marshalling at home while Wilson sat at the tables of high diplomacy in Paris. The Senate, traditionally jealous of Executive power, had watched the President depart for the Peace Conference without consultation with the upper house and without approval from its members; its reserve was apparent when Wilson returned to Washington in February. As well, a revolt had taken place among the President's liberal supporters, many of whom saw in the League of Nation's territorial and

economic clauses a breeding ground for future conflicts. Finally, the American citizenry had become exceedingly cautious about having the United States led into foreign entanglements.

America had participated in the affairs of other nations to an unprecedented degree. Now, distrustful of the arguments for internationalism and unmoved by the conviction of her President, she had begun to grow restless as the negotiations continued in Europe. Two events finally sealed the matter and forced America to withdraw from the Peace Conference. The first was President Wilson's physical breakdown, which left him completely incapacitated from September 1919 onward; the second was the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles in November by the Senate.

Wilson had never been entirely well as President. When he had come to the White House in 1913, he was in his fifty-seventh year and suffering from generally bad health, neuritis in his shoulder, and poor digestion. Fears had been voiced that he might not be able to finish his first term. The strains of office had taken a considerable toll on Wilson's physical resources in his first six years as President, and at the Peace Conference the constant diplomatic maneuver and continued harrying of the Allies had added to the strain. On April 3, 1919, he

suffered a sudden and acute attack of influenza while in Paris; in late July, a month after his homeward departure from Europe, he was again bedridden; and on September 25, after a long and exhausting campaign tour in the western United States, he collapsed completely.

The President's breakdown would have been less important had it not come at a critical time. Wilson had left no instructions as to how the nation's foreign policy should be carried out, leaving Secretary Lansing in some confusion as to what course should be pursued at Paris. Moreover, the President had decided to keep the control of Turkish affairs within his own hands - waiting, perhaps, to see the reports of his Commissions to Armenia and Syria - and as a result the entire policy-making process vis-a-vis the Middle East had come to a complete standstill. Finally, Wilson was now unable to protect himself or his policies from the attacks of his opposition within the United States. No advocate as powerful as the President could stand in defense of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Treaty of Versailles had been brought before the Senate for ratification by the President upon his return from Europe in July, but instead of action a long and bitter dispute ensued between Wilson's followers and

those others, who, under the leadership of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, were intent on having the document rejected. Hearings by the Committee on Foreign Relations were not begun until July 31, and for the six weeks during which the Committee conducted its investigations, the President found himself losing ground. Senator Lodge managed to hold the initiative, and the opposition was able to make itself felt in the press more strongly than the Administration.

On September 10, the Treaty was brought out of Committee, with forty-five amendments and four reservations. Lodge's intention had been to make the mangled text so unacceptable to the internationalists that they themselves would be forced to reject it. Even Wilson, writing from his sickbed, noted in a letter to Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock that an affirmative vote by the Senate would mean not ratification but nullification of the Treaty.[87] On November 19, 1919, the Senate voted. After four ballots it was decided that the Treaty of Versailles , along with the Covenant of the League of Nations, was unacceptable in any form: as it had first been proposed by the President; with Senator Lodge's

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[87]Pratt, Julius W., A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955), p. 518.

amendments; or with a compromise set of reservations submitted by Senator Hitchcock. It was a significant defeat for Wilson, and a clear sign that the tide of internationalism had turned. The United States, it seemed to indicate, was trying to find its way out of the morass of European politics and return to domestic affairs, unfettered by foreign commitments or post-war responsibility.

Final Decisions on Palestine

The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles completely undercut the position of the United States at Paris. The American Delegation, at the time under the leadership of Frank L. Polk, the Undersecretary of State, had been able to accomplish little without Wilson's guidance; now, with the President's own plan rebuffed by the Senate, they were obliged to withdraw from active negotiations.

President Wilson issued instructions to terminate the American Peace Commission on December 9, 1919. On that date the last Commissioner was ordered withdrawn from Paris, but a single representative - Ambassador Hugh Wallace, accredited to France - was asked to remain on the Supreme Council as observer. He was instructed by Lansing to "take no action and express no opinion on

any subjects discussed," but to refer directly to the Department of State for orders should an American viewpoint still be desired by the Council.[88]

For a period of time the Allies urged the United States to participate in the final peace settlement with Turkey. At the end of November, shortly after Wilson's decision to recall the American Delegation from Paris, Great Britain and France asked the President for a delay in their departure, which he granted, and after the Commission had left they continued in an attempt to reengage the United States with the Conference. While the American withdrawal had removed a block to British and French ambitions, it had removed also a possible candidate for unwanted mandates[89] such as Armenia and the Constantinople Straits. Wilson, however, would not give his assent to further United States involvement, and on January 21, 1920, the Supreme Council announced its intention to continue its deliberations whatever the President should decide.

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[88] U.S., Department of State, Papers Relating..., 1919: The Paris Peace Conference, XI (1945), 698.

[89] Such mandates were unwanted in the sense that neither Great Britain nor France desired the other's control of such areas, but both would have approved of a relatively neutral power, such as the United States, accepting a League trusteeship.

A last effort was made by both Zionists and Arabs to interest the United States in their respective problems. Felix Frankfurter began a renewed Zionist effort to expand the boundaries of Palestine when he wrote to the Department of State in October, saying that the British and French were arranging the frontiers of their Middle East mandates in a way which would defeat the economic viability of the country.[90] Frankfurter requested the Department to obtain assurances from Britain and France that no action would be taken without active consideration of the American and Zionist positions on Palestine. While the Department was unable to transmit such a request officially, it did cable Frankfurter's message (at his own expense) to Secretary Polk in Paris, and received the reply that the two Allied nations had, in fact, been debating whether to ask the United States informally to arbitrate the boundary question.[91]

On December 29, a Zionist plea for the Litani River and the western and southern slopes of Mt. Hermon to be included in Palestine was sent to Lloyd George.

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[90] Evans, op. cit., p. 262.

[91] Ibid., p. 263.

It was backed by the recommendations of a British engineering firm, hired specifically for the purpose, that such a boundary enlargement was vital to the future development of the land. Additional pressure was applied slightly more than a month later, on February 3, when a telegram was sent simultaneously to Lord Curzon, then British Foreign Secretary, and Alexandre Millerand, Premier of France, requesting anew a northern extension of Palestine's frontiers. The telegram was signed exclusively by American Zionists - Brandeis, Julian Mack, Rabbi Wise, Frankfurter and Jacob de Haas - and was followed up on February 6th by a letter from Brandeis to President Wilson, which stated that a denial of Palestine's viability because of a restrictive northern boundary settlement would be a betrayal of the promises of Christendom to the Jews.[92]

Wilson was moved to write Secretary Lansing:

> I enclose an impressive letter which I have just received from Mr. Justice Brandeis and which I beg that you will read. I agree with its conclusions and beg that you will instruct Mr. Wallace in Paris to use every means that is proper to impress this view upon the French and English authorities. All the great powers are committed to the Balfour Declaration, and I agree with Mr. Justice Brandeis regarding it as a solemn promise which we can in

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[92] Ibid.

no circumstance afford to break or alter.[93]

Ambassador Wallace was further instructed to transmit Wilson's views orally and informally, as the United States had no official position in the discussions on the matter.

Neither of the two nations negotiating the Syria-Palestine boundary were impressed by the Zionist's entreaties or the President's concern. The British had no desire to change the character of the discussions at this late stage, and Premier Millerand took particular exception to the extension of the British mandate that Brandeis suggested. Nor was the State Department enthusiastic at the President's instructions. In view of reports from Palestine that feeling among the Arab population was approaching the flash point, it was not encouraged to take further diplomatic action for the Zionist cause. Secretary Lansing tended to de-emphasize the President's statements on Palestine, and the Department made little effort on behalf of the Zionists except to request reports from its Consul in Jerusalem from time to time to keep American Jews informed of the situation.

America's decision to withdraw from the Peace

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[93]Manuel, op. cit., p. 257.

Conference left the Arabs in a particularly helpless position. In September and October, 1919, the question of occupation forces in Syria had come up at the Conference. An arrangement had been made between Great Britain and France that French troops would replace British forces in Syria later in the year, and considerable agitation had been created in Damascus by rumors that the British had approved a French mandate as a price for French approval of the Turkish settlement.

The Emir Feisal traveled from Damascus to London in September to lodge an appeal with the British against the French occupation of Syria. The Arab leader asked that the arrangement be cancelled; or that the entire question be referred to the Peace Conference, or to a commission under an American chairmanship.[94] All suggestions were turned aside by Lloyd George, with the statement that he could not discuss the matter further.

In spite of the fact that American policy toward a Turkish settlement was in stasis until the Senate had acted on the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League, Feisal continued to look toward the United States for arbitration of the issue. He had made efforts in October to convince William Yale, then in London, that the

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[94]Woodward, E.L. and Butler, Rohan (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Series I, Vol. IV (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), pp. 443-444.

United States should participate in negotiations on the occupation of Syria, and later in the month he approached Frank Polk in Paris on the same subject. Yale had evolved his own plan for the Middle East[95] which he suggested to Feisal as a compromise; Polk was entirely discouraging about further American involvement.

Polk most nearly reflected the State Department's attitude. Until the Senate had indicated its approval of the Treaty of Versailles and the League, the Department was unwilling to make any move toward a settlement in the Middle East. It instructed its envoys in the area to avoid scrupulously any discussions of American acceptance of a mandate - such a suggestion had been made by the Consul in Beirut - and sought to prevent its diplomats from encouraging

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[95]Yale's plan, published in a column of The Times on October 8, 1919, encompassed the entire sphere of mandatory interest. Mesopotamia was to be divided into two zones, the northern area - with Baghdad and Mosul - would be practically independent under a supervisory British mandate; the southern zone would be under a direct British mandate. Syria would also be a practically independent Arab state, under a French supervisory mandate. Lebanon would be a separate unit under direct French mandatory rule. "Palestine," Yale went on, "should be constituted as a separate political unit in which, under a general mandate of Great Britain, the Zionists would carry out....their plan for organizing a National Home for the Jewish people." The United States, as a disinterested power, would have general oversight for the implementation of the scheme.

The proposal was sent to Secretary Lansing on October 27, but in view of the fact that President Wilson had delegated no authority on matters relating to the Turkish settlement, no action on it was taken.

Arab hopes. Frank Polk, never sanguine about American involvement in the Middle East, informed Feisal in Paris that he should not hope for American arbitration between the British and French, nor for United States intervention in Franco-Anglo-Arab disputes. Polk's personal attitude is best summed up in his own words, cabled to Washington after his interview with Feisal. The United States, the envoy believed, should withdraw from the "whole disgusting scramble."[96]

American participation had been the last hope of the Arab nationalists for an equitable settlement. Had the treaty been accepted by the Senate, and had America continued in the Conference negotiations, there was always hope that the Sykes-Picot Agreement could have been rejected for an arrangement more favorable to the Arabs. With the United States off the scene, Feisal was forced to negotiate directly with the French.

A second and final vote on the Versailles Treaty and the League Covenant was taken in the Senate on March 19, 1920. Only one ballot was held. As on November 19, the President himself was forced to ask his followers to reject the Treaty, burdened as it was with fifteen reservations, and the necessary two-thirds majority was not obtained.

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[96]Evans, op. cit., p. 232.

By this last act the United States refused all consideration of the Syrian question. On March 28, Feisal, who had been crowned king of Syria eight days before (the American Consul in Damascus had been instructed to travel to Beirut "on urgent business" so that he might not be at the coronation), cabled Wilson, asking for the President's support of his newly independent nation; no reply was returned. Further communications directed to the President or State Department from Damascus were ignored, as were entreaties by the Delegation of the Hejaz, still in Paris. Arab nationalism, it was clear, could expect no official sympathy from the United States.

On April 24, 1920, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference met at San Remo to decide on the disposition of mandates in the Middle East. Great Britain was given the mandate for Palestine, France that for Syria. The terms of the peace with Turkey, dictated at San Remo and delivered to the Turkish Government on April 24, were signed at Sevres on August 10; the final boundary settlement between Syria and Palestine was reached at the Franco-British Convention of December 23, 1920.

The United States took no part in the negotiations at San Remo, but was kept informed of developments and was allowed to express her unofficial views. A last attempt was made at the Conference to interest the Americans in the

Turkish treaty: the Council formally asked the United States to assume the Armenian mandate and, if she were unable to accept this, to arbitrate on boundaries for the proposed state in any case.[97]

On May 24, 1920, President Wilson took the question of an Armenian mandate to the Senate. He received his answer a week later: the Council's suggestion was rejected by a vote of fifty-two to twenty three; America had no desire to assume such a burden. The Armenian boundary problem was nonetheless arbitrated by the President, and his recommendations were included in the Treaty of Sevres. Nationalist Turkey, however, enraged at the provisions of the Treaty, prevented its implementation and managed to force the Great Powers to a new settlement, completed at Lausanne in 1923.

Just as the first part of 1919 had been a period of extraordinary success for Wilson's international policies, so had the last months of the same year marked a stage of complete defeat. With every weakening of the President's position at home, that of the United States at the Peace Conference became less certain, until by the end of November the American Delegation at Paris was obliged to disengage from all negotiations on the Turkish settlement. No forther exhortations by the President could move his country to renew the broken contact with the problems of Europe or

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[97] U.S., Department of State, Papers Relating..., 1920, III (1936), 780.

the Middle East.

To the United States - and in the final analysis it must be seen that the Senate's action on the Versailles Treaty reflected the viewpoint of the nation - the reasons for neither taking a mandate nor assuming responsibility in a post-war settlement were strong enough. They had guided American policy-makers since the early days of the Republic, when George Washington had stated the position in his Farewell Address of 1796. For over a century and a quarter isolationism had been a way of life, and its basic precepts had not been successfully challenged. Nor were they to be altered now. The Wilsonian era had passed, and with its passing America turned her energies inward toward domestic issues and left her Allies to deal with the problems of mandates and control of the Middle East. The Arab World was divided anew and the voices of Arab nationalism went unheard behind the walls of a new European <u>raj</u>. For the United States, American-Arab relations were severed; the Middle East policy of the nation became simply an extension of American-French or American-British relations. The issues of the period of engagement - Zionism, self-determination, the internationalization of mandatory control - were dead, and the United States had departed until a new war and a hew generation would again force her attention to the area.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The history of American involvement in Palestine from the beginning of World War I to the confirmation of the British mandate in 1920 can be divided into three distinct periods:

1) The final years of Ottoman rule, until late 1917 - a period of noninvolvement;

2) The period of active engagement with the Palestine issue, from the end of 1917 through the middle of 1919;

3) The period of withdrawal, beginning in the latter part of 1919.

In a span of six years time, Palestine had passed from a colony of the Ottoman Empire to a mandated territory under British administration. For the last three of those years the former Turkish province became an international issue, contested by Zionists, Arabs, British and French, all of whom saw their particular interests involved in Palestine's post-war fate.

For one year, beginning in late 1918, the United States was constantly engaged with the question of Palestine.

Much of this can be credited to the efforts of American Zionists to keep the issue before the eyes of the President, yet it was primarily a result of Wilson's own post-war aims at the Paris Peace Conference.

In these the President was in intermittent dispute with the British and almost continually at odds with the French. The latter, led by Clemenceau, put up the strongest opposition to the American position. Throughout the Conference and up to the point of Wilson's final departure for the United States they continued to obstruct American attempts to bring mandates - particularly that of Syria - under firm League supervision. Regardless of American attempts to assign mandates according to the will of the people involved, the French eventually succeeded in seeing the Ottoman Empire divided more or less along the lines of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, with Syria separated from Palestine and under French control.

American self-determination and European annexationism had little tolerance for each other at Paris, and the differences which arose over the disposition of the Ottoman provinces originated almost totally as a result of this conflict in principle. The Wilsonian precept of international control, it should be emphasized, was a new and unorthodox condition to apply to a post-war

settlement. Conquest and subjugation were time-honored principles of war, and the European Allies were within their rights to expect the acquisition of new territory.[98] Yet the First World War was an unorthodox conflict, both in its extent and in the universal reaction against further wars which it created. President Wilson had one of his strongest bargaining points in this reaction, and in 1919 neither Britain nor France could afford to ignore his plea for firm international controls to ensure that war might never again occur.

The President managed, in spite of Allied differences, to attain three goals: (1) the acceptance of the League of Nations; (2) the establishment of mandates within the League; and (3) the establishment of America's right to take part in the discussions on Turkey's partition. The last point was a direct result of Wilson's

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[98] See Oppenheim, L., International Law (London, 1955), I, 570:

> Prior to the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Charter of the United Nations and the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, States, as well as the vast majority of writers, recognized subjugation as a mode of acquiring territory. Its justification lay in the fact that war was a contention, not condemned by law, between States for the purpose of overpowering one another. States which went to war knew beforehand that they more or less risked their very existence, and that it might be necessary for the victor to annex the conquered enemy territory, either in the interest of national unity, or of safety against further attacks, or for other reasons.

success with the first two, for in achieving Allied acceptance of the League and its mandatory system he created of the United States a custodian for the principle of self-determination. Eventually British and French diplomacy managed to dilute the original mandatory concept; the result, as has been noted, was a compromise. In the final analysis, however, it was through Wilson's constant efforts that annexationism was defeated at a relatively early stage in the Peace Conference.

The striking feature which stands out from the Conference period is the ability which Wilson had to impose his will on the Turkish settlement upon both the Allies and his colleagues within the American Delegation. Within a month he had been able to establish the nature of the settlement, and in so doing gave the United States the right to participate in the negotiations while not committing her to any responsibility in the Middle East. The fact that America became involved at all was a matter of volition and not of necessity. Throughout, Wilson managed to retain his freedom of action while obliging the Allies to accept his conditions.

In basic opposition to the Allies on the entire question of mandates, Wilson found himself in a somewhat paradoxical situation in specific relation to the Palestine issue. If he were to have been consistent, the President

would probably have favored an Arab-controlled state, under a loose mandate, with provisions made for the security and rights of minorities. In such a circumstance he would have aroused the Zionists, who could envision nothing less than an eventual Jewish state, and the British, who were in any case bound to honor the Balfour Declaration. If, on the other hand, Wilson had committed the foreign policy of the United States to Zionism - as his statements indicated he might - he ran the risk of alienating the State Department and jeopardizing the interests of his country.

In the circumstance he acted according to which interest he felt was most important. About Zionism he said much but did little. The statement which the President issued to Rabbi Wise in 1918, and those which succeeded it, undoubtedly reflected Wilson's emotional affinity for the Zionist cause. The significant point, however, is that they were not followed by positive Executive action. There is no record of any effort by Wilson to persuade House or Lansing to alter their indifference to Zionism, nor of any directive passed down to the State Department which would have transformed Presidential sentiment into national policy. Perhaps the greatest aid which Wilson gave to Zionism came as a

result of his concurrence in the formula of the Balfour Declaration, transmitted to the British through Colonel House in October of 1917. Yet, judging from Weizmann's remarks, the effect of this note was far more important than the rather casual spirit of its assignation might suggest, and one is left with the feeling that this particular Zionist goal was attained by default.

It can be said that the Peace Conference was the testing ground for American Zionist diplomacy. The preceding years, from 1914 to 1918, had merely been a preparatory period during which the Zionists were in the process of building up strength and increasing their influence in Government circles. The proof of their labor came at Paris, and it is significant that during this most critical period they suffered their most telling reverses.

The American Delegation, which had theretofore been at least receptive to Zionist claims as a result of Wilson's sympathy with their cause, became noticeably cooler to Jewish nationalism as the Conference progressed. American disenchantment began to grow when it became clear that Zionism and self-determination were mutually exclusive, and the favorable impression which the Arab nationalists made on the Americans did nothing to help Chaim Weizmann's position. The President's suggestion of an inter-Allied

Commission of inquiry to the Middle East marked a dramatic downward shift in Zionist fortunes; and it was a foregone conclusion that the King-Crane report's recommendations would be highly unfavorable to a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

In retrospect, it may appear that there was a certain degree of hypocrisy in Wilson's pro-Zionist statements and anti-Zionist actions. Such was not the case in reality, for while the President was openly sympathetic to Zionism, he was equally devoted to the welfare of the United States. Zionism was a personal indulgence which he did not allow to carry over into public policy, and when the two conflicted - as happened when the King-Crane Commission came up for discussion - President Wilson was obliged to act according to what he felt were the nation's best interests.

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