

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE FOREIGN POLICY
AND NATIONAL DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE OF
THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL PLATFORM COMMITTEE
JULY 31, 1968
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

The American Committee for Justice in the Middle East is a non-profit, non-partisan, educational organization working to develop an informed, thoughtful, balanced and articulate public opinion concerning the entire Middle East and its problems. We express our appreciation to the Republican National Convention Platform Committee for allowing us to offer what we believe to be valid and critical views on a question of greater danger to our nation than even the conflict in Southeast Asia.

I

The American Committee for Justice in the Middle East wishes to call attention to the following general conditions:

- 1. MISREADING OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OPINION ON MIDEAST**
There appears to be a misreading, both of international and domestic opinion, concerning what the United States stance in the Middle East should be. A swift glance at the United Nations voting, a reading of European, African and Indian subcontinent newspapers and journals, and conversations with visitors from Afro-Asian nations suffice to indicate the isolation in which our country finds itself through its total and near-blind support of Israel. On the vote on Jerusalem in 1967 at the United Nations (passed 99 to 0), the U.S. abstained. More recently, in the Security Council meeting of May 21, 1968 the United States and Canada alone abstained.
- 2. AMERICANS DESIRE NEUTRALITY**
In the United States today there is a widespread and growing wariness over deep commitments to foreign countries. In a recent poll of his constituency (Congressional Record, March 13, 1968, H1920-22), Representative John A. Dent found that 74 per cent of those replying favored a United Nations settlement of the Mideast problem with the U.S. remaining neutral. This is of great importance considering the view put forward by the one per cent or less of the American public which claims to be devoted Zionists, that the citizens of this nation are strong supporters of Israel and, therefore, will approve a deep commitment to that State.
- 3. REGRETTABLE OVERSIMPLIFICATION AND DECEPTIVE LABELING**
It is regrettable that an oversimplification is made which tends to paint one party black and the other white in the Mideast conflict. No one nation has a monopoly on aggression; indeed, Israel, by its own admission, initiated actual hostilities both

in 1956 and 1967. The treatment of the acts by Palestinian refugees offers an example of image-making by labeling. To other Arab nations and much of the rest of the world, they are considered "liberation" or "resistance" fighters, while in the Israeli and part of the U.S. press they are described as "terrorists." Finally, it should be pointed out that the Arabs are not communist just as Israel is not a clear democracy. Lebanon, Kuwait and Jordan all exhibit parliamentary government in varying degrees while Israel has the only legal Communist Party in the Middle East. This latter fact does not make Israel communist, nor does the acceptance of Soviet aid make the Arab nations any more "communist" than utilizing Soviet assistance in World War II made the United States and Great Britain "communist."

II

The American Committee for Justice in the Middle East believes the present Administration's policy in that region has led to a direct diminution of and endangered American interests in the following areas:

1. LOSS OF U.S. ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND POLITICAL INTERESTS
There has been a definite loss of U.S. interests—political, military and economic. The United States has had a positive balance of payments with the Arab world in excess of \$1 billion annually in the past, the only such region with which we have held so advantageous an economic position. Thus, any and all aid to the Arab nations has been offset generously by our return on investments and our trade with them. The growing Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean and military penetration into the Arab states is obviously a loss to our national security. The United States has similarly lost the support politically of such countries, in addition to all Arab states, as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, India, Turkey, Greece, Ethiopia, France, Spain and most African nations following our one-sided policy in the Middle East.

2. PRESENT POLICY AND POLICYMAKERS SUSPECT
The Johnson Administration has many decision and policymakers at the very highest levels who are extremely suspect, not only to the Arab governments and peoples, but other countries as well, because of their deep and sincere commitment to Zionism. By leaving the formulation, representation and application of foreign policy to such individuals, the entire U.S. effort, feeble as it has been, lacked credibility.

3. WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION FROM THE AMERICAN PUBLIC
The American public was never given any information on the attack on the U.S.S. Liberty. Our citizens deserve to know what objectives the National Security Council had in ordering that vessel into the Mediterranean off Sinai, and why the Israeli attacks were played down. This is one indication of the manner in which

information has been withheld from the electorate by the present Administration. Yet another instance was the almost cavalier treatment of the U.A.R. willingness to allow the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to be taken before the World Court, a major concession on the part of Egypt and completely underplayed and unexploited by an American administration which supposedly wished to avert a war.

4. UNITED STATES POLICY ON TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

The present Administration bases U.S. involvement in Vietnam on the concept that we are fighting there to prove that "aggression does not pay." Yet in the Middle East, President Johnson has permitted aggression to pay in altering the long-standing U.S. commitment to territorial integrity for all nations in that area. This stand, initiated by President Truman in 1948 to reassure the Arab nations after the creation of and first expansion territorially by Israel, reaffirmed and rightly so by President Eisenhower in 1956 after the Suez aggression, has been subtly altered today to apply to fixed, negotiated boundaries which indicates acquiescence in allowing Israel to draw its own borders under the pressure of occupation. Needless to say, this is in direct conflict with the United Nations resolution of November 1967 which the United States purports to support. Additionally, our gift of Skyhawk jet aircraft and the agreement to sell Hawk ground-to-air missiles to Israel, tend to solidify that nation's territorial expansionism and negate still further the U.S. oft repeated commitment to territorial integrity within the region.

5. FORCING THE ARAB NATIONS TOWARD COMMUNIST AID

The existing policy is driving many nations unwillingly toward communist assistance. When it comes to a question of national existence and self-defense, any country will take aid from whatever source is available. Some of our Committee members returned in June 1968 from a fact-finding trip to the Middle East where they saw and evaluated the economic emasculation of Jordan and learned of the Arab desire for only neutrality from the U.S., a return to the Eisenhower policy. Throughout their journey, including Iraq, where they were among the few Americans allowed in that country, the common question put to them by the man in the street and Ministers of Foreign Affairs alike was, "Why is the United States forcing us to the Communists?" It is a difficult query to answer.

III

Based upon our study of the Mideast question and our contact with other members of the American public, the American Committee for Justice in the Middle East urges the following factors be included in the formulation of the Republican Party's policy position on the Mideast:

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1. PRO-AMERICAN, NEUTRAL POLICY URGED

We urge a pro-American interests, honest and clearly neutral policy in that region. We do not support an anti-Israel nor an anti-Arab stance, rather one which takes each issue strictly upon its merits and with the goals of the United States and world peace in mind.

2. FULL SUPPORT OF NOVEMBER 1967 U.N. RESOLUTION URGED

We urge the full support for complete implementation of the November 1967 United Nations resolution. Both the United Arab Republic and Jordan have agreed to accept it; unfortunately, Israel, in statements by its cabinet members, has refused. The United States should withhold military and economic assistance to Israel until that nation agrees to such implementation.

3. PRIORITY FOR PEACE URGED

We urge that the priority established by the United Nations resolution be adopted by the United States; (1) withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied territory, Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the Jordan and Arab Jerusalem, and (2) with an end to belligerency, the question of navigation rights will solve itself (the U.A.R. has officially agreed to this section of the resolution).

4. REFUGEE SOLUTION URGED

We urge the settlement of the refugee problem by the full implementation of the United Nations resolution on this matter, passed annually since 1948 and which is a condition of Israeli statehood, that is, either the repatriation and/or full compensation for the former Arab residents of Palestine. If the refugee problem were solved, the so-called terrorism, or the excuse for it, would cease.

5. "MIGHT MAKES RIGHT" CREED DANGEROUS FOR ALL

We urge that the United States halt its support of the militaristic or "hawk" element now in control of the Israeli government. The acceptance of a "might makes right" creed would be disastrous for all concerned, the Arabs in the immediate future, but even more so for Israel in the long-run. As modernization in the Arab world continues, the economic and political consequences of size will win out over disproportionate technical skills and economic assistance from abroad which now place Israel in a position of superiority.

6. JUSTICE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY PREREQUISITES FOR PEACE

We believe, unfortunately, that unless the United Nations resolution of November 1967, beginning with the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops, is implemented in the next few months, additional war is inevitable. We believe, moreover, that until the Arab refugee problem involving not only humanitarian but political and property rights (Arabs owned 94 per cent of the land and formed two-thirds of the population of Palestine) is righted, there can never be a permanent peace in the Mideast. We deplore the emphasis

being placed on religious differences, primarily by Israel and specifically by its Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, as it harms the 12 million Christian Arabs and numerous Jewish Arabs.

7. U.S. MUST SEEK TO AVOID NEO-COLONIAL STANCE

We believe if the United States adopts the policy now put forward by some pro-Zionist policymakers in the present Administration, that the U.S. has "lost" the Arab countries and must, therefore, put all its support behind Israel as the only opportunity to control the region, we shall have blundered into a neo-colonial stance. This can only lead to the destruction of our own position ultimately and that of our would-be "partner", i. e., Israel. It would make a complete mockery of all the American ideals of democracy to seek to control a majority of 120 million by a minority of less than 2 1/2 million.

8. WITHOUT NEUTRALITY, POSSIBILITY OF UNWANTED CONFRONTATION

We believe that unless the United States corrects its misreading of domestic and international opinion, which is increasingly supporting justice through a neutral and United Nations solution of the immediate and long-standing problems in the Mideast, our nation may find itself alone, isolated and in an unwanted direct confrontation in the Middle East.

The above statements have been endorsed as well by the New Haven Committee on the Middle East Crisis, New Haven, Connecticut and the American-Arabic Association (Amara), Boston, Massachusetts.

IV

The American Committee for Justice in the Middle East is pleased to sponsor the oral testimony of Mr. David G. Nes, former Charge d'affaires of the United States in Cairo, who has also served in Vietnam, Great Britain, Libya and Morocco. Attached, as background information necessary for questioning by the Subcommittee, is an address of Mr. Nes presented in April 1968. Mr. Nes is solely responsible and only responsible for the opinions expressed in his printed statement as well as his oral testimony.