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FROM REFUGEES TO STATEHOOD: THE UNITED STATES AND THE FORMATION OF ISRAEL, 1945–1948

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The article explores the transformation of U.S. refugee policy in the aftermath of World War II and its role in the creation of the State of Israel. While the initial American approach was shaped by humanitarian concerns, particularly the crisis of Jewish displaced persons (DPs) in Europe, the issue gradually evolved into a matter of strategic diplomacy. The article highlights the impact of the Harrison Report (1945) and President Truman’s directive (December 22, 1945), which marked a significant departure from existing immigration quotas and prioritized the resettlement of Jewish refugees. Despite domestic resistance and isolationist sentiment, Jewish organizations mobilized illegal migration routes through Austria and Italy, often supported tacitly by Czechoslovak and Soviet authorities. The research also examines the diplomatic dynamics between the United States and Great Britain, particularly in the context of Palestine. It analyzes the failure of joint Anglo-American efforts, such as the Morrison-Grady Plan and the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, to reconcile Arab, Jewish, and British interests. The article argues that these failures contributed to the internationalization of the

"Palestine question" and the eventual adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which proposed the partition of Palestine and laid the groundwork for the Jewish state. The study underscores the dual function of Jewish refugees as both a humanitarian concern and a political instrument. Their displacement catalyzed policy shifts, tested transatlantic relations, and legitimized the Zionist project in the eyes of international actors. The American response to the refugee crisis, thus, became a lens through which broader postwar transformations in global order, migration policy, and nation-building were enacted.

Keywords: Anglo-American diplomacy, refugees, displaced persons, Jewish migration, Palestine question, Truman administration, Zionism

Introduction

The issue of Jewish refugees and displaced persons in postwar Europe emerged as one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges for the international community and, in particular, for the United States. In the context of growing tensions in the Middle East, the collapse of colonial empires, and the emergence of new approaches to international law, U.S. policy toward Holocaust survivors increasingly acquired a strategic dimension. The resolution of the so-called "Jewish question" in American discourse became ever more closely linked to support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, against the backdrop of a rapidly transforming global order after the Second World War. The relevance of this topic lies in the need for a comprehensive analysis of how humanitarian imperatives, international pressures, domestic political factors, and diplomatic negotiations shaped the evolution of U.S. foreign policy during the period from 1945 to 1948. Despite the existence of a considerable body of scholarly literature on the history of Israel, the Holocaust, and Anglo-American relations, the specific role of refugees as a catalyst for policy decisions remains underexplored.

The historiographical foundation of this study draws on the works of American, Israeli, and European scholars. In his seminal work Benny Morris [Morris 2007] analyzes the political and military dimensions of the Israeli statehood process but pays limited attention to the refugee factor. Arieh J. Kochavi [Kochavi 2001] focuses primarily on high-level diplomatic relations and British-American disagreements over Palestine. Michael Dinnersteinm [Dinnerstein 1982] examines the U.S. response to Holocaust survivors but does not systematically

address the connection to the formation of Israel. Peter Gatrell [Gatrell 2013] offers a broad comparative analysis of refugee movements in the twentieth century, including Jewish displacement, but treats the U.S. role and the Middle Eastern context in a more general framework. Daniel Tichenor [Tichenor 2002] explores the domestic political dynamics of U.S. immigration policy.

The present study is based on a wide range of primary sources, including archival materials from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, and the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. These collections provide access to government correspondence, intelligence reports, refugee statistics, mission documentation, and transcripts of diplomatic communications. Their analysis allows for a reconstruction of U.S. decision-making processes and a deeper understanding of the humanitarian and strategic considerations that shaped American engagement with the refugee crisis, influenced the evolution of U.S. support for Jewish resettlement in Palestine, and ultimately contributed to the international legitimization of Israel state-building project.

The aim of this article is to determine the role of U.S. policy toward Jewish displaced persons in Europe as an integral part of the broader process of establishing a Jewish state in the Middle East.

The main objectives are to analyze the position of the U.S. administration on the refugee issue during 1945–1948; to examine the impact of domestic political context on decision-making; to describe the mechanisms of legal and illegal Jewish migration to Palestine; to identify the role of international organizations and Jewish civic structures in this process; and to assess the significance of displaced persons as both a humanitarian and geopolitical factor in the creation of the State of Israel.

The U.S. Response to the Jewish Displacement Crisis

Assistance to Jewish refugees occupied a significant place in the foreign policy agenda of the United States during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, addressing the issue of postwar Jewish migration required a comprehensive approach, encompassing the situation of prewar political refugees, displaced persons (DPs), the decolonization of the Middle East, and the establishment of a

Jewish national state. At the same time, given the domestic confrontation between isolationists and internationalists, President Harry S. Truman's administration had to take into account internal political sentiments when making any decisions.

In the United States, two primary visions emerged regarding the fate of postwar Jewish refugees and DPs. The first envisioned emigration to Palestine or other countries outside Europe, while the second focused on repatriation to Central and Eastern Europe. According to Samuel Gringauz, the situation of Jewish DPs became a decisive factor in mobilizing American Jewry in support of the "Palestinian option" [Gringauz 1947, *504*]. On the other hand, Zachariah Shuster argued that efforts should instead be directed toward the revival of Jewish communities in Germany, Austria, Poland, and Hungary [Shuster 1945, *9–16*]. Given the serious obstacles to changing American immigration law, the U.S. Jewish community channeled its efforts toward encouraging a more active foreign policy on the "Middle Eastern question". For similar reasons, Zionists received support from Christian civic organizations [Warnshuis 1945, *1284*]. The American establishment and government officials were guided by the necessities and challenges of the time, evolving from a temporary humanitarian response to the plight of Jewish refugees and a sense of guilt over the lives not saved from extermination, to full support for the assertion of the Jewish people's right to their own state.

In July 1945, U.S. Army chaplain Abraham Klausner, drawing parallels with the consequences of the Assyrian conquest, referred to European Jews as the *She'erit Hapletah* – the "surviving remnant" [Hilton 2001, *313*]. According to the estimates of historian Koppel Pinson, by the time of Germany's capitulation, approximately 60,000 Jewish DPs remained in Europe [Pinson 1947]. Around 20,000 Jews were liberated from concentration camps in Germany, and another 7,000 in Austria. A key element of the U.S. information policy at the time was the dissemination of evidence about Nazi crimes. In April 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower invited American officials to visit liberated areas of Europe [*Archives of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum* – ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Letter from General…, April 15, 1945, *2*]. Accompanied by General George C. Marshall, members of Congress toured the Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau camps between April 24

and May 6, 1945. Following the visit, a report was compiled [Lindsey 2012, *381*] and on June 18, 1945, General Eisenhower convened a press conference at the Pentagon regarding the end of the war in Europe. According to Eisenhower, he was "angrier than ever in his life" after visiting the camps and strongly supported the publication of documentary evidence [ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Transcript of Press…, June 18, 1945]. By that time, the military had collected a substantial body of materials documenting crimes against civilians, concentration camps, and the extermination of groups persecuted based on ethnicity, religion, and other grounds [ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Secret Report…, July 1942; ADDEPLM, Investigation Report of the life…, December 1944; ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Report on atrocities…, February 1945; ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Report Dachau…, 1945; ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, G-2 Report…, April 28, 1945].

It should be noted that at that time, Jewish organizations were advocating for the official recognition of the separate status of their national community within the DP camps, as they were not members of the United Nations and were classified by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) as "victims of Nazism" [Hilton 2001, *315*]. On June 22, 1945, following appeals from Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Congressman Emanuel Celler, President Harry S. Truman instructed Earl G. Harrison, the American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, to inspect DP camps in Europe. The mission was to assess the living conditions of the displaced persons, identify their needs, evaluate the performance of the military administration and private organizations, and prepare recommendations regarding the future of those who could not be repatriated. The American president emphasized the need to pay special attention to the situation of Jewish refugees and displaced persons.

During the inspection tour in July 1945, Earl G. Harrison's group managed to visit thirty DP camps. In particular, David Schwartz, accompanied by Colonel Leighton, assessed the conditions in northern Germany, while Harrison himself focused on Bavaria and the American-occupied zone of Austria [Königseder 2001, *31*]. The large-scale repatriation of citizens from the Soviet Union, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands made a strong impression on the American inspectors.

At the same time, members of the mission noted the first difficulties in the repatriation process – namely, the shortage of transport for the return of 100,000 DPs to Yugoslavia and the unwillingness of 350,000 Baltic nationals to return to their countries, now under Soviet occupation. According to Harrison's estimates, there were approximately 25,000 German Jews, 5,000 to 10,000 Balkan Jews, and an undetermined number of Jews from Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria in the camps across Austria and Germany [Penkower 2016, *34–35*].

Following the inspection trip, on August 24, 1945, Harrison prepared a report. The document emphasized the unsatisfactory conditions under which Jews were being held in resettlement centers established on the sites of former concentration camps. It detailed inadequate food rations (1,250 calories per day instead of the recommended 2,000), the separation of families, barracks unprepared for winter, and problems with medical care and employment [ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Report of Earl G. Harrisons Mission…, August 24, 1945, *6–7*]. The report also recommended that an agreement be reached with the British authorities to revise the immigration quotas set by the 1939 White Paper and to evacuate 100,000 Jews from Germany to Palestine [ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Letter from General…, September 18, 1945, *1–3*]. In addition, Harrison opposed the repatriation of Jews to Central and Eastern European countries and criticized several UNRRA military officials for being unfit for their positions on this matter [Fox 1945].

Shortly after receiving the report, on August 31, 1945, President Truman wrote a letter to General Eisenhower, emphasizing the need to improve living conditions for Jewish DPs in the area under the command of the SHAEF [Archives of the Harry S. Truman Presidental Library and Museum, Truman Papers, Letter from Harry S. Truman…, August 31, 1945, *1–2*]. One month later, on September 30, 1945, at Truman's direction, both Eisenhower's letter and Harrison's report were published in The New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune. Journalists placed particular emphasis on the dire conditions of the Jewish DPs, which they claimed resembled those of Nazi concentration camps: confinement behind barbed wire, poor sanitation, near-total isolation from the outside world, instances of

detainees still wearing concentration camp clothing or being issued former SS uniforms, meager nutrition, and lack of preparation for the winter due to fuel shortages.

According to M. Proudfoot, the report's author not only sought to pressure U.S. military authorities to improve the status and living conditions of Jewish DPs, but also aimed to influence Britain to lift immigration restrictions and to draw the attention of American society to the plight of the Jewish people [Proudfoot 1956, *1–4*].

On October 8, 1945, in a letter to President Truman, Eisenhower acknowledged progress in improving the situation of Jewish DPs, but noted that problems remained: the search for better housing, preparation for winter, granting priority employment rights to camp residents, and the reluctance of some DPs to cooperate with the military administration [ADDEPLM, Eisenhower Papers, Letter from General…, October 8, 1945, *1–4*]. Nevertheless, on November 5, 1945, Eisenhower submitted the "Final Report on Jewish Displaced Persons in Germany" to President Truman, detailing the measures taken to address the shortcomings identified in the Harrison Report. Specifically, Jewish refugees and displaced persons were granted distinct status, daily food rations were raised to 2,500 calories, cooperation with civic organizations was enhanced, regular inspections of administrative personnel were conducted, and a permanent Advisor on Jewish Affairs was appointed to the U.S. Army's European Command. This position, equivalent in rank to major general, was to be held by a civilian with experience in administrative and community work.

Political Challenges and Domestic Constraints in U.S. Refugee Policy

However, the most significant impact of the Harrison Report was on President Harry S. Truman, who on December 22, 1945, issued a public statement regarding the immigration of displaced persons (DPs) and European refugees to the United States [Statement by the President… 1961, *572–576*]. The President expressed confidence that the United States could set an example in resolving the crisis by opening its doors to those who had suffered as a result of the war. He reminded the public that the war had halted migration from Europe: in the fiscal year 1942, only 10 % of the immigration quota was filled; in 1943, just 5 %; and in 1944, 7 %.

At the same time, President Truman proposed a plan for the admission of DPs, with a focus on orphaned children. He noted that since the majority of DPs were from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, the number of participants in the program should correspond to the annual national quotas designated for those regions. Specifically, the yearly immigration quota for the region totaled 39,000 individuals, distributed as follows: Germany – 25,900; Poland – 6,524; Austria – 1,413; Yugoslavia – 845; Czechoslovakia – 2,874; Bulgaria – 100; Hungary – 869; and Romania – 377 [Curry 1946]. Truman also stated that the only civilized solution to the plight of this segment of DPs would be to allow them to "take root on friendly soil." U.S. legislation at the time limited monthly admissions to 10 % of the annual quota – that is, to 3,900 individuals.

These figures were formalized in the Presidential Directive on Displaced Persons and Refugees in Europe, issued on December 22, 1945 [Directive by the President… 1961, *576–578*]. The document assigned various responsibilities to U.S. agencies to facilitate the out-of-quota admission of individuals from these categories. The State Department and the Attorney General were tasked with coordinating consular services and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, issuing visas, and cooperating with NGOs on migrant support and inspection of conditions in the occupied zones. The War Department was made responsible for transportation and en route nourishment; the War Shipping Administration oversaw sea routes from Europe; the Surgeon General conducted medical screenings; and the Director General of UNRRA was instructed to support all aforementioned officials on the ground [National Archives and Records Administration – NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 68, *127–129*].

At the same time, it is important to note that President Truman's initiatives were met with mixed reactions by the American public. A Gallup poll conducted on January 16, 1946, revealed that the majority of Americans not only disapproved of Truman's intentions but leaned toward isolationist policies. Specifically, 51 % of respondents favored reducing or suspending immigration altogether, 32 % supported maintaining current immigration laws, and only 5 % supported expanding entry for foreigners [Gallup 1972, *555*]. Sociologists found that supporters of liberalized immigration (the "internationalists") were primarily among those with higher education, whereas

opponents typically had only a secondary education. Nativist sentiments were especially strong among military veterans and trade union members, who, fearing job competition became a key base for isolationist views.

To change public opinion, in 1946 representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and Catholic and Protestant activists formed the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons. The committee included Earl G. Harrison (Chair), William Bernard (Executive Director), Eleanor Roosevelt, James Farley (former U.S. Postmaster General), UNRRA Director General Herbert H. Lehman, former New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, former U.S. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, among others. According to historian Daniel Tichenor, this effort amounted to a "mobilization of liberals" focused primarily on public education and advocacy [Tichenor 2002, *182*].

The first group of 900 DPs selected for the program was assembled in Munich, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt, and was scheduled to depart from Bremen on May 1, 1946 [Immigration From Reich… 1946]. As of August 1, 1946, a total of 2,911 refugees – primarily Austrians, French, Belgians, Estonians, Greeks, and Hungarians – had arrived in the United States [46.000 Service Wives… 1946]. However, in a statement issued on December 19, 1946, President Truman expressed dissatisfaction with the implementation of his directive, as only 4,767 individuals had been admitted under the program's provisions over a ten-month period. He argued that resolving the issue required the U.S. Maritime Commission to intensify its efforts and increase the availability of American transport vessels [Statement by the President… 1962, *508*].

It is worth noting that, ultimately, under the "December 22 Program", approximately 42,000 visas were issued between January 1946 and June 1948, of which around 28,000 were granted to Jewish refugees [Dinnerstein 1982, *263*].

At the same time, the American president sought to find common ground with members of Congress regarding adjustments to immigration regulations. In his statement of August 16, 1946, President Truman advocated for legislative approval to admit "a certain number of DPs", which, in his view, would contribute to resolving the European demographic crisis and help alleviate the Palestinian issue,

demonstrating the United States' willingness to participate in joint solutions [White House Statement… 1962, *421*]. However, efforts to enact such legal changes through Congress repeatedly failed. For instance, on September 2, 1946, at a session of the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, its chairman, Richard Russell, rejected Truman's proposals, claiming that such measures could set a dangerous precedent [Battle Looms… 1946]. In contrast, UNRRA Director General Fiorello La Guardia, upon returning from Europe, stated on September 13, 1946, that President Truman's idea of admitting 15,000 DPs to the U.S. should be expanded tenfold [La Guardia Suggests… 1946].

President Truman reiterated his position on October 26, 1947, during the unveiling of a monument to Oscar Straus – the first Jew to serve in a U.S. Cabinet, as Secretary of Commerce and Labor, and former Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. On this occasion, Truman emphasized that the country might have lost many valuable individuals if it had always blocked immigration [Truman Makes Plea… 1947]. A few months earlier, on August 19, 1947, to study all aspects of the DP issue in Europe, Truman appointed Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Ugo Carusi as Special Assistant to Deputy Secretary of State Charles Saltzman [President Shifts… 1947]. Carusi was tasked with analyzing the implementation of the December 22, 1945 directive and preparing policy recommendations for a potential U.S. resettlement program. As a result of Truman's initiatives, 137,450 Jewish refugees were admitted to the United States between May 1945 and December 1952, according to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. [Ouzan 2004, *101*].

It is worth noting that the Presidential Directive of December 22, 1945 was also intended to resolve the fate of the refugees from Santa Rosa and Oswego. In parallel with the closure of the Mexican camp, the U.S. government decided to shut down the only refugee camp on American soil – Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York. According to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, the camp housed 982 individuals, including 371 Yugoslavs, 235 Austrians, 145 Poles, and 96 Germans [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 59, Memorandum… *291*]. During a survey, 133 people expressed a desire to return to their home countries, 9 wished to go to their previous country of residence, and 641 hoped to remain in the United States [NARA, RG 59, M 1284,

R. 58, Letter from J. G. Winant… *88–89*]. While UNRRA declared its readiness to transport the refugees back to Europe, provided that the Intergovernmental Committee funded the operation, the committee responded that the repatriation was not included in its budget and agreed only to finance the transport of seven individuals. On May 31, 1945, thirteen camp residents departed for Yugoslavia aboard the Swedish ocean liner *Gripsholm* [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 57, Report of the War… *94*].

Thus, on December 22, 1945, President Harry S. Truman issued a declaration stating his intention to allow the "Oswego refugees" to remain in the United States permanently. Moreover, the American president launched efforts to simplify the immigration process for DPs and European refugees within the limits of existing quotas [Public Papers of the Presidents… *572–578*]. The first 92 Oswego residents received legal permission to remain in the United States in January 1946 [92 From Oswego… 1946]. Among them was 15-year-old Croatian Jew Ivo (John) Lederer, who later became a renowned American historian of diplomacy [Gruber 1984, *157*]. Truman's initiatives were widely welcomed by civic leaders. On January 4, 1946, the heads of three non-governmental organizations published an open letter to President Truman, commending his willingness to open the nation's doors to the "Oswego refugees" and his active involvement in resolving the DP crisis in Europe [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 61, Letter to the Honorable Harry S. Truman… *2–4*].

Jewish Migration to Palestine and the Role of Zionist Organizations

Meanwhile, the illegal migration of Jews from Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries, which began in late October 1945, presented new challenges to both the American occupation administration and U.S. policymakers in Washington. According to reports from Jewish community organizations and individual activists, the main causes of this movement included violent pogroms in Poland, severe economic hardship, fear of the communist regime, and psychological trauma associated with memories of the Holocaust. The Polish government, acknowledging its inability to retain the Jewish population, permitted emigration, which significantly increased the scale of the migration [Yushkevych 2015, *103*].

The American authorities sought to find a solution through coordination with other occupying powers. In December 1945, during a four-power meeting, the Soviet side rejected a U.S. proposal to distribute refugees among the occupation zones. According to the American plan, 34 % of the migrants were to remain in the American zone, 41 % in the Soviet zone, 22 % in the British zone, and 3 % in the French zone. Meanwhile, within the American administration itself, positions varied: the War Department advocated for closing the borders, while the State Department recommended continuing humanitarian engagement.

In December 1945, the ATEA Directive was issued, which allowed the temporary acceptance of illegal migrants into camps, where they could receive basic assistance but were to be kept separate from other displaced persons until a final decision was made. The scale of the migration movement quickly grew. According to D. Warren, approximately 550 individuals were arriving each day. By the end of the year, the number of migrants exceeded the capacity of the American administration, sparking debates over the organization of the process and the potential influence of Zionist or Soviet-backed structures.

An investigation conducted by American counterintelligence did not confirm that the movement was organized in a coordinated fashion but noted that migrants often used old German documents and routes that passed through Czechoslovakia and the Soviet zone. Humanitarian assistance was provided by Jewish organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which supplied migrants with food and transportation [Yushkevych 2015, *108*].

In 1946, the American administration continued to accept Jewish refugees in its occupation zone. The State Department, in cooperation with the War Department and leaders of Jewish organizations, held consultations to explore resettlement options. It was decided to continue the humanitarian mission until a long-term plan could be developed. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of the U.S. occupation zone, announced a support program for refugees that included improving conditions in the camps.

The influx of Polish Jews began to stabilize after the countries of the Eastern Bloc, in response to the mass westward migration, implemented border closures. As a result of migration from Poland and Czechoslovakia, the number of Jews in the western sectors of

Germany reached 69,739 by February of 1946 (46,084 of them in the American zone). By June 1946, this number had increased to 105,927 (71,963 in the American zone). In addition to the 86,000 Jewish migrants who entered Germany illegally, 8,000 individuals reached Austria, and 16,000 moved to Italy [Holmgren 2020, *239*]. Following the stabilization of migration flows, by September 30, 1947, the total number of Jewish refugees and displaced people (DPs) in Germany, Austria, and Italy amounted to 247,000, including 157,000 in the American zone of Germany and 20,000 in Austria. Notably, 167,522 Jews in these three countries were receiving assistance from the UNRRA, 122,313 of whom were of Polish origin [PCIRO News Bulletin… 1947, *3*].

Nevertheless, in the minds of many public activists, the primary goal of the mass migration of Jews was resettlement in Palestine for the purpose of creating a Jewish national state. Spontaneous migration to Palestine had begun in the prewar years and continued at the end of World War II. Between 1939 and 1940, approximately 17,000 Jews arrived in Palestine; in 1941–1942, the number fell to 10,000, but by 1943–1944 it had increased again to about 23,000 individuals [Shterenšis 2005, *99–100*].

One of the routes used by Jews to reach the Middle East toward the end of the war was through the Balkan Peninsula. In view of the wartime risks, the British government concluded an agreement with Turkey that allowed Jewish refugees arriving from the Balkans to enter Palestine. In return, the Turkish authorities agreed to issue transit visas. After the liberation of Bulgaria and Romania, the Jewish Agency began issuing migration certificates for travel to Palestine, which automatically included a British visa. However, the agreement with Turkey was not renewed, and consequently, sea travel became the only remaining option for reaching the Eastern Mediterranean. The shortage of ships thus became the primary obstacle to large-scale Jewish immigration to the region [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 55, Advance release… *175*].

According to estimates by the British Embassy in Washington, as of late January 1945, there were 16,000 Jewish refugees from Hungary and 2,000 from Poland and Czechoslovakia living in Romania [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 55, Memorandum… *237*]. Given the dire state of the Romanian economy, these individuals received

insufficient support and were unable to integrate into local society. Additionally, around 100,000 Romanian Jews registered with the Jewish Agency for immigration to Palestine. While the primary route at the time passed through Bulgaria, illegal departures also occurred from Romanian ports. Meanwhile, U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem Lowell Pinkerton reported that Yemeni Jews seeking to reach Palestine were registering at transit camps in Aden. This process, however, lacked support from the chief migration officer of the British administration in Palestine, who feared that increased flows of Yemeni Jews could raise social tensions in Aden and, by using part of the immigration quota allocated under the 1939 White Paper, could alarm European Jews [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 55, Letter from L. C. Pinkerton… *236*].

After the war, Britain continued to uphold its policy of restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, which resulted in a dramatic increase in illegal immigration. In modern historiography, both prewar and postwar illegal Jewish immigration to British Mandatory Palestine is referred to as Aliyah Bet, which includes both the maritime movement from European ports to Palestine (Ha'apala) and the land-based movement from Eastern Europe to DP camps in Austria and Germany. The latter was partly a result of the activities of the underground network Brichah (meaning "escape") [Kochavi 2001, *276*].

Zionist activists from various countries coordinated their efforts to facilitate illegal immigration to Palestine. Zionist organizations in European DP camps were especially active. One such group was the Central Committee for the Liberation of Jews (CCLJ), established in January 1946 in Munich among Jewish camp residents [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 62, Report from Parker… *25–28*]. Although the organization was not recognized by UNRRA, the American military command, or the JDC, its members aimed to assume administrative, financial, ideological, and censorship control over the Jewish DP camps. The committee maintained branches in Regensburg, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart. Its leading figure was Georgy Godik, a former artillery officer in the Red Army and head of the organization's security service.

According to U.S. intelligence, many Jews seeking to reach Palestine illegally did so via Italy. They traveled through the Brenner Pass in the French occupation zone of Austria and then by sea from Genoa

[NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 66, Report by Chief of Dissemination… *91*]. Jewish agencies and associations based in Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, and Poland organized these movements. Financial support was primarily provided by the Joint Distribution Committee, which coordinated activities through its representatives in Vienna and Salzburg. Evidence indicates that both the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia facilitated the exodus by often allowing Jews to leave without checking documentation. In some cases, groups of Polish Jews were assisted in their illegal departure by the Austrian Red Cross. One common route began in the Polish town of Zebrzydowice, continued by train through Bernartice in Czechoslovakia, and ended in the Floridsdorf district of Vienna. The vast majority of these migrants were young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. U.S. military intelligence personnel believed that Jewish organizations regarded Austria and Italy as key transit points along the route from Central Europe to Palestine.

As a result of both legal and illegal migration to Palestine during the postwar period (January 1, 1946 – May 15, 1948), a total of 48,451 Jews arrived in the region (according to other estimates, 53,350 individuals of Jewish origin) [Gil 1950, *28*]. Among the migrants, 35.4 % came from Poland, 33.4 % from Romania, 9.7 % from Hungary, and 8.5 % from Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the IRO (International Refugee Organization) was responsible for managing the legal resettlement of Jewish DPs to Palestine and later to Israel. Under its patronage, 17,019 individuals were transported between July 1947 and July 1948 (with an operational budget of $1,700,000), and 104,842 individuals between July 1948 and July 1949 (with a budget of $10,600,000) [NARA, RG 59, S. IRO and DPC, I. IRO, B. 1, IRO Participation…]. By mid-1949, the number of Jews under the organization's care had decreased from 168,440 to 37,917.

From Humanitarian Crisis to Nation-Building: Refugees and the U.S. Support for a Jewish State

It should be noted that the "Jewish question" had long been a significant topic in U.S.-British relations. During the final months of World War II, the issue of Middle Eastern decolonization and the prospect of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine gained renewed urgency. Following the Yalta Conference, on February 14, 1945, President

Franklin D. Roosevelt met with King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia aboard the USS Quincy in Egyptian territorial waters to discuss the fate of Jewish refugees. The Arab leader advocated the return of Jews to Axis countries that had persecuted them and expressed his disapproval of transferring responsibility for Jewish deportees from Germany to Palestinian Arabs. He was categorically opposed to increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine [Foreign relations… 1969, *7–9*]. However, the main subject of the meeting was military cooperation and the U.S. access to Saudi oil reserves [As-Samak 2014, *44*]. The resulting bilateral agreement – often referred to in the press as the "Quincy Pact" – was criticized as "oil-for-concessions diplomacy". Roosevelt assured Ibn Saud that he would take Arab views into account regarding Jewish immigration to Palestine and reaffirmed this in writing on April 5, 1945. Nevertheless, President Harry S. Truman formally revoked Roosevelt's assurances on September 26, 1945 [Truman 1956, *133*].

Unlike his predecessor, Truman did not support the State Department's position of neutrality on the Palestinian issue. On July 24, 1945, ahead of the Potsdam Conference, he wrote a letter to Winston Churchill expressing the strong interest of the American public and inquiring about Britain's willingness to lift the immigration restrictions imposed by the 1939 White Paper. Initially, Truman limited his intervention to suggestions, avoiding direct U.S. responsibility for implementation. In October 1945, he informed the public that the British had rejected his proposal to raise the immigration quota for Palestine to 100,000 individuals [Truman Says… 1945].

Instead, on October 2, 1945, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee proposed the creation of a joint Anglo-American committee to explore solutions to the Palestinian problem [Truman 1956, *140–141*]. The U.S. State Department welcomed this initiative, hoping to negotiate a temporary and limited immigration agreement, while Truman pushed for the complete removal of immigration restrictions. The establishment of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACI) was formally announced by British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin on November 13, 1945, during a session of the House of Commons [Commons Sitting… 1945, *1927–1929*].

The committee's first meeting was held in Washington, D.C. on January 4, 1946. On January 12, 1946, Deputy Secretary of State Dean

Acheson sent a letter to the U.S. Ambassador in London, warning of complications that had arisen following British resistance to the United Nations' initiative to reform the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) and UNRRA, and to create a new international agency for refugee oversight. Ambassador John Wynant was also tasked with urging British officials to treat refugee assistance as a strategic responsibility that required not only financial contributions but also practical measures – particularly in relation to resolving the "Palestinian question" [NARA, RG 59, M 1284, R. 61, Telegram… 1946, *15*].

On February 5, 1946, members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACI) departed for Europe to conduct field investigations. It is worth noting that the Soviet Union warned the commissioners against visiting Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and the Soviet-occupied zones in Germany and Austria, stating that there was no ethnic or racial discrimination in those areas [Kochavi 2001, *107*]. The AACI members visited Munich, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Bari, Prague, Vienna, as well as Egypt and Palestine, where they inspected DP camps and met with representatives of Jewish and Arab civic organizations, politicians, and intellectuals [Crum 1947, *287–289*]. The final report was prepared in Lausanne and completed on April 20, 1946.

The AACI report recommended the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe and the creation of a binational Jewish-Arab state in Palestine under UN trusteeship [Report of the Anglo-American… 1946, *1–12*]. The first high-level bilateral discussion of the report took place on April 26, 1946, between Ernest Bevin and James F. Byrnes during the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris. Shortly thereafter, on May 12, 1946, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that Britain was prepared to allow the entry of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine, provided that the Jewish Agency resumed cooperation with the British administration and assisted in the disarmament of radical organizations such as the Haganah and the Stern Group. However, the Jewish leadership rejected this proposal.

At the same time, the British Prime Minister claimed that Jews preferred illegal immigration, ignoring the legal quota. Foreign Secretary Bevin warned that the admission of 100,000 Jews would significantly increase tensions in the region and necessitate the deployment

of large military contingents to stabilize the situation. In the event of plan approval, the British hoped for the deployment of UN forces to prevent bloodshed between Arabs and Jews – particularly favoring the presence of a U.S. Army brigade in the Middle East [Laski 1946]. It is important to note that the British government's cautious approach toward expanding Jewish immigration was driven by suspicions that the Zionist project was being supported by the Soviet Union as a means of weakening Britain's position in the region [Morgan 1961, *245*].

In June 1947, bilateral disagreements – especially over the expansion of the Palestinian immigration quota to 100,000 – led to the formation of a new working group, with Herbert Morrison, the British Deputy Prime Minister, and Henry F. Grady, a U.S. diplomat, as its leaders. On July 31, 1947, Morrison presented the Morrison–Grady Plan to the House of Commons, which proposed the partition of Palestine into four autonomous cantons under the authority of a British High Commissioner. Experts also proposed the distribution of Jewish DPs among all UN member states and supported the arrival of 100,000 Jews to Palestine (on the condition that the United States would provide transportation) [Proposals for… 1947, *6*]. Under pressure from Zionist groups, President Truman soon withdrew his support for the plan. Nevertheless, on October 1, 1946, a London Conference was convened to discuss the Morrison–Grady proposal with representatives of Palestinian Arabs and Jews.

During negotiations, the British consistently rejected American recommendations to expand the immigration quota for Palestine and instead urged the United States to accept a comparable number of migrants. This led to Truman's statement of October 4, 1946, in which he spoke not only about the need to admit 100,000 displaced persons but also about the future prospects for the creation of a Jewish state – a speech later known as the "Yom Kippur Statement" [Truman Again… 1946]. British Foreign Secretary Bevin had not anticipated such American activism and viewed Truman's initiatives as politically motivated, aimed at appeasing American voters, assuming the U.S. would ultimately accept Britain's position without objection [Kochavi 2001, *130*]. Truman's declaration and the opening of a new session of the UN General Assembly effectively halted the London negotiations.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Arab Higher Committee called Truman's statements irresponsible, asserting that the acceptance of

Jewish refugees should begin in the United States [Arab Committee… 1946]. On October 28, 1946, the Egyptian delegate to the UN, Mohamed Hussein Haikal Pasha, expressed opposition to mass Jewish immigration to Palestine and, on behalf of the League of Arab States, recommended that the international community seek alternative regions for the resettlement of Nazi victims [The Refugee Problem… 1946]. The following day, this position was echoed by the Syrian representative to the UN, Fares al-Khoury, who emphasized that such actions required prior consultation with Arab leaders [Arab States Decide… 1946].

British efforts to reach a compromise during the second phase of the London Conference (January 27 – February 13, 1947) ended in failure. The rejected Bevin-Beely Plan proposed the admission of 100,000 Jews over a two-year period, the establishment of international trusteeship for five years, and the subsequent holding of elections for a Constituent Assembly. After this initiative failed, on February 14, 1947, Great Britain referred the Palestine issue to the United Nations, which established the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) on May 15, 1947. The committee included representatives from Australia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Canada, the Netherlands, Peru, Uruguay, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and Yugoslavia.

The committee developed two proposals for resolving the Palestine problem. The first plan envisioned the partition of Palestine into three zones, the creation of separate Jewish and Arab states, and the designation of Jerusalem as an international city under UN oversight. The second plan recommended the establishment of a binational Arab-Jewish federation in Palestine. Additionally, the final report, published on September 3, 1947, addressed the issue of Jewish DPs through the proposed conclusion of a separate international agreement under UN auspices. However, the committee did not support increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, citing the potential for regional political complications.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, adopted on November 29, 1947 and supported by the United States representative proposed the partition of the territory of the British Mandate and the creation of two states in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to be designated as an international zone. The partition followed a “patchwork principle”, which envisaged the

creation of three separate Jewish and three separate Arab territorial units, based on the condition that the minimum number of Jews would remain outside the borders of the proposed Jewish state. The demographic proportions were as follows: the Jewish state was to include 498,000 Jews and 497,000 Arabs (other estimates suggest 538,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs); the Arab state would include 807,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews (other estimates: 804,000 Arabs); and Jerusalem, as an internationalized area, would contain 105,000 Arabs and 100,000 Jews [Gatrell 2013, *124*].

After the resolution's adoption, some Jewish representatives protested what they saw as a violation of the League of Nations decision of July 24, 1922, which, in their view, had promised more extensive territorial rights to the Jews.

However, the UN resolution was never implemented. After the British announced their intention to terminate their mandate and withdraw military and civil personnel from Palestine by May 15, 1948, both Jews and Arabs began competing for control on the ground. The emergence of Israeli independence was accompanied, on one hand, by the outright rejection from Arab states of the very idea of a Jewish state (notably Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen), and their readiness to destroy it by military means; on the other hand, it was marked by the mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs from their homes during the formation of the borders of the nascent State of Israel.

Following the first Arab-Israeli war, Egypt retained control of the Gaza Strip, while Jordan occupied the Judean and Samarian Highlands (the West Bank) along with East Jerusalem. However, neither country established an Arab Palestinian state in those territories. Later, Israeli historian Benny Morris criticized Arab regimes for their indifference toward fellow Arabs and for instrumentalizing the refugee issue for political purposes, contrasting this with the state-sponsored integration of Jewish refugees from Arab countries into Israel in subsequent years.

Conclusions

The postwar crisis of Jewish DPs presented the United States with a complex humanitarian and political challenge, intricately linked to the legacies of the Holocaust, the limitations of U.S. immigration law, and the evolving geopolitical order. The American response, shaped

by a combination of moral awakening, grassroots mobilization, and diplomatic calculation, gradually evolved from a reactive position to one of active international engagement.

A turning point in this evolution was the Harrison Report (August 1945), which documented the dire conditions in DP camps and directly influenced President Truman's directive of December 22, 1945. Truman's initiative to admit displaced persons – especially Jewish orphans – into the United States marked the first major breach of America's restrictive immigration quotas since the interwar period. However, strong domestic resistance, as reflected in the national polls and the Senate hearings led by Senator Richard Russell, revealed deep-seated isolationist attitudes among veterans, labor groups, and large segments of the public.

In parallel, Zionist organizations, including Brichah and the Central Committee for the Liberation of Jews (CCLJ), alongside the Joint Distribution Committee, played a decisive role in orchestrating illegal migration routes through Austria, Italy, and the Balkans. The cooperation of Czechoslovak and Soviet authorities, who often facilitated the exodus without documentation checks, underscored the geopolitical complexity of the refugee issue. These underground movements culminated in the organized transfer of tens of thousands of Jews to Palestine – often outside official quotas, and in defiance of British restrictions.

The Truman administration's growing support for Jewish immigration to Palestine, as seen in diplomatic exchanges with Prime Ministers Churchill, Attlee, and Bevin, further signaled a shift in U.S. policy from humanitarian aid to support for state-building. While early Anglo-American efforts – such as the Morrison-Grady Plan and the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry failed to yield consensus, they nevertheless internationalized the Palestinian question and paved the way for UNSCOP and Resolution 181 in November 1947.

Ultimately, the refugee issue served not only as a humanitarian concern but also as a strategic and moral justification for the establishment of the State of Israel. Jewish refugees became both the subject and the instrument of statehood – a demographic necessity and a political argument.

The developments of 1945–1948 reveal how the issue of Jewish displaced persons became a prism through which the United States navigated its emerging role in the postwar world. The interplay of

humanitarian concerns, strategic interests, ideological confrontations, and diplomatic negotiations shaped not only the fate of Europe's Jewish survivors but also contributed to the reconfiguration of the Middle East. The case underscores the capacity of refugee politics to influence international agendas and highlights the extent to which postwar displacement evolved into a matter of high diplomacy and global realignment.

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ВІД БІЖЕНЦІВ ДО ДЕРЖАВНОСТІ: СПОЛУЧЕНІ ШТАТИ АМЕРИКИ І ФОРМУВАННЯ ІЗРАЇЛЮ (1945–1948)

Стаття аналізує еволюцію політики Сполучених Штатів Америки щодо єврейських біженців у контексті повоєнної трансформації міжнародної системи та формування нових геополітичних реалій на Близькому Сході. Особлива увага приділяється переходу від реакції на гуманітарну кризу єврейських переміщених осіб до стратегічної дипломатичної підтримки єврейського державотворчого проєкту. Центральне місце посідають результати місії Ерла Гаррісона (1945) та президентська директива Гаррі С. Трумена від 22 грудня 1945 року, які позначили відхід від обмежувальної імміграційної політики та задали вектор подальших

дій американської адміністрації. У статті розкривається механізм організації нелегальної міграції євреїв із Центрально-Східної Європи до американської зони окупації та далі – до Палестини. Особливо наголошено на ролі сіоністських структур, співпраці з єврейськими благодійними організаціями та сприянні влади Чехословаччини й СРСР у цьому процесі. Значну увагу приділено англо-американському діалогу щодо майбутнього Палестини, аналізуються причини провалу плану Моррісона-Грейді та Комітету з вивчення єврейського питання. Внаслідок розгляду зазначених подій простежується, як "палестинське питання" набуло міжнародного виміру та призвело до ухвалення Резолюції № 181 Генеральної Асамблеї ООН у листопаді 1947 року. Автор доводить, що єврейські біженці постали не лише як об'єкт гуманітарної підтримки, а й як інструмент реалізації нової геополітичної конфігурації Близького Сходу. Американська політика щодо переміщених осіб стала одним із ключових чинників у процесі визнання права єврейського народу на власну державу в умовах глобального перегляду післявоєнного світового порядку.

Ключові слова: адміністрація Трумена, англо-американська дипломатія, біженці, Близький Схід, єврейська міграція, палестинське питання, переміщені особи; сіонізм

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