

Oral History Interview
with
EVAN M. WILSON

Appointed Foreign Service officer, Department of State, July 1937; vice consul, Guadalajara, Mexico, 1937-38; assigned to Department of State, March-November 1938; vice consul, later third secretary, Cairo, Egypt, 1938-41; third secretary and vice consul, Mexico City, 1942-43; assigned to Department of State, January 1943-January 1947; American secretary, Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (Palestine), 1945-46; assistant chief of Division of Near Eastern Affairs, 1946-47; second secretary and vice consul, later first secretary and consul, Tehran, Iran, March 1947-June 1949; student, National War College, August 1949-50; consul general, 1953-57; assigned to Department of State, Washington, 1957-61; counselor of embassy, Beirut, Lebanon, 1961-64; American consul general, Jerusalem from 1964, with personal rank of minister, 1966; retired, 1967; now consultant, Middle East Institute; Member, U.S. delegation 1st, 2d Suez Canal Conferences, London, 1956.

Washington, D.C.

July 18, 1975 by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
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MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, historians and scholars are very interested in why people go into the Foreign Service and their background and their philosophies toward foreign affairs. I wonder if you would, for the record, speak to that point?

WILSON: In my case, it was a question of my having decided at a fairly early age that I wanted to go into the Foreign Service as such. I was brought up by my parents to expect that eventually I would go into some form of public service.

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And as they had taken me abroad, starting with the time when I was ten years old (they had taken me to spend a whole year abroad between school and college), I had learned a number of languages. And so, as I say, early on I decided that I would like to have a career in foreign affairs.

This interest was heightened by my studies at Haverford College, where I first took international relations, and later at Oxford, where I again took international relations. And during the three years that I spent at Oxford, I never came home but went on each vacation to the Continent, living in different countries and practicing languages in France, in Germany, in Italy, and in Spain. I also spent two summers at what was called the Zimmern School, the Geneva School of International Relations, which was run by Sir Alfred Zimmern, who was my professor at Oxford.

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Through the school at Geneva (where, incidentally, I met my wife), I was thrown into contact with students from a great many foreign countries, and through these experiences in living abroad, both during the time I was at Oxford and earlier on visits to Europe, I had acquired the kind of experience in living in foreign countries and dealing with foreigners which I consider to be a prerequisite for going into the Foreign Service. I had also managed to acquire some foreign languages.

MCKINZIE: Did Alfred Zimmern have a philosophy which took in your contacts with him?

WILSON: Yes. He influenced me a great deal, because Zimmern was a great believer in the League of Nations. The school was held at Geneva and we used to attend the sessions of the Assembly. I remember being present in 1932, when Iraq was admitted to the League, and I remember the

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discussions regarding the Manchurian incident in the same year.

MCKINZIE: Did at that time you feel the United States had missed an opportunity by not joining the League?

WILSON: Yes, very much so. Very much so. I became very much of an advocate of international cooperation and of international organizations, and this heightened my interest in going into the Foreign Service. However, between the years 1931 and 1936 the Department of State did not give the Foreign Service examinations. I returned from Oxford in 1934 and

managed to get a position here in Washington with one of the New Deal agencies, the Home Owners Loan Corporation, and worked there until the examinations were given in 1936.

MCKINZIE: All the while with the object of getting

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into the Foreign Service?

WILSON: Yes, with that object, and I was lucky enough to get in.

MCKINZIE: Did you go to the Roudybush School or any of those...

WILSON: Yes, I went to Mannix Walker's School for several months. Mannix Walker was a former Foreign Service officer who ran a small school here in Georgetown and had a very high degree of success in getting students into the Foreign Service. The year that we took the examination he had a group of eight and two of us got in, which was considered quite high.

MCKINZIE: I understand in those days that one never had a choice in one's first assignment.

WILSON: Absolutely not! I had no idea where I was going. I took the examinations in the spring

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of 1936. During the summer, I was notified that I had passed the written examination and that I should come up for my oral examination in October, which I did. And in those days, the tradition was that at the close of the oral examination, since it was necessary to have a physical examination if you were entering the service, the examiner would say to the candidate, "And now you may proceed to your physical examination." If he did not say that, you knew that you had not passed. And so I was sent to my physical and a month later, in November, I received word that I had passed. But I was not appointed until July of 1937, after the start of the fiscal year.

During the intervening months, I was here in Washington and tried on many occasions to find out from the Department what was going to happen to me and when I would be appointed.

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But I was unable to get any information, until one day I had found in the mail a letter appointing me as vice consul at Guadalajara, Mexico.

I stayed there only about nine months (this was my so-called probationary assignment) and was then brought back here for training at what was called the Foreign Service School.

During the time that we were at the Foreign Service School, in the spring of 1938, we had lectures by members of the Department on various subjects and various parts of the world, and a talk which a man named Harold H. Tittman gave on Italian policy in the Levant inspired me to make a study of that particular subject.

In those days each member of the Foreign Service School was required to write an essay as a part of the training and I wrote an essay on that subject, "Italian Policy in the Levant." This brought me, for the first time, into

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contact with the members of the old Division of Near Eastern Affairs. And when, during the course, we were asked to indicate a preference for an assignment, I said that I would like to go to the Middle East, although I had never been there. And to my great pleasure, when the assignments came out I was assigned to Cairo.

I went to Cairo and remained there for three years. During that period, I paid my first visit to Palestine, with which my work was so much to be connected in later years.

In 1940, when the war reached a pitch of intensity with the entrance of Italy into the war and the threat in the western desert, we evacuated our families from Cairo to Jerusalem and my wife spent seven months in Jerusalem, which gave us further connections with that place, as I was able to visit her a few times.

After three years in Cairo, I was given

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home leave. It's interesting to recall that I was the first member of the staff at Cairo to receive home leave at the Government's expense, as that was quite a new thing in those days. And I came back to this country. I had been told that I would be transferred, and it happened that my chief from Guadalajara, George Winters, was then in charge of the Mexican desk in the Department. He asked me if I would be interested in going back to Mexico, as they were building up the staff to meet various new wartime responsibilities (this was just after Pearl Harbor). And having gone through two evacuations with my family -- my wife and child having gone home six months before me in 1941 -- and having managed to get our household effects out from Suez across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific and through the Panama Canal right after Pearl Harbor, I replied that I would be

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delighted to go anywhere where I could go overland and have my family with me.

So, I was sent to the Embassy in Mexico City to do economic warfare work.

MCKINZIE: During the period that you were in Cairo, granted that this was at a very critical stage of the war and the outcome of it was by no means predictable, did you have any feelings that the colonial powers were going to have a different role in the future? Did you have any predilections what the war was going to do to the area?

WILSON: Yes, I would say so. I should explain that both at Guadalajara and at Cairo I did purely consular work and was not involved in political work, although our legation, as it then was in Cairo, was so small that all of this had some taste of the political work. At that time,

although Egypt was nominally independent, it was very much under British control, and the British

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army was very much in evidence. And the attitude of the British in Egypt was not unlike what I understand to have been their attitude in India at the time of the British raj. They were very overbearing in their conduct towards the native Egyptians, who were subject to various forms of social discrimination and other disabilities. And, in fact, relations between the British and the Egyptians were so tense that in their emergency planning (in which we Americans participated) for air raid precautions and possible evacuation in the event that Cairo should be the object of attack (which it never was), the entire British thrust was in the direction of protection against anticipated native rioting rather than enemy attack, which was considered minor.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, in later years, it's quite clear from writing you've done, particularly in newspaper articles that you have written,

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that you made a point to have contact with feuding factions, if you please, in the areas where you worked, and that your purpose was to serve as conciliator and so on. At this very early stage of career did you have Egyptian contacts and British contacts?

WILSON: Yes, but as I said, my work was entirely in the consular field, and I was the most junior member of the staff there. The contacts which I had were not of a particularly significant nature. I did not get into the Palestine question at that time at all; in fact, in those days we hardly regarded Egypt as an Arab country. We used to talk about whether it was an Arab country or not.

When we went to Palestine, to Jerusalem, I remember having several long talks with George Wadsworth, who was our Consul General there and one of the well-known specialists

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in that area. And it was he who really started me on the study of the Palestine question. I can remember his recommending a number of books on the subject which I got out of the library at the YMCA where we were staying in Jerusalem in 1939. That was my first exposure to the Palestine question, but I didn't have any contacts with anyone outside of our little official circle at that time in Jerusalem.

MCKINZIE: Why were you brought back from Mexico?

WILSON: I was brought back from Mexico because the chief of the Division of Exports and Requirements, Christian Ravndal, decided that he wanted to have me in Washington dealing with economic warfare as it related to Mexico. And he asked me if I would agree to coming back after only another nine months; thus I've had two nine-month assignments in Mexico. And although it was

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difficult because of the housing problems and financial problems in Washington in wartime, I did agree to do so.

Shortly after I came back from Washington, I became ill and was sent to the hospital. And during that time, as so often happens in the bureaucracy, the Division of Exports and Requirements was abolished overnight by fiat of the Bureau of the Budget, which ruled that this division, which stood in a liaison capacity between the Department of State and the Board of Economic Warfare, had no proper role as it was neither functional nor policymaking.

At that time, there were reported to be some 75 Mexican desks around Washington in addition to the one I held for Ravndal. Ravndal (to whom I owe a great debt), knowing of my interest in the Near East, arranged with the Near East Division for me to go into that division upon the abolition of his division.

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And so when I recovered from my illness I started in on the Palestine desk in November of 1943. At that time I also covered Iraq, and later Egypt as well.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, what were the anticipated interests of the United States in that area, in the period of peacemaking and immediate postwar period? Were they commercial, strategic, anti-Communist? How did you assess the task of the whole division, the primary task?

WILSON: The interests of the United States in the Near East at that time were largely commercial and cultural. I'm speaking of the war period now, before we embarked on a role as a world power after World War II. We had very important trade and cultural interests in the Near East for a hundred years. Our merchants had gone out there in the early 19th century, and so had our missionaries and educators, and I don't

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need to mention things like the American University at Beirut and the influence which it had. Our work in the Near East Division had to do with the promotion and protection of American interests in the area, with keeping current on developments regarding the area, and with the implementation of such policy toward the area as we had at that time. However, our policy was stated only in the most general terms. The Near East was not an area of tremendous significance to the United States prior to World War II; it was completely overshadowed by Europe, the Far East, and Latin America in the estimation of the top level of the Department. In fact, the Near Eastern Division was very much of a backwater in those days, and it was not until after the war that we really began to play a significant role in the area. It was also not until 1943 that we developed any kind of a policy toward Palestine,

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the basis of which was that there should be "no decision without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews." Our statements of policy prior to that time had been largely generalizations based on adherence to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and that sort of thing.

MCKINZIE: Franklin Roosevelt was known to be anti-colonial, or at least his position emerged that way in the course of his conversations with [Winston] Churchill, particularly as the war went on. Were you sensitive to those presidential feelings as you...

WILSON: Well, those feelings were directed largely at the problem of India, with which I was not connected, although I had some familiarity with it because of the fact that it was also handled in the Near East Division. As far as Roosevelt and Churchill and the Near East is concerned,

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there was very little, if any, discussion of that area between them, as far as I have been able to establish. And Roosevelt's policy toward the Palestine question was largely rooted in his belief that after the war he would be able to take care of that problem, just as he thought that after the war he would be able to take care of the Soviet Union and Joseph Stalin.

As far as colonialism is concerned, I don't recall that that entered into any pronouncements that Roosevelt made about Palestine, although our sympathy with the national aspirations of the people of the area was well-known, going back to Woodrow Wilson and to the King-Cratle Commission. And, certainly, we were very strongly in favor of the efforts of Syria and Lebanon to achieve their independence from the French, which came up in the latter part of the war. This was in an area immediately adjoining

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Palestine.

MCKINZIE: Who was the author of the "full consultation" policy?

WILSON: I don't know, nor do any of my former colleagues whom I have consulted recall this.

The formula was first publicly put forward by Lord [Robert Arthur James Cecil] Cranborne -- now Lord Salisbury, at that time and for many years a principal adviser to Anthony Eden -- in the House of Lords in a speech during 1942, the exact reference to which is in *Foreign Relations of the United States* for 1943, and also it's in my book (see note at end).

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, could you speak to the point of your awareness of Zionist organizations in the United States and their growing concern for postwar developments and postwar settlement in the area? In your position on the Palestine

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desk, did you personally come in contact with leaders of these groups?

WILSON: Yes, a great deal, and this is a matter which I'm covering in great detail in my book. I think the only thing I need say here is that as the desk officer for Palestine I could not help being aware of the steady stream of communications directed at all levels of the U.S. Government by the Zionists and their supporters. They are to be commended for the way in which they were able to bring American public opinion around to the support of their position. And, as you know,

from 1942 on, from the time of the Biltmore Conference, their official program called for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

MCKINZIE: Many of the people with whom I've spoken about this subject say that the members of the Near East Division were personally anti-Zionist,

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though certainly not anti-Semitic. Would that be a fair representation of the Division?

WILSON: It depends on how you define the word "anti-Zionist, and how you define the word "anti-Semitic." Take the last one first, the word "anti-Semitic" is generally used in this country to be equivalent to anti-Jewish, whereas in actual fact the Arabs are also members of the Semitic race. I would like to make it very clear that there has never been any evidence, so far as I am aware, of an anti-Semitic attitude (in the sense of anti-Jewish) on the part of any of the members of the Near East Division as I knew them at that time.

If you take the word anti-Semitic in its literal meaning, many of us felt, after an exposure to the intense propaganda coming at us from both sides, and out of a sense of

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exasperation at their intractable positions, that our attitude was one of "a plague on both your houses." And in that sense it could have been facetiously said to be anti-Semitic. But that is not the way in which the word is generally used.

Now as far as anti-Zionist is concerned, I have discussed this on many occasions with Jewish and Israeli friends. If by anti-Zionist it is meant that the officers of the Near East Division were opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine on the grounds that this would have very serious effects on our interests in the area, then I think it can be said that that was indeed the attitude of most of us. However, that does not mean that we were hostile to Zionism or to the Zionist leaders with whom we were in frequent contact. It has been one of the characteristics of persons associated

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with that part of the world, since Biblical times, that "he who is not with me is against me." This trait is shared by both the Arab and Jewish inhabitants of the area today, and we were frequently accused by Arab contacts of being pro-Zionist because our work brought us into contact with Jews.

Therefore, I do not think that there are any grounds for the criticisms which have been leveled at the Near East Division on the basis of being anti-Semitic, and as far as anti-Zionism is concerned, I think that it is a question of how you define the term, as I have just said.

Actually, our major concern was not to promote one side in this dispute against the other. We never did so, nor did we ever have instructions to favor either the Jewish side or the Arab side. Our main concern in a case like this, where there was a conflict, an

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obvious conflict, between two American interests, the Jewish interest and the Arab interest, was to try to the greatest extent possible to reconcile these conflicting interests. And for all the years that I served in the Division at that time, my major recollection of my attitude is that I was trying to find ways of reaching an accommodation.

MCKINZIE: At what point did you despair of achieving accommodation?

WILSON: I have never despaired of achieving accommodation, difficult as it is, or I would not have spent so much time and effort in trying to identify means of reaching a solution. Let me just add that while I am generally pessimistic regarding this problem, I am by no means convinced it is insoluble.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, during those wartime years there existed, under the direction of Leo

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Pasvolsky, a group of people who were involved in the postwar planning. Many of those people were academicians brought in especially for the purpose, and two people, Philip W. Ireland and William Yale, had a special interest in your area. I wonder if you could talk about the relationship that you and the people in the Division had with those people, whether they were on more or less the same wavelength and the importance that you ascribed to the kind of work they were doing?

WILSON: The people to whom you refer were dealing with all parts of the world and with a whole range of postwar problems. As you say, my contact was mainly with Ireland and Yale, and to a slight extent with the late Christina Phelps Grant and also Dr. Isaiah Bowman, who served as their supervisor.

Our contact with them was through the so-called

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Interdivisional Area Committee on Arab Countries, the members of which were Gordon Merriam, Foy Kohler, and myself for the Near East Division and Ireland and Yale for what was called the Division of Territorial Studies.

We met on a regular basis and were concerned mainly with working out the details of a trusteeship agreement for Palestine, as was suggested by President Roosevelt to Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Hoskins in a conversation which they had in September 1943, which is in the *Foreign Relations* for that year. The different plans which were drawn up in 1943, 1944, 1945, and subsequent years -- most of which were written by Yale -- are all in the *Foreign Relations*.

MCKINZIE: Were these meetings of a harmonious nature?

WILSON: Very. The meetings were of a very harmonious nature. At that time I knew relatively little

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about the Palestine question, and I welcomed the presence of the people whom I considered to be real experts, like Ireland and Yale.

MCKINZIE: There were other people who had interest in the area, the War Department, for example. And later Secretary [James V.] Forrestal put extremely intense interest in it because of the resources of the area, particularly oil; he was concerned that a major war could not be fought without Arab oil. During those years, 1943 through 1945, do you recall having contacts with people in the War Department about current and postwar policies?

WILSON: Yes, we had two principal contacts in the Pentagon, Colonel Harry Snyder and Major Robert Ogden. We used to meet and exchange information. As I recall, both of them had had area experience and the reports which they passed to us from the various attaches in the Near East were an

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essential part of the information which we acquired on a daily basis. There was also J.C. Hurewitz, who at that time was with the OSS and is now the head of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, a well-known scholar in the field who has published many books. And in the Office of War Information, there was Habib Kourani, who is an American of Arab extraction, and who is now connected with the American University at Beirut. These were all people -- together with Colonel Hoskins, who was also OSS -- with whom we were in frequent contact.

MCKINZIE: Was there a War Department position?

WILSON: Not that I recall, but you are certainly correct in saying that the War Department, as it was then called, was very conscious of the importance of the oil of the Middle East to the war effort. However, you must remember that the oil of the Middle East was not nearly

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as important a factor in our energy picture at that time. Likewise, the War Department was anxious that nothing should be done to agitate the Palestine question in a manner that would interfere with the war effort. And this was the basis of the intervention of the Chief of Staff [George C.] Marshall at the time of the congressional resolutions regarding Palestine in early 1944.

MCKINZIE: I assume that in your forthcoming book you will discuss Colonel Hoskins and his role in stopping that congressional resolution?

WILSON: Yes, I expect to cover that.

MCKINZIE: When President Roosevelt died and President Truman assumed the responsibilities of office, when were you first aware of President Truman's special interest in this area? Do you recall any particular incident which made it clear that he had a personal interest in it? I raise this because on so many issues President Truman

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was willing to take the advice of Secretary of State or the area branches of the Department, but in this instance he seemed to have a very personal concern. At what point did that register?

WILSON: I would say that this first came to my notice and to that of other members of the Division at the time that President Truman wrote his famous letter to Prime Minister [Clement] Attlee about the Harrison report and the 100,000 Jews. This letter, which was dated August 31, 1945, we learned of only through the press nearly a month later, as is fully laid out in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* for that period. This was the start of President Truman's effort, which was based largely on humanitarian grounds, to get the British to open the gates of Palestine to the Jewish survivors of the displaced persons

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camps.

MGKINZIE: At that time, 1945, a great number of Jewish organizations in the United States were involved in raising money for the purposes of acquiring ships to transport legal and illegal migrants from Europe to Palestine. Was there discussion in the Department about prohibiting that activity, that you recall?

WILSON: This came later than 1945, but at any rate, this activity was repeatedly brought to our attention by the British Embassy. The Foreign Relations and the archives are full of correspondence between the Department, the British Embassy, and the Department of Justice, and possibly other agencies on this subject. This is not a matter that I am too familiar with, except that I remember very clearly that the British were understandably very annoyed at the extent of the campaign

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carried out by certain Zionists -- and I say certain Zionists deliberately -- to raise money for this purpose through advertisements in the press.

The placing of these advertisements was not illegal, and there was very little, therefore, that we could do about it, nor could we prevent the raising of the funds.

MCKINZIE: You could restrict the travel.

WILSON: We could restrict the travel of American citizens to Palestine by withdrawing their passports, and I believe this was done in a few instances, but this was an extremely difficult thing to do politically. The traffic in illegal immigrants from Europe to Palestine was not generally a matter where the United States Government could take action.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, as the issue became more and more a primary issue, as it began to get

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more public press and began to concern the Department more, did you feel that people who really didn't understand the background and the nuances of the problem were brought in to deal

with that? That is, were the special people that were put on the team appropriate to the task, as you got a larger and larger number of personnel?

WILSON: Do you mean in the State Department, special people brought in for special purposes?

MCKINZIE: Well, people who were brought into the State Department and special people brought in for special purposes. We're talking about people who reported directly to the President.

WILSON: Well, certainly there were people in the White House who reported directly to the President, like David K. Niles, and Clark Clifford, who played an important part in

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our Palestine policy and who approached the subject in a very different manner from the Department, since their primary concern was with the domestic political aspects of the problem. The only people that I can recall who were brought in to deal with this general problem in the Department without having a background in the Near East were General [John H.] Hilldring, who was in charge of the area of the Department dealing with occupied Germany, and some of his assistants.

General Patrick J. Hurley was a personal representative of the President who was sent out to the Near East with very broad terms of reference in 1943 and who made a report which confirmed many of the same points which we had been making to our superiors and which were made at about the same time by Colonel Hoskins in his report.

As far as I can recall, General Hurley had not had any previous experience in the

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Middle East. Not long after he was sent to China, where he made quite a mark for himself. I do not think that his impact on our Near Eastern Policy was very great, aside from his having pointed up some of the obvious risks in our Government's pursuing an essentially pro-Zionist policy.

MCKINZIE: What about the people in the United Nations who became more and more involved with that? The point I'm trying to get at is, did you feel that there was any losing of control of the situation?

WILSON: Yes, certainly, I think it's clear that very soon after Mr. Truman's accession to the Presidency, control over our Palestine policy passed from the State Department to the White House. I don't think that the United Nations played any significant role up to the time when I left the Department in January, 1947.

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Of course, there was a very considerable injection of the United Nations into the dispute from the time of the British decision to turn the Palestine question over to the U.N. in February, 1947. But this is something of which I had no personal experience.

MCKINZIE: I see. Mr. Wilson, I assume that in your forthcoming book you will deal with the role of David Niles, the influence of people like Loy Henderson, the unfolding of U.S. policy and the problems of policy, and so we can avoid the duplication of that here. Why did you leave the Department in 1947, in January?

WILSON: I left the Department in the course of perfectly normal rotation. The rule was that a Foreign Service officer could only serve four years in the Department, and I had come

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up from Mexico in January of 1943, so I had to go out in January of 1947.

MCKINZIE: Terribly exciting time to rotate out, wasn't it?

WILSON: Yes, but I had a very interesting time in Iran. And by that time I was thankful to be rid of the Palestine problem for a while.

MCKINZIE: From the point of view of your career and the work you were doing, was this one of those positions where you had to work long hours per day and with weekends and that kind of thing, or was it regularized pretty much up until that time?

WILSON: The work on Palestine called for a great deal of overtime. In those days, we worked until about 6 o'clock on Saturday, so that Sunday was the only day off. But I was frequently brought in to work on Sunday, as well as in the

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evenings.

MCKINZIE: There are some interesting questions about Iran which no one seems to have the answer to. One question which I would like to ask is about something which occurred before you went there, but perhaps you've heard about it. President Truman, in one of his writings, alludes to having told Stalin that if Stalin did not remove troops from Azerbaijan, he, Truman, was prepared to move the U.S. fleet into the Persian Gulf. The implication of this was the United States would be forced to use force.

WILSON: Was this at Potsdam?

MCKINZIE: This was after 1946, just before the withdrawal. William Franklin, a historical officer of the Department of State, said that a President can't really do anything in secret and that any

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President who would have done something like that would have left a record or a trace of it. Were you aware at the time that such a thing had occurred, that a message had passed between Truman and Stalin?

WILSON: No, I don't remember that at all. In 1946, I was still dealing with Palestine, although toward the end of the year I began preparing for my assignment in Iran. I have no recollection of any such exchange. Do I understand that the Foreign Relations for the period or the Archives show nothing on that subject?

MCKINZIE: That is correct.

WILSON: Well, you might look at Ambassador George V. Allen's memoirs in the Truman Library for information on that score.

MCKINZIE: The other thing that frequently comes up about Iran is whether or not it had a

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special place, not only in Middle Eastern policy, but in U.S.-Soviet policy. Franklin Roosevelt, according to Arthur Millspaugh, who had written on the subject, considered Iran to be a test case for the provisions of the Atlantic Charter. Here was an area in which both the United States and the Soviet Union had interests; here was an area in which national self-determination could be tested. If Iran floated after the war properly, without any undue interference from the Soviet Union or the United States, then it would indicate a commitment of the Soviets to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Was that talked about at all in the Department?

WILSON: I don't recall any discussion of that point. The Iranian crisis, as such, occurred after Roosevelt's death. I do recall George

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Allen's telling me that the so-called Declaration of Tehran, which was signed by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the time of the Tehran Conference in November 1943, was an afterthought which he, or someone else in the Department, had thought of, and which was agreed to very hastily by the three leaders, who had given it very little attention. I, therefore, would be inclined to doubt that Roosevelt had focused very much on this problem. And whereas I never met Dr. Millspaugh, I am sure you are aware that he was a very controversial figure, and I have often been told that his statements need to be taken with a grain of salt.

MCKINZIE: Thank you.

WILSON: I don't want to be unkind to Millspaugh, as I've never met him. He must be dead, isn't he?

MCKINZIE: Yes.

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Perhaps you'd be good enough to...

WILSON: Let me say something.

MCKINZIE: Sure.

WILSON: Harold B. Minor, who is now living in Florida and who was in charge of Iranian affairs in the Department at that time, might be able to throw some light on this.

MCKINZIE: Perhaps you'd be good enough to relate your work to the issues with which you dealt.

WILSON: In Iran?

MCKINZIE: In Iran.

WILSON: I was sent out to the Embassy at Tehran with the position of executive officer. This is a position which no longer exists in the Foreign Service and is roughly equivalent to the later position of deputy chief of mission. However,

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I was not the ranking subordinate officer. My work under the Ambassador dealt with supervising the operations of the various branches of the Embassy and routing papers through the Embassy, very much in the way that a deputy chief of mission operates. While Ambassador Allen was in Tehran, I did not have a specific assignment to any one of the branches of the Embassy, but when Ambassador [John Cooper] Wiley arrived in early 1948, he brought with him his own executive officer, the late Joseph J. Wagner. I was then made head of the political section. So, for the last, roughly, year and a half that I was in Iran, I did political work. Prior to that time, under Ambassador Allen, our staff was so small that I dabbled in every part of the work of the Embassy, political, administrative, consular, and so forth, although, as I said, my principal function was an executive one.

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MCKINZIE: Did you have contacts with British citizens who were concerned about the future of British oil in Iran during those first months?

WILSON: No. I had many contacts with members of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, but I do not recall their expressing any apprehension about their concession. At that time, the representatives of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and of the British bank, called the Imperial Bank of Iran to the dismay of the local citizens, acted very much like pro-consuls. They had very large houses with many perquisites, and in most of the cities in Iran, the residence of the representative of the oil company and the residence of the representative of the Imperial Bank far outshone the residence of the British consul. The effect of this upon the Iranians was, of course, unfortunate, and undoubtedly their

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general conduct contributed very much to the expropriation under Dr. [Mohammed] Mossadegh.

MCKINZIE: In that period, it would seem the political reporting would be of absolutely crucial importance, because there was some question, was there not, of exactly what the Tudeh Party was all about, what its purposes were, who controlled it, how it was financed. What kinds of contact did you cultivate for purposes of political reporting?

WILSON: I didn't think there was any question that the Tudeh Party was a Communist party and, therefore, controlled from Moscow.

MCKINZIE: Some people once in a while deny that.

WILSON: I came to Iran after the dissolution of a coalition government which had included one or two members of the Tudeh Party, and the main issues with which we were concerned during

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my time there were, first, the Soviet oil concession, and, second, the question of our military missions. I'd be glad to talk about both of them, if you wish.

MCKINZIE: Please do.

WILSON: As you will recall, Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam, who was an extremely skillful politician, had managed to get the Soviet Union to agree to withdraw its forces from Northern Iran -- that is to say, from the two provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan -- in exchange for an oil concession in the northern provinces, along the Caspian Sea. This, of course, was a highly controversial matter, and it goes without saying that the West was not in favor of such an oil concession.

Qavam, in characteristic fashion, managed to string the Russians along for many months by taking refuge in the well-known Iranian law

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which provided that any concession to foreigners must be confirmed by the Majlis, or Parliament. For many months, he was able to postpone the discussion of this issue in the Majlis.

Meanwhile, George Allen was in very close touch with him, pointing out the dangers of allowing this Soviet concession to come into effect. And in a very well-known speech before the Iran-America Relations Society in September 1947, at which I was present, Allen spoke publicly about the matter in such a way as to convey very clearly the impression that the United States would support the Iranian Government if it should reject the concession. In due course this was done, and there is no question in my mind but that Allen contributed very materially to this objective.

Now, with regard to the military missions, this was a matter which engaged the attention of Ambassador Wiley during most of the time

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that I served in the Embassy with him. We had two missions, one to the Iranian army and one to the Iranian gendarmerie. The latter was under the charge of Colonel [H. Norman] Schwartzkopf, who had become very famous in this country at the time of the Lindbergh kidnapping. The military mission was under the command of General Grow, who unfortunately was to become quite notorious later on when he was indiscreet enough to leave his diary unguarded somewhere in Germany, where it was picked up by Communist agents. This was unfortunate because of the fact that it contained many critical remarks regarding the Russians. He was serving as military attaché at Moscow at that time.

We considered that the activities of these two missions were perfectly legitimate, but for many months the Russians engaged in a propaganda

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campaign against them. It is understandable, on the basis of the way in which they handle similar matters, that they should have assumed that our missions were engaged in espionage, in intelligence activities, and in promoting an anti-Soviet attitude on the part of the Iranian army and gendarmerie.

To the best of my knowledge, there was absolutely no basis for the charge that our officers were engaged in espionage or intelligence or even in trying to promote an anti-Soviet attitude on the part of the military. However, if the major threat to Iran's security can be regarded as coming from the Soviet Union, it is difficult to see how our officers could refrain, as a part of their duties, from helping build up Iran's defensive potential. And this naturally might appear to the Soviet Union to be a hostile form of activity.

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I was present with Mr. Wiley when he discussed this subject with the Soviet Ambassador on numerous occasions, and we always maintained the position that the presence of our missions there was perfectly legitimate. And they remain to this day. I believe the gendarmerie mission may have merged with the military mission, but they are still there.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, were these two missions, the gendarmerie and the military mission, considered political in the sense that the acceptance of any form of aid constitutes a certain commitment to the United States? I'm thinking of aid as an instrument of policy, now.

WILSON: Yes, I would certainly say that, in that sense, they were instruments of American policy. Since one of their functions was to supervise the distribution of such military aid as we gave to the army and gendarmerie.

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MCKINZIE: While you were there, there was a very large aid program going on in Europe, and it led many countries to contend that the United States had forgotten them and their need. Did you ever hear of those kind of remarks, that if you could give steel mills to France and Italy, you could give steel mills to Iran and India?

WILSON: I don't recall any specific instances, but I'm quite certain that that would have been the attitude of the Iranians at the time, and they no doubt said so to our people.

MCKINZIE: You were there the time that President Truman made his inaugural speech in January of 1949, in which he announced the sharing of American technological abundance, the Point IV program. Did that create any excitement in Iran at all? Do you recall whether anybody thought that was a potential for improving the lifestyle there?

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WILSON: I'm sure that it was noticed, but I don't recall any specific references to it.

MCKINZIE: Upon the general subject of U.S. aid to Iran, was there a preference on the part of the Iranians for military as opposed to development or technical assistance?

WILSON: No. After all, the Millspaugh mission could be regarded as a type of economic aid.

And we had a number of American technicians serving at that time in different ministries of the Iranian Government -- for example, a doctor in the Iranian Ministry of Health. We also had the Near East Foundation, a private institution which was quite active at the time.

MCKINZIE: Were you in close contact with the Iranians who themselves were watching Palestine developments, Israel developments?

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WILSON: No. There was relatively little attention paid to the Palestine question in Iran. In my book I mention a conversation which I happened to have with the Shah at the time of Israel's independence, but the subject was not very much discussed there.

MCKINZIE: Were you concerned about relations between Iran and its neighbors?

WILSON: Yes. One important matter with which I had to deal was the Helmand River dispute between Iran and Afghanistan. This was a matter which absorbed a great deal of our attention during those years and had to do with the division of the waters of the Helmand River, which rises in Southwest Afghanistan and flows into Iran where it irrigates an area which would otherwise be desert. For many years, the Iranians claimed that the Afghans were cutting off the water, and many studies of the subject were made. We became

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involved purely as a friend of both governments, and the issue continued to plague relations between the two countries for many years.

As far as Iraq is concerned, the dispute over the Shatt al Arab River had, of course, been in existence ever since the 1930s. It has only recently been resolved, and I do not recall that we had very much, if anything, to do with it at the time.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any dealings with the beginnings of the U.S. Information Agency?

WILSON: I had a great many dealings with the beginnings of the U.S. Information Agency, because I had to be placed in charge of our information programs in Iran for a period in the year 1948. And do you want me to tell that story?

MCKINZIE: Please.

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WILSON: In early 1948 Congress passed an act establishing the U.S. Information Service, which was called the Smith-Mundt Act. George Allen left Tehran to return to Washington as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and, therefore, had supervision over this program. One of the provisions of the Act was that everyone who served under the program in the field had to have a security clearance. The forms were sent out to Tehran for completion by the two American officers who dealt with the program, the cultural officer and the information officer, and were simply pigeon-holed. Therefore, when the Act became effective, which I recall was July 1st, 1948, it was extremely embarrassing for George Allen to have to send a telegram to his old post, Tehran, saying that it was the only post in the Foreign Service where the officers had not completed the necessary forms. Therefore, these two men would have to be taken off information

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and cultural work until they could complete the forms and submit them to Washington, and some Foreign Service officer would have to be placed in charge of the program. This was because the Act provided that the requirement for security clearance would not apply to anyone whose name had been nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate, as was the case with all Foreign Service officers. Ambassador Wiley decided that I should be the one to run the program, and for about a month I did so.

In those days it was a very modest operation, involving cultural exchange, considerable involvement with the Iran-America Relations Society, which I already mentioned, and the usual press activities.

MCKINZIE: I understand that very many of the Foreign Service people -- particularly those who would be what you call old line Foreign Service -- were frequently not receptive to the U.S. Information

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Service, that they perceived that such activities were not a part of diplomacy. Was there any feeling among the people in the Embassy in Iran that that was the case?

WILSON: I don't recall specifically if there was any such feeling, but it would have been quite natural for the older members of the Service to have had this attitude both towards the USIS and toward the AID agency. My own feeling has always been that these two activities are essential functions which the United States Government has to perform in the postwar world, and I have never resented their presence. I do think that they should both be under the Department of State, and I believe that the present tendency is in that direction.

MCKINZIE: Were you involved at all with people in Iran in discussions about some sort of military defensive arrangements? There were later

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discussions but were there in that period?

WILSON: No, not in those days.

MCKINZIE: That was not something that you even thought about?

WILSON: No, that didn't come in until John Foster Dulles and the Northern Tier and the Baghdad Pact.

MCKINZIE: In regard to this business of the Northern Tier, there was some thinking, or a special concern about it, during the Truman years, under Acheson -- although the term "northern tier" was not used. Iran, because of its geographic location, did seem to get special attention, to have a special importance in the Department, particularly after the cold war began...

WILSON: You will recall that Iran was a member of the so-called Saadabad Pact. The Saadabad Pact

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was named after the Saadabad Palace, which is the Shah's summer residence outside of Tehran in the hills. It was negotiated by Reza Shah, to the best of my recollection, in the late 1930s, and was a very loose defense arrangement between Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. In a real sense, this could be regarded as a precursor of the Baghdad Pact, except for the fact that Afghanistan never joined the latter.

The Iranians always attached a great deal of importance to this relationship, although more in the direction of Turkey, because, as you probably know, Reza Shah was a great admirer of [Mustafa Kemal] Ataturk and tried to model his regime after Ataturk's. The question of regional defense arrangements, however, did not come up as an active issue until later on.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, there was a lot of discussion about the "revolution of rising expectations"

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among the populations in Latin America and in some parts of the Asian countries. Was there on post any discussion about what might come about in the way of a social transformation in Iran and what the United States could or should not do?

WILSON: No. My association with that general subject came later -- in my work in India, to begin with. In Iran we were concerned, as I said, largely with the Soviet oil concession and the military missions. I don't recall much discussion of Iran's social needs, although obviously there was need for improvement in many fields.

MCKINZIE: Were there other activities during the time you were head of the political section that we should make a part of our record?

WILSON: There was certainly the episode of the mythical Major Lincoln, which I would be, glad

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to tell you about, if you haven't already heard.

MCKINZIE: No, please do.

WILSON: My leading subordinate in the political section at the time was the late Gerald F. P. Dooher, who spoke Persian and who had remarkable Persian contacts, particularly among the tribes which play a very important role in Iran. Dooher and Ambassador Wiley, who was quite a character himself, conceived of mounting an elaborate hoax whereby a series of anti-Soviet broadcasts would be directed against the Soviet Union, allegedly from Northern Iran and allegedly carried out by one Major Lincoln, who was said to be an American stationed in some remote part of Iran. Transcripts of these spurious broadcasts were leaked to the Soviet Embassy, which for a while believed them,

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and this caused a great deal of amusement to Wiley and to Dooher. Eventually it came out that there was no such person.

MCKINZIE: How did they do the broadcasting?

WILSON: I don't remember. Maybe this isn't worth mentioning; you may run across it somewhere else. But it is the sort of thing that Wiley and Dooher spent hours on.

MCKINZIE: You said Ambassador Wiley was a character, why do you say that?

WILSON: Ambassador Wiley was a great character; he was one of the old-time diplomats. I learned a great deal from him. I think the best way I can characterize him is to say that the highest compliment he could pay anyone was to say, "There is a diplomat." He attached the greatest importance to diplomatic niceties, to diplomatic procedures,

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to matters of protocol, and to the use of the French language, which he insisted all his officers must be proficient in. And his telegrams to the Department were replete with characteristic references often of a rather obscure nature, but often, likewise, very witty.

MCKINZIE: That Iranian assignment lasted two years?

WILSON: Two and a half years.

MCKINZIE: It was not quite a full term, then?

WILSON: No, but we didn't have a fixed tour of duty for foreign service as we did the four-year rule for Departmental service. We did have, as I already mentioned, the availability of home leave after three years at the post. But I was transferred from Iran in the summer of 1949 in order to attend the National War

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College during the academic year 1949-1950.

MCKINZIE: When you finished that course of study, you were assigned to India.

WILSON: Yes, I was assigned as Consul General at Calcutta, where I spent three years and where I was still serving when Mr. Truman went out of office and General Eisenhower came in.

MCKINZIE: Did you feel that you were getting away from the whole question of Middle Eastern affairs? I understand, of course, that it's in the same division, and so was all of Africa, and you had for so long been concerned about a tighter area. Had you been following Indian affairs earlier?

WILSON: The only familiarity which I had with Indian Affairs was gained at Oxford when I did a course entitled "The Political Structure of the British

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Empire" under Professor Reginald Coupland, who afterwards happened to be a member of the Peel Commission which went to Palestine in 1936. As you say, India came under the Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs, as it then was called, and I welcomed the opportunity to go there. I had, in fact, paid a short visit to New Delhi from Tehran in order to attend a Foreign Service conference. I also welcomed the opportunity to serve again under Mr. [Loy] Henderson, who was the Ambassador there, even though Calcutta and New Delhi were a thousand miles apart and even though Mr. Henderson left in 1951 to become Ambassador to Iran. During my stay in India, I had three Ambassadors of very different types: Mr. Henderson, Mr. Chester Bowles and then George Allen, with whom I'd already served in Iran.

MCKINZIE: I take it that Loy Henderson would be

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considered an old line Foreign Service officer?

WILSON: Loy Henderson would be considered an old line Foreign Service officer, but he was and is a man of an extremely broad-gauged approach to everything and a man who is by no means hide-bound or conservative in his attitude.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned that Calcutta and New Delhi are a thousand miles apart, but did you feel isolated from the center, did you feel isolated from the Ambassador? Was there sufficient communication so that you understood what was going on?

WILSON: Yes, there was very close communication. The United States had maintained Foreign Service posts at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay long before we opened the post at New Delhi, which had only been during the war -- in other words, only a few years before I arrived in India. The size of the country and the size of our

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consular districts did give us a good deal of independence from the center and did mean that we were largely on our own. However, I frequently visited New Delhi. The Ambassador held periodic meetings of the three consuls general, he frequently visited the other cities, and so did members of his staff. So I feel that we had a very full exchange of information.

MCKINZIE: People in the American consulate must work rather frequently with the host government. How did you find the quality of the Indian civil service?

WILSON: Very high. I have always said that the Indians had a tremendous advantage over the peoples who had been under, say, French or Dutch rule, in that the British had developed a cadre of trained civil servants who were able to take over in India and Pakistan at the time of

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independence and partition. These men were, to all intents and purposes, the equivalent of a set of British officials. Their manner of working and their terms of speech were completely Anglicized, and they were -- in those days, at least -- a very efficient group of officials.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned earlier that your concern for the needs of the population was somewhat sharpened in India. How did that come about?

WILSON: I don't think anybody could serve in a place like Calcutta without becoming aware of the needs of the population. For instance, we had thousands of homeless people who slept every night on the streets of the city. The health conditions and the poverty were deplorable. My wife worked with a very remarkable woman who is still there -- Mother Theresa, a nun who has

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spent her whole life among the poor and destitute in the Calcutta slums. And all of us were constantly aware, through our Indian contacts, of the tremendous social problems which the nation faced. In those days, I think it's important to emphasize, there was a tremendous spirit of optimism among Indians and a tremendous feeling of excitement at their newly won independence. I frequently have had Indian friends say to me that they now realized how we felt in the years after 1776.

The Indian scene has changed in many ways since the early 1950s, but, certainly, I think it is fair to say that all of us who were there at the time had very high expectations for the new nation. I think our awareness of India's social problems was enhanced by Chester Bowles, who is a remarkable man with very broad humanitarian sympathies and a very high degree of social awareness.

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MCKINZIE: Chester Bowles sent to the White House a dramatic appeal for assistance to India.

WILSON: When was that?

MCKINZIE: Shortly after he assumed the post.

WILSON: You remember that he was the Ambassador there twice, and I was only there during his first period of service.

MCKINZIE: During his first period of service, he did send an appeal for considerable U.S. assistance. Was this a matter of discussion at your meetings?

WILSON: Yes, indeed, and I think all of us were very sympathetic to his point of view. We had, before I left, the nucleus of a Point IV mission in Calcutta. We had a number of engineers, doctors, and other experts who were working with the local governments, and I think all of

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of us participated in the start of that program.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any contact with Indians who were inclined to tell you what they wanted in the way of U.S. assistance and who contended that India needed something other than Point IV type aid?

WILSON: No, I don't remember that; I'm not sure what you have in mind.

MCKINZIE: Well, often countries would say that they need a steel mill rather than technical assistance.

WILSON: There may have been such requests, but they would not have come to me, probably, since the Embassy dealt with aid matters in the first instance.

MCKINZIE: Were you a student of the Kashmir dispute?

WILSON: Not during the time that I was in India.

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The Calcutta area, and particularly West Bengal, had its own share of problems. The Bengalis, who are remarkable people, are apt to concentrate on their own immediate problems to the exclusion of other issues, and it was noteworthy during the time that I was there that we heard practically nothing about Kashmir. Later on, I did some work on the problem when I was in the Policy Planning Staff, but that is another story. I also visited Kashmir and had a vacation there while we were in India, but I do not regard myself as an expert on the question. And it was typical of the attitude of our Bengali friends that they paid very little attention to it. Of course, the Calcutta district we had, in addition to West Bengal, a number of very important Indian

states, such as Orissa, Bihar, and Assam, to say nothing of the border areas of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan.

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MCKINZIE: Nepal was recognized as independent.

WILSON: Nepal was recognized as an independent country by us, but during the time that I was at Calcutta, the Ambassador at New Delhi served concurrently as minister to Nepal. Until after I left, Nepal remained in the Calcutta consular district. If you'll look at my biography in the register you will see that I served concurrently as consul general at Kathmandu as well as Calcutta, although I was only able to visit it once during my time of service.

MCKINZIE: Were there many consular duties that would result in activities connected with Nepal?

WILSON: No, the work relating to Nepal was not very heavy. And, of course, as I said, the Ambassador was the diplomatic representative, although at the time that I was in Calcutta

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we did not have anything in the way of a legation at Kathmandu. We did, however, have an information officer and an aid officer, but they reported to New Delhi.

I might add that the fact that Nepal was in the Calcutta consular district was only a continuation of the situation which had been in existence prior to our opening a post at New Delhi. There was also the fact that the communications between New Delhi and Kathmandu ran through Patna in Bihar, which was a part of our district.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, you've alluded to your optimism about India's future. One of the hopes of the people in Washington who were involved in the aid program was that very much private investing would take place in areas which needed aid of various kinds the most. What was the climate for American investors in 1950-1951? What were the prospects? Were you optimistic, and

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did you have dealings with American businessmen who looked for a bright future?

WILSON: In the first place, I think we have to recall that there was very heavy British investment in the Calcutta area and that this continued after independence. In fact, at the time that I was there there were more British businessmen than in the period immediately preceding independence. We did, however, encourage American businessmen to come to that part of India and to invest there, and we were optimistic about the general prospects. I don't recall any specific details, but National Carbon, Standard Vacuum Oil Co. and several American banks were represented there, and I was in close touch with their people.

MCKINZIE: On a political subject, the Korean war broke out in June of 1950 and led to a solidifying

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of camps, a further division of the world into Communist and anti-Communist positions. The United States later took the position that to be a neutral in such a struggle was immoral. Was there any feeling in 1950 to 1953 that India's neutrality was immoral? Did anyone make reference to that in government?

WILSON: I think that we have to make a distinction between the attitude of Henderson and the attitude of Bowles. Henderson has a long background of service in Eastern Europe and is well aware of the attitude of the Soviet Union and of the Communist world. He was Ambassador in India at the time the Korean war broke out. I'm sure that he worked hard to bring the Indians around to a sympathetic point of view. Indeed, it is my recollection that he was instrumental in getting India to vote in the United Nations General Assembly in favor of the United Nations

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action in Korea.

Bowles was much more inclined to be sympathetic to the Indian point of view and to the Indian concept of neutrality, but he was also a very able defender of the American point of view on Korea. I can bear personal witness to this from an incident at Calcutta University, when he addressed a group of students and was subject to very severe heckling on the subject.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Korean war was the most difficult issue between the United States and India in those years. And it came as somewhat of a surprise to me to find that many of my Indian friends regarded it as a conflict between whites and nonwhites. Therefore, there was a great deal of opposition in India to our policy in Korea.

MCKINZIE: Did you find yourself in a position of frequently having to defend the U.S. policy?

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WILSON: Yes, my wife and I were frequently called upon to do so, but not in quite as dramatic a form as Ambassador Bowles on that occasion, which you will find recounted in his memoirs.

MCKINZIE: Did you make speaking engagements frequently?

WILSON: Not as much as I probably should have done. Our USIS officers were very active in this field, and I generally left that to them. But I did make talks from time to time.

MCKINZIE: Are there other events during that period of service in India which we should include in our records?

WILSON: One of the principal matters with which we had to do was Tibet and the question of the Dalai Lama, but Mr. Henderson would be a much better source on this subject, as would Ambassador Fraser Wilkins, who was there with him as his political officer.

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Briefly, after the Chinese Communists took over Tibet in late 1949 and early 1950, there grew up in Darjeeling and Kalimpong, two towns in our district, quite an important colony of Tibetan refugees, including a number of officials. We were frequently in touch with these persons, who, in turn, were in touch with the Dalai Lama. On various occasions we tried -- that is to say, Henderson and I tried -- to persuade the Dalai Lama to come out (which he eventually did in 1959). However, at this time he declined to do so, having placed the matter before the soothsayers. A circle of stones was set up, and one of his soothsayers spun a stick in the middle of the circle in such a way as to determine where it would stop. One of the stones meant "go to India," one of them meant "stay in Tibet," and others had other

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meanings. At all events, the stick, when it came to rest, stopped beside the stone marked "stay in Tibet," and that is what the Dalai Lama did.

It's true.

MCKINZIE: How was this related to you?

WILSON: It was related to us by one of the officials in Darjeeling or Kalimpong. We did manage at that time to get the Dalai Lama's brother out, and he is still living in this country. This episode had many cloak and dagger aspects and will no doubt come to light some day, if it has not already.

MCKINZIE: Were you a part of the cloak and dagger operation?

WILSON: Only to the extent that I supervised the activities of several of my officers who were

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involved in it in behalf of the Embassy. We were in constant touch with the Tibetan exiles and obtained from them a great deal of information regarding developments within Tibet which was of considerable usefulness to the Department.

MCKINZIE: How large would you estimate the number of Tibetan refugees to be in Darjeeling and Kalimpong?

WILSON: Oh, a few hundred. As you probably know, the Dalai Lama has now settled in Dharmasala, which is above New Delhi in the hills. I dare say that there is quite a large Tibetan colony there, but I don't know the details.

MCKINZIE: Were there other matters? The Indian wheat loan, were you involved in that?

WILSON: No. I've got a picture here of myself

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receiving a shipment of wheat. There's a picture in there of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. She came to Calcutta and New Delhi.

MCKINZIE: Were your functions in that case mostly social, showing her around, briefing her?

WILSON: Yes. Briefing her.

I can't remember any major matters involving the United States aside from those that I have mentioned. We paid a great deal of attention to reporting on the political and economic situation in the different states in our jurisdiction, all of which I visited. There was constant friction between the Bengalis and their neighbors. There were various activities along the border, particularly in places like Manipur and Tripura, but these were not matters which were of primary concern to the United States.

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We also played a role in trying to prevent trade with Communist China out of the port of Calcutta, particularly in carbon black, which was considered a strategic material. As is frequently the case in the Foreign Service, we represented the interests of Panama, and there were many ships of Panamanian registry which continued trading with China after American ships were prohibited from doing so. On several occasions we succeeded in revoking their charters, an action which was strongly opposed by the Chinese Communist Consul General in Calcutta. He tried to get the Indian authorities to remove me, but nothing came of this.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Wilson, thank you very much.

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Mr. Wilson's impressions while serving on the State Department's Palestine desk from 1943 to 1947, as well as his observations regarding President Truman's Palestine policy, are fully covered in a book (*Decision on Palestine: How the U.S. Came to Recognize Israel*), copyright, 1979, by the Hoover Institution, Stanford, California.

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