



## FROM THE EDITOR

THE ROLE OF U.S. PRESIDENTS in making policy on Palestine is an insufficiently studied topic. Many believe that if the policy of a given administration is particularly favorable to Israel, this is entirely due to the president's predilections. Disappointment with the policies of the Obama administration after the high hopes raised by his initial declarations is based on this belief. Others are convinced that the Israel lobby is and has always been all powerful, imposing its views on different administrations. Neither of these views is correct. There is no question that a president's personal attitude is important, as could be seen during the Eisenhower and other administrations when U.S. policy showed a degree of balance between Israel and the Arabs. At the same time, the Israel lobby has grown much more powerful, especially since the 1980s and especially in Congress, where it initially focused its efforts and where it has virtually unchallenged influence.

Lawrence Davidson's article in this issue helps to elucidate an early phase of presidential policy-making on Palestine. Specifically, he examines the decisions whereby President Truman, against the advice of most of his expert counselors within the government and the military, but encouraged by political advisors who were fervent supporters of Zionism, made the fateful decisions that led to U.S. support for the establishment of the Jewish state. Davidson shows that Truman acted essentially for domestic political reasons as well as because of his own personal beliefs rather than out of a sense of the national interest, a precedent that has been followed by several of his successors. Truman thereby helped to create both the tragedy of the Nakba and the Middle Eastern policy morass the United States has waded through for more than six decades.

This issue also includes an article by Mustafa Abbasi on the fall of the city of Acre during the 1948 war. It constitutes part of *JPS's* ongoing effort to cast further light on the events of 1948 and in particular to do so using not only Zionist, Israeli, and Western sources but also underutilized Palestinian and Arab ones. The capture and depopulation of Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberias, and the Arab neighborhoods of West Jerusalem, before or just after the formal establishment of the State of Israel, destroyed the bulk of Arab urban society in Palestine and had an impact on the course of the Nakba and on the structure of post-1948 Palestinian society that has not yet been fully studied.

Rounding out the issue is an article by Elena N. Hogan on the social role of women's gold wedding jewelry in West Bank society that examines how this custom has evolved in conditions of occupation and hardship. This issue also includes coverage of the annual AIPAC conference held in March 2010, at a moment when the power of the Israel lobby on Capitol Hill remains secure, but resistance to its hard-line support of Likudist positions is starting to form in other domains. These include many university campuses, some churches and intellectual circles, and among the younger element of the U.S. Jewish community. It remains to be seen whether, and when, these stirrings of opposition to the lobby's pervasive influence will be reflected in changes in the blanket support of Congress for Israel and in presidential policy-making.

—*Rashid I. Khalidi*