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Telephone round table. September 1948.

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UNITED JEWISH APPEAL  
TELEPHONE ROUND TABLE  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1948  
1:30 to 2:00 P.M.

SPEAKERS

HENRY MORGENTHAU, JR.  
HERBERT H. LEHMAN  
ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN  
JONAH B. WISE  
EDWIN ROSENBERG  
ALEXANDER ALBALA

MR. MORGENTHAU: I want to welcome you to this very brief business conference. Sitting here with me are Governor Lehman, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, Edwin Rosenberg and a young man by the name of Alexander Albala, a Captain in the Army of Israel.

What we have to say to you will be brief. No one is here for the purpose of making speeches.

First of all, as General Chairman, I owe you a report on the status of the 1948 United Jewish Appeal campaign. A year ago, I called some of you together at a national conference in New York to talk to you about the progress of the drive. To spare you the difficulties involved in travelling to a meeting and to save time, we are using the medium of the telephone. We know that all of you want to be with your families during the High Holidays.

MR. MORGENTHAU:  
(cont'd.)

I don't have to tell you that a great deal has happened this year. The best way I know how to put it is to say that the Jewish communities of America have kept in perfect step with history. The response to the campaign thus far has been very encouraging. In many cases, communities and their leaders have achieved the impossible. Some of you may ask -- "Are we going to raise \$250,000,000 in 1948?"

I have studied the figures, I have read the community reports, and I must truthfully say that we will not raise the full quota of \$250,000,000. Then, you might ask, how close will we get to our objective? That question, it seems to me, will be answered by the cities and towns that are now in the midst of their fall campaigns. If they do as well as the spring communities, then we will have a result that will be a credit to all American Jews. We will definitely raise this year substantially more than we raised in 1947.

We have come to regard the "Year of Destiny" as a casual slogan, but how else can we describe a year which saw the proclamation and establishment of the State of Israel.

MR. MORGENTHAU:  
(cont'd.)

When the United Nations voted to establish a Jewish State, the Arabs declared war on the Jews of Israel. It was an uneven battle from the start. The Jews faced an enemy that seemed to have all the trump cards, unlimited manpower, and all the fighting equipment, and more, than the armies of six countries could use. It was nothing less than David facing Goliath.

I am sure that you know all the facts by this time. I am sure it is enough to say that your dollars -- millions of dollars in cash -- turned defeat into victory. You gave the heroic young men and women of Israel the things they needed to drive out the Arab invaders. You turned the tide of history.

There just aren't any words that can describe the momentous achievement of American Jews in that grave hour of crisis. It has made me proud of my heritage as a Jew. It has made me proud to be associated with you in the cause of Jewish survival and reconstruction.

The gates of Israel are wide open. The Jewish nation is free to welcome its own people home. And they have been coming home. They have been coming home because you -- the Jewish communities of America -- you have provided the cash to build the bridge of ships to the land of their hopes and dreams.

MR. MORGENTHAU:  
(cont'd.)

Only a short time ago the refugees used to enter Palestine at the rate of 1,500 a month -- a mere trickle. Today, they are steaming into the State of Israel at the rate of 10,000 and 12,000 a month -- or more. This month -- Dr. Joseph Schwartz of the JDC, who has just gone back to Europe, has told me -- this month, no less than 14,000 refugees will be brought to Israel.

When we met last December and adopted the quota for the 1948 United Jewish Appeal -- we spoke in terms of an immigration into Israel of a total of 75,000 for the year. In the first eight months of the year, you helped 60,000 come in. With your help, we have more than fulfilled our promise.

We have now reached a point in the operations of the United Jewish Appeal where the funds that we have will decide the scope of our work from now on. How many Jews shall live in the D.P. camps? How many Jews shall go to Israel? How many shall be helped to come to the United States, and how many of those who remain in Europe will have the chance to rebuild their lives?

I believe that if we conduct this meeting in the form of a round table discussion, we will get the answers we want.

MR. MORGENTHAU:  
(cont'd.)

I have stressed immigration into Israel. Mr. Rosenberg, can you tell us briefly what the situation is with regard to immigration into the United States? We know the new D.P. law discriminates against Jews. But has the United Service for New Americans had the chance to study how the new law is going to work?



(Cont'd. on next page)

MR. ROSENBERG: The new D.P. law is a restrictive one. There is no doubt about it, Mr. Morgenthau. But it is a matter of how its provisions are interpreted. Right now, the D.P. Commission has set up regulations which we believe will enable as many Jews to come to this country as we will provide for. We have received estimates from the IRO, the JDC, and Dr. William Haber, Advisor on Jewish Affairs to the Commanding General, and these indicate that a very substantial number of Jewish DP's may be eligible to come to the United States from the D.P. camps alone. And that does not include those who will be coming in from countries outside of the D.P. centers.

MR. MORGENTHAU: What about the immediate needs, Mr. Rosenberg?

MR. ROSENBERG: Well, the fact is that within the next two weeks, the first boat loads will arrive here from Germany under the new law. The first boat will arrive on October 16 in New York and the second will arrive on October 25 in Boston, and they will come with increasing frequency from then on. For example, in November there will be four boats, in December there will be six, and by March there will be between ten and eleven ships coming in each month, direct from the D.P. centers. There will be substantial numbers of Jews on each.

GOV. LEHMAN:

Mr. Morgenthau, I'd like to touch on one of the basic points of this new law. Mr. Rosenberg, I understand that before any refugee can qualify for emigration, the new law requires that a community -- the community in which the newcomer is to settle -- must give a definite guarantee of a job and housing. What experience has the United Service had with this procedure, Mr. Rosenberg?

MR. ROSENBERG:

Under the new D.P. Act, the local communities play a much larger part in the reception and care of refugees than they have in the past. The new Act now requests as a matter of law what we in United Service and the communities have done throughout the years. Frankly, Governor Lehman, I am glad you raised this question. There is not a Jewish community in any part of this country with whom we have worked that has not responded magnificently. Communities have gone all out in rounding up jobs and housing accommodations for those who are waiting to come here. Of course, the better the job is done, the more people will be able to come and that means the more money will have to be spent. Part of that money will have to be spent right at the port where the people arrive.



MR. ROSENBERG:  
(cont'd.)

Part of it will have to be spent in resettling them and giving them the first emergency assistance. Some of that help will now be given in the communities. USNA has agreed to assist communities financially where necessary, to the extent of one hundred dollars per person to cover initial needs for food, clothing, and shelter, which previously were provided in the port of entry city.

MR. MORGENTHAU:

It is easy to see why United Service needs immediate cash.

MR. ROSENBERG:

...But that's not all. Remember, United Service must still carry on its many direct relief and rehabilitative services. At this very moment, we have over 8,000 newcomers who receive direct financial assistance from the agency. And, in addition, we are helping thousands every month to find jobs and in all the other ways that are necessary to get them off to a new start.

MR. MORGENTHAU:

Thank you, Mr. Rosenberg. Now, when we talk of immigration -- and that is the biggest and most exciting subject at the present moment -- we must think in terms of Europe -- the jumping off place. Whether it is emigration to the State of Israel, or the United States, the JDC is very directly involved. Rabbi Wise, what is the JDC doing on the question of emigration?

RABBI WISE: To put it in the form of a headline, Mr. Chairman, the JDC is now spending \$1,400,000 to pay for the transportation of 10,000 refugees to Israel every month, and of additional emigrants to other areas. We had hoped that the IRO would participate in the cost of resettling the Jews now in the D.P. camps. We are still trying to have this intergovernmental body assume its share of the burden. But right now the JDC must foot the entire bill. It costs a minimum of \$125.00 to bring one refugee from Europe to Israel and unless we supply the money, he won't get there. This item alone should make all of us realize how urgent are the cash needs of the Joint Distribution Committee -- and consequently-- the United Jewish Appeal, at this moment.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN: You have given us quite a story in one short headline. I wonder, Rabbi Wise, whether all of us realize what a figure like 10,000 a month means to the people who have been waiting for three years and more for the chance to find a new home in Israel.

RABBI WISE: Governor Lehman, I don't know that anybody can do justice to the human side of this picture of large-scale emigration from the D.P. camps. To say that morale is at its highest over there is to be guilty of understatement. Perhaps if I tell you what happened in Munich some weeks ago, you will appreciate what has happened in D.P. camps in the last few months.

RABBI WISE:  
(cont'd.)

It was the day that the first 600 refugees received their visas from Israel. There was real joy in their hearts. There were tears in their eyes as they tried to read the piece of paper stamped with the name of the State of Israel. At last the promise and the hope had materialized. They were on their way. Since then, thousands have received their visas and have started out for the journey that would mean the end of wandering.

I am happy to be able to report that the camps are beginning to be emptied. Most of the refugees who were in the D.P. centers in Italy have already been moved to Israel. There are still about 100,000 Jews in the United States Zone of Germany. There are others in the British Zone and in Austria and Cyprus. Large numbers are definitely on the move. We are now seeing the beginning of the end to the tragic chapter of the homeless survivors of Nazi terror and pogroms.

MR. MORGENTHAU: Would you say then that the burden of the Joint Distribution Committee is being reduced, Rabbi Wise?

RABBI WISE: Not exactly, Mr. Morgenthau. At least not immediately. There are some 180,000 Jews in the D.P. areas alone. If the present trend in emigration continues, it will certainly mean a

RABBI WISE:  
(cont'd.)

lessening of pressure on the JDC program in the foreseeable future. But right now, with the increase in emigration, and the continued needs in other directions, we are faced with the greatest responsibilities in our history.

There is no question that the movement of Jews out of the D.P. camps has increased the optimism of Jews all over Europe. But at the same time, we must not overlook the fact that another winter is on its way, and JDC must continue to provide relief and other basic assistance to over three quarters of a million people on the continent alone. If we fail them, morale goes down.

We have the problem of aiding vast numbers of displaced Jews who have come into France -- of keeping up 382 JDC child care institutions in Europe -- of maintaining 525 JDC-aided Jewish medical institutions in Europe -- and of keeping up our present accelerated effort to achieve economic reconstruction for the tens of thousands of Jews who must, or plan, to remain in Europe.

This help is particularly urgent in Eastern Europe. In that part of the continent, tens of thousands have been economically displaced, as a result of changes in the form of government. In Rumania alone, 40,000 persons, now getting relief help,

RABBI WISE:  
(cont'd.)

must also be retrained to earn their own livelihood. But frankly, the funds haven't been available for a job of this magnitude -- though in recent months we have placed thousands on the road to economic self-sufficiency.

Another problem which concerns all of us to a very large degree is, of course, the problem of Jews in the Moslem countries. The reports that have been coming in of late have been most alarming because we have heard of thousands of Jews, the most successful members of the community of Cairo, for example, being placed in concentration camps, their property confiscated, being cut off from all forms of aid and assistance. We have heard of similar cases in Syria and Iraq, and we have heard of outbreaks and pogroms in places like Morocco and Libya and in Aden and various other parts of the Moslem world.

More and more, that problem is going to bear in upon us. We are already providing considerable aid, but we shall have to provide more. The JDC has sent a medical and a welfare mission into North Africa to study the situation in the various countries there. This will be followed within a very short time by a mission to study the

RABBI WISE:  
(cont'd.)

educational facilities for the youth of those countries. I must reemphasize that in view of all these things, the cash position of the JDC is very difficult.

MR. MORGENTHAU:

Thank you, Rabbi Wise. I know that the communities which are participating in this telephone conference understand the immensity of the job that the JDC must carry on in the coming months. We have not yet covered the complete story, but I wonder, Governor Lehman, whether you want to make any comment at this point in the discussion.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN:

The problems and the opportunities are so pressing that we have not given any consideration to the perspective of history that all of us are making together. So much has happened during the past year that we have not been able to keep up with its significance. We are truly at one of the greatest turning points in the history of the Jewish people. For the first time in 2,000 years a Jewish State exists. The State of Israel is no more than a four and one-half month old infant, and already it has given to the world a fine record of courage, of faith, of sacrifice and of achievement. It has clothed the Jewish name in a new dignity and pride. The destiny of the Jews of Europe is inseparably linked with the future of the new Jewish State. You and I -- all of us

GOVERNOR LEHMAN:  
(cont'd.)

together -- have made that State possible. You and I and all of us together have brought the Jewish people to the threshold of a new way of life -- a way of life where they can throw off the chains of misery and the bonds of oppression -- a way of life where they can be free men dedicated to peace, democracy and to human progress. The doors to Palestine are wide open and we have paved the way for the redemption of the homeless. We have made a good beginning in the dismantling of the D.P. camps.

We have turned a corner in history and before us lie not emergencies and crises, and tragedies, but the greatest of all opportunities not merely for relief, but for rehabilitation and reconstruction in their most permanent aspects.

Through your response to the United Jewish Appeal -- and here I wish to pay special tribute to those communities which have made our cash receipts the most outstanding of any year -- you have shown that you have always been ready to meet emergencies. War and mass persecution have always evoked a most magnanimous and energetic type of action. But we have to adjust ourselves to a new situation where the challenge of opportunity, not crisis, must stimulate us to the same kind of self-sacrifice and heroic effort.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN:  
(cont'd.)

We must not succumb to complacency now that a Jewish State is in existence. Actually, this represents a vital test of our sense of responsibility. Everything that we have done until now has been based on our sincere and solemn pledge that we would see our fellow Jews through the bitter years and make a new life for them when the opportunity arose. No one can deny that we have done nobly by our promise to keep them alive and help them survive until the day of freedom. Now we have an even greater task before us -- the task that will take them from the relief rolls and the dismal crowded quarters of the D.P. camps, and set them up as free human beings in Israel, the United States and other parts of the world. The task will not be complete until we have fully redeemed our less fortunate brothers now living in the shadows of hate.

I believe, Mr. Morgenthau, that all of us in the communities throughout the country have been so busy living and making new history for our people that we may have lost sight of the tremendous implications of this momentous year. We have opened the gates of hope. We have brought into being a new era of revival, but this is merely the glorious beginning of things to come. It is up to all of us -- working together in the UJA -- to



GOVERNOR LEHMAN:  
(CONTINUED)

bring about the emancipation of our fellow-Jews from the horrors, the sorrows and the trials of yesterday. In other words, now more than ever, we are their tomorrow.

MR. MORGENTHAU:

I think all of us appreciate your comments. The Jewish people is certainly at the crossroads of history. While we are on the subject of history, I would like to ask Rabbi Goldstein who has just come back from Israel to tell us what the needs are in the Jewish homeland. Tell us about the land where history is being made every hour of the day.

RABBI GOLDSTEIN:

Briefly, Mr. Morgenthau, the needs in Israel must be based on an actual and concrete program of immigration at the rate of no less than 120,000 Jews a year. This is not a blue-print. This is not a resolution. This is a reality. This is the rate at which Jews are now, at this very hour, coming into the State of Israel. I know that in December of last year we talked of a plan for the entry of 75,000 Jews in 1948. Many of us may have been a bit skeptical. Some of us may have felt that it was merely a good talking point, but from what I have seen in Israel, I can tell you that we have gone far beyond that already. It seems to me that the figure of 100,000 for the year 1948 will be much closer to the mark than the 75,000 that we anticipated.

As you, yourself, have stated Mr. Morgenthau, our people

RABBI GOLDSTEIN:  
(Cont'd.)

are coming home to Palestine at a minimum rate of 10,000 a month. When we consider this rate of immigration in relation to the total Jewish population of Israel, we can see that it represents an increase of 15% or more in the total population in the course of one year.

MR. MORGENTHAU: Just what does this scale of immigration involve, Rabbi Goldstein?

RABBI GOLDSTEIN: It involves, among other things, the acute problem of housing, Mr. Morgenthau. Housing is one of the most pressing needs. It stands to reason that without adequate housing, we shall not be able to take care of the growing influx of Jews. We must build new homes, we must set up special housing units and remodel existing units to enlarge their capacity.

Another major problem is the establishment of new agricultural settlements. This too, is directly bound up with immigration. Unless we have enough settlements to receive the newcomers, we shall be clogging up the machinery of absorption. The economic and social machine of the state of Israel must be helped to function on a basis that will enable it to digest, so to speak, all of the new human material introduced into its system.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN: If I may interrupt, Rabbi Goldstein, I'd like to ask a question which I am sure is in the minds of a great

GOVERNOR LEHMAN: many people. How has the present truce affected  
(cont'd.) the Jewish community of Israel?

RABBI GOLDSTEIN: The greatest burden on the life of Israel today is the truce. Keeping a large army of young people on a war footing disrupts agriculture and industry. The truce has put a terrible strain on the economic life of the state. A beginning is being made now toward removing some of the fighting men from the army barracks. They are being concentrated in agricultural settlements so that they may be engaged in productive labor while they remain militarily alerted. I look forward that the truce will be followed soon by peace in Israel. I need hardly add that the Jews of Israel want and pray for peace. We must act to give the soldiers the opportunity to beat their swords into ploughshares. You've heard of Palmach, the heroic striking force of the Israeli Army. Do you know what is their insignia -- two sheaves of wheat crossed by a sword. These boys and girls came from the agricultural settlements and want to go back there. This is a problem in readjustment and settlement that we must deal with in the coming months. We must also expand our public relations efforts to inform the world of the progress of this far-reaching program-- the program of unprecedented immigration -- the program of reconstruction on a scale hitherto unheard of in the annals of Jewish history.

RABBI GOLDSTEIN: If you will permit this personal word, I should like to say something without having consulted the chairman of this round table. When I was in Israel less than two weeks ago, I was profoundly impressed with the high regard which Jews in Israel have for Mr. Morgenthau. There is universal appreciation in Israel of the great services rendered by the Hon. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., as General Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal. The Jews in Israel hope that he will continue to lead the Jews of America in the greatest privilege in their history, that of solving at long last the problem of Jewish national homelessness in and through a Jewish state.

MR. MORGENTHAU: Thank you Dr. Goldstein. All of us are interested in how the Jews of Israel feel about their war for independence. A short while ago a group of nine young men and women, members of the Army of Israel, came to the United States at my invitation. One of these young people is here with us today. I'd like to introduce him to you. He is Captain Alexander Albala, who fought with the Jewish Brigade in the British Eighth Army before he joined the Haganah. Captain Albala, what are the Jews of Israel fighting for?

CAPTAIN ALBALA: We are fighting to live, Mr. Morgenthau. Not to live anywhere -- but to live in our own country -- Israel. We fought a hard and bitter fight because we knew that there were only two ways out for us -- victory and freedom, or death and destruction for all of us -- men, women and children alike. You know the terrible odds we faced. You know what precious little we had to fight with. There were many times in the first days of the struggle when we had to fight machine guns -- with rifles -- and tanks with machine guns. It was difficult to decide which settlements should be defended, which should get a machine gun. It was humiliating for a soldier to have to count his bullets instead of firing them. It was humiliating when you had to leave a position, which you somehow managed to hold for days -- not because it was no longer important to the line. But because you got the message that no more ammunition could be sent to you to fight back. That is what we were up against in the beginning. I myself often wonder how it happened that we actually pulled through in those trying days. But things have changed a great deal since then. With your help, we got the equipment we needed so badly -- and got it in time, just in time to hurl back the invaders.

If I were to say that we have fought and we are ready to fight again for our right to live, that

CAPTAIN ALBALA:  
(cont'd.)

would not be the whole truth. Of course, we are fighting for our survival and our right to live as decent and free men. But we are also fighting for the freedom and the right to live of the thousands and tens of thousands of our brothers who are still doing time in the D.P. camps -- the prisons without bars. They have been kicked around from place to place much too long. And we see it as our sacred duty to bring them into our country -- to give them the chance to breathe the air of freedom -- to teach them to live in dignity -- to enable them to lift their heads to the sky and enjoy the fruits of peace and hard work.

I had a friend who fought at my side shortly before the truce. When the firing got heavy, he fell with a bullet through his head. There was not much that could be done for him. But I bent down to dress his wound. He opened his eyes and said, "My mother is in a D.P. camp. She is still waiting for a ship. Try and bring her here and take care of her when she comes." I promised that I would do it -- and I shall. I and all my comrades shall do it. We shall fight until we can bring in the mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers of the people of Israel. We shall do it, if you help provide the ships, if you help build the homes. We shall not lay down our arms until we have helped build a better future for our people.

MR. MORGENTHAU: Thank you, Captain Albala. I am sure that all of you will agree that we have a tremendous task ahead of us in the coming days. No one is more keenly aware than I am of the superb job that has been done in the communities this year. All of us in the United Jewish Appeal are most appreciative of what has been accomplished until now to keep the dollars rolling into our treasury. I know that it is not necessary for me to urge you to do what you think best to assure more cash as quickly as possible. I am not going to tell you how to do it. You are the best judge of the most effective way to produce results in your community. You have demonstrated that time and again in the last few months. All I want to emphasize is that we need cash at once -- and lots of it.

I must repeat that I believe that everyone has done his level best in 1948. And if we don't quite reach the \$250,000,000 quota, it will only mean that we do not live in a world of perfection. Surely, all of us together have tried our utmost to make this world less imperfect.

When you come to the question of voting on allotments, please remember this. An allotment is not an inanimate figure of so many digits and decimal points. An allotment is life itself.

MR. MORGENTHAU:  
(cont'd.)

An allotment is ships and food, and hope and a new life. The more you give, the greater your allotment, the more Jews will be able to come into Israel.

Now a word to the leaders of the communities -- the great-hearted men and women who have borne the brunt of this campaign -- local leaders, like every other contributor, have a perfect right to pay their pledge over an extended period of time. However, I hope that these individuals will make their payments immediately to encourage their communities to speed the flow of cash that will deliver many Jews from exile into freedom during the High Holiday period.

In closing, I want to thank you for your patience, and above all, for your splendid service to the cause of the United Jewish Appeal. To all of you, I wish to convey my personal best wishes for a very Happy New Year. May you all be blessed with good health and with the continued strength to carry on the sacred tasks of rebuilding Jewish life. Thank you and goodbye.