



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series I: General Correspondence, 1914-1969, undated.

Sub-series A: Alphabetical, 1914-1965, undated.

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American Zionist Emergency Council, Bergson, Peter, press  
release from Hebrew Committee for National Liberation  
repudiating story in Washington Post concerning Bergson, the  
group's chairman, undated.



*Bergson, Peter*  
*copy*

NEWS FROM HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

*Dr. Libson*

2315 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest, Washington 8, D. C.

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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY

STATEMENT OF THE HEBREW COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

Harking back thirty years to yellow journalism at its worst and dirtiest, the WASHINGTON POST published today a story that, from its headline through two columns of text to its last line, is a false and vicious presentation of what purports to be an interview with Mr. Peter Bergson, Chairman of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation.

It is not necessary to go beyond the headline and "lead" to realize that the tone of the story is one of deliberate misrepresentation and insinuation to present Mr. Bergson in the worst possible light. This first paragraph contains no less than five false statements, some of them contradicted in the latter part of the story. These false statements read as follows:

1. "From his \$63,000 residence at 2315 Massachusetts Avenue." -- As the story later indicates, the building belongs to the Hebrew National Liberation Fund, Inc.

2. "Peter Bergson, self-styled 'nuisance diplomat'". -- Mr. Bergson has never called himself a "nuisance diplomat" to either the POST reporter or to anyone else.

3. "Boasts his Hebrew Committee of National Liberation with its numerous affiliates has collected one million dollars from a generous American people." -- This is an unmitigated lie, manufactured out of whole cloth. The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation has never collected any money whatsoever from the "generous American people". It is registered as a foreign agent with the United States Government and its activities are duly reported to the proper government agencies so that anyone interested can quickly discover what it has and has not done. Obviously, therefore, Mr. Bergson did not boast of



any sums collected by the Hebrew Committee.

What the POST may be referring to is the funds collected by the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, of which Mr. Bergson is one of eleven Co-Chairmen, and possibly the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews of which Mr. Bergson was the leading officer during the period of its activity. Both these organizations have done and are doing a most valuable work for which the Hebrew people of Europe will remain eternally grateful. However, these are American organizations. They have a full slate of officers and executive boards consisting of some of the most eminent men in American public life.

The expenditure, as well as the collection of money by the above-mentioned organizations has been a matter of public record, issued in quarterly reports by certified public accountants. These reports have been distributed to the responsible officers of the organizations and can be had for the asking by anyone interested in the work done by these organizations, including the WASHINGTON POST which has not taken the trouble to get a single copy of such reports before publishing these disproved accusations.

To insinuate, as the POST story does, that there is any suspicion attached to the expenditure of the funds collected from the generous American people by these organizations is to impugn the integrity of all the men who are holding responsible executive and administrative positions on these committees.

4. & 5. "He became vague, however, when a POST reporter insisted he tell what use has been made of the million dollars." ---

This statement is as patently false as the statement that preceded it. Mr. Bergson did not "become vague" about the use of this money. He was not even asked what use had been made of the money contributed by the American people to the organizations mentioned above. He volunteered the statement, correctly quoted by the reporter, that "Our major activity is to



mobilize the understanding and help of American people for an integral and positive solution of the problems of the Jewish people in Europe."

Similar analysis of almost every paragraph in the story will reveal more than a score of inaccuracies, misstatements and misrepresentations. It is hardly necessary to point out the most glaring of these falsifications to prove that the story was written with the deliberate intention to malign and slander Mr. Bergson.

One of them reaches the acme of absurdity in presenting "...his (Bergson's) assertion he has been the means of smuggling 40,000 Jews into Palestine." Not even the most gullible public will believe the reporter that any man is foolish enough to claim that he has smuggled 40,000 Jews into Palestine. The fact is, as the Palestine Administration has itself testified, that the American Friends of a Jewish Palestine, organized by Mr. Bergson and his Palestinian associates, supported the efforts of a large organization in Palestine in its work of bringing 40,000 Jews into that country despite the restrictions imposed by the infamous and illegal White Paper limiting Jewish immigration.

It is significant that THE POST quotes an unnamed British official, characterized as "a high British authority", in derrogation of this effort to save the Hebrew people of Europe by taking them to their own country. "It leaves wide open an opportunity for 'flotsam and jetsam'", said this high British authority, "and Nazis posing as refugees to enter mandated territory without first being investigated."

We were not aware that THE POST partook of the callousness of British officialdom which so lightly disregarded the tragic need of the Hebrew people for a haven and dismissed the refugees knocking at the gates of Palestine as "flotsam and jetsam". Nor did we think that THE POST was so naive as to believe that the British opposed immigration into Palestine for two years before the war because they feared the penetration of "Nazis posing as refugees." As



a matter of fact, Germans were freely admitted at that time into Palestine without any interrogation as to their Nazi affiliations.

While the brutal frankness of the "high British official's" sentiments toward the tormented Hebrew people is accurate, his statement quoted by THE POST "that Britain's only official dealings with him had been of a 'military nature' is woefully lacking in accuracy. Throughout the time Mr. Bergson was exerting his efforts to get British approval for a Hebrew Army, he conducted prolonged negotiations with British authorities in this country. He had numerous meetings with other "high British officials", including a formal conference with Field Marshal Sir John Dill and Lord Halifax at the British Embassy on October 1, 1942.

As for the truth about Mr. Bergson's draft status about which this official is quoted, the facts are as follows:

He was up for induction in the United States Army in July, 1943, at Fort Meyer, Virginia, and was rejected by the Army and classified as 4F. This was a voluntary induction from which Mr. Bergson could easily have refrained, being a foreign visitor in this country and a citizen of Palestine, which, ironically enough, was considered a neutral in the war. There was an effort made by the same sources that are responsible for the present slanderous attack on Mr. Bergson to railroad him into the Army recently, but this failed due to the fact that Mr. Bergson is 34 years of age and, as everyone knows, the Army does not want nor need people of that age, particularly when they were in the 4F category.

A quotation from the report of the Interim Committee of the American Jewish Conference, which has been completely refuted by the answer published by the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish people of Europe reveals one of the sources of the attack against Mr. Bergson. The American Jewish Conference is following Hitler's example of reporting a big lie often enough to gain credence from gullible people despite the fact that this lie has been exposed over and over again.



According to THE POST, "the public might be interested in knowing just how much has been collected and what disposition was made of the money," the Interim Committee of the Jewish Conference commented. "To date Bergson has made no such accounting." This statement was made in an attack directed against the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. It brazenly ignored the fact that at the time it was made there were in existence two quarterly reports of certified public accountants presenting in detail the data concerning the collection and expenditure of every cent raised by the Emergency Committee in its six months of activity.

Similarly, the charges of the American Jewish Conference that any of the organizations with which Mr. Bergson is associated have used names without permission, have been completely disproved and discredited. Not a single name has been presented by the American Jewish Conference to back up this charge. On the contrary, in its effort to prove this charge the American Jewish Conference and the Zionist Organisation of America used the name of Mrs. Louis D. Brandeis, wife of the late Supreme Court Justice, as one who declared the use of her name was "completely unauthorized." Mrs. Brandeis was prevailed upon to make this charge without investigating the facts. Later on, upon being shown her own signature consenting to serve as a sponsor of the American League for a Free Palestine, Mrs. Brandeis retracted this charge. On June 8, 1944, the NEW YORK TIMES published this retraction. On June 3, 1944, the WASHINGTON POST published Mrs. Brandeis' charge but it failed to print the retraction although its editors were given a photostatic copy of Mrs. Brandeis' signature as a sponsor, together with her statement acknowledging the genuineness of the signature. What was then interpreted as a journalistic oversight now becomes apparent as a deliberate effort to create a false impression concerning the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and the American League for a Free Palestine.

Likewise, in quoting Pierre van Paassen's attack on the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, THE POST ignored the fact that Mr.



van Paassen's attack was immediately disproved in every point by his own published statements and that Mr. van Paassen is now being sued for libel by the Emergency Committee.

No further proof is necessary of the antagonism inherent in this story than the following two sentences: "Bergson's salary, by his own admission, is \$75.00 a week. Formerly, he said, it was \$45.00 a week." The insinuation is clear. What the reporter seeks to convey in the parenthetical words, "by his own admission," and "he said," is that Mr. Bergson was telling an untruth at one time or another. No reader will get the impression of the true facts from this statement, namely, that until May 20, 1944, Mr. Bergson received a salary of \$45.00 a week for his tremendous work and that following that date, the salary was raised to \$75.00 per week.

This was in accordance with the general policy of the organizations with which Mr. Bergson has been associated that men employed in any capacity receive a maximum of \$45.00 a week if they have no dependents, and \$55.00 a week maximum if they did have dependents. On May 20, 1944, the maximum was raised to \$75.00 a week for both classes of executives. It would be interesting to compare this salary arrangement of the organizations headed by Mr. Bergson with the salaries paid to executives of other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations of a similar character.

Finally, there is an outright falsification in the paragraph which states that "Bergson, who formerly had declared the \$63,000 'embassy' was purchased for him by friends, admitted to THE POST it was paid for out of funds received for by the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation."

At no time has Mr. Bergson declared that the building occupied by the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation was purchased for him by friends; nor has he found it necessary to "admit" to THE POST, or to anyone else, that it was "paid for out of funds received by the Hebrew Committee of National Libera-



tion." As THE POST states in the very next paragraph, the simple fact is that the building was purchased by the Hebrew National Liberation Fund, Inc. There has never been any secret about this nor any need to hide or "admit" this fact. It was so recorded in the transfer of property filed with the proper authorities.

