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American Zionist Emergency Council, British Embassy, 1944.

British Embassy
Correspondence

MEMORANDUM

To Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio

Date October 5, 1944

From Arthur Lourie

I have been through the file which deals with our interviews and correspondence with the British Embassy. The following subjects were taken up at different times in the course of the past year:

1. The manner in which the gun-running trials were conducted in Palestine, and in particular the objectionable statements of the prosecuting attorney and the nature of the publicity given the proceedings. Also the question of the arms searches in general. (October 12, 1943 - interview of Dr. Goldstein, Mrs. Halprin, Mr. Greenberg, with Sir Ronald Campbell). Prior to this a carefully prepared aide-memoir on the subject was submitted to the Embassy.

2. Discussion on major policy; abrogation of the White Paper; the question of Arab federation. (On November 8, 1943 your interview with Lord Halifax.) November 22, 1943 a resolution of the Emergency Council with regard to the White Paper was adopted and formally transmitted to the Embassy. This was acknowledged in a letter from Lord Halifax, November 29th, stating that he would transmit the contents to London.

3. A resolution on the White Paper prepared by the Palestine Jewish Legion in consultation with the Emergency Council was submitted by a delegation which called at the Embassy November 29th.

4. Following the statement of the President to Dr. Wise and yourself we learned that the censor had prevented the release of this message in Palestine. A telegram from yourself and Dr. Wise was sent to Lord Halifax protesting this action. (March 14, 1944).

American Palestine Committee

5. Action was taken by the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ to protest the pro-Arab propaganda activities of Freya Stark. (April, 1944).

6. In response to the publication by the British Information Services of the pamphlet, "50 Facts About Palestine", a letter analyzing and taking exception to the presentation of the Palestine issue was sent to the Information Service.

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7. A memorandum dealing with three topics, namely:

(a) the grant of certificates to refugees in liberated countries,

(b) the question of refugees in Mauritius,

(c) the statements attributed to Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith in Italy, was submitted by the American Jewish Conference, (September, 1944), in consultation with the Emergency Council.

8. In connection with the establishment of a Jewish Brigade Group, a cable expressing satisfaction and appreciation was sent to Mr. Churchill through the Embassy, signed by Dr. Wise and yourself. (September 29, 1944).

In addition to the above, there were a number of informal contacts such as that when you and I called on Mr. Russell and Mr. Berlin last March.

The Jewish Army question had been raised, of course, at various times in previous months when the Germans were still in North Africa. The recent negotiations were carried on exclusively in London and called for no action on our part here.

Looking through this list of items, I would make the following brief comments:

1. The pressure developed in this country on the subject of the White Paper towards the end of last year was undoubtedly a major factor in obtaining the modification in the terms of that document, represented by the postponement of the deadline in respect of the unused balance of the 75,000 certificates, beyond March 1944. We are faced today with a new problem, namely the decision of the British Government to restrict the grant of further certificates to Jews escaping from enemy-occupied territory, while refusing them to refugees in liberated areas. The effect of this is virtually to stop all further immigration to Palestine since the number of Jews thus escaping, especially since Rumania declared war against the Axis, is extremely small. This is a matter which will no doubt be followed up in the near future here as well as in London.

2. The long campaign conducted in this country in support of the Jewish Army proposal was certainly a factor in the action finally taken with regard to the Jewish Brigade. It is true that that campaign had not been actively conducted of recent months, but the Executive in London in renewing negotiations could point to the warm endorsement given the Jewish Army proposal by American Zionists and to the welcome which the establishment of a specifically Jewish military force would receive here.

3. The question of the internment of the 1,450 refugees in Mauritius has been taken up on a number of occasions. All efforts, however,

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to obtain their return to Palestine during the war have failed, though we have some hope of the removal of the post-war ban which had also been placed on their return. (Privately and not for publication, the Colonial Office has informed us that this ban will not be applied.) The situation of these refugees continues deplorable in the extreme, and we have recently had further communications from them asking us to do what we can to help obtain their removal from this tropical island.

In general, of course, the work of the Committee has been concentrated on the specifically American scene. Thus while our major activity was concerned, apart from the question of the White Paper, with the Resolutions in Congress, that aspect, however, would not be reflected in discussions with the British Embassy. The impact of our work on the British Government, accordingly, is not to be seen in the direct approaches to the Embassy, but rather in the impression created on the British of a vigorous and watchful Zionist movement in this country. This has in various ways unquestionably been effectively established in the course of the past year.



B.L.

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