



## 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, Latin American  
Department, undated.



## MEMORANDUM

- RE: 1. NEW YORK CITY, A CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN ZIONIST VISITORS
2. THE LATIN AMERICAN DEPARTMENTS
3. THE TWOFOLD DUTY OF ZIONIST LEADERSHIP TOWARD LATIN AMERICAN JEWRY

### 1. NEW YORK CITY, A CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN ZIONIST VISITORS

New York City receives a constant stream of Latin American Jewish visitors, Zionist and non-Zionists who can be easily won over for our work. In the past two years, the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine availed itself of this opportunity to stimulate and guide political and other Zionist activities in the Latin American countries. (See Appendix A)

At the time the removal of the Latin American Department from New York to Washington was decreed, there existed in New York the Keren Hayesod Latin American Department which remained a valuable contact with visiting Zionists. The Keren Hayesod is now definitely closing its New York office. Latin American Jews coming to New York City - they seldom, if ever, go to any other city, and least of all to Washington - will henceforth have no contact whatever with any official Zionist body, let alone with a representative especially concerned with their needs and problems.

### 2. THE LATIN AMERICAN DEPARTMENTS

a. The Latin American Division of the recently created World Committee for Palestine, located in Washington, D.C., is carrying on to the fullest extent the political work for which the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency had been created originally in New York City, in November, 1943.\*

\* Note: It was felt from the very inception of this work that it would carry greater weight if it were promoted by a non-Jewish Zionist body, officially, at least, and the plans for creating such body were followed out immediately after the creation of the first two pro-Palestine committees in Latin America.

b. The present Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency in Washington was informed at the first staff meeting held on Wed., Jan. 16, 1946, that it is to engage in Zionist organizational and cultural work, but that it is not expected to do much until "after the Zionist Congress", because there are no means and no people to go down to those countries.



c. I deem it worthwhile to call to your attention that the recently created Latin American Department of the American Jewish Committee, under the directorship of a noted Argentine educator, Mr. M. Yagupsky, is located in New York City where it can and will have close contact with Jews coming from Latin America. Moreover, the American Jewish Committee seems to find enough people to send to those countries as emissaries and it is opening regional offices in Latin America.

### 3. The Twofold Duty of Zionist Leadership toward Latin American Jewry

Zionist leaders are no doubt aware how important it is to make Zionism a force in the life of those communities for their own sake and to harness their human and material resources for the good of the movement. Zionist leaders, so poignantly aware of the irreparable loss our movement sustained on the European front, will surely not permit themselves to overlook the Latin American reservoir of more than 650,000 Jews. That these Jews have been to a very great extent overlooked by our Zionist leadership, is common knowledge. (See Appendix B)

Although Latin American Jewry is overwhelmingly Zionist in its sentiments, the chaos created by the zeal of misguided emissaries of a certain institution has reduced Zionism in those countries to tragic insignificance and impotence. It is my conviction, based on first-hand knowledge and experience, that even if the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine were instructed to go ahead full steam now, it is most improbable that it could enlist the cooperation of the intellectuals and rally the masses on that continent by means of correspondence, in many cases with the very same individuals who paralyze all local Zionist initiative and prevent the emergence of a wide and popular Zionist movement. Such movement can be created and developed only by the following steps:

a. A Zionist leader, fully accredited by the Jewish Agency, should visit immediately as many of the countries as possible, especially Argentina and Brazil, and enlighten the leaders in those countries and put an end to the confusion which prevails there.

b. An experienced organizer or two should be sent to those countries for several months to launch Zionist membership drives and to train the local people in Zionist organizational work. (They lack in many cases the most rudimentary knowledge.)

c. A Zionist regional office should be opened in Argentina, if possible, with a permanent director and a paid staff.

The work carried on energetically and persistently by the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency in New York, during the last two years, has brought about a general awakening and an urgent demand for orientation and organization. Zionist leadership must now avail itself of this mood of preparedness. To wait till after the Zionist Congress would be a disservice to Zionism and unfair to Latin American Jewry.



## APPENDIX A

The case of Lima, Peru, will serve to illustrate the importance of personal contacts with Latin American Jewish visitors to this country.

The Lima "Zionist Federation" was not in a position to undertake the task of creating a pro Palestine committee in their country and therefore recommended a non-Zionist with proper "contacts" for this work. The non-Zionist rejected the written request of the Latin American Department of the Jewish Agency on the ground that he knew little or nothing about Jews and still less about Zionism, and because his beginning of an interest in things Jewish had already put upon him an unusual burden of communal duties and responsibilities.

Months later, the Latin American Department in New York was informed that the gentleman was in a hospital in New York. When he recovered he, he kept his promise and came twice to the Latin American Department and allowed himself to be informed and persuaded to undertake the work at first proposed to him almost a year prior to his visit to New York. He returned to his country, rallied the Zionists around himself, created the pro Palestine Committee among whose members are the president of the Senate and ministers of the Cabinet; he opened an office for the Committee and sent a most capable and energetic government official as a delegate to the World Christian Conference for Palestine that was held in Washington, D.C., November 1-2, 1945.

## APPENDIX B

Not in years has a Zionist leader visited the Latin American countries on behalf of an official Zionist body. Although the holding of the First Latin American Zionist Convention was decided upon as early as August 29, 1944, not a single Zionist leader honored the Convention with his presence during the sessions of March 10-15, 1945.

Members of the Zionist Actions Committee and of the Jewish Agency who toured those countries did not do so under the auspices of any Zionist body as such. Indeed, a member of the Zionist Actions Committee refused to appear at the recent Balfour Day Rally in Buenos Aires (a city of some 300,000 Jews), and his sponsors demanded that his name be eliminated from any further Zionist publicity for that major Zionist function.

In Brazil, certain forces are still engaged in impressing upon Zionists and the people in general that Zionism is not legal and that the governmental press release of April 5, 1945 is illegal. Yet no higher Zionist authority has shown to date any interest in that large and prosperous Jewish community, and no Zionist leader or committee has been sent there to set aright the so-called Zionists who oppose the restoration of the Zionist movement there.

Latin American Jews do not know how to interpret this utter unconcern on the part of the higher Zionist instances with regard to the situation created in those countries, especially since those directly responsible for the confusion and paralysis of Zionist effort purport to act in the name of high Zionist authorities.