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Ben-Horin, Eliahu, 1956.



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May 8th, 1956

ELIAHU BEN-HORIN

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

Here is a report of the essential points in my talk yesterday with Mr. Morris of the British Embassy. I hope that you may find it interesting.

Mr. Morris started by saying that he had no written document from London in reply to my memo, but he had notes before him to which he referred in the process of giving me the Foreign Office's reaction. The Foreign Office found my plan "very interesting", although, as I must realize, it was not a completely new idea. Indeed, Wedgwood, etc. Also in recent times suggestions to this effect have come up from time to time - although not in such a comprehensive and motivated form as my memo.

Then, he went on to say that the British Government was very much concerned about the security of Israel, but, as you know, all the efforts of Britain and America to bring about Israeli-Arab peace have thus far failed - and the outlook is not too bright.

And then, he came out with three objections of London, of which only the last one is a serious one:

- 1.- All the present members of the Commonwealth have reached this status by way of organic development (from colony to Dominion). In the case of Israel, however, it would be an entry into the Commonwealth after complete severance of previous ties.
- 2.- It is a question which cannot be decided by London alone. All the members of the Commonwealth would have a say in this matter.
- 3.- Being concerned about Israel's future, London feels that this future can be secured through an Israeli-Arab "accommodation" which must sooner or later take place. From this viewpoint, would not an open identification of Israel with Britain and "British imperialism" weaken the chances of such an accommodation?

This was in substance the message he gave me from the Foreign Office, assuring me time and again that the Foreign Office gave very serious consideration to my plan, and that any comments I care to make would be passed on again to London.

In my comments I totally ignored the first two items, which are formalistic, and concentrated on the essence of the problems involved. I told



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him that Mr. Nasser (whom, by the way, he characterized as "a Goebbels who wants to be a Hitler") does not need any additional "ammunition" to justify his hatred of and fight against Israel; and that I don't care a damn whether Nasser & Co. will like it or not; that speaking strictly for myself (and here I repeated what I told him in Washington that none of the Israeli leaders knows anything about these negotiations), I am concerned with the following three problems, and in that order of importance:

- 1.- The future and security of Israel. And it is my conviction since long that no small state of Israel's size (with its utterly indefensible borders) placed in such a key strategic position can survive in the long run, unless she has a protective umbrella of a more powerful world entity.
- 2.- The future of the Middle East. For the Middle East to develop normally and progressively, it is imperative that it does not succumb to the Soviets and that it has all the cooperation and help of the Western democracies.
- 3.- The preservation of the legitimate interests of the Western powers in the Middle East (which, in turn, is a *conditio sine qua non* for progressive development of the Middle East - as stated in the previous paragraph).

From the viewpoint of these three considerations, my plan is the only one which provides a satisfactory solution. At this stage, a thought came to my mind which I voiced to Mr. Morris. I said: "Although this has not been in the back of my mind when I formulated my plan - and it still is not - but I venture to say that, if your main desire is to bring about an Arab-Israeli accomodation, just make ~~believe~~ Mr. Nasser believe that Britain and Israel are about to reach an agreement along the lines of my plan - and Nasser will run like mad to make peace with Israel, rather than to have you, the British, back in the Middle East."

At that, Mr. Morris smiled and said: "It is a thought."

This is in essence as complete a report as I can give you in writing. In parting, I asked him what he thought of my publishing an article on the subject. His reply was: "By all means. The airing of the plan could do no harm, only good."

What do you make of it?

Best regards.

As always,

Eliahu Ben-Horin