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Jewish Agency, Comay, Major Michael S., 1947-1948.

June 6, 1947

The Executive

M. S. Comay

Interviews with Dominion Representative, Washington

New Zealand

In the absence from Washington of the New Zealand Minister, Carl Berendson, I had a forty-five minute talk with the First Secretary of the New Zealand Legation, Mr. J. S. Reid, who attended the Special Session with the Minister. I found that he had whole-heartedly accepted the British attitude on all aspects of the Palestine question, and was therefore strongly anti-Zionist. He argued, for instance that the trouble in Palestine would not be settled unless "outside interference" was stopped. Asked what he meant by this, he said it referred to the interference by the Jews elsewhere, particularly in America, who gave the Palestine Jews unlimited financial and political backing. As regards immigration, he did not consider that Palestine should have to shoulder any greater responsibility towards the DP's in Europe than any other country, particularly the United States. The present illegal immigration was inexcusable, as it was trying to force the issue by violence. Asked what he would do if he were a DP, sitting in a camp in Europe, he retorted that it was the duty of the DP's to await the outcome of the UNO handling of the matter, and that he hoped that the result would be to open the doors of other countries to them, especially the U. S. He did not believe that for the most part they would really want to go to Palestine if they were offered other alternatives. Asked what view he had formed as to a possible final solution, he felt that a strong central government should be maintained. If this didn't work, partition might be considered, but even then immigration into the Jewish area should be limited, otherwise this area would become overcrowded and the Arab fears that the Jews would spread from there into Arab territory might become a reality.

At the Special Session he felt that both the Jews and Arabs had been moderate and reasonable, except that Ben-Gurion had been a little extreme on his attack on the Mufti and had provoked the Arabs. He approved of the attitude taken by Sir Alexander Cadogan. He saw no reason why Britain should hold the baby if UNO did not back her policy. I asked what would happen if Britain refused to carry out a UNO policy? He shrugged his shoulders and replied that if UNO disagreed with Britain, it would have to devise some machinery for running Palestine. New Zealand had been pressed to go on to the Commission of Inquiry, but had refused because they didn't have the personnel. He would probably have been the representative. (I advanced counter arguments but did not feel that I had shaken his attitude very much.)

At the September session he thought that either Peter Fraser or Walter Nash would come over to UNO. Judging from Reid, the New Zealand Legation is completely under the sway of the British Embassy. Whether this applies to Berendson as well, I cannot say. He is away on vacation and due back Friday night or Saturday morning, and I have a provisional appointment with him for Saturday.

South Africa

I spent a half hour with Mr. H. T. Andrews, the South African Minister. He told me that General Smuts had instructed him to support the Jewish Agency as much as he could, and he outlined for me his part during the Special Session to show that he had carried out these instructions. He referred particularly to the question of hearing the Agency before the full General Assembly, and to the terms of reference of the Commission. I then asked him the following questions:

1. Q - What impression did he think the Agency spokesman had made?

A - He said the impression was excellent and generally he thought we had reason to congratulate ourselves on the showing we had made in connection with the Special Session and the results.

2. Q - Had the British tried to get the support of the Dominions during the session?

A - There was considerable informal discussion with Cadogan and with the British Ambassador, but the British were careful, in dealing with the Dominions, not to create the impression that they were pushing them. As a rule, the British Ambassador met with the Dominion representatives about once a week for discussions of policy. (I gathered at the New Zealand legation too that the heads of the Dominion's legations usually met at the British Embassy on Saturday mornings to maintain contact with each other.) For 90% of the time the Dominion's views would roughly coincide with those of Britain, but where, on particular issues, any Dominion had a special interest or a different point of view, the British would not insist on unanimity. In this case, he, Andrews, told Cadogan of the instruction he had received from South Africa, and explained that this would influence his attitude during the session. Cadogan had accepted this, and had assured him that he quite understood his position.

3. Q - What did he feel about the actual Commission?

A - As far as he could judge, the various governments represented on the Commission were on the whole sympathetic towards us. We must not overlook, however, that the members might react as individuals and not as spokesmen of their government. This was the understanding when the Commission was appointed. It was true that many of them were diplomatic officials, but

Canada, for instance, had appointed a Judge over whom they have no political control. Asked whether he knew anything about the Indian and Iranian members, he said that he assumed they would be sympathetic to the Arab case, but the Persian was a man for whom he had high regard. He had been a friend of his for some time and he found him moderate and intelligent.

4. Q - What did he feel about the position taken by Cadogan?

A - It had made a good impression, and he himself felt that it was fair. When asked what he thought might happen if Britain was in fact faced with a UNO decision unpallatable to her, he evaded answering.

5. Q - Could he throw any light on the United States attitude?

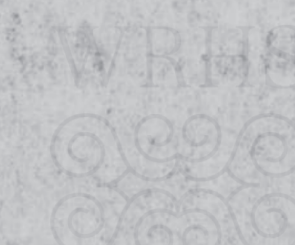
A - Like most outside people, he felt that the U. S. had sat too long on the sidelines giving advice to everybody else, and he was pleased that Washington had now been dragged into the matter too far for them to extricate themselves again. (I can vouch for it that this highly critical attitude towards the U. S. rôle regarding Palestine is common to all opinion inside the British Commonwealth.) He avoided a question from me as to what factors constituted the present dilemma in the State Department. He doubted whether Washington had yet crystallized its views, and felt that they would refrain from showing their hand until the session is September.

6. Q - What prospect was there for crystallizing Dominion opinion for the September Session.

A - In connection with this, I gave him an indication of the views held by Dr. Evatt and Peter Fraser, and pointed out that these more or less coincided with those of General Smuts. He said it would be of great interest to Smuts to know this, and he asked me whether I could also give him a reliable indication of the views of McKensy King. I replied that as far as I know the Canadians would hold similar views, but I could not state this at first hand. I asked whether it would be possible for the Dominions to coordinate their policy. He was non-committal, but said that he assumed there would be an interchange of views between the Commonwealth representatives for the purpose of the September session. The British would no doubt, take the initiative in having such a prior discussion. This would be an opportunity for ventilating the views of the Dominions within the family circle, so to speak, before the public discussions started. I gathered from his manner that he was reluctant to visualize the Dominions interchanging views amongst themselves behind the backs of the British. In leaving, I mentioned the fact that we had an office here, and that Eliahu Epstein would be happy to have a chat with him or supply him with information at any time. He referred the chats he had already had with Shertok and Gelber.

Australia

I spent an hour with Col. Alfred Sterling, the Australian Minister. The talk, however, dealt very little with Palestine as he explained that he was not directly concerned either with it or with UNO generally. Australia had set up virtually a separate Department to handle UNO affairs in New York, which had been run by Hasluck until he had resigned. Col. Hodgson, the Minister in Paris had then been brought over for the Special Session. For all practical purposes, the Embassy staff in Washington was short-circuited, except that the Ambassador, Mr. Makin had a general over-all responsibility. After a little general discussion on Palestine and the Middle East, the rest of the talk covered Australia-South African relations and Commonwealth affairs generally. Incidentally, he said that Australia's external outlooks were dominated by Pacific and Far Eastern affairs and that it was not sufficiently concerned with the Middle East even to appoint a diplomatic representative there, although there was a trade representative in Ankara who covered the whole region. I have been unable as yet to see the Ambassador who has been snowed under, particularly with the Far Eastern commission, but Sterling is trying to arrange an appointment for me for Saturday.



The Jewish Agency for Palestine

June 11, 1947

MEMORANDUM

To: The Executive

FROM: M.S. Comay

Subject: Australian Representatives
Palestine Committee

On Monday evening, I was asked to a small party to say farewell to Hood, the Australian representative on the Committee and was introduced to his alternate, Samuel Atyeo, who had just returned from serving on the Balkans Commission. He is a young man, seems intelligent, but rather self-opinionated and professes to be a keen Socialist. I gathered that he had been a personal assistant to Dr. Evatt for many years. He had had a consultation the previous evening, with Dr. Evatt by long distance telephone, during which he had been given a general indication of Evatt's views and had been instructed to study and report back to Evatt on certain specific points.

Since other people were present, I could not interrogate him any further, but we arranged to meet again for further discussion in Palestine.

As regards the attitude of the Australians on the Commission, I gathered from Atyeo that they had been instructed by Evatt, in the earlier stages at any rate, to be as non-committal as possible and to avoid being labeled as pro-or anti-British, Arab or Zionist. He was a little vague when I asked whether this attitude could be maintained at a later stage, when the Committee would have to decide whether it could make any positive recommendations. Presumably at this stage, the Australians would seek a fresh directive from Dr. Evatt and my feeling is that Dr. Evatt would then consider the matter tactically in the light of the role that he himself might play at the Special Session.

Both Australians were very keen to meet Dr. Weizmann, especially since Freda Kirchway had spoken to them about him that same afternoon. I promised to take them down to Rehovot myself for an informal off-the-record talk with Dr. Weizmann.

In discussing the Commission, Atyeo said that certain members were already regarded as partisan; for instance the Indian and the Persian as spokesmen for the Arabs and the Uruguayan and the Yugoslavs as pro-Zionist. He said that it was this kind of label which the Austrians were anxious to avoid acquiring. He hinted that any kind of obvious lobbying by either Jewish or Arab officials would not be welcomed.

I asked what they were doing about experts and was told that the Canadian judge Rand had put up two names from England. He did not name names, but I gathered that one was connected with Oxford and the other with Cambridge. I had a suspicion that these suggestions had really emanated from Begly and that the Canadian might be willing to be useful to the British (this is only a guess at this stage - I suggest that we should be a little wary at first in our

approaches to the Candians). I suggested Professor Paul Hanna and sketched in his background. They made a note of it and promised to put it up. I also suggested as independent witnesses of the highest standing the names of General McNarney (on the DP's), Professor Coupland, Professor Rappard and Baron Von Azbeck. All these suggestions were noted. They were put up by me after consultation with Mr. Arthur Lourie.

There was some discussion of the Russian attitude, especially in relation to Gromyko's speech at the Special Session. Everyone present was sure that there was some sinister motive behind the Russian statement, and that its appearance of bona fides should not be taken at its face value. I argued that this speech had really facilitated a solution, particularly with Washington. This argument made some impression, but I found myself up against a strong emotional bias as regards the Russians -- particularly in the case of Atyeo, as a result of his experiences in Greece and Yugoslavia, to the extent that we can influence the Commission when its views crystallize. We should be very hesitant in encouraging either of the two Soviet satellites on the Commission to take the initiative in our favor. Some objection, although a lesser one, might apply to a Latin-American country like Uruguay which has come to be regarded as pro-Zionist at the outset. Probably the most useful initial sponsorship for a Jewish State would come from a country such as Sweden or Holland.

As I mentioned, Atyeo professes to be a Socialist. He admires Crossman and Michael Foot and knows the latter personally. It should be considered whether some contact could be made with him by either Crossman or Foot, in a way which would not appear to be inspired by us. Maybe it would be natural for Foot, with whom Atyeo became friendly at San Francisco, to write to him when he hears that he is on this Palestine assignment. I have, meantime, gotten Atyeo reading Crossman's and Crum's book and discussed them with him.

msc/las

Wisdomay

ישראל
הממשלה הזמנית

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING REPRESENTATIVE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

16 E. 66 St.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

June 30, 1948

CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
105th St. & Ansel Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

As I indicated to you on the telephone this morning, the gist of the Mediator's suggestions is the creation of a union of two states, a Jewish and an Arab (including Trans-Jordan). A common Council is to be set up to administer matters which fall within the scope of the union, i.e., matters which were the province of the Joint Economic Board under the partition plan, plus coordination of foreign policy and defense. Jerusalem is to go to the Arab State with some municipal autonomy for its Jewish residents. There is to be some interchange of territory as between the Negev and Galilee, but these territorial suggestions are not clear.

In a covering letter the Mediator stresses that these are purely tentative suggestions as a basis for discussion, and that any results from such discussion must be based on voluntary acceptance and not on any imposition. He furthermore begs the Government not to reject them outright without giving him an opportunity of personal discussion with them either at Rhodes or in Tel Aviv. He also urges them not to make anything public until they have communicated their first reactions to him. The Government is meeting today, but Shertok has already indicated the obvious -- that the scheme is made in Britain. In fact, you will recall the notes of a talk that Eban and I had some weeks ago with Beeley, where the main points in these proposals were pretty accurately foreshadowed. Nevertheless, we do not feel that it would be advisable for us to react publicly here except on instructions from Tel Aviv. I told my colleagues that this was your view too.

Unfortunately, I cannot mail you copies of the code cables received, as this is contrary to the requirements of security.

I attach a copy of the cable sent you by Rabbi Fishman about assistance for the Yishivot, and a copy of my cable to Hoofien.

I have spoken to Eban about an Executive meeting in Pittsburgh on Sunday, but as it is difficult for him to get there before Monday, I am calling you again about it.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Michael S. Comay
Michael S. Comay

MSC:lm



WESTERN UNION

JOSEPH L. EGAN
PRESIDENT

1201

(13)

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

NL = Night Letter

LC = Deferred Cable

NLT = Cable Night Letter

Ship Radiogram

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CL53 PD=WUX NEWYORK NY 8 831A=

:THE TEMPLE=

1948 JUL 8 AM 9 15

:105 ST AND ANSEL RD=

WRHS
FOLLOWING FROM HOOFIEN QUOTE YOURS THIRTIETH HAD NO
INSTRUCTIONS INVESTIGATE BUT PLACE MATTER BEFORE AGENCY
WHICH HAVE DONE EMPHATICALLY ADDING SUPPLEMENTARY
APPLICATIONS FISHMAN AND UNTERMAN MATTER RESTS NOW WITH
AGENCY HOOFIEN UNQUOTE=

:COMAY=

COMAY=

CLASS OF SERVICE

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WESTERN UNION

JOSEPH L. EGAN
PRESIDENT

1920

(25)

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

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Ship Radiogram

LONG

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CL106 DL PD=WUX NEWYORK NY 8 919A=

1948 JUL 8 AM 10 34

:DR ABBA HILLEL SILVER THE TEMPLE=

:105 ST & ANSEL RD=

=FOLLOWING CABLES FROM ZIONIT QUOTE JULY SIXTH SILVER
WOLFGOLD GREENBERG HALPRIN NEUMANN FINAL DELIMITATION
FUNCTIONS ZIONORG RETAINING WIDE JURISDICTION AND WEIGHTY
FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDING CONTROL BOTH FUNDS
ALSO FILLING VACANT PLACES EXECUTIVE REQUIRE SPEEDIEST FULL
CONSULTATION ALL EXEC MEMBERS THEREFORE EXPECT YOU HERE
LATEST FIFTEENTH JULY PLEASE WIRE REACTION OUR CABLES 27/6
UNQUOTE QUOTE JULY SEVENTH PLEASE INFORM EVERY EXECMEMBER
AMERICA PLENARY SESSION EXECUTIVE ASSEMBLING 15/7 UNDER ALL
CONDITIONS FOR DECISIVE CONSULTATIONS ON MOST VITAL PROBLEMS
ZIONORG STOP NO POSTPONEMENT POSSIBLE VIEW GRAVE ISSUES
INVOLVED STOP SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY RESTS WITH AMERICAN
MOVEMENT THEREFORE RELY YOUR UNFAILING ATTENDANCE PLEASE
WIRE UNQUOTE PARAGRAPH PLEASE ADVISE IMMEDIATELY WHETHER
YOU ARE GOING IF SO FORWARD PASSPORT URGENTLY FOR ATTENTION
REGARDS=

:COMAY=

:ZIONIT ZIONORG DELIMITATION 27/6 15/7=

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WESTERN UNION

JOSEPH L. EGAN
PRESIDENT

1201

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

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Ship Radiogram

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CL336 PD=WUX NEWYORK NY 2 139P=

:RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER=

:~~246 EAST 105 ST~~=

Temple

1942 III 2 PM 2 32

:DISTURBING NEWS REGARDING FATE OF PETER BERGSON.

- NEITHER ATTORNEY JUDGE NOR OFFICIALS KNOW HIS WHEREABOUTS.

: POLITICAL ISSUES ASIDE AS A PERSONAL FRIEND AND ADMIRER
OF HEBREW PATRIOTS PLEASE ADVISE INFORMATION IMMEDIATELY=

:ARTHUR SZYK NEW CANAAN CONNECTICUT=

:SZYK= (

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

July 7, 1948

Jewish Agency for Palestine
16 East 66th Street
New York 21, New York

Attention: Mr. Comay

Gentlemen:

Please put on the agenda for next Monday's meeting the request of the Yeshiveth for assistance, and have all the material bearing on the subject available, including the enclosed telegram of Chief Rabbi Hersog.

I have received a telegram from Arthur Szyk requesting information about the fate of Peter Bergson. Is there any information available to us that I could transmit to Mr. Szyk, the artist?

With all good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er

Via Air Mail

ישראל
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PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL

OFFICE OF THE
~~PROVINCIAL~~ REPRESENTATIVE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

16 E. 66 St.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

July 9, 1948

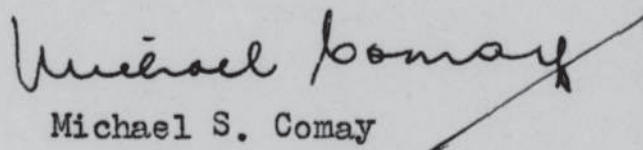
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
105th St. & Ansel Road
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

I have your letter with the inquiry from Arthur Szyk about Peter Bergson. Our information is that he is alive and in good spirits, and is comfortably housed, although the exact spot has been kept secret for security reasons.

You will notice that an Israeli Court in Tel Aviv has just granted a habeous corpus order against the Government in respect of his detention.

Yours sincerely,


Michael S. Comay

MSC:lm

July 14, 1948

Major Michael S. Comay
Jewish Agency for Palestine
16 East 66th Street
New York 21, New York

My dear Major Comay:

You may recall that when we discussed the request of the Yeshiveth for a contribution, I made reference to the fact that I had received a memorandum from them outlining their needs. I am enclosing herewith this memorandum which I trust you will bring to the attention of the Finance Committee within a day or two for action.

You will recall that we decided to send a cable to Israel asking for their decision in the matter, and failing to hear from them in a few days, we would proceed to act for them.

With all good wishes, I remain

Most cordially yours,

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

AHS:er
Enc.