



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series II: Harold P. Manson File (Zionism Files), 1940-1949, undated.

Sub-series A: Main Manson File, 1940-1949.

Reel
100

Box
35

Folder
32

Churchill, Winston, talk with Chaim Weizmann, 1943.

Churchill

~~SECRET~~

confidential

AHS File

EXTRACTS FROM MINUTES OF THE 25TH OCTOBER, 1943.

*re: British policy
Weizmann*

TALK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER:

Dr. Weizmann said that there had been present at the lunch, besides Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, and Major Churchill, Mr. and Mrs. Attlee, Lord Portal, the Dowager Lady Reading, and another Labour man whom Dr. Weizmann did not recognise. Dr. Weizmann sat between Mrs. Churchill and Lord Portal. During lunch, Mrs. Churchill talked about Quebec and Orde and Lorna Wingate, and at one stage Mr. Churchill joined in by saying that he knew Dr. Weizmann had wanted Orde Wingate for Commander-in-Chief of the Jewish Force, but they could not have him because he was wanted for other work.

After lunch the ladies retired and Mr. Churchill had introduced him to the other guests in very complimentary terms. The Prime Minister said it was a long time since he had seen him, and Dr. Weizmann said it had been too long for him. Mr. Churchill then said that after they had crushed Hitler they would have to establish the Jews in the position where they belonged. He had had an inheritance left to him by Lord Balfour, and he was not going to change. Dr. Weizmann said he did not think the Prime Minister would change, but there were dark forces working against them which might force the Cabinet's hand. Major Churchill said they were all only human, and none of them getting any younger; it was therefore necessary to act quickly. Mr. Churchill said they would have to take some chances. Turning to Dr. Weizmann, he said: "You have some very good friends: for instance, Mr. Attlee and the Labour Party are committed on this matter." Mr. Attlee said he certainly was, adding that he thought something should be done about Transjordan. Mr. Churchill said he had been thinking about partition, but Transjordan was a good idea. He knew the terrible situation of the Jews. They would get compensation, and they would also be able to judge the criminals. As regards the position in the Near East he did not take for granted all the information that came from that part of the world. Mr. Attlee said to Dr. Weizmann that some of his people were overplaying their hand: they were sometimes threatening. Mr. Churchill said they should not do that. He personally would prefer one good row. He would advise them not to have a series of rows. What they had to do was to watch the timing. He would not say publicly what he was telling Dr. Weizmann now: there would be questions, and he would have to lose time explaining. They could quote his public utterances, and say that he would not budge from them.

Mr. Churchill repeated that they had a number of good friends: Mr. Attlee was committed, the Labour Party was committed, the Manchester Guardian was friendly, etc. He understood, however,

that there were certain Jews in America who were opposed. He thought Dr. Weizmann should try and win over Mr. Baruch. Mr. Churchill had talked to Mr. Baruch, and had told him that he was wrong, but had not succeeded in persuading him. Mr. Churchill went on to say that he was not going to change his views; he would bite deeply into the problem, and it was going to be "the biggest plum of the war."

When Mr. Churchill mentioned partition, Major Randolph and Dr. Weizmann demurred, and Mr. Churchill replied that he had been against it originally, but now they had to produce something new instead of the White Paper. He had not meant partition in the literal sense - he then mentioned something about the Negev and Transjordan.

Speaking of the Arabs, the Prime Minister said that they had done very little, and in some instances had made things difficult for us. He would remember this when the day of reckoning came. Mr. Churchill added that when the Palestine issue came up, he would speak out, and proceeded to give the headings of his speech. He finished off by saying that Dr. Weizmann need not worry - they had a wonderful case.

At one stage, Dr. Weizmann mentioned that anti-semitism was growing, and the Prime Minister said he thought it was not so, and Lord Portal agreed with him.

Mr. Churchill said they could not yet discuss details. On the subject of the Arms Trial, the Prime Minister clearly did not know the details, but said again that they should not threaten. He suggested that Dr. Weizmann should go to Palestine, adding jokingly that he had freedom of movement throughout the Empire.

At one stage Dr. Weizmann said that March 1944 was approaching, and he feared then to see a notice over the gates of Palestine; "No Jew need apply." From Mr. Churchill's reply it had appeared that they were thinking of carrying forward the balance of certificates after March 1944, and Mr. Churchill added that in a couple of months or so after that, something else might turn up.

Mr. Churchill quoted, during the talk, the saying that "God deals with the nations as they deal with the Jews." Mr. Churchill also said that of every fifty officers who came back from the Middle East, only one spoke favourably of the Jews - but that has merely gone to convince him that he was right.

When the party broke up, and Dr. Weizmann said goodbye, the Prime Minister said: "Not goodbye - au revoir", and that he would see Dr. Weizmann again. Dr. Weizmann said he was glad to hear that because he had understood that the Prime Minister was not very keen on seeing him, and sometimes urgent things arose which he could discuss only with him.

The lunch and the talk which followed lasted until 3.30 p.m.
