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### **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.

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Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe,  
1943.



COPY

MEMORANDUM

November 30, 1943

To Mr. Henry Montor

From Harold P. Manson

Following is a report on the meeting of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish people of Europe and the American League for a Free Palestine, held at the Hotel St. Moritz on November 29, 1943.

The meeting, which attracted a small audience, was definitely on the dull side. Congressman Somers, who was to be the speaker of the evening, could not attend, and his place was taken by Konrad Bercovici. There were three speakers in all (Potter, who acted as chairman, Bercovici and Professor Smertenko).

As was expected, the point given most emphasis by all speakers was that the Jews constitute a separate problem and cannot be regarded as part of the general refugee question. There was, however, some difference of opinion as to the popularity of this view in United Nations circles. Thus, while Potter saw indications that the United Nations commission investigating war crimes will adopt the Emergency Committee's approach and pointed to the utterances of the Polish delegate to the UNRRA Conference (reported in yesterday's newspapers) as indicating concern with the Jewish problem as such, Smertenko took a less optimistic view and declared that "although the Emergency Committee's efforts are beginning to bear fruit, United Nations leaders are yet to be converted."

Following are other points made by the individual speakers:

POTTER asserted that many Jewish organizations are coming around to the view of the Emergency Committee and the American League for a Free Palestine that merely wiping out the White Paper will not be enough; that there must be free immigration into "a Jewish State and Commonwealth." Potter cited the utterances of Rabbi Meyer Berlin (reported in yesterday's press) as constituting an endorsement of this view.

BERCOVICI assailed Sol Bloom's efforts to "sabotage" the Resolution to save the Jews now being considered by the House. Recalling the Bermuda Conference, Bercovici charged that Bloom was - and is - a "do nothing". He asserted that Bloom called a hearing on the Resolution without bothering to consult with the measure's sponsors, demanded financial reports from the Emergency Committee, etc.

Reiterating the Emergency Committee's contention that the Jewish problem must be treated separately, Bercovici declared that the proposed amendments which stipulate that the Resolution should concern itself with all oppressed peoples would emasculate the measure.

Bercovici ridiculed Jewish organizations which object to the Emergency Committee's methods. Asserting that such groups believe "time will take care of things," he added that "they've been dreaming of Chamberlain's 'peace in our time.'". He also maintained that the representatives of such Jewish organizations



Mr. Henry Montor

November 30, 1943

are "old," but that the Emergency Committee is made up of "young, strong people, who won't wait."

SMERTENKO launched an all-out attack against the State Department. He declared that the State Department, which had all the facts on the slaughter of Jews in Europe, refused to release this information until the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope "cried out in horror." To placate those protesting against the murder of Jews, the State Department initiated the fiasco which was the Bermuda Conference, Smertenko said. He added that after three months of pleading at the State Department's door, the Emergency Committee was forced to turn to Congress and that the present hearings are being held to continue the State Department's sabotage of the Committee's efforts.

Smertenko disclosed that "men close to Roosevelt" say that the President cannot at this moment ask Churchill to open the doors of Palestine. Roosevelt must be able to point to a popular demand for such action, he said and urged support for the League for a Free Palestine's program. He emphasized that the League is "traditionally American" and "is not bound up with the philosophy of Zionism."

A specific program of action was outlined by Smertenko, as follows:

- 1) The circulation of petitions throughout the country.
- 2) The placing of ads in out of town papers as well as in the New York press.
- 3) A "neighborhood canvas," including the mobilization of ministers and other leaders in the community.

The names of the interim officers chosen for New York were announced at the meeting. They were reeled off rather quickly, but I managed to catch the following:

For the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People:

Chairman - Potter

Vice-Chairman - Mrs. Johanna Lindloff and Rev. James A. Martin

Executive Committee - George Hamilton Coombs, Rev. De Witt, Dr. Freibisch,  
Dr. Thayer, Dr. Sternberg

For the League for a Free Palestine:

Chairman - Herbert Moore

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# EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO SAVE THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF EUROPE

INITIATED BY THE EMERGENCY CONFERENCE HELD IN NEW YORK—JULY 20-26, 1943

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Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver  
Zionist Emergency Council  
41 East 42nd Street  
New York City

Dear Rabbi Silver:

When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously adopted the resolution providing for the establishment of a specific commission to save the Jewish People of Europe -- a favorable situation at last was created which promises to lead to large-scale government measures to save these otherwise doomed people.

But in this favorable hour, a paradoxical situation is still permitted to continue which confuses and therefore weakens the efforts of all who should unite their strength in the interest of the helpless.

While prominent American figures, and leading American newspapers of all shades of political opinion, have urged the immediate passage of the Congressional resolution, and while every independent Jewish American newspaper and magazine in the country has enthusiastically heralded the demands for this resolution, some Jewish organizations have remained strangely non-committal, silent or actually obstructive. Worse than that: the leaders of some influential American-Jewish organizations have found it opportune, in this moment of greatest emergency and catastrophe for the Jewish people abroad, to start a fight amongst themselves -- even to the extent of attacking the initiators of this non-sectarian and non-partisan movement.

This situation is not only strange and paradoxical, it is tragic. This letter is written not to criticize or blame; it is written with the fervent hope that even at this late hour, all of the resources and energies of the leading Jewish organizations in this country will strive to mobilize for one concerted effort to secure action by the United States and the United Nations. For only through such action can we hope to save countless people from certain death.

We must keep before us just one grim fact -- we must rescue Jews who are about to die. If they are allowed to die their blood will be on our hands, for there can be no greater sin against God or man than to permit divergence of opinion on internal political questions among Jewish-American groups to affect the rescue of millions of Jews in Europe.

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Rabbi Hillel Silver

The Palestinian Delegation associated with this Committee has always most carefully and studiously avoided all problems dealing with communal or organizational life of Jews in this country. In the opinion of this Delegation, the problem of saving the Jews of Europe and the general or internal problems of the Jews in this country must be kept distinctly apart.

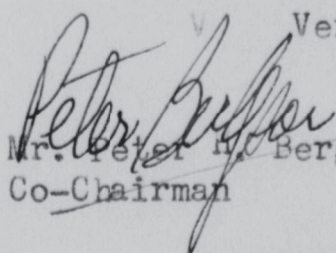
We have aimed to organize a movement, on a strictly non-partisan and non-sectarian basis, for the sole purpose of saving those who need and expect our help. We appeal for understanding and for help to the American people -- 135,000,000 strong. However, we recognize that the help of the Jewish organizations is of utmost importance. Such help and cooperation need not in the least affect the regular activities of Jewish organizations. It is difficult to conceive of a situation in which two Jewish-American organizations cannot agree to discuss plans for the salvation of the Jews of Europe -- merely because they do not agree on the structure of the Jewish community in this country, or the future of Palestine. That is why we consider the dissolution of the Joint Emergency Committee on European-Jewish Affairs, because of internal organizational divergencies among Jewish-Americans, a tragic misconception of the catastrophic situation of European Jewry.

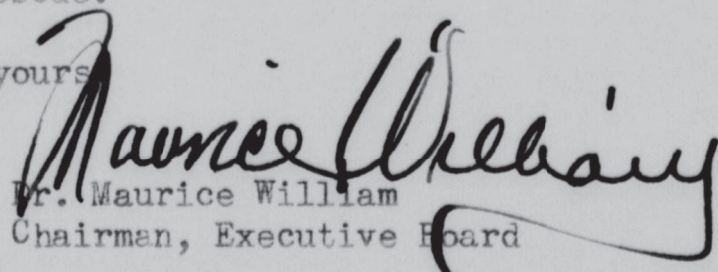
History will judge guilty all who refuse to put aside their political prejudices, to the neglect of a most urgent and most sacred task -- the rescue of the remaining Jews of Europe. From the ghastly regions of torture and slaughter in Eastern Europe have come messages which boil down to a horrifying curse on the heads of American Jewry -- "We Hate you!" We cannot, we must not permit this tragic situation to continue.

We, therefore, most earnestly appeal to you to participate in a meeting next Thursday, 8:30 P.M., January 6th at the Lotus Club, 110 West 57th Street, which we have taken the initiative of calling in order to present to you a plan of rescue and an outline of the way in which all Jewish-American organizations can unite behind it. We are not attempting to create "unity" between Jewish organizations: the internal political arguments and fights will most probably continue as before, but they will be separate once and for all from the campaign to save the Jews of Europe, and thus they will not be carried out at the expense of other Jewish lives.

Surely no possible harm can come from such a meeting; perhaps some good. We shall, therefore, be looking forward to meeting with you at this conference devoted to considering just one great problem -- rescue.

Very truly yours

  
Mr. Peter H. Bergson  
Co-Chairman

  
Mr. Maurice William  
Chairman, Executive Board

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE  
To Save  
THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF EUROPE