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

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

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American Jewish Committee, 1942.

On June 14, 1942, the Executive in Jerusalem discussed the Ben-Gurion - Wertheim agreement. No decision was taken. Here are the views expressed by the members of the Executive:

"A" expressed his apprehension about adopting a program which postpones the establishment of the Commonwealth until after a Jewish majority is obtained. He asked whether the agreement binds us not to demand a State at once, which may be necessary in order that we should be able to create a majority.

"B" would enthusiastically welcome this formula if it were the attitude of the non-Zionists alone, but he is opposed to an agreement which binds us and turns us back to the Balfour Declaration. He urged postponing the decision of the Executive until after the attitude of the American Jewish Committee was known.

"C" thinks that a one-sided declaration of this kind by the American Jewish Committee would be a Zionist triumph; but as an agreement it is a Zionist defeat as it makes clear that there can be no Jewish government before a majority is obtained. The result will be that our enemies will do everything in their power to prevent a majority. This agreement is worse than the enlarged Jewish Agency, which was in itself a mistake. In the last war no one expected the Balfour Declaration, but the Kerensky Revolution made that possible. Now, too, the alliance of the USSR with England opens prospects which we should not impair. We cannot approve an agreement which binds us. "C" believes the agreement binds us because if it were meant only for America, then why should our approval be necessary. He suggested waiting until the AJC clarifies its position and asking whether or not the agreement binds them.

"D" differs from A's views. He emphasized the importance of a united political front in America which of course would bind the American Zionists. He considers the agreement a big Zionist achievement, especially its emphasis on large-scale Jewish immigration and colonization. He proposed informing Ben-Gurion that the Executive welcomes every unification of forces for our political struggle, and suggests that after the ratification by AJC the matter should be brought before the Actions Committee.

"E" opposes approval of the agreement. He dislikes looking for partners at the expense of our program. He insists that we should not give up the demand to establish Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. He is prepared not to raise the question of the boundaries, and for the time being to be satisfied with western Palestine.

"F" says he guesses that the Zionist tension in America is weakening. He would like to see England come to the Peace Conference with such a plan, but not us. He would be ready to make concessions to the British and to the Arabs, but not to Jews. He asked what was the hurry.

"G" requested the Executive to rely on its envoy in America should he come to the conclusion that we need at once a united front on the basis of a clear program. He does not regret the enlarged Agency. Although it did not result in political gains, it prevented great losses in difficult hours.

The non-Zionist member objected that the agreement is nebulous. He said it makes possible partition and does not clearly recognize the rights of the Arabs. He considers the agreement damaging because it is not intended to establish a bi-national state. He hopes the AJC will not approve it. He agreed to postpone the decision until further information had been received.

New York- July 6, 1942.

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Hotel Winthrop
New York
July 9, 1942.

Judge Louis Levinthal
Emergency Committee
41 E. 42nd Street
New York, N.Y.

Dear Judge Levinthal:

I received from the Executive a summary of the discussion which was held in the middle of June on the agreement with the American Jewish Committee. I am attaching it for the information of the Office Committee. Although the formula was rather severely criticized by several members, I heartily welcome this criticism and associate myself entirely with the underlying principle that we must be able, if circumstances permit at the end of the war, to ask for the immediate establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth. In my own view this agreement does not preclude such a possibility, and when the negotiations are resumed I will try to make this clear to the chairman of the American Jewish Committee.

Some of the criticism is based on lack of information. I refer to the views of "C" that our enemies will do everything in their power to prevent a majority. They overlooked one very important sentence in the formula, namely "under a regime especially designed for that purpose," which is intended to cover our demand for immediate Jewish control over immigration and colonization. It is for this reason that a rider is added to the agreement that a sub-committee should be appointed "to define means and methods best calculated to achieve the above aims."

It was very heartening for me to see that even at a time when invasion threatens Palestine the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem could still discuss this problem in a true Zionist spirit.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) David Ben-Gurion