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

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Bergson Group, 1944.

Benson Group's letter
sent to Tax - to go
to President

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June - 1944

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CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY

JUDGE HARRY M. FISHER

In Chambers

February 21, 1944

Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Chairman
American Zionist Emergency Council
New York, N. Y.

Dear Doctor:

I know you are wise and, ordinarily, far-seeing enough, but I am afraid you got the wrong impression from my letter.

We never intended to have any dealings or traffic, as you put it, with Berkson or his crowd. We were holding conversations with the well-intentioned, innocent goyim. Contrary to your fears, our strategy has already worked. On last Saturday morning the enclosed article appeared in our newspapers. From this you will see how well we succeeded. The whole group withdrew from the Committee. They were simply convinced that my position with reference to that Committee, which tallies with yours, was sound. Had I started out by asking them to withdraw from the Committee I would have failed.

My plan was to urge them to take the Committee over and they were considering it, but apparently found that that would be either impossible or futile, and so they withdrew entirely. Now they are anxious to work with us and it is my opinion that we have scored the first victory here and that that victory could lead to greater gains if we found immediate employment for these well meaning non-Jews who want to help. Should we not have local committees of either the Wagner-McNary Committee or the Murphy Committee? If we do, as I believe we should have such committees, I am sure these gentlemen can be induced to have their group act as the nucleus for it.

Please advise me without delay.

Cordially yours,

(Signed)

Harry

P. S. Since writing the above letter my attention has been called to the enclosed editorial in the Chicago Sun.

LD
2/24/44

15 LEADERS QUIT JEWISH AID GROUP

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Dr. Francis E. McMahon of the University of Chicago, chairman of the Chicago Chapter of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, and 14 other officers last night announced their resignation from the organization.

In a telegram to Gabriel A. Wechsler of New York, national secretary of the emergency committee, which was made public by McMahon, the resigning officers said their action was occasioned by "increasing confusion between its (the emergency committee's) activities and objectives and those of the American League for a Free Palestine."

COMMITTEE'S WORK PRAISED

The telegram praised the committee's work in the past, and added:

"We are still resolved to work for the rescue of the Jewish people of Europe, but we prefer for the time being to take independent action."

Dr. McMahon said that the signers of the telegram felt that the league is political in character, whereas the character of the emergency committee is primarily humanitarian.

RESIGNING OFFICIALS LISTED

The resigning Chicago officers include Michael Mann, executive secretary of the Chicago Industrial Union Council (C.I.O.); the Rev. Michael J. O'Connell, C. M., president of De Paul University, and J. Bryan Allin, vice-president; Robert C. Sorensen, executive secretary; Ernest Byfield, treasurer, and the following executive board members:

Prof. James Luther Adams, Courtenay Barber, Jr., Julian Bentley, Wallace Heistad, Frank McGullough, Dr. John A. Lapp, Leo Nellis, Earl Dickerson and Andrew J. Onderdonk.

Other members of the Chicago chapter will continue its work, according to Dr. McMahon.

COPY OF EDITORIAL WHICH APPEARED IN
CHICAGO SUN FEBRUARY 21, 1944.

RESCUE -- NOT POLITICS

Regrettable circumstances have prompted the resignation of 15 leaders of the Chicago Chapter of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe. They have resigned, they explain, because of "increasing confusion" between the activities and objectives of the committee and those of the American League for a Free Palestine. The men who reached this decision are outstanding champions of inter-racial justice. They are uncompromising foes of anti-Semitism. Their opinions may differ widely as to the merits of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. But they are right in recognizing that the latter question is a political one and should not be injected -- as it has been -- into the urgent, humanitarian and non-controversial cause of rescuing Jews from Hitler's Europe.

To the extent that the question of Palestine's future has been injected into it the effectiveness of the emergency committee has been injured. But the work of rescue must go on. The officers and members of the committee who have resigned emphasize that they will continue to serve this great cause. Every Chicagoan of good will should, with them, give it the fullest backing.



LD
2/24/44

Mr. President:

The undersigned members of the United States wish to address you on a matter affecting the rights of the United States in Palestine and of great concern to a large number of citizens in this country.

The matter at issue is the status of Palestine under the Convention between the United Kingdom and the United States of America signed at London, December 3, 1924.

Under the terms of this Convention, "The United States and its nationals shall have and enjoy all the rights and benefits secured under the terms of the Mandate to members of the League of Nations and their nationals, notwithstanding the fact that the United States is not a member of the League of Nations." (Article 2)

The Convention further states that "vested American property rights in the mandated territory shall be respected and in no way impaired." (Article 3)

The Convention goes so far as to stipulate: "Nothing contained in the present Convention shall be affected by any modification which may be made in the terms of the Mandate as recited above, unless such modification shall have been assented to by the United States." (Article 7)

In general, therefore, the United States enjoys with reference to Palestine the right and benefits of a member of the League of Nations, as evidenced by article 2, quoted above, as well as by article 4, providing that "a duplicate of the annual report to be made by the Mandatory under article 24 of the Mandate shall be furnished to the United States."

So important are the rights granted to the United States under this Convention that the very consent of this country to British Administration over Palestine is made subject to the observance of these conditions, as evidenced by article 1: "Subject to the provisions of the present Convention the United States consents to the administration of Palestine by His Britannic Majesty, pursuant to the Mandate recited above."

It appears that repeated measures have been taken by the British Administration in Palestine which had the effect of changing substantially the status of Palestine. More particularly, in evident contradiction of the terms of the Mandate under which the Administration of Palestine is obligated to "facilitate Jewish Immigration under suitable conditions" and to "encourage...close settlement by Jews on the land," the Mandatory has introduced several measures restricting Jewish immigration in Palestine and Jewish settlement on the land, whether or not the Jews concerned are citizens of the United States.

Your special attention is respectfully drawn to the latest and most flagrant of these measures, the White Paper of May, 1939, prohibiting Jewish immigration to Palestine beyond an arbitrary limit of 75,000 immigrants, and the Land Regulations of February, 1940, prohibiting the acquisition of land and settlement thereon by Jews in most of Palestine. Both measures would appear to be clearly inconsistent with article 15 of the Palestine Mandate, which provides that "No discrimination of any kind shall be made between the inhabitants of Palestine on the ground of race, religion or language. No person shall be excluded from Palestine on the sole ground of his religious belief."

The White Paper of 1939 has been stated by the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations to be contrary to the Mandate. It is contended by some that the Mandate might be amended in certain respects by the League of Nations and the Mandatory if the amendments do not express or contradict some provision of the British-American Convention. However, no such amendment has been made and the United States is in exactly the same position to protest against the White Paper as is the League of Nations or any member thereof. The Land Regulations of 1940, owing to wartime conditions, were never passed upon by the Mandates Commission. Nevertheless, both measures have been put into effect by the British Administration.

The interest of the United States in this matter is twofold:

1. The cumulative effect of these measures is seriously to interfere

with and to render impossible further development of the policy of a Jewish National Home in Palestine -- a policy which has been assented to by the United States and which forms one of the bases of the U.S. - British Convention of 1924.

2. In failing to except American nationals of Jewish faith from the restrictions imposed upon Jews in Palestine, the British Administration has presumed to introduce discrimination against American citizens on the grounds of religion - a practice which to the knowledge of the undersigned has never been attempted since the fall of the Czarist regime in Russia and which the United States could not admit without becoming untrue to its fundamental principles.

In drawing your attention, Mr. President, to the above situation, we respectfully inquire whether the Government of the United States was consulted by the British Government before these measures were taken, and whether the Government of the United States, if so consulted gave its consent to them.

If such consent was not given, we inquire what the Government of the United States has done to insure that the rights of this country in the promotion of the Jewish National Home policy in Palestine, and its particular interest in the treatment of American nationals in that country, be respected.

If any action has been taken by this Government and has failed to remedy the situation, we inquire what further action is contemplated to bring about the desired result.

In view of the urgent nature of the problem, we should be grateful for an early reply.

Respectfully,