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102

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35

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146

Gillette, Senator Guy M., 1944.

COPY

AZEC
342 Madison Av.
N.Y.C.

UNITED STATES SENATE
Committee on Foreign Relations

January 13, 1944

Mr. Harry L. Shapiro, Director
American Zionist Emergency Council
342 Madison Avenue
New York City

My dear Mr. Shapiro:

This acknowledges the receipt of your letter of January 10, 1944, with which you transmit a copy of a statement emanating from the American Zionist Emergency Council, in which is discussed the recent formation of another organization called the American League for a Free Palestine.

I regret very much that there has developed confusion and dissension among our citizens of Jewish ancestry. There are hundreds of thousands of Americans like myself who are not of Jewish origin but who are tremendously interested in the problems of these people here in our own country and abroad. Speaking for myself, I am particularly concerned over the wide-spread and recently stimulated propaganda of an anti-semitic nature which has reached a point where it is seriously threatening the peace and security of our citizens of this racial derivation. I am also greatly concerned with the brutal destruction of the Jews who have been residing in Axis-dominated countries and who have been marked for extermination. I have been giving what little aid I can in the matter of these problems. In their solution, I have a decidedly secondary interest in whether or not there is established a separate Jewish Palestinian Army or whether or not there is established a Zionist Homeland to the exclusion of other methods of saving these people marked for destruction, and I am frank to say that I think that it does a distinct disservice to our Jewish friends here and abroad for any group or groups to persist in measures looking to dominance for any one association.

The problem to be solved is big enough for all Jewish people and non-Jewish people to solve without creating dissension among them and without bickering as to whether this organization or that organization shall have precedence or credit for such work as is accomplished. All of these organizations have a benign purpose, and all are doing fine work. I hope that none of the organizations will jeopardize the interests of this great people by senseless emulation as to who is to be in a position of pre-eminence or dominance in the work that is to be done.

Our joint Chiefs of Staff would not get very far in the military problems that face the United Nations if they wasted time and effort and unity in questions as to whether one country or another country should have dominance or the lion's share of credit in the victory that we are seeking.

Very sincerely,
(signed)
GUY M. GILLETTE

GMG:HS

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MEMORANDUM

MINUTES OF INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR
GUY M. GILLETTE OF IOWA, RABBI LEON I. FEUER
AND MR. LEO SACK.

On Monday, January 17, 1944, Rabbi Leon I. Feuer and Mr. Leo Sack interviewed Senator Guy M. Gillette of Iowa, with particular reference to Senator Gillette's letter of January 13th, addressed to our New York office, copy of which is attached.

Rabbi Feuer opened the interview by telling Senator Gillette that the Jewish people were deeply grateful to him for his generous sympathy and for his desire to make some constructive contribution to the solution of our problem. However, just because of his very decent attitude in the past, we felt that he had a right to a clarification of the situation with regard to the various Jewish organizations who were working in the field, and claiming to represent the Jewish people. We told him that it made a great deal of difference in approaching a solution of the problem whether or not the work was carried on by responsible organizations who are representatives of a constituency. We then presented to give him some of the background about the Jewish Army Committee and to tell him of their failure to work under the leadership and discipline of responsible Zionist and Jewish bodies. The whole matter was gone into very thoroughly.

Senator Gillette responded that it was only his desire to help, that he had a deep and abiding interest in the problem, and that to him it was tragic for Jewish organizations to bicker amongst themselves, because it made it very difficult for Senators to make up their minds whom they should support and what program they should back. He said that he did not particularly care which organization

conceived the idea of the resolution. The whole matter was gone into by the Senators and it became the work and thinking of a number of them including himself, and that they were determined to see that the resolution passed the Senate because they believed it would be a real contribution toward the alleviation of the plight of the Jews in Europe. In other words he repeated at greater length the argument contained in his letter.

He then expressed regret that Jewish organizations had seen fit to oppose his resolution. We responded that Jewish organizations had not and would not oppose the Gillette Resolution. There was nothing in the resolution that could be opposed. Quite to the contrary, we felt that any means of calling attention to the plight of the Jews and any step taken to study that plight was helpful. However, we have believed all along and still believe that the resolution was inadequate, that there could be no concrete and constructive approach to the problem which did not include Palestine, the one place in the world which had demonstrated its capacity for absorbing large numbers of Jewish refugees. The Senator agreed that Palestine was important, but he felt that other places should not be ruled out of consideration. We pointed out to him that other places had never been ruled out of consideration, that one possibility after another for Jewish resettlement had been studied and tried and when all had been said and done we would still have to fall back upon Palestine. He said he was ready to grant the soundness of this argument, that he had always believed in the Jewish Homeland and that he would support any measure for its further development.

We told him of our proposed resolution on Palestine. He

then brought up the old question of the State Department and contended that it might be wisest not to introduce the resolution because the State Department was bound to oppose it. We pointed out first of all that the same argument applied to his own resolution, secondly, that we were not at all certain that the State Department would oppose this resolution -- that there was a possibility that the State Department would take an attitude of neutrality -- and finally, that we were determined to put forth every possible effort to see to it that Jewish rights in Palestine and opportunities for further developments should not be destroyed.

At the close of the interview, Senator Gillette expressed the hope that there would be no opposition on the part of our organization to his resolution, and we assured him of our friendliness toward it. We expressed the hope that he would support the Palestine Resolution when it was introduced and he said he would gladly do so.

We left a copy of the resolution with him and he invited us to come again and discuss the matter further with him. It was a long, friendly and helpful interview. We believe that we drove home to him the difference between the activity of responsible and irresponsible individuals and organizations.