



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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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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Stettinius, Hon. E., Jr., 1944.

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Archangel, March, 1944.

".....They enjoy the privilege of a single room to themselves - a large room, in which a wardrobe separates the parents' bed from the boy's cot, and a sideboard which forms another section into a living room.....If I had called in December, I would not have found your sister, as it is only a fortnight since she returned from Central Siberia, where she has been evacuated with her husband and the boy while the danger to Moscow was imminent. Now everybody is returning. The town is one of the most crowded in the world. The new Metro is really modern, but the crowding is terrific - there are crowds everywhere, crowds and queues. Yet people live here better, comparatively, than in - say - Archangel.

Your sister looks very much like you, but when I saw her she was not looking her best. Her ear was hurting her - she thought she had inflammation of the middle ear - and her face was all wrapped up. In addition, she was wearing an overcoat, because they have not yet managed to secure firewood since their return to town, and it was rather cold in the room. The boy, about 14, looks extraordinarily like Kiwi, though smaller. He was reasonably well dressed, and - again like Kiwi, - had his nose in a book the whole time. He reads all his father's books!

It came as a terrific shock to your sister when she heard your name - I began by saying I had regards from you; she began trembling all over. She tried to get rid of the boy, and it took her quite some time to regain some measure of self-control. Poor woman! She suffered hell and agony in Siberia - she found the anti-semitism there unbearable. There were lots of refugees there, a large proportion of Jews, and many Ukrainians, who were taking it out of the Jews, because it was only due to the Jews that we had this war. Your sister was wakened up in the middle of the night by her landlady, who told her to clear out and to go to Palestine.....The boy was called "Zhidi", and suffered hell at school - the very same school where your sister was a teacher. The father of one of the worst Jew-baiting boys in the school was a member of the party. Your sister took up the fight; the father was reprimanded and expelled from the party. But he was readmitted within a fortnight, though it was confirmed that it was the father himself who taught the boy Jew-baiting. Your brother is bewildered by all the changes. He is still at his post, and lulls himself in the belief that all the official changes and unofficial undercurrents are temporary phenomena which will pass when Hitler is finally beaten.....Your third sister, the dentist, is practising in Northern Siberia, but she too complains of terrific anti-semitism, and is hoping for a return to Moscow. Your mother, as you probably know, died of old age during the evacuation to Siberia (in 1942).....Sofia was with her to the end.

When I had got so far with the family history, your sister's husband turned up; he had been to the station to fetch their luggage, which had just arrived. Since there are no cars available for private use, he had had to get hold of a porter and a small sledge which they had pushed through the streets. He had to help with the pushing, because it would never do for a Jew to walk through the streets of Moscow with a porter pushing his belongings for him! He told me several interesting things: (i) No Jewish officials

are being sent to the re-occupied territories: allegedly the German deeds of anti-semitism have taken such deep roots there that it would be dangerous for them. Such Jews as are sent, go only to the larger cities - to send them to country places would endanger their lives; (ii) "Zhid", which was a political (much more serious than a criminal) offence, is now on everybody's lips, even in Moscow itself; (iii) in the train, returning from Siberia, twelve priests were travelling to a church conference. Passengers were cleared out to make room for them. They were openly preaching Jew-hatred.....

Your little nephew had had his barmitzvah passed unnoticed; he knows nothing of things Jewish - cannot even read. But he now feels strongly that he is very much a Jew. "Of course", said your brother-in-law, "when Stalin has time to deal with this situation, he will soon take it in hand. He is our only hope."

One thing that worried your brother-in-law greatly was whether the car I had arrived in had stopped outside the house. I reassured him that I had stopped the car a few doors away and had anyhow sent it back. He wanted to know whether anybody had seen me on the stairs? Several visitors wanted to come in while I was there, and they had quite a job keeping them out of the room. Even the boy was kept ignorant of my identity: we talked Yiddish, which he doesn't understand, and I kept my arms folded behind my back. I stayed while they had a meal of potato-soup; they offered me some coffee - brewed, I suspect, specially in my honour..... I stayed quite three hours, and in the end had quite a job trying to get out unnoticed. Sofia watched one door, and her husband on the look-out on the stairs. They considered it would be most inadvisable for me to try and meet other members of the family - besides your brother wouldn't meet me, it would be dangerous, in view of his position, which he still retains. I promised to call again, to phone for an appointment - "from a call-box, for goodness sake not from the mission or from a Hotel".....I managed to get together quite a handsome parcel, which in Moscow means a hell of a job: I got a tin of 7 lbs of sugar; six tins of steak, two large tins of bully beef, six tins of salmon, three of sardines, two pounds of washing soap, several pieces of toilet soap, some tins of condensed milk.....I did not risk the car again. I put on my old raincoat, carried my cap in my hand. I took a porter from the hotel to the street-corner, carried the parcels up the stairs myself.....Unfortunately the doctor was with your sister, so I could not go in. Your brother-in-law asked me whether I could procure some vitamin C tablets for her, and I handed over those we bought together. Little did you think then that they would go to your own sister. I had also brought a few sweets for the boy.....They gave me for you a small rug in Bezallel work, which I shall duly hand you on my return. I had no opportunity to explain that they had better keep it - it might be of better use for bartering....."

(There is a lot of stuff about general conditions which I'm not copying - this one small collection of H.I. data from one tiny family group seems to me to supply enough fragments of the picture.....Perhaps show it to Dan, for the good of his soul!)

CLASS OF SERVICE

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BY DIRECT WIRE FROM

WESTERN UNION

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

1223

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MAY 18, 1944

DR. STEPHEN S. WISE
40 WEST 68TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y.

THE WASHINGTON OFFICE HAS MADE AN APPOINTMENT WITH UNDERSECRETARY STETTINIUS FOR YOURSELF AND DR. SILVER NEXT TUESDAY MAY 23RD 3:30 P. M. UNDERSTAND YOU ARE PLANNING TO BE IN WASHINGTON THAT DAY TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY CONTACTS CONFERENCE KINDEST REGARDS

LEON FEUER

(CHGE AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL)

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June 2, 1944

Honorable Edward R. Stettinius
Under-Secretary of State
State Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We need hardly tell you how deeply gratified we were over that which you told us with respect to the general situation in Europe and, more especially, with regard to what you evidently feel are the justified hopes for the rightful solution of the Zionist problem. Your word to us was indeed most heartening, and we shall look forward with high anticipation to mid-August, when we may hope to resume the discussion of the subject with you and the President.

The outlines of the situation, as you put them to us, were admirable, but we are concerned lest they be predicated upon Partition. Palestine partitioned would be a further fragmentation of a small country -- about 10,000 square miles in all -- as compared with the million square miles of the Arab territorial complex. We take it for granted that you and the President will feel as we are told Mr. Churchill feels, -- inhospitable to the idea of further partitioning, diminishing Palestine (which since 1919 has been reft of Transjordan), thus making it impossible for the land to carry the burden of solving the Jewish problem.

We are, dear Mr. Secretary, with warmest regard,

Faithfully yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

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Stephen S. Wise

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

June 22, 1944

My dear Rabbi Silver,

I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of the letter which you and Rabbi Wise sent me under date of June 2, 1944 with respect to our recent talk regarding Palestine.

As I pointed out to you in our talk, I am hopeful that in the future, when an appropriate time is reached, the Palestine question will be solved in a manner which would be satisfactory to all concerned. You will recall that I also suggested to you that military considerations were so much to the forefront at present that it would be in the interest of the United Nations' cause to postpone all discussion of the Palestine question until autumn at the earliest.

Since we met, the invasion of Europe has begun, and it is the more important, therefore, that we should all bear in mind the distinction which the President drew in one of his recent press conferences between the present period in Palestine, when military considerations must rule, and the future, when other considerations may guide us. I am sure that you will agree with me that no action should be taken which might be prejudicial to the war effort or which might adversely affect the military situation, even in an area which, like Palestine, is not now the scene of active military operations.

I shall look forward to having a further discussion of this subject with you and Rabbi Wise next August or at any subsequent time that you may wish to call on me.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ E. Stettinius Jr.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
American Zionist Emergency Council
342 Madison Avenue
New York 17, N.Y.

July 6, 1944.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Mr. Stettinius:

I am encouraged by the understanding and sympathy shown by you for the Zionist position in the course of our recent conversation to bring to your attention the attached report by a staff correspondent in the June 28th issue of The Christian Science Monitor. It will be observed that the report purports to reflect the view of the State Department with respect to that part of the Republican platform which deals with Palestine. The statements which it contains give the impression of having been inspired by some source within the State Department and are unfriendly to the Zionist cause to the point of open hostility.

The character of the report is in such contradiction with the good will and helpfulness of your own attitude that I feel justified in writing to inquire whether the statements which it contains do in fact express the view of the State Department, and I should be most grateful for any information you may care to give me in this connection.

Sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

Honorable Edward R. Stettinius Jr.
Under Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

AHS:LLB
Encl.

July 7, 1944.

Honorable Cordell Hull
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hull:

At different times in recent months reports have reached us that consideration is once again being given to a settlement of the Palestine question by some scheme of partition. Jewish opinion is unanimously against such a solution, which it views as impractical and unjust and as failing to take into account the dire needs of European Jewry as a result of the war and Nazi persecution.

We desire, accordingly, to submit for your consideration the enclosed memorandum outlining briefly the reasons which we believe would indicate the un wisdom of such a policy.

Sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

Stephen S. Wise

S:W:LLB
Encl.

July 7, 1944.

Honorable Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.
Under Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Stettinius:

We are enclosing copy of a memorandum which we have submitted to Mr. Hull with regard to proposals for a partition of Palestine and which we would like also to submit for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

Stephen S. Wise

S:W:LLB
Encl.

1944

Palestine and Partition

1. The 1922 Partition. Partition is no new proposal as far as Palestine is concerned. The Balfour Declaration with its promise of a National Home for the Jewish people was originally intended to apply to the whole of historic Palestine, ¹ including Palestine east of the Jordan, or Trans-Jordan as it is known today. In September, 1922, however, the League of Nations, at the instance of the British Government, excluded Trans-Jordan from this area. More than two-thirds of the territory originally designated as the Jewish National Home was thus closed to Jewish settlement.

2. The 1937 Proposal. A further partition of Palestine proposed in 1937 by the Palestine Royal Commission recommended the establishment of a Jewish State on an area of about one-fifth of Palestine west of the Jordan. The remainder, apart from a small British enclave, together with Trans-Jordan was to become an Arab State. In Parliament this proposal was severely criticized, among others, by Winston Churchill, and was made the subject of a devastating analysis by a former British High Commissioner of Palestine, Viscount Samuel. The objections indicated by Viscount Samuel were more than confirmed by the Palestine Partition Commission (1938), headed by Sir John Woodhead, which was appointed by the British Government to investigate the technical aspects of the partition proposal.

1. Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937, p.38.

3. Economic Objections. No proposal for the future of Palestine can be acceptable to the Jewish people which precludes the possibility of large scale Jewish settlement and colonization. But partition, to quote the Woodhead Commission, "would be a severe blow to the economic welfare of the Jewish State." It would be detrimental to industrial expansion and would greatly limit the possibilities of absorbing a large Jewish population.

So far as agricultural colonization is concerned, partition would be fatal to any important project for close settlement and intensive development. For any conceivable partition of Palestine would necessarily separate the important water resources in the north, from the irrigable land in the south which offers the greatest prospect of development. Such a political separation of water and land would of course entirely preclude the development of Palestine in regional terms along the lines of the TVA, as suggested by Dr. W. C. Lowdermilk in "Palestine, Land of Promise".

4. Jewish Attitude Today. Whereas in 1937 some sections of the Zionist movement were ready to consider a proposal to establish a Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine, today Zionists are unanimous in their opposition to any partition. The reason lies in the fundamental change which the Jewish situation in Europe has undergone as a result of the war and Europe's occupation by the Nazis. While some of those Jews who will survive the war will no doubt desire to return to their countries of origin, for very many emigration and in particular emigration to Palestine where alone they can claim to go as of right and will be welcomed by their own people, offers the best, if

not the only prospect of a new and more hopeful future. In order to meet the needs of such a large scale immigration it will be necessary to make use of the possibilities of Palestine as a whole, and any reduction in the area of settlement would be regarded as introducing a corresponding limitation on the numbers who may thus be rehabilitated.

5. Exclusion of Vital Areas. To the Jews not merely would a second partition of Palestine be regarded as a grievous and continuing injustice, but in addition to the other objections already suggested there is the fact that no partition of Palestine is possible which would not exclude areas which are intimately woven economically, sentimentally and historically into the warp and woof of the National Home. Thus the exclusion of northern Palestine from the Jewish State would not only remove from the Jewish area a network of colonies in Galilee associated with some of the most heroic aspects of the story of Jewish resettlement in Palestine, but would presumably mean in addition the excision of Haifa and of the Valley of Jezreel. Around Haifa are located most of the larger industrial enterprises of Palestine Jewry. To take away this port, which is the principal door to and from Palestine, and to exclude the surrounding industrial zone from the Jewish State would be a calamitous blow. The valley of Jezreel again, which has been entirely reclaimed from its previous pestiferous and marshy condition by the lives and sweat of Jewish colonists, is today the showpiece of Jewish colonisation in Palestine. Its flourishing settlements constitute the backbone of Palestine's Jewish agricultural community. It would be inconceivable that this area should be cut out of the Jewish State to be. On the other hand, as already

indicated, if the partition proposed is one which would exclude the southern area of Palestine from the Jewish State, we are faced at once with the fact that it is in the south that the greatest possibilities for agricultural development and settlement exist. To exclude this area is to hamstring these possibilities.

6. Effect on the Arabs. For the Arab State partition would be economically catastrophic. "It would be impossible", said the Woodhead Commission, "whatever boundaries we might recommend, to set up an Arab State which should be self-supporting." This view is confirmed by the results of the separation of Trans-Jordan from western Palestine. The latter, developed by Jewish energy and capital, has made rapid economic progress, with accompanying benefits for the Arab section of the population in the standard of living, educational and social services, and with unprecedented growth of population. Trans-Jordan, however, has remained poverty-stricken, dependent on subsidies from without, and numerically almost stationary.

7. Political Disadvantages. Great as are its economic disadvantages, partition is no less inexpedient from the political point of view. It is urged in justification of partition that by separating Arabs from Jews, the possibilities of friction are eliminated or at least reduced. But, as was indicated by the Woodhead Commission, any partition proposal would leave large numbers of Arabs within the Jewish area. At the same time the interest of the surrounding Arab States in the Arabs within the Jewish State would continue undiminished. Under these circumstances the establishment of a tiny, economically and politically impotent, Jewish State would hardly be conducive to a permanent settlement. Thus partition would fail to achieve its

primary purpose. The alternative of a large scale transfer of Jews into an undivided and economically viable Palestine within a minimum period after the war, would create facts such as would make possible the establishment of a well-founded Jewish Commonwealth capable of maintaining itself and in a position ultimately to reach final and mutually advantageous agreements with its Arab neighbors. In addition, the natural boundary of the Jordan Valley offers a strategically defensible frontier. "The military authorities", stated the Woodhead Commission, "have impressed us that no boundary can be found west of the Jordan which affords a satisfactory strategic line". Indeed, as one member of the Mandates Commission said, "Partition creates more problems than it solves."

Summary of Objections to a Partition of Palestine.

1. The effect on both the Arab and the Jewish States would be disastrous from the economic point of view. The Arab State could not be self-supporting and its standard of living would deteriorate. The Jewish State would be unable to support any considerable new immigration.
2. Administration would be complicated, communications and transportation greatly affected and liberty of movement curtailed.
3. No strategically defensible boundary can be drawn within Palestine west of the Jordan.
4. From the political point of view partition will be unacceptable to the Jews and would invite bitter and violent opposition from the Arabs.
5. In fine, partition would do no more than to create the caricature of a Jewish State -- a state lacking in the substance of economic and political power, unable to offer shelter to those hundreds

of thousands of Jews who will desire to return to their National Home, and incapable of making that vitalizing contribution to the life of the whole Near and Middle East which might be expected from a broadly based, well established Jewish Commonwealth.

