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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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State Department, 1945.

Preliminary draft State Dept.

ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1945

Pursuant to instructions from Dr. Silver, Dr. Akzin arranged for a meeting with Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson for Thursday, September 20, 3:00 P. M. The delegation was to have consisted of Dr. Wise, Dr. Goldstein, Mr. Emmanuel Neumann, and Dr. Akzin. Since Dr. Wise and Dr. Goldstein were unable to be present, Judge Levinthal was requested by Dr. Silver to form part of the delegation.

The delegation had almost a full hour with Mr. Acheson, who had Mr. Henderson, Chief of the Middle Eastern Affairs Office, with him. Toward the end of the conversation, Mr. Acheson began to show signs of nervousness, which may have been connected with the intense criticism to which he is being currently subjected in Congress in connection with his remarks critical of General MacArthur. At the end of our conversation, he had to go to the Capitol which, judging by today's newspapers, must have been a somewhat unpleasant experience. We later learned from the press that before meeting with us, he entertained for lunch the British economic delegation -- a point which lends interest to something that occurred during our conversation.

Judge Levinthal opened the discussion by explaining the awkward position in which we find ourselves, being kept unaware of what is being decided or thought about Palestine by our government, and asked for information. Mr. Acheson replied that he does not know what is being done about this matter, that it is being handled by President Truman and Secretary Byrnes, and that they are the people from whom we would have to obtain any information.

Mr. Neumann and Mr. Akzin pressed the point further, referring to President Roosevelt's commitment, the Democratic platform of 1944, our knowledge that some steps are being taken, our fear that the steps taken without our consultation would result in

a fait accompli as far as we are concerned and in an unworkable solution. It was pointed out that our representatives were unable to see either the President or Secretary Byrnes, and that the Jewish masses are growing deeply resentful over the treatment which we are receiving from our own government in this matter. Mr. Acheson replied that he will report our point of view to the Secretary and assured us of his personal belief that the pledges given by this government, whatever they are, will be carried out in good faith. He added that he understands our desire to be consulted and said that he thinks that both we and the Arabs will be consulted before any decision is taken.

An attempt was made at that point to elucidate Mr. Acheson's meaning when he said that the Arabs should be consulted. He was asked whether he means the Arabs of Palestine or those of other countries. He replied, "I don't know what Arabs I mean. I think that everybody who has an interest in the matter should be consulted. After all, the Jews are not the only ones who have an interest in it."

When mentioning that the President's pledges would undoubtedly be kept, but that he does not know enough about this matter to be certain what these pledges are, Mr. Neumann read to him the text of President Roosevelt's statement of October, 1944. He was visibly impressed, and a discussion developed on the question whether the Department of State is faithfully pursuing this policy in practice. Mr. Neumann asked whether instructions and letters from the Department of State to its field officers make it sufficiently plain that this government's policy, as announced by President Roosevelt and confirmed by President Truman, should govern their attitude in their daily work, or whether, on the contrary, the Department tolerates or even encourages an attitude on the part of the field officers which is contrary to this line of policy. Henderson replied that a statement made by the President to a newspaper man or a private organization is never taken by the President as representing this government's official policy unless the Department is informed by the President that this is his desire. Until such precise instructions are

received, the Department follows its usual practice of being cautious and evasive. Acheson fully supported this view and added that this is the practice of every government department ~~and~~ until instructed from high up to adopt a definite policy, and that if we wish to secure such definitive instructions, we must take it up either with the President or with the Secretary of State.

At one point it was emphasized by the delegation that the Jewish masses have become very bitter about the conflict between public pledges and practical policy, ^{that} ~~with~~ their bitterness beginning ^{to} ~~ing~~ to affect their attitude toward the administration, and there is growing resentment against the British coming to this country for financial assistance while they brazenly disregard their old pledges in regard to Palestine. "The five million Jews of America, of whom 95% are ^{warm} ~~and~~ supporters of our cause, are not going to stand for it", was a phrase used by Mr. Neumann in this connection.

This argument visibly irritated Mr. Acheson. He said that while he fully understands our complaint about being kept in the dark and our request for a procedure for consultation, he has no sympathy whatever with the suggestion that because of British policy in Palestine we might try to interfere with necessary steps of international cooperation. We then replied that we are not giving him our considered opinion but are relating to him the emotional state of the Jewish masses and we wish him to realize to what extent our people have become indignant.

Before leaving, Judge Levinthal asked whether we were correct in understanding that he, personally, would recommend systematic consultation between the government and the Zionist leadership with reference to Palestine policy and a change of attitude on the part of the Department of State. Acheson gave a friendly but somewhat evasive reply, emphasizing that he will report the matter to the Secretary, but ^{that} the decision does not lie with him.

After leaving Acheson's office, Henderson kept us engaged in conversation for about ten minutes, discussing our complaints against the Department of State. Neumann singled out the case of Mr. Wadsworth, and Henderson said that in none of the papers which he had seen did Wadsworth advocate a policy hostile to our interests. He has no evidence of Wadsworth or anyone else having tried to influence the Department against us or to impress the Arabs with the fact that America favors the extreme Arab point of view. "Should anyone of my officers ever do such a thing, he would not last more than five minutes." He asked us not to single out individuals, but to realize that the bureaucrats are doing their best in the absence of clear instructions from above. He would be happy if he received such clear instructions, but they must come from higher up. As for rumors that individual foreign service officers may be favorable to the Arab cause, these rumors are based on the notorious unreliability of Arabs. If you listen to an Arab politely, he will start the rumor that you are in full agreement with him.

