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

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American Jewish Conference, 1945.

## MEMORANDUM ON FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the light of the experience of the past fifteen months, we of the staff have joined in submitting to the new Interim Committee recommendations on the future program and organization of the American Jewish Conference.

### I. PROGRAM

The resolutions adopted at the second session and the statements made by many of the delegates lead to the conclusion that it is the consensus that the Conference must become a more active body and must function on a much broader scale. The tenor of the speeches throughout the debate fortifies that conclusion. The report of the Budget and Finance Committee, recommending an appropriation of \$250,000 for 1945, as compared with the \$100,000 that was spent in 1944, is typical of delegate reaction to the previous record. On all sides, the opinion was voiced that the Conference must accelerate and intensify its work within the scope of the original program.

At the outset, we propose clarification of the Conference's functions in accordance with the following principles:

1. The Conference must carry on political and public relations work on the national and local levels.
2. It must function as an entity on its own behalf without delegating its authority and its duties to other bodies unless the occasion demands.

We believe that these two principles are prerequisite if the Conference is truly to be the spokesman for American Jewry on all problems within the Conference's scope, and if the Conference is to gain and merit greater support not only for itself but for the program it espouses.



We propose that the following projects be undertaken:

1. The early submission of all of the Conference decisions on rescue, Palestine and post-war to the President of the United States by a Conference delegation, which is now more vital than ever before in view of the wide-spread and public impression that there is great disunity among the Jews of the United States on these matters.
2. The continuation of rescue work in a more active and direct manner, in view of the fact that there are still 500,000 Jews at the mercy of the Nazis and some of these can doubtless be rescued if action is taken.
3. Activity to implement the two Palestine resolutions of the Conference, with special reference to intergovernmental action to assist in the resettlement and rehabilitation of many thousands of Jews now waiting to go to Palestine.
4. Continuation of political and public relations work to advance the post-war program of the Conference.
5. The creation of the United Jewish Representation proposed in the Conference resolution.
6. In the meantime and in preparation of the United Jewish Representation, the sending of commissions to Europe and to Palestine and Russia, if possible, to establish direct contact with the Jewish communities abroad.
7. The appointment of Conference representatives or correspondents in key points abroad to provide direct information to the Conference.



8. The development of public opinion - among Jews and non-Jews - favorable to Conference objectives by radio programs, regional conferences, and other means.

9. The development of closer cooperation between the Conference, its constituent organizations and the communities, involving rules governing the relationship of the Conference and its affiliates and their enforcement and closer contacts with communities through the utilization of field representatives by the Conference and the delegates, community councils and other local bodies in the communities.

These are the major projects which should be undertaken if the Conference is to carry out its adopted program.

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## II. PAST DIFFICULTIES

It is necessary to point to certain past disabilities as a result of which the Conference was not adequately geared for action. These difficulties were of a two-fold nature.

### 1. Lack of Clarity in the Interpretation of the Conference's Functions

A. The work of the Conference in the past was complicated by contradictory interpretations of the status of the Conference. There was a difference of opinion within the Interim Committee itself and within the Commissions over the question whether the Conference should be an operating body or a "sounding board" for American Jewish public opinion. This difference was never definitively resolved and as a result, the Commissions themselves, which were created to implement resolutions by the Interim Committee, had no clear understanding of the work they were called upon to do and the means to be employed.



B. The Conference found itself assigned to carry on work previously done partly by some of its constituent organizations. Thus it was involuntarily in competition with them while its Interim Committee and Commissions consisted of representatives of these very same organizations. On the theory that duplication of work was wasteful and therefore should be avoided, there was a tendency to delegate functions to constituent organizations. This delegation was not always formal. On more than one occasion, work that was theoretically to be carried out by a Conference Commission, was in fact performed by members of the Commission through their own organizations. Thus the Conference was not always active in its own right and at times became the registry of other organizations' activities. As a result, it has suffered loss of prestige on more than one occasion, not only among the constituency of the Conference, but more serious, in governmental circles. The Conference was clearly intended to be a foreign affairs committee for American Jewry. If it is to be in fact the spokesman of American Jewry vis-a-vis our government, foreign governments and the public, it can become that only if the organizations within the Conference are willing to defer to it, and if the Conference committees and staff, themselves, have a clear mandate to carry on the work of the Conference. The very confusion resulting from a multiplication of representations at Washington which the Conference was designed to end, was compounded during the past year with the sanction of the Conference itself.

## 2. Organizational Defects

A. The primary organizational defect during most of the year was the absence of an executive body charged with responsibility for the execution of the Conference decisions. The Administrative Committee was not established until May and for a period its only function was preparation for the second



session. In the meantime, large commissions consisting in no small part of persons who were not even delegates to the Conference, were created and their work was not effectively coordinated. One of them was given complete autonomy and was independent by resolution of the Administrative Committee and the Interim Committee. A second almost completely delegated its functions. It was not even a policy-making body or a sounding board.

B. The Conference was inadequately supported financially during the year and while it operated within its income, its program was constantly hampered and on two occasions, when funds were required for urgent work, it was compelled to make a special solicitation of organizations both in and out of the Conference.

We review these defects so that the Interim Committee may take them into consideration in planning the future program.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS ON ORGANIZATION

#### 1. Executive Committee

If the Conference is to become an operating body in the full sense of the term, it must have an executive or administrative committee vested with full authority, meeting at least fortnightly and responsible for the execution of the Conference program. The Interim Committee should formally delegate to the executive committee full authority to function in between bi-monthly meetings, at which the Interim Committee would receive reports from the executive committee, review past activities and determine future policies in the light of developments.

The executive committee should be a small and compact body with the co-chairmen serving as ex-officio members. In the selection of its membership, consideration should be given to the fact that the executive committee is a functioning rather than a legislative body, and that its membership should consist



of persons who are prepared to give a priority of time and interest to the Conference and its work and to become the active spokesmen for the Conference rather than the representatives of their organizations.

## 2. Other Committees

Small committees, consisting of members of the Interim Committee and delegates at large, should be created to consider the various phases of the work of the Conference, and to report and be responsible, in the first instance, to the executive committee. Members of the executive committee should act as the chairmen of the various committees. The committees should clear on all projects with the executive committee and should, when authorized by that body, undertake activities proposed by or referred to them.

We suggest the establishment of the following committees:

- A. Committee on Rescue
- B. Committee on Post-War
- C. Committee on Palestine

The functions of these three committees are more or less clearly defined.

D. Committee on Jewish Representation - One of the major objectives during the year will be the establishment of a United Jewish Representation. It is recommended that a special committee be established to consider all the aspects of this situation and to be empowered, under the authority of the executive committee, to proceed with the execution of the plan.

E. Committee on Organization - The Interim Committee was directed to appoint a committee to study and make its report and recommendations to the third session concerning the structure and organization of the Conference and it will be necessary to appoint such a committee in the immediate future to begin the work.



F. Joint Planning Committee - World Jewish Congress - It is the opinion of the staff that the present working agreement between the World Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Conference has not, for a variety of reasons, worked as well as it should have. It is recommended that a committee be appointed to review the agreement and to consider this problem in all its aspects as it affects proper cooperation and joint responsibility for carrying out action agreed upon.

G. Committee on Religious and Cultural Rehabilitation - The resolution on post-war rehabilitation provided for the creation by the Interim Committee of a committee or commission to investigate the problems affecting the religious and cultural rehabilitation of post-war European Jewry, and to take such action as may be necessary on the basis of its findings.

H. Committee on Community and Organization Relations - We believe that rules governing the relationship of the Conference and its constituent organizations and procedures strengthening the relationship between the Conference and the communities, must be adopted as soon as possible. In this connection, there was referred to the Interim Committee a proposal submitted to the Committee on Organization covering the relationship between the Conference and its constituent organizations. This Committee should consider that resolution, which, while commendable in purpose, does create some new difficulties which might serve to impede efficient operation.

I. Committee on Finance - This committee could undertake the responsibility for raising the \$250,000 budget, which, under the terms of the Conference resolution, is to be contributed both by the communities and the national organizations. The Finance Committee would have to pass upon the budget, pro-rate the allocations as between and among the communities and the organizations. The Finance Committee resolution at the Conference recommended that at least three members of



the Budget and Finance Committee of the second session be members of the Finance Committee, and the Interim Committee should give consideration to this proposal.

### 3. Political Panel

In addition to these committees, there should be established, within the Executive Committee, a panel of leaders who will be available to carry on representations in the name of the Conference with government officials as the need arises.

### 4. Community Participation

A. Conference Committees - We believe that it is important that steps be taken to dispel the impression of some of the delegates that the communities are not adequately represented in the Conference bodies and committees. During the year, a number of the delegates have expressed surprise that while they served on standing committees at the Conference's first session, they were not enlisted as members of the commissions. Within the General Committee at the second session, this sentiment was also expressed in a motion providing that only delegates to the Conference might serve as officers of the session. It is desirable, therefore, to place community delegates from the committees of the session on committees wherever possible and practical.

B. Interim Committee and Cooptions - The same viewpoint was reflected in the resolution of the Conference providing for cooption of fifteen members to the Interim Committee. The resolution stated that "in connection with the designation of such members at large, consideration should be given to communities outside of the City of New York." In this connection, an analysis of the membership of the Interim Committee elected at Pittsburgh shows that 21 of the Interim Committee are delegates representing organizations, and 27 are community delegates; but of these community delegates, 15 are in fact the heads of national organizations



and 16 are from Greater New York. It would seem desirable, in view of the complaint that the communities are not represented in proportion to their strength in the Conference, that the Interim Committee give special consideration to the communities in making up the list of coopted members. The presence of a number of community delegates would be of material assistance in solving the problem of involving the communities in the Conference program and in raising funds in the communities.

C. Attendance of Out-of-Town Members - In order to insure that the community delegates will in fact attend the meetings of the Interim Committee and the standing committees, it is recommended that the Conference undertake to pay at least the railroad expenses of the members residing outside Greater New York.

#### 5. Responsibility

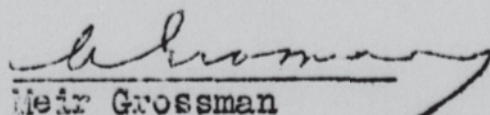
We recommend that in the interests of efficient operation, responsibility for each committee be vested, wherever possible, in a single head. We believe that primary consideration must be rapid implementation of program and we suggest, on the basis of experience, that there is loss of time and efficiency and that opportunity for action is sometimes lost when responsibility is divided.

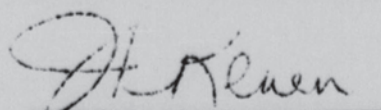
#### 6. Staff

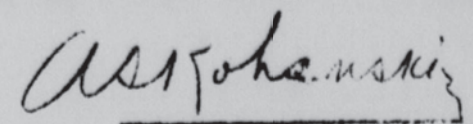
The enlargement of staff will be necessary under the program outlined above, if the Conference is to carry on its own work with a minimum of delegation to other bodies.

#### 7. Financing

In the interim, pending the organization of the Finance Committee, and in order to insure that the work may be carried forward immediately, it is suggested that the organizations, which are now by Conference resolution expected to contribute to the Conference budget, should subscribe amounts as advances on their contributions.

  
Meir Grossman

  
I. L. Kenen

  
Dr. A.S. Kohanski



# MISSING PAGE (S)





AMERICAN JEWISH CONFERENCE ASKS STATE DEPT. FOR HEARING FOR JEWS AT SAN FRANCISCO

WASHINGTON, April 2. (JTA) -- The American Jewish Conference today submitted a memorandum to the State Department requesting that Jews be granted a hearing at the United Nations Security Conference at San Francisco and outlining a post-war "security" program for the Jewish people.

The memorandum asked the United Nations to incorporate in the charter to be adopted at San Francisco, an International Bill of Rights, and urged them to restore civil and political rights to the Jews of Europe, to speed the reconstitution of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth, to undertake measures for the rehabilitation and resettlement of the Jews in liberated European countries and for the restoration of their property confiscated by the Germans and their collaborators, and to punish those responsible for war crimes against Jews.

In requesting the right to present to appropriate committees of the United Nations Conference a program for the restoration of rights and status to the remnants of the surviving Jews in Europe, the American Jewish Conference pointed out in its memorandum that "now, when those who have been so long silenced by the oppressor are to be permitted to speak, it would be gross inequity if this right were to be granted to all, and withheld only from the most oppressed."

Outlawing of Anti-Semitism Demanded; Free Immigration to Palestine Urged

The memorandum emphasized that the International Bill of Rights, which, it suggested, should be incorporated in a universal covenant among the nations participating in the San Francisco Conference, must embody the outlawing of anti-Semitism, equality of rights in law and in fact for all the citizens of every country, and full and complete protection of life and liberty for the inhabitants of all countries irrespective of their race, religion, birth, language and nationality.

With regard to the Palestine question, the American Jewish Conference emphasized that the gates of Palestine must be opened to free Jewish immigration. It also pointed out that "without the constitution of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth, the provisions of the Atlantic Charter remain unfulfilled."

The memorandum also dealt with the problem of displaced persons and with the restoration of citizenship to all Jews who have been deprived of it. It requests that the national and international courts which will decide the punishment of war criminals shall recognize Jewish representatives as "amici curiae" and that "the Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes, or a similar body, shall give 'locus standi' to a representation of the Jewish people." The memorandum was submitted to officials of the State Department by a delegation headed by Louis Lipsky, co-chairman of the Interim Committee of the Conference. The other members of the delegation were Maurice Bisgyer and I. L. Kenen.

PALESTINE PROBLEM WILL NOT FIGURE AT "BIG FIVE" CONFERENCE ON MANDATED TERRITORIES

WASHINGTON, April 2. (JTA) -- The Palestine question as such will not be considered at the meeting of the "Big Five" which the State Department has suggested should take place two weeks before the opening of the San Francisco Conference for the purpose of working out an agreement on mandates, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned here today.

The location of the meeting of the "Big Five" - the United States, Britain, Russia, France and China - is under discussion at present. The meeting would concern itself with the recommendation of the United States suggesting the establishment of an international trusteeship over mandated territories. Britain and France may oppose this recommendation, it was indicated.