



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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Cripps, Sir Stafford, 1945.

CONFIDENTIAL MEMO from CHV and HMLes to AHS Keep
concerning interview with Sir Stafford Cripps
at the Board of Trade Building - Monday, August 13, '45

We were unsuccessful in securing an interview through the efforts of our friends at Palestine House. Thus we resorted to the expedient of telegraphing Sir Stafford "at the request of Reinhold Niebuhr." Immediately a response came from his office and an appointment was made at our convenience. We were cordially greeted by Cripps who asked affectionately about "Reinhold," his family, the children, etc.

Then Sir Stafford asked us what brought us to England. CHV explained the nature of ^{our} mission and mentioned our relationship to Sir Wyndham Deedes whom Cripps said he knew well. When we mentioned the support of the Pro-Palestine Committees in a score of countries, Cripps interrupted to ask: "By 'Pro-Palestine' do you mean 'Pro-Zionist'?" When we answered affirmatively, he then remarked that the problem was a complex and thorny one, an issue that could not be solved by either an Arab program or a Zionist program.

"There was a time," he continued, "when I was favorably impressed by the Zionist program and adhered to it for the most ~~part~~ part, but no longer. The problem is too grave today and is, I believe, not capable of solution. There was a time when ~~it~~ it might have been settled fairly, but that was back in 1935. Now it is too late. At that time I spoke against our government's policy in an address in the House of Commons. I fear it is now impossible to ^{do} anything about it. The Arabs have been formed into an Arab Union and they have threatened violence against the Palestinian Jews unless they have their way."

We countered by saying, in HMLes's words, that "we have been led to believe through reading the authoritative observations of our Jewish friends and Christian associates that this threat of violence is exaggerated." To this Sir Stafford vehemently responded: "No, I can assure you that here there is no exaggeration. I am completely convinced that the danger is real. I've been out there and I know. I've talked with the Arabs

He said that Palestine could hold no more than 2 1/2 million altogether
and especially with the Egyptians. You see, they are afraid of becoming 'hewers of wood ~~x~~ and drawers of water.'" We pointed out that Arab living conditions had been improved and that no Arabs had suffered by Jewish activities in Palestine. "Now," said Sir Stafford, "that may be true, but what counts is what the Arabs think. As one of our famous judges put it one time; 'the set of a man's mind is just as real ~~and~~ ~~matter~~ as the condition of a man's stomach.' There will be bloodshed and real difficulties in the Middle East." *He said that at the meeting of the Arabs in Cairo the British had a terrible time trying to restrain the Arabs who hate the Jews.* CHV then suggested that the Colonial Office might have been responsible for this state of affairs and that they had created it. This Sir Stafford denied.

He felt that the issue should be dealt with by an international commission to which it should be referred and by whose decision all parties should abide. When HMLEs asked him whether Great Britain would be willing to relinquish Palestine as a base in the Middle East, there was no answer. -- Cripps said that he was not entirely in accord with his party on the matter and had never lined himself with the "Zionist elements in the Labor Party."

It was his contention that the Balfour Declaration had placed Great Britain in a frightful mess by promising Palestine to both the Jews and the Arabs; that Balfour later realized what he had done and issued a statement to reassure the Arabs. -- Further, he was concerned because Poland had found in Zionism a marvelous excuse for expelling the Jews years ago. -- When asked what was to happen to the Jews of Europe, there was no response. *But he felt that Russia had handled the problem best of all. He disagreed but to no avail. A Jewish assimilation.* He mentioned the growing anti-Semitism in the USA. We mentioned similar trends in England and he discounted the trend, but noted that the prejudice now growing in Britain is due in large part to "the clannishness of the Jews." He had been forced into certain trades -- and "if you'll note, when a Jew enters a trade, he drives everyone else out -- and often goes into the most disreputable trades. Perhaps our barring him from certain trades is responsible for that. Here in Britain, no Jew is in the building trades, for the unions just won't allow it."