



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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Niles, David, 1946.

May 28, 1946

Impasse Between the Jewish Community and the White House

While the American Jewish community, through the American Jewish Conference, enjoys the best of relations and operational facility with the important arms of Government such as the State Department, the War Department, leaders of Congress, UNRRA, etc., there is one point in Washington at which there exists a complete impasse. The record indicates clearly that Jewish leadership in this country enjoys no entree to the President, and, as a rule, gets no farther than the office of David Niles, who is responsible for advising the President on relations with the Jewish community and other minority groups in the country. A careful and objective analysis of the attitude and functions of Mr. Niles indicates the following:

1. That he claims to be a good friend of the Jewish community in this country.
2. That he claims to have a good knowledge of the politics and personalities active in the Jewish communities.
3. That he claims to strive to bring to the attention of the President in the best possible light the representations of the Jewish community.
4. That he consistently sees and maintains an open-door policy to all representatives of the Jewish community who wish to do business with the White House.
5. That among the people whom he sees constantly are Rabbi Wise, Nahum Goldmann, Eliahu Epstein, and many others.
6. That he never actually transmits to the President the views or communications submitted by the authorized leaders of American Jewry.
7. That he gives them a good impression by, from time to time, giving them "inside information". The "inside information" which he gives is always possible of procurement quite easily from other sources.
8. That he has the closest relationship with the American Jewish Committee and is completely devoted to their service to the exclusion of all other representative bodies of the American Jewish community.
9. That this exclusive representation renders ineffective a great deal of the work performed by the organizations in American Jewish life and usually negates their work.
10. That this exclusive devotion to the American Jewish Committee actively denies representation in the White House of the true viewpoints and desires of the American Jewish community.

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Evidences of this state of affairs are numerous. For instance, President Truman has never seen authorized leaders of the American Jewish community or the Zionist movement without seeing during the same day Judge Proskauer and Lessing Rosenwald. Another instance to be cited is that of the telegram signed by Rabbis Wise and Silver, Messrs. Neumann and Monsky requesting an audience with the President sent shortly after the release of the Anglo-American Committee report. To date, no answer has been received to that telegram. Such a communication is handled by David Niles. Numerous other instances could be cited which, however, would be of a confidential nature.

The best interests of the American Jewish community would indicate that they would be better served if another man were in the position occupied by David Niles. Such a man, without exclusive interest in the field of Jewish affairs, would be prone to consider representations and requests from Jewish bodies on the criteria of objective judgment and scope of representation. He would, in performing his duties for the President, seek to keep the President objectively informed on the thinking and desires of the American Jewish community as a whole. In performing duties in this matter, he would be acting in a manner opposite to that of Mr. Niles which obviously confuses and misinforms the President. It is therefore to the political advantage of the Jews first to ask for the removal of Mr. Niles, and second to ask for the appointment of a person more favorable to their interests. On the first point, the difficulty is within the Jewish community itself. If an authorized delegation from the American Jewish movement were to visit Mr. Hannegan to state their case, the weakness of their case would be found in the fact that such outstanding men as Rabbi Wise, Nahum Goldmann, and others maintain constant contact with David Niles. He could point to their friendly attitude as proof positive that he serves them as well as other sections of the Jewish community. It is therefore important that the first step in liquidating this impasse at the White House is to have a definitive meeting of the appropriate leaders involved in order to work out a plan of strategy to improve this situation. After this step has been taken, it would be a comparatively simple matter to convince Mr. Hannegan that a change must be made. If Mr. Hannegan is convinced, the change would most certainly be made.