



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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.

Reel
107

Box
37

Folder
351

American Zionist Emergency Council, report at Zionist
Organization of America convention, 1947.

REPORT OF HARRY L. SHAPIRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL, AT THE CONVENTION OF THE
ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA, JULY 4, 1947

Mr. Chairman:

Certain limitations are inevitably imposed on one who reports on the activities of the American Zionist Emergency Council, the political arm of our movement in this country. As active leaders in the work of the Local Emergency Committees, the delegates to this Convention surely understand that a detailed review of the numerous complex activities of the Emergency Council cannot be presented here. However, a general outline of our work since the last Convention of the Zionist Organization of America should indicate the nature and scope of our program of mass action.

As in previous years, our public relations and political action was designed to win the added support of the American people for Zionist aims, and to convince our Government of the urgent need for action to redeem its long-standing pledges regarding Palestine.

When we last met in Atlantic City, the Emergency Council had just launched a nation-wide campaign to drive home to the National Administration and to the various candidates then running for public office that we do not seek new promises -- new declarations of sympathy for the Jewish National Home and new statements of condolence for Jewish suffering in Europe. We explained that we are calling for the fulfillment, rather than the renewal, of promises.

On November 2nd -- Balfour Day -- Zionist mass action, carried forward with singular effectiveness by the Local Emergency Committees, made it unmistakably clear that we demand concrete action to implement established U. S. policy.

Welcome as were the reaffirmations of support which had come from President Truman in the form of his October 4th statement and his forthright reply to King Ibn Saud, they did not constitute the action which was -- and still is -- urgently needed.

We hammered away on this theme, not only through public pressure, but through personal contact with the various branches of our Government, which was maintained consistently by our Washington Bureau. Dr. Silver, the Chairman of the Emergency Council, had a number of meetings with Secretaries of State Byrnes and Marshall, Under Secretary of State Acheson, various other officials of the Department of State, and, of course, with leading members of both Houses of Congress. We were greatly aided and encouraged throughout by the unflagging support of the Legislative Branch of our Government. Congress has demonstrated time and again that it is not prepared to let the Palestine issue rest with the passage of pro-Zionist resolutions. Leaders of both parties in both Houses have shown that they mean to have those resolutions translated into action. Only a few days ago, we saw a striking demonstration of this heartening attitude when a group of our nation's leading Senators called upon the State Department to clarify its attitude on Palestine. I should like, at this time, to give expression to a feeling which, I know is shared by all Zionists in this country. I wish to express the profound appreciation of our entire movement to the members of Congress who have supported us consistently and unwaveringly.

In February, following the fiasco of the London Conference, Dr. Emanuel Neumann returned to America to present a detailed report of what had taken place there to an Extraordinary Meeting of Zionist leaders which was convened in Washington. At that meeting, we began to mobilize for the new action that

would be called for by Great Britain's referral of the Palestine question to the United Nations.

Our most intensive campaign of the year was soon launched. We sought to support and supplement the work that the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Palestine was doing with regard to the United Nations, and we, therefore, proclaimed the week of May 4th to 11th as ACTION-FOR-PALESTINE WEEK. We called upon the Zionists of America to surpass all of their previous efforts, and I am happy to report that our campaign resulted in an unprecedented demonstration of public sentiment. From Washington we learned that the White House and the State Department were flooded with letters, telegrams and resolutions from both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Civic, legislative, labor, fraternal groups held special meetings to voice their support. Sermons were preached in churches and synagogues throughout the nation. A large majority of our country's newspapers spoke out vigorously for us. And hundreds of public statements were made by governors of our states, mayors of our cities, state legislatures and city councils.

Apart from serving to impress the United Nations with the intensity of American feeling on the Palestine question, this campaign also helped to bring about a change of attitude on the part of the U. S. delegation to the United Nations on the question of Jewish Agency participation in the Special Session.

The Zionists of America have good reason to take pride in the efforts I have just reviewed. In a very real sense, the Zionist rank and file of this country helped to write history during the past few months and it is my belief that they will be called upon to do it again in a very short time.

One activity which has been conducted with quiet efficiency has been with regard to the Middle Eastern oil question. It is to be regretted that this vital aspect of our political work was badly neglected throughout the years. In the past, Zionist leadership did not take cognizance of the effect of Middle Eastern oil on the Zionist position and on American policy regarding Palestine. Some time ago, however, Dr. Silver took the initiative in calling a private conference to discuss the oil question. At this meeting this problem was gone into thoroughly for the first time and a plan of policy and action was carefully thought out. Since that initial conference, a great deal of work has been done. Many important contacts have been established. Considerable enlightenment has been spread with regard to the Zionist position and Zionist interests. We have reason to hope that continued efforts in this direction will produce favorable results.

We have been particularly busy in counteracting the falsehoods and misrepresentations spread by Arab and pro-Arab propagandists in this country. Arab propaganda, which has been sponsored and supported by certain of the oil companies, by certain missionary organizations based in the Near East, by certain anti-Zionist elements in our State Department, and of course, by those elements in our country who gladly endorse anything directed against Jews, has been intensified over the past few years. Arab speakers have gone through the country addressing meetings, especially on university campuses. A strong pro-Arab group has entrenched itself in and around Princeton University. The visits of the Saudi-Arabian princes and other Arab dignitaries have been

skillfully taken advantage of by propagandists.

Needless to say, we have not allowed such matters to pass without attention. Wherever an Arab propagandist appears, we make efforts to arrange for the public appearance of an effective spokesman who refutes the former's arguments and exposes distortions and misrepresentations.

In such activities, as indeed in almost every aspect of our work, we have enjoyed the invaluable cooperation of the American Christian Palestine Committee. From the lecture platform, through the medium of motion pictures and by the distribution of literature, the American Christian Palestine Committee has won the support of thousands in churches, civic groups, women's clubs and colleges. I must make special mention of the magnificent Seminars on Palestine organized by that Committee, as well as the two regional Christian conferences which were held in Detroit and Boston. At each of these conferences, more than 50 meetings took place over a period of 3 days. The Committee's seminars in Atlanta, Memphis, Birmingham, New Orleans, and Dallas culminated in a National Seminar at Highland Park, Illinois on May 29th to 31st, which is generally considered one of the most successful meetings of its kind ever held.

Time does not permit a detailed review of the splendid support given us by other important organizations. However, I cannot omit reference to the fine cooperation which was forthcoming throughout the year from both the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Veterans' groups, too, once again demonstrated their support of our cause. This was particularly true of the Jewish War Veterans and the American Veterans Committee. Of special significance, also, was the work of the American Arts Committee for Palestine which was formed by the American Christian Palestine Committee, and which is made up of the most prominent figures in the art and entertainment world. This group published impressive full-page advertisements and public statements at critical moments, all of which attracted nation-wide

attention.

I am afraid that I am not doing justice to the work of the various departments of the Emergency Council, which form the backbone of our political and public relations organization. These departments function under experts in their respective fields who have made "doing the impossible" seem a matter of routine. A more detailed review of their activities is contained in the Convention Report which has been distributed to all the delegates, and requires no elaboration here.

In conclusion, I wish to state that we in the Emergency Council would be quite helpless without the support of the Zionist masses throughout America. The success of our various projects can be measured in direct ratio to the efforts and energies expended by the Local Emergency Committees. Without your willingness to carry out the various suggestions which emanate from the national headquarters, we could not move. The fact that the Zionists of America have worked with undiminished loyalty and devotion over the past few years is the source of our greatest encouragement. And the Zionist Organization of America may be proud of the major role which it has played in the work of the American Zionist Emergency Council. I am confident that I express the sentiments of this Convention when I predict that the vigor and determination which have characterized the work of the Emergency Committees in the past will continue unabated until we shall have completed our task of bringing into being the Jewish State.