



## 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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Jewish Agency statements, 1948.



9/23/48

STATEMENT OF DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN SECTION OF THE JEWISH AGENCY

The tragic assassination of Count Bernadotte by outlaws, and the feeling of condemnation which it has universally aroused, are being used by the enemies of Israel as an opportunity to cripple the Jewish State, if they cannot destroy it altogether, by drastically constricting it in size and depriving it of its necessary natural resources. They seek to do this under the slogan that Count Bernadotte's recommendations must be adopted and effectuated in full as a monument to his memory and in the claimed interest of "peace".

These recommendations, which Count Bernadotte himself admitted in his report were not within his province as Mediator to make, require calm analysis in order to understand how disastrous their implementation would be for the Jewish cause in Palestine and the State of Israel.

The first recommendation to be noted is that the Negev, consisting of two-thirds of the State of Israel as set up in the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 29, 1947, should be torn away from Israel and handed over to the invading Arab States, preferably Trans-Jordan. The Jewish State, whose total area under the November 29 Resolution is only 5,770 square miles, is thus to be further reduced in size by no less than 3,750 square miles; while a mere 400 square miles of rocky and hilly Western Galilee is to be added to it in compensation.

Moreover, the territory thus proposed to be taken away from Israel is practically empty of inhabitants because of lack of water, although it can be made habitable by costly and extensive irrigation works which the Jews alone are ready to undertake and finance. It provides the only available land reserve for the expected and necessary large Jewish immigration into Israel; the rest of Israel, as well as Western Galilee, being already thickly inhabited. If the Negev should now be lost to Israel, it would be condemned to continuing sterility as a desert, just as is the vast and empty area of the largest part of Trans-Jordan; and for the same reason, namely, Arab apathy. The Jewish plan for its irrigation and development would be aborted, and the capacity of the truncated remnant of Israel to absorb new immigrants would be greatly reduced. In this way, the persistent objective of the enemies of Israel, which has ever been to prevent or severely limit Jewish immigration into Palestine, would be achieved.

Nor is this the only disastrous effect which the implementation of this recommendation would have. Three other highly important effects should be noted:

1. The Negev includes the southern and more than half of the western shores of the Dead Sea and provides the only access of the State of Israel to the waters and minerals of that Sea; the rest of the shore of the Sea being outside the boundaries of Israel and mostly in Trans-Jordan. So important to the life and development of Israel was free access to and the right to extract and exploit these minerals deemed to be by the General Assembly of the United Nations that the Assembly by its November, 1947 Resolution actually included within the State of Israel even more of the shore area of the Dead Sea than was recommended by its Special Committee on Palestine. These minerals, in fact, constitute perhaps the only reserve of valuable minerals available to Israel. Millions of Jewish capital have already been sunk in the building of plants both at the northern and southern ends of the Dead Sea for the extraction of these minerals. Competent



experts are agreed that these minerals can form the basis of a varied and highly skilled chemical industry in Israel for the benefit not only of its inhabitants but of the world at large. The proposal now is to make all this impossible and to turn the whole of the Dead Sea with its minerals over to the Arab States.

2. The territory in question gives the State of Israel access to and a part of the shore of the Gulf of Akaba on the Red Sea and thus renders possible the development there of an Israeli port to serve the commerce of Israel with the Far East and Africa, without the necessity of routing such commerce through the British controlled Suez Canal with its heavy tolls. The excision of this territory from Israel renders this prospect hopeless.

3. There are well-founded reports to the effect that the territory in question contains valuable deposits of oil. This is perhaps the real reason why it is now proposed to take this territory away from Israel and hand it over to a puppet of Britain. But this oil constitutes the only reserve of fuel for the industrialized State of Israel which must otherwise depend for oil upon the mercy of the British-Arab production in Iraq and the very high prices charged to Israel for such oil as it may be allowed to have from such production.

Another recommendation of Count Bernadotte deserving special notice relates to Jerusalem. The recommendation is that Jerusalem with its besieged 90,000 Jews should be put under United Nations control without any corridor connecting it with Israel. The November, 1947 Resolution of the General Assembly likewise proposed to put Jerusalem under United Nations control. But this was on the supposition that the Arabs would respect the decision of the Assembly and let Jerusalem live. Events, however, have proved that this expectation was and is illusory. Jerusalem was wantonly attacked by the Arab States with British supplied bombs and artillery immediately after the British withdrew from Palestine on May 15, 1948, despite the United Nations Resolution, and has been under siege and attack ever since. Its water and food supplies have been cut off. The Jews have sustained thousands of casualties in defense of the beautiful city which they have built and which contains not only their most sacred shrines, but their great University, their hospitals and other educational and philanthropic institutions. The heroism of the Jews of Jerusalem, men, women and even children alike, in the face of the murderous Arab attack constitutes an epic by itself. Now it is proposed to turn these people, after all their sacrifices and privations, over to the mercy of the Arab invaders; for that is what Count Bernadotte's recommendation amounts to. The Arabs can no more be expected to respect the nominal "control" of the United Nations over Jerusalem in the future than they have respected it heretofore. The world must still remember the outrage of the destruction of the pumping station at Latrun, which provided Jerusalem with water, at a time when that pumping station was officially under United Nations supervision and after the Arabs had specifically agreed to the resumption of its operations under the so-called Truce; and only this morning the press carries news of the brutal assault upon a convoy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem under United Nations auspices by the Legionnaires of the Trans-Jordan Legion, which convoy was proceeding under the express agreement of the Arabs under the Truce.

It is inconceivable that the Jews of Jerusalem and Israel will ever again consent to leave Jerusalem in the midst of a hostile Arab sea, unconnected with Israel and with no greater security for their lives and property than would be involved in the nominal "control" of the United Nations.

It is interesting to note the reasons given by Count Bernadotte for his devastating recommendations. He says in his report that "it cannot be ignored



that the vast difference between now and last November (the time of the General Assembly Resolution) is that a war has been started and stopped and that, in the intervening months, decisive events have occurred." But this war was unquestionably started by the Arab States surrounding Palestine, six of whom are members of the United Nations, in open and proclaimed defiance of the United Nations and its Resolution. If this war has now been stopped to any extent, it has been by Jewish valor and heroism, and not by anything that the Mediator or the United Nations have done. The combined armies of the invading Arab States, whom the United States, through its representative, has branded as aggressors in the Security Council of the United Nations, have been thrown back by the embattled Jews and have, indeed, been saved from complete rout only by the very timely "Truce" which the Security Council imposed on July 15. It seems now, however, that either as a reward for their aggression or to compensate them for their unexpected defeat, the State of Israel is to be dismembered and two-thirds of its territory and practically all its mineral wealth given to the aggressors. While the City of Jerusalem, with its overwhelmingly Jewish population and great Jewish institutions, is to be turned over to the mercies of its surrounding Arabs while under nominal United Nations "control".

Count Bernadotte recommends this treatment of Jerusalem because "of its religious and international significance." But it had the same significance on June 27 of this year when he proposed that Jerusalem should be turned over completely to the Arab State of Trans-Jordan. He then apparently believed that its international significance should be forgotten in favor of the Arabs. It was only when it became evident that the Jews would prevent the carrying out of his recommendation of June 27 by force of arms that the present, new recommendation was advanced. But it amounts in effect to the same thing as the old recommendation, and the Jews are doubtless ready to defend themselves against it, too, by force of arms.

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STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL  
WITH REFERENCE TO THE BERNADOTTE PLAN,  
ISSUED IN PARIS SEPTEMBER 22, 1948

The Israeli government is giving the most serious study to Count Bernadotte's important report to the General Assembly. The people of Israel are eager for peace with their Arab neighbors, and they will earnestly explore all proposals which are put forward as a basis for a final and lasting peace.

While it is welcome that the report expresses the central fact of Israel's independence and vitality as a state, it would nevertheless be premature at this stage to accept its conclusions in their entirety. Careful study and discussion are obviously essential.

Thus, one of the conclusions which calls for the most critical scrutiny is the suggestion that the Negeb be excised from the state of Israel. The United Nations special committee on Palestine, after an exhaustive study of the Palestine problem, recommended that the territory of the Negeb be included in the Jewish state. This recommendation was accepted by the General Assembly. To exclude the Negeb from the state of Israel would be to take away two-thirds of its area, to reduce it to a miniature state, to constrict its growth and to deny to the Jewish people the only available land reserve which offers the prospects of large-scale development.

In any discussion of the report, the future of Jerusalem will be the subject of special interest. Besieged by foreign Arab armies, the people of Jerusalem were cut off from food and water, suffering many casualties, and were finally rescued from starvation and death only because the State of Israel established a land bridge from the coast. Under the circumstances, the people of Israel and especially of Jerusalem will not look with equanimity on any plan which would jeopardize the fate of the 90,000 Jewish inhabitants of that city by cutting them off from direct contact with Israel.

The government of Israel will presumably have an opportunity of making its official comment on these and other important features of the report before the appropriate organs of the General Assembly.