



## 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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The New Palestine, Manson articles in, 1949.



# A President Leaves Office

By HAROLD P. MANSON

The outgoing president of the Zionist Organization of America is in at least one sense among the fortunate of men. It was Emanuel Neumann's high privilege to stand at the head of the largest of Zionist bodies throughout two of the most eventful years of Jewish history. His administration was highlighted by two exalted moments without parallel or precedent — the United Nations decision of November 29, 1947 and the birth of the state of Israel. But his leadership during this era of fulfillment was not a happy accident. It was the direct — and logical — result of a lifetime of service to a single ideal: Zionism. Always a realist, he could only look forward to great responsibilities and nerve-racking toil when he assumed office. The fact that he was also able to enjoy sweet moments of triumph serves to reassure us that history is not always unfair to one who serves a noble cause with devotion and sacrifice.

While Emanuel Neumann's career — indeed, his entire life — has been bound up with the Zionist movement, he is not a careerist. Instead of "playing it safe," he repeatedly took a strong independent stand when his conscience bade him to do so — even when this made him the target of political attack. His position on questions of Zionist policy has never been dictated by personal whims, but by that cool and relentless logic which is probably the greatest of his gifts. Time and again that logic has led him into "the opposition" — and time and again events have proved him right.

## Political Achievements

I am in no position to evaluate Emanuel Neumann's role in Zionism prior to the establishment of the American Zionist Emergency Council, during which period I first met him. However, his contributions on the political front alone should earn him a place of honor in Jewish history. Even a brief and incomplete summary of his political accomplishments establishes the fact that he has been a true pioneer, often years ahead of most of his colleagues.

At the end of 1939 he returned to America after several years in Palestine. He was obsessed with the idea that a great political effort had to be made in the United States to break the deadlock created by the British White Paper policy. Throughout 1940 he carried on what was virtually a one-man campaign to arouse American Zionists. In 1941 he took charge of the public relations activities of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs (the embryo of what was later to be the American Zionist Emergency Council). With a pitifully small budget and almost no assistance, he initiated the organization of the American Palestine Committee, headed by Senator Robert F. Wagner. Soon afterwards he enrolled some 68 U. S. Senators, 250 members of the House of Representatives and hundreds of other civic and political leaders in the committee. Next he brought about the formation of another organization composed of Christian religious leaders, which was later to become nationally important as the Christian Council on Palestine.

In 1942 he persuaded Dr. Walter Clay Lowdermilk to write his now-famous book, *Palestine: Land of Promise*, in which the plan for a Jordan Valley Authority was outlined. The impact of this volume upon government officials and public opinion was tremendous. It disposed of the argument that Palestine could not absorb large numbers of Jews, and its publication was a political event of capital importance.

## Criticized Inadequacy

But, significant as these accomplishments were, they represented only a tiny fraction of the political effort which the situation demanded. Dr. Neumann pleaded for the expansion of the Emergency Committee's political and public relations program, pointing out that the committee did not even maintain an office in Washington. But the body's officers were not disposed to enlarge the scope of its work. Nor was there sufficient clarity regarding policy. Dr. Neumann finally resigned at the end of 1942, and issued a public statement criticizing the inadequacy of the American Zionist effort.

At this point he turned his full attention to Dr. Low-



DR. EMANUEL NEUMANN

dermilk's JVA idea. He established the Commission on Palestine Surveys and recruited a group of eminent scientists and engineers for the purpose of investigating the feasibility of the Lowdermilk project and preparing blueprints for its eventual execution. The cooperation of the then head of the TVA, David Lilienthal, and his top-flight experts, and the aid of the Bureau of Reclamation were enlisted. After several years of work, the engineering report was completed. It was published only a few weeks ago.

Dr. Neumann's resignation from the Emergency Committee caused considerable heart-searching among some Zionist leaders. Dr. Chaim Weizmann, then on a visit to the United States, urged that the Committee be reorganized and that Dr. Abba Hillel Silver be invited to head it. However, this suggestion was resisted by important elements on the American Zionist scene and the reorganization failed to take place. In the early summer of 1943 Dr. Neumann and a group of colleagues took decisive action. They initiated a movement to draft Dr. Silver for the presidency of the ZOA. However, their primary purpose was to achieve a reorganization and expansion of the Emergency Committee. As a result of this "Draft Silver" movement, those who had opposed reorganization of the Emergency Committee capitulated — and Dr. Silver became the active head of the American Zionist political scene. Under Dr. Silver's dynamic leadership the American Zionist Emergency Council was launched. An adequate budget was provided, numerous departments headed by experts in their respective fields were established and a revolutionary tempo was injected into American Zionism.

## Palestine Resolution

In the Emergency Council, Dr. Neumann was not only the principle supporter of Dr. Silver, but also his close associate. He was particularly active in 1944 in connection with the Palestine Resolution then pending before the Congress of the United States. His testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee was published under the title, "Zionism and the Arab World," and became a classic.

Late in 1944, when the great controversy broke out in Zionist ranks over the tabling of the Palestine Resolution and Dr. Silver's subsequent resignation from the Emergency Council, Dr. Neumann devoted himself to a campaign for the recall of Dr. Silver and the vindication of his policies. I was one of the four executives who resigned from the Emergency Council in protest over the scuttling of Dr. Silver's policies and who, to-

gether with Dr. Neumann, organized the American Zionist Policy Committee. I shall never forget those grim days of internal strife, nor the brilliant leadership provided by Dr. Neumann throughout the six months which elapsed before the Emergency Council and ZOA administrations of that time responded to the public demand that Dr. Silver and his policies be reinstated.

In 1945, during Dr. Silver's absence from the United States, Dr. Neumann was charged with the difficult task of piloting the Palestine Resolution, which had been reintroduced in Congress, through both the Senate and the House. By his skill in draftsmanship he was able to produce a text which was satisfactory both to Zionist leaders and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. After the resolution was passed in the Senate, Dr. Neumann was called upon to testify again before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, following a long anti-Zionist statement by Lessing Rosenwald. He demolished the opposition's arguments, and the resolution was unanimously approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee, after which it was carried in the House.

## Committee of Inquiry

Dr. Neumann played a significant part throughout the deliberations of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. During the public hearings in Washington, he delivered the principal political address on behalf of the Zionist movement. In the spring of 1946, at the invitation of the Jewish Agency, he flew to Jerusalem with two American engineers for the purpose of discussing the Jordan Valley Authority project once more with the Anglo-American Committee.

His contributions to the deliberations of the twenty-second World Zionist Congress, which was held at Basle, Switzerland in December, 1946, are now a part of Zionist history. Apart from delivering one of the principle addresses of the Congress, he served as chairman of the subcommittee which drafted the political resolutions. It was in that capacity that he succeeded in arriving at a formula which united several of the parties and a majority of the Congress — in support of Dr. Silver's stand against participation in the Bevin-sponsored London Conference on Palestine.

Before returning to America to serve as a member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in New York, Dr. Neumann went to London, where informal talks between the British government and leaders of the Jewish Agency were taking place. I was in London at that time and shared the rigors of that miserable winter with Dr. Neumann. The gloomy atmosphere was remarkably well suited to the altogether depressing spectacle staged by Bevin. He was obviously trying to conduct "parallel negotiations" with the Jews while meeting formally with the Arabs. With their guns pointed at the heart of the Yishuv, the British were trying to maneuver the Jewish Agency into discussions for the achievement of an "agreed solution." In plain English, they hoped to cram the Morrison-Grady Federalization Plan down our throats. Fortunately, the Jewish Agency's spokesmen did not fall into the traps which awaited them at every turn in the conversations — and it should be added that the Agency's course might have been charted quite differently had not Emanuel Neumann and Moshe Sneh been on the scene to influence action which would be in accordance with the Basle decision.

## Action in UN

Throughout the United Nations deliberations on Palestine, Dr. Neumann occupied a distinguished role. Both as a member of the Jewish Agency Executive and as the head of America's leading Zionist organization, he rendered invaluable service in meetings of the Executive, in contacts with United Nations delegations and in the mobilization of American public opinion. His record needs no further recapitulation here.

It has become increasingly clear that the Zionist movement will continue to be faced with grave problems requiring political astuteness and sound judgment for their solution. Zionism will, I am sure, benefit from the great talents of Emanuel Neumann for many years to come.

## Northwest Commends ZOA Leadership

The Northwest ZOA Region, under the chairmanship of President Dr. A. L. Greenberg, at its last meeting adopted a unanimous resolution sending greetings to the administration of the ZOA on the first anniversary of the state of Israel. The resolution continues:

"We commend the leadership for the political achievements

which so greatly led to the successful birth of Israel. We also extend greetings to the government of Israel and the Jewish Agency on this memorable anniversary.

## West Oak Lane ZOA Backs Silver, Neumann

A resolution endorsing the leadership of Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Emanuel Neumann was adopted at a recent meeting of the West Oak Lane Chapter

of the Philadelphia Zionist Organization. The resolution reads in part:

"To Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Emanuel Neumann — In recognition of your untiring work and devotion to the cause of Israel and Zionism, especially for your achievements during the last year in the halls of the United Nations, we congratulate you. Furthermore, we make known to everyone that the West Oak Lane Chapter of the Phila-

delphia Zionist Organization heartily endorses and approves your leadership and policies."

Gilbert S. Levitt is president of the chapter and Manuel I. Wertheimer is secretary.

## Young Judaea Marks 40th Anniversary

National Young Judaea will commence a year-long celebration of its 40th anniversary during the months of June, accord-

ing to Norman Schanin, executive director of the organization which now embodies more than 15,000 American Jewish youths in over 900 groups.

Climaxing a number of community-wide and national celebrations being planned for June will be the second annual session of the National Senior Young Judaea camp, Tel Yehudah, which will be held from June 26 to July 17 at Tel Noar Lodge in Hampstead (N.H.).