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Series II: Harold P. Manson File (Zionism Files), 1940-1949, undated.

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Miscellaneous, 1944-1947.

NEW LEADERSHIP

By Louis Lipsky

Former member, Jewish Agency Executive

*for the
New Reporter*

I am sure that, after sober reflection, Dr. Silver will not maintain for long the quick remarks he made immediately after his return from Basle. He is quoted in the New York Times as saying that "the old leadership was repudiated" and that there emerged from the Congress "a clear purpose and a clear line." For my part, I would like to congratulate the new Executive on having retained in their old posts of service so many of the able men of the old Executive and for having added several new men who undoubtedly will distinguish themselves in executive work during the next two years.

Is it a fact that the old leadership was repudiated.

During the period of the war, the Zionist leadership was not represented by one person. During all the war difficulties, the Executive as a whole was responsible for the Zionist program and Dr. Weizmann exercised his functions within the frame of the Executive. In fact, there was an understanding to that effect. During the period of the war, not only Dr. Weizmann but Mr. Ben Gurion as Chairman aided by Mr. Shertok, Dr. Brodetsky, Dr. Goldmann and Mr. Locker carried on Zionist political affairs in all parts of the world. Mr. Eliezer Kaplan was responsible for Zionist finances. All five remain in the new Executive. Mr. Ben Gurion was largely responsible for the adoption of the Biltmore Hotel resolution by all American Zionist groups and then by Palestine Jewry. Mr. Shertok was responsible for the recruiting of Jewish soldiers in the British Army and for the Jewish contribution to the British war effort in general. Mr. Ben Gurion, Mr. Shertok and

Mr. Kaplan came to the United States many times and gave effective cooperation to our endeavors in the political and financial fields. The exigencies of war brought Dr. Nahum Goldmann to the United States; he functioned here for a number of years as representative in America of the Jewish Agency; he has now been asked to take up the important political task in London where Dr. Brodetsky and Mr. Berl Locker (both of them members of the old Executive) continue as members of the new Executive.

Furthermore, with only two or three exceptions, all the men who served on the old Executive continue on the new. Dr. Isaac Greenbaum, Rabbi J. L. Fishman and the junior members who were made full members in 1945 -- Mr. Dobkin, Mr. Shapiro and Dr. Sneh remain in office. Dr. Silver and Dr. Neumann in the United States, and Mr. Fritz Bernstein of Palestine have been added; but to balance them, Mrs. Rose Halprin, Chaim Greenberg and Goldie Meyerson are now voting members of the new Executive. In effect, the same majority on the principal issues of the day prevails in the new Executive.

For all practical purposes, therefore, the new Executive is the old Executive with Mr. Ben Gurion as the highest official in the Zionist hierarchy, where formerly Dr. Weizmann was that leading personality. It is the same regime today as it was before Basle. This becomes clear at a glance when it is seen that of the nineteen members of the new Executive, fourteen are on record as having voted going to the London Conference and being sympathetic to "a viable Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine." The pre-Basle majority dominates the new Executive.

Did the Basle Congress establish a clear line and purpose.

A tactical line and purpose was established at Basle, but they are not clear. The resolution on the London Conference was of itself open to contradictory interpretations. The old Executive had also

rejected going to London unless a definite change of attitude was manifested by the Labor Government. What would constitute such a change, the Labor Party urged at Basle, should be left to the new Executive. This the Congress refused to do. It agreed to give the required authority to the Actions Committee on which were represented two minor parties not included in the new Executive — Revisionists, the Aliya Beth — who could be relied upon to block any suggestion of going to London.

How was it possible for the Basle Congress under the prevailing conditions to come to a good end with a clear line or purpose. Zionist Congresses do not make history; they record it. The Basle Congress was held either too soon or too late. It had to guess and speculate. The ground under its feet was not secure; it was shifting from day to day. With a perversity impossible to explain, Britain was playing a game of hiding its intentions, delaying the announcement of plans, continuing its policy of balancing interests, denying Jewish rights, but pretending that it was on the verge of making up its mind, appealing for confidence without laying any basis for it. How could a clear line emerge out of this shifty game. Should we go to the London Conference. Yes and No. Should we definitely stay away. No and yes. Should we favor partition. There was no proposal. Should we throw our weight toward resistance. Why be hasty. That there was no clarity was indicated by the refusal of any group of like-minded Zionist parties to form the new Executive. That was why a coalition Executive of contending parties emerged at the end of the proceedings.

What has happened since the adjournment of the Congress. Very little that clarifies line or purpose. Dr. Silver had no alternative but to agree in the Actions Committee to an arrangement which brought the

Labor Party into the Executive as a member of the coalition. That arrangement (I hear) provided for the acceptance as decisive by the Actions Committee of the vote of the new Executive on going to London. Mr. Ben Gurion and Mr. Shertok are now active in London endeavoring to lay a basis which would make it possible for the new Executive to attend the London Conference. They are talking of informal as against formal discussions, but as a matter of political reality, there is no real difference between the two. The resolution of the Congress therefore remains on the record, but in fact, the resolution of the Labor Party, rejected by the vote of the Congress, is the basis of the activities of the new Executive in London at the present time.

In effect, the line of the old leadership -- never clear at best, never extreme -- is now the line of the new Executive, except that Dr. Weizmann officially no longer plays a leading part in the proceedings. The Labor Party at once saw the incongruity of this situation. In its view, the return of Dr. Weizmann as President was made possible by the modification in the Actions Committee of the Congress decision on the London Conference. It therefore proposed to the Actions Committee that Dr. Weizmann be elected President. His candidacy had not been defeated by a direct vote. The adverse vote has been in effect resolved and reversed. But the suggestion of the Labor Party was not accepted by the Actions Committee. Nor could Dr. Weizmann himself accept at the hands of the Actions Committee what the Congress had not offered to him.

It may be argued that a radical change in leadership is indicated in the formation of the American section of the Jewish Agency. But the election of Dr. Silver as Chairman of the American section did not

require the withdrawal of Dr. Weizmann or any revolutionary change. Dr. Silver could have taken over the position under any circumstances. The conflict of jurisdiction between the Zionist Emergency Council and the American branch of the Jewish Agency could not be solved in any other way. But even so, Dr. Silver's chairmanship is not what he wanted it to be. A balance has been set up in the American section. The American section is not autonomous. Mr. Ben Gurion is Chairman of the whole Executive and the head of all political affairs. He will have a dominating influence on all political matters including the American scene. He will have the loyal cooperation of Mr. Shertok, who will be responsible for the day by day work of the Jewish Agency in Washington.

It would have been better had Basle in fact elected a new leadership -- new men, new ideas, new procedures. Nothing is gained at this time by avoiding decision. Nor is anything gained by regarding formal technical victories as if they were real or had practical value. Coalition is a device to segregate for the time being festering differences within a form of government. It seldom works for long. At any rate, it is hard for a coalition to draw straight and clear lines. The inner struggle is too intense. What has come out of Basle is a coalition leadership. No party was a victor, no party was defeated. There is nothing to brag about. In fact, due to no fault of our own, Basle was a temporary defeat of many hopes of all of us.

The leadership and the line will have to be revealed in what the new Executive will be able to do. It has no easy task. Will it be able to subordinate strong personalities to the general view, will it be able to maintain a united front, will it be able to sacrifice personal or party prestige for collective victories. There is no need to appeal for loyalty to the new Executive. That loyalty will be given without

stint by the rank and file. To appeal for loyalty now suggests probable disloyalty which is not called for. It is fervently hoped, however, that every member of the new Executive will be animated by the spirit of conciliation and patience; and that good will will prevail, as it did not prevail in the deliberations at Basle.

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Eugene Kelly & Associates

Munsey Building

Washington, D.C.

National 3973

March 18, 1944

Dr. Avva H. Silver,
c/o The Temple,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver:

Under separate cover I am sending you recordings of the broadcast you made at the dinner. The recordings are made on two 12-inch discs suitable for home victrola use.

I thought you would get a kick out of this as I did in having them played back to me at the studio.

Best regards,

Eugene Kelly

AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

January 29, 1947

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Emergency Council was held on Wednesday, January 29, at 4:30 P.M., at 342 Madison Avenue, New York City.

PRESENT

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver (presiding), Gedalia Bublick, Mrs. Moses P. Epstein, Prof. Hayim Fineman, Rabbi Wolf Gold, Israel Goldstein, Mrs. David B. Greenberg, Mrs. Samuel W. Halprin, Rabbi Max Kirshblum, Rabbi Irving Miller, Mrs. David de Sola Pool, Judge Morris Rothenberg, Louis Segal.

Daniel Frisch, Isaiah L. Kenen, Arthur Lourie, Sidney Marks, Ignacy Schwarzbart, Abraham Tulin.

Benjamin Akzin, Gerold Frank, Eliahu Ben Horin, Arnold K. Isreeli, William Kaufman, Leo R. Sack, Harry L. Shapiro, Benjamin Shwadran, Joseph Sternstein, Abe Tuvim.

DR. ALEXANDER H. PEKELIS AND JACOB FISHMAN

Dr. Silver paid tribute to the memories of two very valued members of our body, Mr. Jacob Fishman who passed away in Basle and Dr. Alexander H. Pekelis who was killed in a tragic airplane crash over Eire.

RESIGNATION OF MR. ARTHUR LOURIE, APPOINTMENT OF DR. AKZIN

A letter from Mr. Lourie of resignation as Political Secretary of the American Zionist Emergency Council was read by Mr. Shapiro. Mr. Lourie had been requested to assume the directorship of the New York Office of the Jewish Agency. A motion was made, seconded and passed that his resignation be accepted, whereupon Dr. Silver commended the excellent work done by Mr. Lourie and wished him success in his new office. Dr. Silver stated that he had requested Dr. Benjamin Akzin, director of the Council's Washington Bureau, to fill the vacancy created by Mr. Lourie's resignation. A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the appointment of Dr. Akzin to the post of Political Secretary of the Council.

REPORT BY HARRY L. SHAPIRO

A report was rendered by Mr. Shapiro on the present program of the Emergency Council: to stimulate expressions of American public opinion at this crucial period. Some of the staff members are going to various cities throughout the country to talk to editors, columnists, commentators, etc. for the purpose of obtaining favorable editorial comment in newspapers. Simultaneously with this campaign, it is planned to have several Senators and Representatives speak up on the floor of Congress. In addition, we are contemplating some newspaper advertisements in conjunction with this program, all of which are designed to bring the pressure of public opinion on the British Government.

DR. SILVER'S VISITS WITH SECRETARY OF STATE BYRNES AND AMBASSADOR INVERCHAPEL

Dr. Silver stated that soon after his return from Basle he called upon the Secretary of State, and the British Ambassador. He reported to the Ambassador on what had taken place at the Congress, and the reasons for the resolutions adopted there. He told them that the resolution not to go to the London Conference was a conditional resolution predicated on existing conditions, and that if conditions would change the movement would stand ready to go to the Conference. He pointed out that the next move was up to Great Britain who could indicate a change in conditions either by word -- by promising to establish a Jewish State or to revoke the White Paper -- or by deed -- by starting to move the 100,000. The Ambassador believed the first unlikely since it would prevent the Arabs from coming into the Conference, but he thought well of the second suggestion and said that he would forward the idea to Foreign Secretary Bevin.

Dr. Silver's interview with Secretary Byrnes was friendly throughout, was along similar lines, and Mr. Byrnes appeared much impressed with the possibility of the second suggestion, that of moving the 100,000. He told Dr. Silver that he would request Lord Inverchapel to transmit to Mr. Bevin his own approval of this suggestion. A few days later Dr. Silver received word from Mr. Byrnes that this had been done.

MR. SHERTOK'S VISITS WITH LOY HENDERSON, DEAN ACHESON AND LORD INVERCHAPEL

Mr. Lourie reported that Mr. Shertok's interview with Mr. Acheson was rather disconcerting. He received the very clear impression that the State Department was proposing to take no further action at this point, but would watch matters for the time being, feeling that it had done what it was called upon to do.

Mr. Acheson was apparently aware of the cold impression he had given Mr. Shertok because the following day when Mr. Shertok saw Loy Henderson, the latter went out of his way to be cordial to Mr. Shertok and to indicate that the State Department was watching the situation in London very closely and was receiving a daily report on matters there.

Lord Inverchapel referred in his meeting with Mr. Shertok to his earlier talk with Dr. Silver. He stressed two points: the importance of maintaining the partnership between the Jews and the British, and the possibility that Great Britain might abandon her trusteeship over Palestine altogether. When Mr. Shertok appeared skeptical of such a possibility, Lord Inverchapel insisted that under the present circumstances when the British Army is a conscript army, if British soldiers were killed in Palestine the reaction at home would be very strong, and a decision would be widely popular. The Ambassador was desirous that we should do everything possible to induce the American Government to lift its immigration quotas here, stating that this would facilitate British pressure on the Arabs and American pressure on the British. Mr. Shertok replied that he was not acquainted with the attitude of the American Congress on this matter.

MR. HERBERT HOOVER

Dr. Silver reported on his talk with Mr. Hoover who was leaving in a few days for Germany to make a study of the German relief problem for the American Government. Mr. Hoover was very much of the opinion that all efforts to settle Jews outside of Palestine would be unsuccessful. Dr. Silver suggested to

Mr. Hoover that, after he had seen and talked to these people, he could be very helpful if he would raise his voice at that time and demand their immediate transfer to Palestine. Mr. Hoover was very friendly to our cause, Dr. Silver stated.

APPRECIATION OF MR. TUVIM'S ACTIVITIES

Dr. Silver thanked Mr. Abe Tuvim for having taken complete charge of the work of the Emergency Council during the members' absence at Basle, and for having handled it so competently.

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW MEMBERS OF THE AGENCY EXECUTIVE

Dr. Silver expressed satisfaction that two members of the Council had been newly elected to the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Rabbi Wolf Gold and Mrs. Samuel Halprin, and wished them success in their new posts.

JEWISH WAR VETERANS

Dr. Akzin reported on the annual courtesy call paid the President by the National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans, Colonel Richman. While veterans' problems were under discussion, the President was in a very relaxed frame of mind. However, as soon as Palestine was mentioned the President's mien changed. The President told Colonel Richman that each time he thinks a solution of the Palestine problem is in view the British bring up something, and there still is no solution. The President said, however, that he continued to be hopeful.

REPORT ON THE LONDON CONFERENCE

Dr. Silver had just received a telephoned report of the proceedings in London. The 2½ hour informal meeting of the Jewish Agency leaders with the representatives of the British Government -- the first of an expected series -- concerned itself exclusively with the long-term problem and did not touch at all on the present disturbances in Palestine.

Our people presented our full program, Dr. Silver reported, as agreed upon at Basle -- our great need for immigration and our rights under the Mandate. They indicated that if any other proposals would be made they would be prepared to submit them to the competent bodies for consideration. The general attitude of the British in this first meeting was negative to the idea of partition and leaned more to a federalization scheme, a modified, liberalized Grady-Morrison Plan.

One of the Englishmen had asked if a viable Jewish state did not preclude a viable Arab state. It was expressed by one or two Englishmen that they could not go back to the Mandate, that new situations had developed which made it difficult to go back to the original intent and purpose of the Mandate. The question of immediate immigration was raised by our people. The answer was given that the Government may consider interim measures.

Dr. Silver expressed the opinion that the British had not yet closed their minds to the subject of partition, but were maneuvering to make the Jews accept a cantonization scheme which would be an improved Grady-Morrison Plan. He reiterated his conviction that in these negotiations it would be the last five minutes that would count, and that we should not be in too great a hurry.

DEBATE ON SENATE FLOOR

Mr. Segal suggested that a full-dress debate on the floor of the Senate would bring the pressure of American public opinion to bear on Great Britain.

Mr. Tulin thought it would be a mistake to have members of the Senate get up at this time and advocate a Jewish state. He felt that it would be better if they spoke about immigration, DPs, and our general rights under the Mandate without specifically coming out for a Jewish state, because a final solution at this time would be to our disadvantage. If we could get immigration on a large scale now, perhaps it would be wiser to wait a year or two from now, when the whole international situation could be expected to be more stabilized, and a more favorable final solution might come into view.

Mrs. Epstein, while expressing doubt as to the wisdom of a debate in the Senate at this time, felt that if such a debate were to take place it must deal with the ultimate solution of Palestine, just as the Conference itself deals with a final solution.

Judge Rothenberg pointed out that the entire mood of the Zionist Congress had been in favor of presenting our maximum demands. Furthermore, he felt that some other step, such as getting Secretary of State Marshall to take action to influence the London Conference, might be more effective than getting Congress to speak up.

Mrs. Halprin also disapproved of Mr. Tulin's suggestion. If the Senators now spoke and completely reversed their prior stand in favor of statehood it would appear that the United States had reversed its position.

Mrs. Greenberg thought that a Senate debate at this time would be a distinct disadvantage for us since Congress is beset with domestic difficulties. Since Congress had already spoken by passing a resolution last year, she felt that we should let well enough alone and concentrate on other matters, particularly the problem of combatting the recent rise of anti-Zionist propaganda.

Mr. Segal stated that it would not be necessary for the debate in the Senate to go into the question of partition vs. a state in all of Palestine. Senators could talk about: 1) the Jewish plight; 2) displaced persons; 3) Jewish homelessness; and 4) Jewish independence, and request our Government to do everything in its power to persuade Great Britain to alleviate the situation. The press and radio would comment on this and Great Britain would get nervous.

Mr. Bublick felt that our friends should not talk about a viable Jewish state, but only about the rights under the Mandate and the illegality of the White Paper. That the Mandate is unworkable should not be the position of our country or of any Senator who speaks on our behalf. A "viable Jewish state" means nothing politically and is not fortified by any documents. England must give us not a "viable Jewish state," but what the Mandate says.

Dr. Akzin stated that, if it should be decided to have a debate in the Senate, the speeches need not be too rigid, and the Senators don't have to be too specific in advocating solutions. Some of them will probably talk about the Congressional Resolution of last year, others about partition on the basis of the President's statement, a Jewish state in all of Palestine, the displaced persons, etc. The central idea that should be common to all of the speeches should be the timing of the debate so as to exercise pressure on the British

prior to a decision of the London Cabinet.

Mr. Sack said that a full dress debate now would be a very dangerous thing for us. A debate cannot take place unless two sides of a question are presented, and though many could make favorable speeches, very few in the Senate can answer questions which will inevitably be raised, such as that of terrorism, Russia, etc. Furthermore, there are many new Senators and Representatives in the present Congress who are not quite as convinced about Palestine as the last Congress was. Washington is of the opinion that England is making an honest effort to solve our problem and there are people who may say we are interfering with these efforts. Therefore, it might be wiser to have two or three people in each house make worthwhile speeches and forego a full dress debate.

Summarizing the discussion, Dr. Silver said a few important Senators and Representatives -- people to whom London listens and watches -- would be asked to speak up on the floor of Congress or on the radio or in the newspapers, within a week or ten days. As for the type of speech that should be delivered, our Congress adopted a resolution a year ago and ought to press for that Resolution. To talk about partition would be out of the question.

Dr. Silver pointed out that we had lost much ground in Washington in the last two or three months because of international events and because we have been less active. The opposition has been taking advantage of this and has been gaining momentum. The tempo of our work must be speeded up all along the line -- in Congress, in our contacts with the Government, with the public press, radio, articles in magazines, meetings, etc. At this time when the fate of our movement is being decided we must work at maximum speed and intensity. American public opinion must be marshalled quickly and dramatically.

DR. SILVER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD LONDON TALKS

Mr. Bublick asked the chairman whether he was satisfied that the talks now going on between the Agency and the British Government are completely in line with the Congress Resolution.

Dr. Silver replied that he thought the London talks a mistake and a back-door method of getting into the Conference. He had sent several cables to London and Jerusalem to that effect. He thought we were too impatient and that we should have permitted the spirit of the Congress Resolution to percolate and to influence the general situation.

DELEGATION TO THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Goldstein was of the opinion that it was time to see the President again and that he should be approached by a different type of delegation than in the past. Instead of the "political" people, we should attempt to get men like Bernard Baruch or David Lilienthal to evoke some action on the part of the President. Dr. Silver agreed and suggested that the delegation be arranged under the auspices of some other organization, possibly the American Jewish Conference, rather than the Zionist movement.

BRITAIN'S REFUGEE PROPOSAL

Judge Rothenberg called attention to a report that the British Government is proposing to bring 500,000 refugees into England, 80,000 of whom would be Jews, and expressed his fear that this was a new trick by the British to counteract our demands for immigration on the basis of the displaced persons' situation.

Dr. Silver also voiced his concern over this report. He stated that this is part of a maneuver which has been gaining momentum over a period of months. Up until a few months ago the British argument was the military one. They have softened that because everyone knows they have 100,000 troops in Palestine. Now they say: "You take some refugees, we will take some and there will be no more problem." Dr. Silver pointed out that that was the very danger he had warned about when everyone was stressing refugees -- that refugeeism would ruin our movement. This line of propaganda would be most difficult to counteract.

OIL CONFERENCE

It had been suggested that a conference should be called on the question of oil, similar to the one held in St. Louis last April. Dr. Silver suggested that Mr. Ben-Horin arrange this immediately.

ANTI-ZIONIST PROPAGANDA

Mrs. Greenberg called attention to the increasing amount of anti-Zionist propaganda that has been appearing in leading magazines throughout the country. In this connection, Mr. Ben-Horin stressed the importance of making contacts which would have the long-range effect of political education rather than merely obtaining signatures of various people for statements or articles. Furthermore, the anti-Zionist forces in the State Department continue to work against us.

It was decided that the Chairman should appoint a committee to study means of counteracting the rise of Arab and other anti-Zionist propaganda in this country.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY CONFERENCE

After a brief discussion it was decided to call another Washington conference of our Emergency Councils for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the London Conference.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWISH AGENCY AND EMERGENCY COUNCIL

It was decided that the chairman should appoint a committee for the purpose of working out the relationship between the Jewish Agency and the Emergency Council.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 P.M.

B.A.