



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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American Zionist Emergency Council, extraordinary conference,  
1949.



TEXT OF DR. SILVER'S ADDRESS AT THE EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE  
CONVENED BY THE AMERICAN ZIONIST EMERGENCY COUNCIL  
IN NEW YORK, JANUARY 18, 1949

The political situation in relation to the State of Israel has been and is very fluid. It changes frequently, unexpectedly, and we naturally must adjust ourselves to these changes and variations. It is good statesmanship to do just that. Thus, for example, today you and I read in the press the announcement which was made in the House of Commons to the effect that the Jewish detainees on Cyprus, of whom there are, I understand, some 11,000, are now free to go to Israel as quickly as the State of Israel can supply transportation. We have, as you know, for many months carried on a most vigorous and determined campaign to attain this very objective. British Foreign Secretary Bevin's announcement is a welcome, albeit very belated, step toward rectification of a wrong which never should have been committed in the first place.

We welcome this announcement for the sake of these thousands of men and women and children who have been languishing under terrible tribulations on Cyprus these many months, and we are happy indeed that they will now find the Menucha and the Nachala in the land of their hopes, of their prayers, and of their devotion. A great deal, however, yet remains to be done by Great Britain, which in the last year or two, through what I regard as a shortsighted and blundering policy on the part of Mr. Bevin, has been perhaps our most determined opponent in the United Nations.

I don't know that it will meet the needs of the situation to review the whole history of the British attitude, although history is very often a guide. It certainly is a lesson that should not be lightly ignored. Under Mr. Bevin the Government of Great Britain has opposed nearly every solution for the settlement of the Palestine dispute other than that which Mr. Bevin was determined upon.

When the President of the United States proposed that the doors of Palestine be opened for 100,000 of our refugees, Great Britain opposed it. Great Britain had its way until the Jewish State itself, by its own action, opened the doors of Palestine and in a very short period of time admitted over 100,000 into the country.

Great Britain opposed the Anglo-American recommendations, although they did not propose the establishment of an independent Jewish State. She opposed it, although Mr. Bevin had promised that if the report were agreed to unanimously, Great Britain would back it.

When, at the request of Great Britain, the United Nations was seized of the problem and appointed a committee to make a new study of the situation and bring in a recommendation for the settlement of the Palestine problem, and the UNSCOP report was submitted to the United Nations, Mr. Bevin's Government again violently resisted the recommendation.



When the United Nations, a year ago last November, adopted the UNSCOP report as it was subsequently revised and amended, Great Britain did everything in her power to sabotage the implementation of that report. And in March of last year she succeeded, with the cooperation of some of our own government officials in the State Department to bring about a reversal of policy and the convocation of another Assembly whose purpose was to nullify the November decision and to put in its place a scheme for a new trusteeship over Palestine.

When on May 14, the Jewish people of Palestine proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, and within a few months after that proclamation, the Government of the United States gave recognition to that State, Bevin's Government determined to undo that historic act, and before long we had the horrible spectacle of a British-trained, British-commanded, British-financed, British-armed Arab Legion fighting in the ancient and sacred City of Jerusalem, destroying Jewish houses of worship, killing, wounding, in an effort to avert the establishment of the State of Israel. In addition, Mr. Bevin's Government directly or indirectly encouraged the neighboring Arab States to invade Palestine and to launch a concerted attack upon the newly established State.

When these Arab armies, some of them financed, all of them encouraged by the British Government, failed to destroy the State of Israel and to drive the Israeli into the Mediterranean, when, in fact, the invading armies were beginning to receive their first crushing blows, which finally completely discomfited and routed them, it was the Bevin Government that sought to restrain the fighting prowess of Israel by all kinds of maneuvers calculated not to establish peace in Palestine but to keep the State of Israel from achieving ultimate victory.

And when finally the magnificent forces of Israel in recent weeks carried out their amazing campaign in the Negev and fairly shattered the Egyptian forces and were about to clear the Negev of all hostile armies, it was then that Mr. Bevin, realizing that he was unable to achieve his objectives by using Arab armies to fight for him, determined to maneuver for direct military intervention on the part of the British Empire. British troops were despatched to Transjordan. A defunct treaty with Egypt which the Egyptian Government had denounced and declared null and void, and the unfortunate incident of the shooting down of four or five British-piloted planes over the battlefields of the southern Negev, were seized upon as excuses to announce that Great Britain is prepared to arm the Arab States so as to encourage them to carry on their war against Israel. This, on the eve of the promising armistice negotiations between the State of Israel and several of the Arab States.

Mr. Bevin also sought to have our own Government underwrite this new policy of unilateral British intervention in the Near East. Fortunately, the President of the United States in unmistakable terms said no. Fortunately, our Government decided no longer to be involved in these desperate adventures of Mr. Bevin which are motivated by no concern for the welfare of the Arabs, and certainly by no concern for the welfare of the Israeli, but purely and simply by what he regards as the imperial interests of Great Britain. And the refusal of our Government to go along must have been couched in such clear and unmistakable terms as to have brought about



intimations of a substantial shift in the whole British attitude towards the Government of Israel.

The latest reports which have been on the air this afternoon are that the Government of Great Britain is prepared to adopt a new line, that it is prepared soon and rather quickly to give de facto recognition to Israel, and that, generally speaking, Great Britain is prepared to inaugurate a new policy, and that it has notified its dominions and the Arab States of this intention. If that is so, then we will hail it with the greatest of satisfaction. Our quarrel has never been with Great Britain or with the British people. I recall the very first time that I had occasion to speak before the United Nations. I took occasion to point out that our controversy is not with the people of Great Britain, for whom the Jewish people has always had the highest regard, a people which in the past evidenced time and again an understanding for the just claims of the Jewish people, a people that was in the past responsible for the issuing of the Balfour Declaration. Our quarrel has been and is with a wrong-minded government, with a false, ruthless, almost unpardonable policy. It is the government and its policies which we fought. When the government changes its policies and adopts an attitude of justice to Israel and cooperation with Israel in its tasks of establishing itself formally as a free and sovereign people in its ancestral home, our quarrels with Great Britain will come to an end.

However, and I again repeat this word of caution, nothing concrete has as yet been done, except for the promise of the release of the detainees on Cyprus, who never should have been detained in the first place, to demonstrate a real change of attitude on the part of the British Government. And until that change takes place, and we hope that it will take place soon, it is the part of wisdom to remain mobilized, to remain alerted, to remain critical and analytical, not only to await the development of events but to keep the pressure on until the events do take place that we wish to take place.

May I remind you that everything we have achieved in the last fifteen months was achieved by Jewish labor and Jewish effort and Jewish sacrifices. The United Nations did not establish the Jewish State. The Jewish armies established the Jewish State. The United Nations did not open the gates of Palestine for the vast stream of immigration which is now pouring into the country. The State of Israel, backed by the armies of Israel, opened the doors of Palestine. Everything that has been achieved over there and here and which is now being achieved in London is being achieved as the result of the tremendous pressure, work, determination of the Jewish people here and all over the world.

The road is still very long. The State of Israel is not yet a member of the United Nations. The State of Israel has not yet received complete recognition by our own Government. The State of Israel has not yet received that loan which has been promised and for which the State has been so prayerfully waiting these weeks and months. There is no armistice as yet in Palestine. Enemies are still on the borders of Israel. The frontiers of Israel have not yet been defined and established. The future of the City of Jerusalem has not yet been determined. Most of the grave problems, political as well as economic, remain to be solved, and nothing could be so



fatal, so lethal, to the future of the State of Israel and to the future of the Jews throughout the world, than an attitude of relaxation upon which our enemies fondly count.

And so, while the situation tonight is considerably improved over the situation five days ago when I sent that urgent call to you to come -- and I hope that the improvement will continue to be as rapid from here on -- I am happy that you are here so that you can receive from me this word of caution which I hope you will transmit to the members of your great organizations, that the great work of defending the State of Israel politically, the great work of achieving ultimate peace for Israel, remains to be done. Therefore, all our friends must be marshalled and kept informed, our friends in government, our friends in Congress, our Christian friends, the press, all the molders of public opinion, the Christian clergy of the United States, all of the forces which have so magnificently stood by us throughout our struggles in recent years. To this day Mr. Bevin has found very little comfort in the American press for his actions of the last two weeks. Not only did he find no comfort, but he found the most thorough-going denunciation. The Government of Great Britain must give a very attentive ear to American public opinion, which is reflected in the American Government, which in turn is reflected in that American aid upon which Great Britain depends today for its very survival.

