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The Wise - Silver Controversy: An Analysis of Zionist Policy Aims
in the United States, 1939-1945, by Philip Ernest Schoenberg,
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The Wise-Silver Controversy: An Analysis of
Zionist Policy Aims in the United States,
1939-1945

By Philip Ernest Schoenberg

WRHS



History 1760, Section:
History of the Jews in
the Medieval and Modern
World

May 17, 1971

revised June 7, 1972

A Note of Appreciation

I wish to thank Mrs. Landers and the staff of the Theodor Herzl Library of the Jewish Agency whose help and co-operation made this seminar paper possible.



Prologue

On September 4, 1944, the Independent Jewish Press Service in a news release reviewed the accomplishments of Dr. Abba Hillel Silver and Dr. Stephen S. Wise as co-chairmen of the American Zionist Emergency Council (henceforth referred to as AZEC). Since Dr. Silver had joined as a leader the year before, the Zionists had successfully reversed the anti-Zionist climate of 1942 and the first half of 1943 in Washington.¹ Three months later in December, 1944, both Dr. Silver and Dr. Wise resigned in angry disagreement and mutual recrimination over the tactics to implement their ardent policy of having the American Government help establish a Jewish State in Palestine. Each accused the other of following a course that endangered not only the welfare of the Jewish people but that of the Zionist movement through sabotaging each other's efforts.²

Aim of the Paper

The aim of this essay is to examine as closely as possible what brought about the split between Wise and Silver. Both were Reform rabbis of long devotion and distinguished service to the causes of the Jewish people, Zionism, and to the American people. They were both men of impeccable integrity who had great oratorical ability. They felt America was different and only needed the spiritual Zionism of Ahad Ha'Am. Nevertheless, they saw political Zionism as the solution for Jews who were not as fortunate to live in the United States where religious freedom was a reality.

¹Bernard Lerner, "Washington Sector in Zionism's Battle," American Section, Independent Jewish Press Service (hereafter referred to as JPS), 4 September 1944, p. 1c.

²"Drs. Wise and Silver resign in Zionist Emergency Council split," JPS, 22 December 1944, p. 1c.

The Establishment of AZEC

The organization over which these two men and their partisans battled over was the offspring of the Twenty-First World Zionist Congress which met in Geneva in late August, 1939. Anticipating the outbreak of World War II, it established the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, just in case the central leadership of the Zionist movement should collapse under the impact of a war's dislocating effects. In January 1942, it was renamed the American Zionist Emergency Committee to emphasize that it was American in character and that it was directed toward publicizing the Zionist cause in the United States. In addition, it carried out political action on behalf of Hadassah (women Zionists), Mizrahi Organization of America (Religious Zionists), Poale Zion-Zeire Zion (Labor Zionists), and the Zionist Organization of America (the organization of General Zionists which henceforth shall be referred to as ZOA).

An Executive Committee met at frequent intervals to carry on the business of the committee. Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Dr. Solomon Goldman, and Louis Lipsky constituted the governing triumvirate in the early months. Dr. Emanuel Neumann was for a time the Executive Officer in Charge of Action from January 1941 to December 1942. It was not until late in 1940 that AZEC had a full-time secretary and an office of its own.³

Upon invitation of the Zionist Executive (of the World Zionist Organization) and the leaders of American Zionism, Dr. Wise became Chairman of the Executive Committee which carried out the policy of the American Zionist Emergency Committee. Dr. Wise was indispensable at the beginning because his authoritative status among Jews and Gentiles alike opened the doors for the Zionist movement in Washington and elsewhere. A political office the Jewish Agency was established in Washington under the

direction of Dr. Nahum Goldman with the co-operation of Louis Lipsky and Stephen S. Wise. Dr. Nahum Goldmann, who considered himself a disciple of Dr. Wise, felt that he was far too impulsive to be a successful statesman. He despised political consideration and lacked the politician's indispensable ability to get the long view and to reconcile radically different positions....Ruthless in battle and polemics...but his remarkable humanity and generosity always put the thing right again.

Other Jewish leaders may have been revered or feared but he was loved.⁴

Unfortunately, the work of the Emergency Committee was not as effective as was anticipated by either Wise, Lipsky, or Weizmann.⁵ Negotiations were started in 1942 between Silver and other Zionists to increase the effectiveness of AZEC. Weizmann brought pressure upon the Emergency Committee to re-organize in order to become more effective and recommended that Dr. Silver take over the leadership.⁶ Wise was willing to give up the authority in AZEC but not all the responsibility. He felt that Silver was the only capable alternative to his own leadership. Silver as a younger and more vigorous man, would go far in carrying out the plans of the Emergency Committee.⁷ Silver wanted not only authority in carrying out decisions but most of the responsibility in formulating them.⁸ There were other

³American Zionist Emergency Council, The American Zionist Emergency Council: A Report of Activities, 1940-1946 (New York: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946), pp. 3-4 (henceforth referred to as AZEC); The New York Times, 28 August 1944, p. 21 (henceforth referred to as NYT).

⁴Nahum Goldmann, The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann: Sixty Years of Jewish Life, trans. by Helen Sebra (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1969, pp. 201, 204-205.

⁵"Dr. Abba Hillel Silver replies to Dr. Stephen S. Wise," JPS, 12 January 1945, p. 2.

⁶Chaim Weizmann to Stephen S. Wise, 20 June 1942 in Doreen Bierbrier, "The American Zionist Emergency Council:

Zionist leaders, notably the ZOA faction led by Judge Louis N. Levinthal, the president of ZOA. He did not want Silver, his own vice-president, to be on the committee because he wanted Dr. Israel Goldstein, a rabbi who was the president of the National Land Fund, to become president of ZOA.

The First Re-organization of AZEC

Finally, on August 9, 1944, Dr. Wise as chairman of the Emergency Committee, Dr. Israel Goldstein, and Dr. Silver signed an agreement. Dr. Silver would become chairman of the Executive Committee, the body responsible for the centralized direction of Zionist political efforts, and co-chairman of the Emergency Committee. Silver agreed to step down from his campaign to become president of ZOA in exchange for a free hand in the implementation of the Committee's policies. Wise, Goldstein, and others on the Executive Committee, which was increased from twelve to twenty-six members, would share in the creation and responsibility of the policies.⁹ Wise would be free to turn his efforts to other areas of Jewish life such as the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, both of which he was president of. Wise declared that no organization should depend upon an indispensable individual. It was also clear that Wise had spread his leadership thin by being involved in so many different organizations.

An Analysis of a Pressure Group," American Jewish Historical Quarterly, LX (September, 1970), pp. 84-85.

⁷Stephen S. Wise to Chaim Weizmann, 10 February 1943, in Servant of the People: Stephen S. Wise, ed. by Carl Herman Voss (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), pp. 78-79.

⁸"Dr. Abba Hillel Silver replies to Dr. Stephen S. Wise," JPS, 12 January 1945, p. 2.

⁹"Dr. Abba Hillel Silver replies to Dr. Stephen S. Wise," JPS, 12 January 1945, pp. 1-2; Harold P. Manson, notes on "Toward American Jewish Unity," in Vision and Victory: A Collection of Addresses by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver: 1942-

Following this, on August 27, 1944, Dr. Silver was elevated to the the two posts that he was promised on the newly re-organized and renamed American Zionist Emergency Council. He succeeded Judge Louis E. Levinthal as chairman of the Executive and Political Committee and shared the co-chairmanship with Dr. Wise. Silver was at the moment national chairman of the United Palestine Appeal and national co-chariman of the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees, Overseas Needs, and Palestine as well as vice-president of ZOA.¹⁰

In the opinion of Dr. Emanuel Neumann, Silver could not have been called at a better time because

the [Zionist] Movement was passing through its darkest moments....The Government at Washington had evolved a peculiar but successful technique: the State Department stood squarely behind the British Colonial Office while the White House issued soothing messages, dropping with good-will but signifying nothing.¹¹

The Administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt did not do what was right but what was expedient. The State Department had attempted to protect itself against liberal opinion by erecting "a wall of silence" on the false plea of military expediency and strategic necessity.¹²

The First American Jewish Conference

Shortly after this, the First American Jewish Conference was held from August 29 to September 2, 1943. Harry Monsky, president of the officially non-Zionist B'nai B'rith, had

1948, ed. Harold P. Manson and Sulamith Shapiro (New York: Zionist Organization of America, 1949), pp. 13-14 (hereafter referred to as Vision and Victory).

¹⁰NYT, 27, August 1943, p. 21.

¹¹Emanuel Neumann, "Forward" to Vision and Victory, [no page numbers].

¹²Emanuel Neumann, "America's Palestine Policy in Transition," The Palestine, October, 1944, p. 10.

¹³NYT, 30 August 1943, p. 6.

managed to bring together sixty-five Jewish organizations, Zionist and non-Zionist, to act upon common Jewish problems and to present a united front. One quarter of the 502 represented the national organizations and the other three quarters had been elected in some sort of communal elections. In other words, almost one half of 5,000,000 American Jews were represented at the conference.¹³ The Zionist leaders, in a moment of strategy, had agreed that they would not discuss the establishment of a Jewish State. Six weeks before the conference met, the American Jewish Committee, the leading non-Zionist organization, thought that it had achieved this concession as the price of holding the meeting.¹⁴

From the first day of the conference, which opened in New York, there was a strong Zionist current. One of the two major issues on the agenda was to consider the relation of the Jewish people to Palestine. The theme of the speeches was either to help the Jewish refugees or re-establish the Jewish State in Palestine. Gedalia H. Bublick, the honorary president of the Mizrahi Zionist Organization of America, was the first speaker on the agenda to urge the re-establishment of the Jewish state. Dr. Israel Goldstein and Dr. Wise presented comprehensive programs to bring pressure on the Allies to help the Jewish refugees. Goldstein urged the ending of the 1939 McDonald White Paper that limited Jewish immigration to Palestine. Henry A. Monsky exhorted the Jews to fight whatever their rights were instead of being quiet about what was happening in Europe. Mrs. David de Sola Poole, the president of Hadassah, presented a report on the rescue work of Youth Aliyah. Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, president of the American Jewish Committee, recommended unity and indirectly hinted that the Zionists should give up the idea of a Jewish State if they wanted the participation of the American Jewish Committee. The Sunday

¹⁴ Bierbrier, p. 87.

session was ended by a memorial service held for the Jewish victims of Hitler in Europe.¹⁵

The next day, August 31, Chaim Weizman's greetings to the conference were read in which he advocated that the Allies should not only help the Jews in Europe but help re-establish the Jewish State. Rabbi Meyer Berlin,¹⁶ the president of the Mizrachi Zionist Organization, Gedalia Bublick, and Dr. Nahum Goldmann spoke in a similar vein. Baruch Zimmerman, the president of Poale Zion, declared that the allied governments were trying to minimize the Jewish tragedy in Europe. Israel H. Goldberg was the only speaker of the day who did not take a Zionist stance. He explained that this was because his own organization, the Jewish Labor Committee, had not reached a decision on the issue.¹⁷

The last speaker was Abba Hillel Silver whose speech received the largest ovation accorded any orator. He demanded an unequivocal declaration in favor of a Jewish Commonwealth. This was the only solution for the Jewish refugees who no longer had a home. He condemned those, meaning the American Jewish Committee, who would have the conference remain silent on the issue in order to maximize unity. He had received permission to speak on behalf of American Jewish Congress, whose president was Stephen S. Wise, an organization of which he had never been a member.¹⁸ Thus Silver was not a solitary voice in the wilderness who had prevented a sell-out as Howard P. Manson depicts and a scholar, Miss Doreen Bierbrier, accepts but only the grand climax to other speakers who had prepared the way for him.¹⁹ If Silver was a militant, so so were the other speakers. Miss Doreen Bierbrier also places the re-organization of AZEC after, instead of, before the conference.²⁰

¹⁵NYT, 30 August 1943, p. 6.

¹⁶Berlin Hebraized his last name to Bar-Ilan, and Bar-Ilan University in Israel is named after him.

On the third day of the conference, August 31, time was spent on denouncing the American Council for Judaism. The recently established organization was declared to speak for less than 100 Jews who were afraid of being too Jewish. The New York Times was denounced for giving more space to the American Council for Judaism and its anti-Zionist program of no Jewish State and the repatriation of the Jews to their original homes which no longer wanted them than to the views of the American Jewish Conference.²¹

On September 1, the last of the American Jewish Conference, under the chairmanship of Stephen S. Wise, a resolution was passed by a vote of 498 to 4 which stated:

We call for the fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration and of the mandate for Palestine whose intent and underlying purpose based on the "historical connection" of the Jewish people was to reconstitute Palestine as the Jewish Commonwealth.

The victory of the Zionists was supported by every Jewish organization except the American Jewish Committee which had cast three of the four negative votes. Proskauer led the withdrawal of the American Jewish Committee from the conference when he refused to accept the American Jewish community's overwhelming decision through the conference to ratify the Zionist program for the establishment of a Jewish state.²²

¹⁷NYT, 31 August 1943, pp. 1, 5.

¹⁸NYT, 31 August 1943, p. 5; Abba Hillel Silver, "Toward American Jewish Unity," in Vision and Victory, pp. 14-20.

¹⁹Manson, notes on "Toward American Jewish Unity," pp. 13-14.

²⁰Bierbrier, pp. 86-87.

²¹NYT, 1 September 1943, p. 12.

²²NYT, 2 September 1943, pp. 1, 10.

The Forty-Seventh Annual ZOA Convention

More than a year later, October 15, 1944, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver could report to the Forty-Seventh Annual Convention of ZOA in Atlantic City that the American Zionist Emergency Council had made tremendous strides forward. The team effort of Hadassah, Mizrachi, Poale Zion, and ZOA had been magnificent. He thanked Dr. James G. Heller, Louis Lipsky, Herman Shulman, Emanuel Neumann, Dr. Wise, and Dr. Goldstein of ZOA for their fine co-operation with the other three parties of the Emergency Council in testifying for the passage of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution in the last days of the winter months of 1943.

Unfortunately, the War Department had objected to the passage of the Resolution on the spurious grounds of military necessity--the Arabs might revolt and sabotage the United Nations war effort. In contrast, more than three-quarters of the members of the U. S. Congress had expressed their support for the Resolution.²³ As a result, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had felt public pressure to authorize Dr. Silver and Dr. Wise to say on his behalf on March 9, 1944 that the

United States Government had never given its approval to the White Paper of 1939. The President is happy that the doors of Palestine are today open to Jewish refugees and that when future decisions are reached, full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home, for which our government and the American people have always had the deepest sympathy and today more than ever, in view, of the tragic plight of hundreds of thousands of homeless Jewish refugees.²⁴

This represented a tremendous breakthrough for now the American Government was at odds with British policy in Palestine despite Arab protests, Silver analyzed. On October 12, 1944, the State Department finally relented because of aroused

²³Abba Hillel Silver, "A Year's Advance," in Vision and Victory, pp. 54-57.

²⁴Silver, "A Year's Advance," p. 57; AZEC, p. 13.

public opinion and withdrew its objection to the Resolution. Both parties in their presidential platforms had endorsed the establishment of a Jewish of a Jewish State, and on this very day October 15, 1944 the President had endorsed his own party's platform. What had been regarded as extremeist at the American Jewish Conference in 1943 and the Biltmore Conference in 1942 had now been accomplished to a large degree. The basic lesson to be learned, Silver expounded, was not to compromise basic Jewish rights for the sake of expediently seeking unity but to "Demand what our people is historically entitled to demand, all of it."²⁵

The financial support of ZOA had been instrumental in advancing the Emergency Council, Silver continued. A monthly bulletin, The Palestine, had been initiated under the editorial leadership of Louis Lipsky in which 16,000 copies a month were being given to leaders in American political life to influence them in favor of Zionism. Wide publicity was also being given to Dr. Loudermilk's book, Palestine: Land of Promise, to contradict propaganda emanating from "Washington's highest circles" that Palestine could not support any large Jewish settlement.²⁶

Nevertheless, there was still an unfortunate discrepancy between official announcements on one hand and official actions that would put them into effect. There must be no relaxation of political efforts to secure a "Jewish Homeland" nor any acceptance of partition. What was needed was discipline, co-ordination, and trust to the collective judgment of the American Zionist Emergency Council, Silver concluded. On October 16, 1944 the Forty-

²⁵Silver, "A Year's Advance," p. 60.

²⁶Ibid., p. 54.

²⁷Manson, "Abba Hillel Silver--An "ppreciation," pp. 13-14.

Seventh Annual ZOA Convention at Atlantic City unanimously endorsed Silver's policy in a resolution. (Dr. Israel Goldstein was elected as ZOA's president the same day.)²⁷

Following Silver, Emanuel Neumann analyzed that the President's statement had broken the State Department's "wall of silence." The platforms of the Democratic and Republican political parties had moved ahead. Instead of the "full justice" asked by the President, the political parties demanded a Jewish Commonwealth and unrestricted immigration to Palestine. American public opinion was increasingly becoming sympathetic to the Zionist position. Instead of vague generalities, there were now specific promises and commitments from leading politicians.²⁸

Commitments by the Presidential Candidates

On October 12, Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican candidate for President, had been approached by Abba Hillel Silver, nominally a Republican, and he announced:

I heartily endorse the Palestine plank in the Republican Party platform. Again I repeat what I previously stated to the great leader of the American Zionist movement and distinguished American, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, that I am for the reconstitution of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth ... I favor the opening of Palestine to their unlimited immigration and ownership.

The American people have time and time again declared themselves in favor of these principles.²⁹

Meanwhile, Dr. Wise, a nominal Democrat, had not been inactive. He had seen President Roosevelt the day before, October 11, to urge him to endorse the Palestine plank of the Democratic party platform.³⁰ On October 12, the War

²⁸ Neumann, "America's Palestine Policy in Transition," p. 10; Israel Goldstein, "From the President: How do we stand?", in The New Palestine (the official magazine of ZOA), June 9, 1944, p. 421; "Statement by Dr. Israel Goldstein," JPS, 5 January 1945, p. 2c.

²⁹ NYT, 13 October 1944, p. 15; U. S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States--Diplomatic

Department withdrew its objections, as had been previously stated by Silver.³¹ On October 15, 1944, Roosevelt wrote to Senator Robert Wagner of New York, who had planned to attend the Forty-Seventh Annual Convention of ZOA, that he approved the Democratic Party's platform, which read as follows

We favor the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization and such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and Democratic Jewish commonwealth....I am convinced that the American people give their support to this aim and if re-elected I shall bring about its realization. ³²

Wise had been responsible for getting the Democrats to adopt a Palestine plank while Silver was responsible for getting a similar plank adopted by the Republican party.³³ Wise's task had been the more difficult one since the Democrats had a better chance of being elected since they were the incumbents and thus would be more obliged to implement their promises. Wise, after reading Roosevelt's endorsement of the Democratic platform at the ZOA convention, thanked both Thomas E. Dewey and the incumbent President for being "clear, forthright, and unambiguous" in supporting the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth.³⁴ The Arab states and various nationalistic Arab organizations vociferously protested to the State Department that the "Zionists were endeavoring irrevocably to commit the future American Administration to the carrying out of the Zionist program."³⁵

An Analysis of the Differences Between Wise and Silver

It was part of Silver's plan to bring pressure upon the President in order to influence the State Department into a more favorable attitude in which it would then seek

Papers: 1944, vol. 5, The Near East, Africa, and the Far East (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 617. (Hereafter referred to as U. S. State.)

³⁰ NYT, 12 October 1944, p. 21.

³¹ Silver, "A Year's Advance," p. 57; U. S. State, p. 637.

to change the policy of Great Britain on Palestine in favor of creating a Jewish State as had been promised. According to Harold P. Manson, Silver wanted to mobilize public opinion to influence American politics. Jewish support must not be taken for granted but given on a quid pro quo basis. Wise, on the contrary, thought support could only be obtained by making government officials sympathetic to the Zionist cause and thus was afraid of antagonizing them.³⁶ Wise regarded politics as a modus vivendi to achieve justice and virtue in an imperfect world.³⁷

Although both Silver and Wise were political independents, the former favored the Republicans and the latter the Democrats. In addition, Wise had developed a personal relationship with Roosevelt through the years over Zionism and Nazism as well as non-Jewish matters. Consequently, Wise found it more difficult than Silver to criticize the National Administration.³⁸ Nonetheless, Wise, like Silver, indirectly criticized the National Administration in public. In private, Wise was more apt to blame the bureaucracy that surrounded the President for either shirking or prejudicing or advising him badly.³⁹ Silver, contrariwise, increasingly had the suspicion that the right hand (the personal promises of the President) knew what the left hand (the actions

³²NYT, 16 October 1944, p. 19; U. S. State, pp. 615-616.

³³Lerner, p. 3.

³⁴NYT, 16 October 1945, p. 19.

³⁵U. S. State, p. 617.

³⁶Bierbrier, p. 88; Manson, "Abba Hillel Silver--An Appreciation," pp. 14 & 16.

³⁷Stephen S. Wise, Challenging Years: the Autobiography of Stephen S. Wise, ed. by Justine Wise Polier and James Waterman Wise (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1956), p. 190.

³⁸Wise, pp. 8 & 222-226; Bierbrier, p. 88.

of the State and War Departments) was doing.⁴⁰ Both Silver and Wise regarded themselves as militant fighters for the Jewish people.⁴¹

Silver and Wise Call for Action

Silver and Wise were not content to sit back but sought immediate action to carry out the political program of AZEC. On November 13, Silver spoke before the National Convention of Hadassah in Cleveland where he charged that the British Colonial Office had sacrificed the rights of the Jews in Palestine in a vain effort to appease the Arabs. Palestine was not a British colony but a mandate which should be promptly proclaimed "a Jewish Commonwealth." Something must be done to help the surviving Jews in Hitler's Europe. Hadassah passed a resolution asking for the immediate opening of Palestine to unlimited Jewish immigration and the setting up of a Jewish Commonwealth.⁴²

In addition, on November 26, 1944 Stephen S. Wise sounded a similar note of militancy. He spoke before the international convention of the World Jewish Congress, which he had founded to organize the Jewish communities of the world to form a united voice. He advocated that the allied countries should help the Jewish refugees through the United States War Refugee Board. Sadly, it was announced at the conference that five and a half million Jews had

³⁹Wise, p. 232.

⁴⁰Manson, "Abba Hillel Silver--An Appreciation," p. 15.

⁴¹Israel Goldstein, "From the President: Stephen S. Wise at Seventy," The New Palestine, March 17, 1944, p. 301; Louis Lipsky, "Faithful to an Ideal," The New Palestine, p. 301.

⁴²NYT, 14 November 1944, p. 23.

⁴³NYT, 27 November 1944, p. 14.

⁴⁴NYT, 1 December 1944, p. 16.

already been killed by Hitler and his cohorts.⁴³ Wise was elected president of the World Jewish Congress and a resolution was appsed authorizing co-operation with the Jewish Agency.⁴⁴

The Introduction of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution

In early 1944, a resolution was introduced into both houses of Congress on behalf of AZEC. The Zionist Council wanted to prevent the British White Paper of 1939, bad as it was from becoming worse. According to the provisions of the British White Paper, Jewish immigration to Palestine, heretofore restricted, would cease by March 31, 1944. The British, desring to show their great "generosity," announced that Jewish immigration would be allowed to continue until the quota of Jewish immigration they had set up in 1939, 75,000, would be fulfilled. AZEC wanted to have the White Paper abolished because it meant no Jewish immigration at all in the end, and the giving of the conception of a Jewish State. AZEC refused to be taken in by this generosity which the United States State Department felt was reasonable.⁴⁵

The Jewish Commonwealth Resolution, known as the Compton-Wright Resolution in the House of Representatives and the Wagner-Taft Resolution in the Senate, was a bi-partisan sponsored measure which read:

The United States shall use its good offices and take appropriate measures to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be opened for free entry to the Jews into the country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth. 46

⁴⁵Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1948), II, p. 1535.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 1535.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 1511-1514 & 1535.

⁴⁸U. S. State, pp. 639-641.

The Views of the National Administration: The President and the State Department

In early November, 1944, Cordell Hull resigned as the Secretary of State. He was replaced by Edward R. Stettinius, the Assistant Secretary of State. Despite the change of the man on the top, there was no change in views held by the State Department. Both men desired to please the Arabs in order to accomplish what they regarded as the interests of the United States. Cordell Hull wanted to get oil from Saudia Arabia after the war and to get the support of the Arabs in the Middle East in order to secure military lines and insure political stability. The State Department conveniently forgot that the Arabs had been very un-cooperative throughout World War II.⁴⁷ Egypt had been officially neutral when Rommel was defeated in the Battle of Alemain and the British had to crush the pro-Nazi governments in Arab Iraq and non-Arab Persia. Vichy-held Syria and Lebanon were by the British with Jewish co-operation from Palestine. (This is where Moshe Dayan, Israel's Minister of Defense during the Six-Day War, lost one of his eyes when he was acting as a scout.)

Nevertheless, as the head of the Near East and African Affairs division of the State Department expressed it to Stettinius, there were 70,000,000 Arabs and 300,000,000 Moslems whose support should be sought. After all, what were 600,000 Jews in Palestine who could not help but be in ardent support of the Allies?⁴⁸ Stettinius feared that the Russians and the British by following an anti-Zionist, pro-Arab policy would gain the support of the Arabs at the expense of the United States which would lose not only a source of oil but a potential commercial market in the post-World War II world.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 649.

As a result, Hull⁵⁰ favored the status quo in Palestine in the vain hope that the Jews and the Arabs would reach some sort of agreement. It was the opinion of the Zionists that it meant the Arabs had won since the status quo--restrictions on immigration to Palestine--favored the Arabs. President Roosevelt⁵¹ acted sympathetically towards the Jews as a humanitarian, not as a Zionist. Assistant Secretaries of State Sumner Wells⁵² and Edward R. Stettinius⁵³ also acted in a humanitarian vein. They hoped the Jews and the Arabs would reach some sort of agreement, and thus leave the State Department alone. President Roosevelt seemed to have favored either an extra-territorial solution or the conception of an Arab State with autonomy for the Jews in Palestine.⁵⁴ In view of the Kurdish uprising in Iraq and the Balack revolt in Sudan against forceable Arabization, the latter solution might not have exactly worked too well in the long-run. Hitler's "Final Solution" only seemed to confirm in the mind of the Zionists Herzl's solution to the Jewish problem: only when the Jews were a majority in a land of their own and had sovereignty could the Jews protect themselves and determine their own way of life.⁵⁵

The First Deferment of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution

Cordell Hull felt that the Arabs might revolt if the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution was passed. In early February, 1944, Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, appeared at the hearings in Congress to voice the same objections held by Hull that military necessity demanded the Resolution's postponement. Hull wanted to avoid making the Jewish Common-

⁵⁰Hull, II, p. 1539; Cordell Hull, "To Free Mankind," in Never Again! Ten Years of Hitler, ed. Stephen S. Wise (New York: Jewish Opinion Publishing Corp., 1943), p. 11.

⁵¹Hull, II, p. 1532; Goldmann, pp. 204-205; "Editorial Views: Flaws in the Pattern," Palestine, January, 1945, p. 2.

⁵²"Editorial Views: Sumner Wells on Foreign Policy,"

wealth Resolution an issue in the national elections. Although Wise and Silver felt that the President had made pledges to them (from his statements of March 9 to October 15, 1944), the State Department, on the whole, advised the Arabs that it had made no pledges and there was no change in United States policy in regard to Palestine. When Cordell Hull left the State Department, he felt satisfied that he had managed to put off the Zionists, kept the Arabs quiet, and made the British happy by post-doning talk on the ideas of unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State.⁵⁶ His successor Stettinius endeavored to continue the same policy.

On November 9, 1944, Wise and Silver met with Stettinius and asked if the State Department would object to the re-introduction of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution into Congress. Stettinius replied that he wished to discuss this with the President. On November 15, 1944, Congressman Solomon Bloom, chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, made the same inquiry with the State Department, since Secretary of War Stimson had withdrawn his department's objections on October 12, 1944.⁵⁷

On November 15, Stettinius informed Bloom and Wise that "The President feels it would be a mistake to have the Palestine Resolution re-introduced at this time." On November 23, 1944, acting again on behalf of the President, he also ad-

Palestine, Septebmer, 1944, pp. 1-2.

⁵³U. S. State, pp. 655-657.

⁵⁴Milton Plesur, review of If I Foreget Thee, O Jerusalem: American Jews and the State of Israel, by Robert Silverberg, in American Jewish Historical Quarterly, XL (December, 1970), p. 220.

⁵⁶Hull, II, p. 1537.

⁵⁵Theodor Herzl, "The Jewish State," in The Zionist Idea, ed. by Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 204-226.

vised Senator Wagner to do the same thing. The President felt that the Middle East situation was too delicate to be upset at the moment by the passage of the Resolution. The assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo by the Stern gang did not add to the equilibrium of the situation. The President wished to discuss the Middle Eastern situation with the representatives of other governments. Roosevelt also wished not be quoted on the matter. Senator Wagner indicated that he would defer to the President's wishes.⁵⁸

The Second American Jewish Conference

On December 3, 4, and 5, 1944, the Second American Jewish Conference was held in Philadelphia. Silver, on the first day of the conference, spoke on the rapid advance that had been made in getting political recognition of the Jewish Commonwealth. Ludwig Lewisohn, the noted author who was the political and literary editor of The New Palestine, the organ of ZOA, wrote that Silver's power "lies in his uncompromisingness and his ability to communicate his own passion and his own grief." Nahum Goldmann, on the second day of the conference, gave a political and diplomatic analysis of events. The third day of the conference was closed by Stephen S. Wise "with all the accustomed grace and pliancy, with all that vibrancy of his and oneness with his people which does not tarnish nor make stale,"⁵⁹ Lewisohn noted. Other closing remarks were made by Louis Lipsky who demanded that something must be done to arouse the world from its apathy on the destruction of European Jewry and justice for the victims. Rabbi Israel Goldstein, on behalf ZOA, declared that although the United States War Refugee Board had done some good, unrestricted immigration into

⁵⁷U. S. State, p. 637.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 640.

⁵⁹Ludwig Lewisohn, "Impressions of the Conference," The New Palestine, December 15, 1944, p. 56.

Palestine would be the only solution to the survivors. Silver in his closing remarks, declared that a two-front war must be waged--against the bareness of nature in Palestine and the indifference of the world--"to our national dispersion and our national degradation." The Jews must fight those Jews who opposed Palestine on religious grounds and the community at large which opposed the establishment of a Jewish State. Although the Jews had won some political rounds, they had not scored a knockout victory.⁶⁰

The Second Deferment of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution

On December 5, 1944, Silver and Wagner called upon Stettinius in the morning. Senator Wagner now felt that no damage would be done by the passage of the Resolution and he quoted the President's endorsement of his own party's platform. In the afternoon, Stettinius saw Senator Connally whom he now informed that it was ^{still} the President's official policy to defer action on the Resolution. Stettinius felt that Wagner would urge action while Connally would be able to persuade the Senate Foreign Relations Committee not to take action on the Resolution.

Despite Silver's activities, Weizmann did not think AZEC was doing enough. Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization, wrote a letter to Rabbi Silver in Washington in which he advised AZEC to take two steps. First, AZEC should get the non-Zionist Jews in Roosevelt's Administration, such as Felix Frankfurter and Henry J. Morgenthau, to endorse the that Palestine should be opened to receive Jewish refugees as a humanitarian gesture. Second, AZEC should get the President of the United States to endorse the various developmental projects of the Zionists in Palestine. Then Prime Minister Churchill would be able to overcome anti-Zionist opposition in the British cabinet since he

⁶⁰"Conference Voices," The New Palestine, December 15, 1944, pp. 65-67.

would have the American Government backing a Zionist policy.

On December 6, 1944, Stettinius was obliged to appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In a secret session, he explained the "delicate situation in the Arab World" and the President's desire to have a free hand in the Middle East. If the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution was passed, then the President's hand at the diplomatic card table would be known to all. The Senate Committee, in turn, insisted upon a public statement by either the President or the Secretary of State, if the Resolution was not to be reported out. In other words, the committee did not desire to be blamed for an unpopular action.⁶¹

On the previous day, December 5, Goldstein on behalf of ZOA sent a telegram to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He feared that the Resolution had already been lacerated in the House and the Senate version would be similarly scarred. The telegram read:

We earnestly urge you to report out favorably on the Palestine resolution for adoption by the present Congress. Important remove the word 'ultimately' which has already led to misunderstanding, likewise important retain word 'Jewish' before word 'Commonwealth.'

Your Committee's favorable action would be deeply appreciated as fulfillment of President Roosevelt's magnificent message to the last Zionist Organization of America Convention, and of overwhelming American opinion as expressed recently in both party platforms.

Similar telegrams were sent to the Senate by Mizrahi Women's Organization, Poale Zion, and other organizations.⁶²

Then, on December 8, Senator Connally read confidentially the State Department's message that it was sympathetic to the persecuted Jews of Europe and was helping them through the War Refugee Board but

⁶¹U. S. State, pp. 642-644.

⁶²U. S. State, pp. 645-646; "Palestine Resolution reported to have new snag," JPS, 11 December 1944, p. 2.

the Department considers, however, that the passage of the resolution at the present time would be unwise from the standpoint of the general international situation, and has so informed the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs. ⁶³

The President was pleased at the State Department's actions. Roosevelt, on December 9, 1944, cabled from Warm Springs, Georgia to Stettinius that, "I think your course in regard to the Zion Resolution is just right." The Zionists still hoped that the State Department announcement would not be issued. On December 11, 1944, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate voted 10 to 8 to take no action but asked the State Department to make public the memorandum that had been read earlier to the Committee. The State Department promptly obliged. ⁶⁴ The action of the Senate Committee and the subsequent announcement naturally killed the Resolution in the House.

After issuing the State Department's memorandum on the deferment, the anonymous public relations man, "off the record," declared that he had some additional advice to give newsmen. He declared that it would be useful to the understanding of the situation, if wide circulation

was given to the actions of the Stern gang. Various Zionist organizations had already denounced the actions of the Stern gang. The British, naturally, attempted to blame the actions of a few extremists on the entire Zionist movement in a futile attempt to discredit it and thus delay any discussion on the Palestine issue. ⁶⁵

⁶³U. S. State, p. 644; "Palestine Resolution reported to have new snag," p. 2.

⁶⁴U. S. State, pp. 644-645.

⁶⁵"Palestine Resolution reported to have new snag," pp. 2-3.

⁶⁷Stephen S. Wise to Julius Livingston, 18 December 1944, in Voss, p. 267.

The Emergence of the Silver-Wise Controversy

After this stunning defeat, when they had been so close to victory, a Monday morning quarter-back debate developed among the Zionists. The first skirmish that became public was initiated by the Wise faction. The Zionist movement was now split into Wise and Silver factions on the proper course of getting American political support for the establishment of a Jewish State. Dr. Goldstein, president of ZOA, in the December 15, 1944 issue of ZOA's The New Palestine, criticized Silver but not by name. He declared that the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Zionist Council had violated the Council's decisions of November 21, 1944. At this meeting, it was agreed by both co-chairmen, Silver and Wise, and the representatives of the four Zionist organizations that it was "absolutely necessary" to secure the assurance of the State Department that it would not object to the passage of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. It was the unanimous consensus of opinion of everyone present, including Silver, that it would be unwise to go ahead without knowing what the State Department would do. They did not want to sustain another defeat. It was agreed to give into governmental pressure for the time

being. They would let the state department win the battle while they would win the war, the recognition of the Jewish Commonwealth.

According to Goldstein's version of events, the chairman of the Executive Committee, Silver, had gone ahead. Silver wrote "an official communication" in which he had counseled Sol Bloom, the chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, to promptly have his committee report out favorably the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. As a result of being reported out early before the Zionists could muster sufficient support on the committee, a weakened Resolution was reported out in which the word "Jewish" before "commonwealth" was deleted while the word "ultimately" was retained. This was the reason for the telegrams that Goldstein, on behalf of ZOA, and the leaders of other Zionist organizations sent to have the wording of the Resolution changed during the week of December 5, 1944. Goldstein declared that he had no regret that the deformed resolution was aborted in the Senate.⁶⁶ The future of Zionist policy was now in question because of this Waterloo.

Concomitantly, on December 18, 1944, Stephen S. Wise wrote to a friend:

...I am miserably unhappy over the development of things. It would take me ten or twenty pages to write the whole story. It must suffice for the present if I tell you that Dr. Abba Hillel Silver has acted in the grossest violation of decisions of the American Zionist Emergency Council. He was with Dr. Nahum Goldmann and myself when he said to Secretary of State Edward Stettinius "W" will not proceed with the resolution unless we get a green light from the President." The answer of the President through Secretary Stettinius --uttered, I have every reason to believe, in good faith and with the best of goodwill--was: "Say to Stephen that the thing is to be left in my hands a little longer. I shall soon see certain people." Meaning, of course, Churchill and Stalin. In defiance of that, Dr. Silver did go ahead, overrode the objections both of Congressman Sol Bloom and Senator Robert F. Wagner and invited defeat in the Senate Committee which is nothing less, in any event, a temporary disaster.

I have nothing more to say about it excepting that I will not remain one of the heads of the Emergency Council by having Z. O. A. [Zionist Organization of America] do its own political work in conjunction with the Jewish Agency than expose ourselves further to the danger which inheres in the present situation of Dr. Silver's continued defiance of and attacks upon the President. 67

The Resignations of Silver and Wise

As a result, on December 15, 1944, Dr. Wise resigned from his co-chairmanship of the Emergency Council to force a re-organization of it in his image. In his letter of resignation, Wise declared that he "could no longer remain co-chairman of a body one of whose officials in a matter of supreme importance had deliberately and persistently contravened decisions of the council with harm to the cause we serve." Wise presented his formal resignation to the Council on December 20, 1944. However, this was not accepted. Silver, also, resigned dramatically in an "irrevocable" fashion because he also wanted to force a re-organization of the Council in his favor.

The friends of Wise at the December 20 meeting declared that he preferred to follow the State Department's point of view that the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution should not be pressed until a more auspicious moment appeared. Therefore, the presentation of the Resolution had been untimely and inadequately prepared. Silver asserted that public pressure must be maintained to insure passage of the Resolution which his opponents feared would engender the antagonism of the Federal Government. Silver refuted charges of "independent action" and counter-charged "pussyfooting." Both sides in the dispute ascribed its origin over the culmination of differences of many months between Silver and Wise over the policy of AZEC.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "Statement by Dr. Israel Goldstein," JPS, 29 December 1944, pp. 3-4.

A resolution censoring Silver for "independent action" was proposed by Dr. James G. Heller of ZOA. The resolution was defeated: with all members of ZOA except Louis Lipsky supporting it; Hadassah was split; Mizrachi and Poale Zion voted against it. The Council, unable to come to any other decision with the quandry of deciding between Silver and Wise or trying to retain both, agreed to meet on December 28, 1944 to reach a final decision.⁶⁹

Commenting on the situation, the Yiddish press urged a status quo in the Zionist Council. These men were both too essential for either one to be lost. Der Tog ("The Day"), a pro-Zionist Yiddish daily, declared not only must the services of both be kept, but "Only an aggressive, dynamic policy can lead to success; and Rabbi Silver is clearly the man to be entrusted with such a policy."⁷⁰

In a further development, on December 27, Silver announced from the Hotel Commodore of New York, just before departing to Cleveland, that he had resigned because "my policies do not appear to have the support of a sufficient majority of the membership of the council as now constituted to warrant my continuation in office." The opposition of ZOA members in the Council had made it impossible to carry out his policies, which had been approved by a unanimous vote at the Forty-Seventh Annual ZOA Convention on October 16, 1944. He was grateful for the support that he had received from Poale Zion, Mizrachi, the Jewish press, the rank and file of American Zionism, and local Zionist Emergency Councils everywhere. He was pleased with his administration of the past sixteen months in which the Zionist cause had made great progress. Silver ended with the declaration that:

⁶⁸NYT, 26 December 1944, p. 19; "DRs. Wise and Silver resign in Zionist Emergency Council split," JPS, 22 December 1944, p. 1; "Statement by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver," JPS, 5 January 1945, p. 7c.

⁶⁹"DRs. Wise and Silver resign in Zionist Emergency split,"

As a private in the ranks, I shall continue to advocate the classic Zionist program, which aims at the re-establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth, and a policy in which timidity, appeasement and backstairs "diplomacy" will have no place. ⁷¹

The Second Re-Organization of AZEC

Finally, Wise was elected the sole head of AZEC on December 28, 1944. He was now chairman along with Mrs. Rose Halprinof Hadassah replacing Robert SZold, a ZOA member, as treasurer of the Council. Mizrachi and Poale Zion vigorously opposed accepting the resignation of Silver while ZOA and Hadassah voted for its acceptance. Mizrachi declared that the withdrawal of Dr. Silver was "A serious blow to a vigorous policy" and placed the blame for it on the unyielding majority on the council. The Wise forces may have won over the split Hadassah group by giving it a position held by the firmly committed pro-Wise ZOA group in AZEC.

Concluding the meeting, the Council announced its deep appreciation for Dr. Silver's services and trusted that he would be at the call of the Zionist cause. An administration Committee would be created to represent the four Zionist organizations for the implementation of a common policy to avoid future disagreements. Thus policy and procedure would be one. AZEC declared in a statement that it would go forward with continued determination and vigor for the realization of its objectives--unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine and its reconstitution as a Jewish Commonwealth. For this, it would seek the support of the legislative and executive branches of the American government and the good will of the American people.⁷²

p. 1.

⁷⁰"Yiddish press urges status quo in Zionist Council," JPS, 26 December 1944, p. 1.

⁷¹NYT, 28 December 1944, p. 15; "Dr. Silver's Statement," JPS, 29 December 1944, p. 2.

Then, in another meeting, on January 2, 1945, Hayim Greenberg, editor of the monthly Jewish Frontier and president of Poale Zion, was elected chairman of the Executive Committee to succeed the post vacated by Silver's resignation. Herman Shulman, a representative of ZOA, was elected chairman of the Administration Committee charged with the implementation of the policies of the Council in politics and public relations. The Administrative Committee would now consist of the heads of Hadassah, Poale Zion, Mizrachi, and the Zionist Organization of America, as well as Greenberg, Shulman, and representatives of the Jewish Agency.

Goldstein succeeded in consolidating the victory of the Wise forces, although he had only managed to get 12 out of 26 votes on the Council while Silver's supporters carried 8 votes. Although this was not an absolute majority, Goldstein had won the day for Wise anyway. Apparently using the stick and carrot approach, Goldstein had maneuvered Wise to victory. He got the support of Hadassah and damped the opposition of Poale Zion by giving their leaders positions previously held by ZOA members. In addition, he promised money from ZOA for AZEC's re-organization. The stick was that ZOA supplied the money, the membership, and the leadership for the local Emergency Councils. Mizrachi could threaten vainly to leave the Council as a measure of protest, but it was only ZOA that had the means of carrying out its objectives. Without ZOA, there could be no AZEC. Silver's proponents lacked the money, the prestige, and the patronage to defeat Goldstein.⁷⁴

⁷²"Zionist Emergency Council elects Wise sole head, accepts Silver's resignation," JFS, 29 December 1944, p.1.

⁷³"Hayim Greenberg, Herman Shulman hold key posts in Zionist Council," JFS, 5 January 1945, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴Israel Goldstein, "From the President: How do we Stand?", The New Palestine, June 9, 1944, p. 421; "Statement

The AZEC Dispute Becomes an Internal ZOA Battle

As a result, ZOA emerged as the key organization where Silver would either have to win recall or be ultimately defeated. Both sides in the dispute began taking their cases to the "grass-roots" of ZOA. Silver began a campaign to capture control of ZOA. Emanuel Neumann, on behalf of Silver, and James G. Heller on behalf of the pro-Wise Administration (i. e., present Israel Goldstein) of ZOA debated the issues before the local sections of ZOA. The Silverite forces scored some successes, especially getting a pro-Silver resolution passed by the Brooklyn Zionist region, the largest regional branch of ZOA. The resolution declared that the ZOA Administration's action in getting AZEC to dispose of Silver had been "ill-considered" in a vote of 48 to 1. In another vote, it declared that the confidence placed in Silver's leadership by a unanimous vote, embodied in a resolution, at the Forty-Seventh Annual ZOA Convention had not been misplaced. Harry L. Shapiro, the former director of the Council, and Harold P. Manson, its former Director of Information, issued a statement charging that reports of Silver's contravention of authority was one-sided, inadequate, and distorted.

In contrast, David Werthem, secretary of Poale Zion following the election of Hayim Greenberg, said: "We have consistently supported Dr. Silver, despite his errors." Now Poale Zion considered unity to be of paramount importance. It considered the dispute between Silver and Wise in ZOA to be an internal matter. It was of little consequence who was right as long as unity came before everything else. It denounced the efforts of Mizrachi to set up an independent political action group to act conjointly with the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. This was the wrong approach because AZEC should not be split. Poale Zion desired harmony even though it continued to support Silver.

Following this, Leon Gellman, president of Mizrachi, denied that Mizrachi had sought to leave the Council but

that it would remain to give the new AZEC Administration an opportunity to show what achievements it would accomplish. However, it deplored the action of Poale Zion for not continuing to support Silver for whom it would accept no substitute. Poale Zion's refusal to hold the Council apparently gave Mizrahi second thoughts.⁷⁵

The Silver-Goldstein Debate

Believing the best defense is an offense, Goldstein and Silver simultaneously, on January 5, 1945, issued press releases giving their version of events which led to the defeat of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. Goldstein denounced Silver's statement of December 27, 1944, and amplified his criticism of Silver that he had published in The New Palestine of December 15, 1944. The president of ZOA declared that not only had AZEC met on November 21, to discuss the pressing forward of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution but also on October 30 of the year 1944. The representatives of the four Zionist parties and both co-chairmen were present in the decision making process. All agreed that they should get assurances from the State Department that it would not interpose any objections to the passage of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. Goldstein heatedly denied that there had been any "timidity," "appeasement," "backstairs diplomacy," or a division over "militancy" versus "non-militancy." Everyone agreed that it was a matter of common sense not to risk another defeat.

The State Department recommended that AZEC postpone pressing for the Resolution, despite repeated efforts by AZEC to change the State Department's mind. Nevertheless, Silver went against the decision of the Council which he had approved, according to Goldstein. Instead, Silver took it upon himself to write an official communication to

by Dr. Israel Goldstein," JPS, 5 January 1945, p. 2c.

to Representative Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in which he demanded:

As Chairman of the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Emergency Council I urge prompt action on the Resolution.

Upon receiving the communication, a watered-down Resolution was reported out of the committee on November 30, 1944 to go before the House. With the elimination of the word "Jewish" from the Resolution even the Arabs could agree with it. Dr. Goldstein ironically commented that the Resolution was anything but "militant." Seeing that the Resolution was coming before the Senate, Goldstein decided to retrieve Silver's chestnuts from the fire. Desiring that the Senate Resolution should be at least "a proper Zionist Resolution," Goldstein sent his telegram, on behalf of ZOA, to urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to change the wording. Secretary of State Stettinius showed up to deliver the coup de grace which sent the Resolution into oblivion.

Now Silver had the ill-considered chutzpah to raise the issue of "bold political action" versus "timidity," scoffed Goldstein. "This issue is a patent attempt to cover up the question of why an official of the Emergency Council has acted contrary to its decision in which he himself shared." Silver had not been intrepid enough to raise the issue of going ahead in defiance of the State Department at the Council meetings.

There was still one redeeming factor, avowed Goldstein. Wise had remained in friendly contact with the State Department and President Roosevelt. The good will of the President was essential, and he would probably consult with the heads of other governments to fulfill the Zionist program. The Jewish Commonwealth Resolution would hopefully be introduced into the next session of Congress with the approval of the State Department.⁷⁶

⁷⁵"Hayim Greenberg, Herman Shulman hold key posts in

With great vehemence, Abba Millel Silver rebutted Goldstein's statements. He related that no decision had been made at the October 30 meeting of the Emergency Council to stop pressing forward for the passage of the Resolution. The consensus of opinion had been that if the State Department said no, AZEC would not attempt to get approval of the Resolution. Since the State Department had given neither a yes or no but a vague answer, he had felt free to go ahead.

Then, at the November 21 meeting, according to Silver, Dr. Wise reported that Stettinius had telephoned him. The Secretary of State, on behalf of the President, informed him that Roosevelt urged that nothing be done about the Resolution at the moment, but that it should be left in his hands a little longer. It was decided at this meeting, that a committee consisting of Silver, Wise, and Shulman should approach the President through Senator Wagner to get him to change his mind. Silver contended that the Council was not content to be the passive, but on second thought to be active. Dr. Wise objected because he did not want the President to be "annoyed" by AZEC's insistence and persuasion. The day after the meeting, November 22, Silver sent a telegram to Wise. It requested Wise to contact Congressman Bloom on the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. However, Wise did not deign to answer the telegram. Thus, Wise did not carry out his responsibilities.

Nevertheless, the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution continued to make progress under its own power, although AZEC was pulling its punches. Both the Senate and the House Foreign Relations Committee of Congress had convened on November 29, to consider the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. Congressman Bloom was eager to move ahead to fulfill his pledge. He had announced publicly right after the President's

Zionist Council," pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶"Statement by Dr. Israel Goldstein," 5 January 1945, JPS, pp. 1c-3c.

statement of October 15, that his committee would discuss the issue after the election in November. The Congressman saw no need for the State Department to be consulted on what he considered to be the Congress' own business. However, he wanted AZEC to share the responsibility for moving ahead. Silver emphasized, "I reassured him on that score, and at his request, I wrote him a letter following our interview in which I backed him up." Thus Silver contended he was merely an innocent by-stander who had rushed to give aid to pass the Resolution.

Concomitantly, on December 4, 1944, Senator Robert A. Taft, on his own initiative, had requested a re-consideration of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. Senator Wagner and Dr. Silver met with Secretary of State Stettinius who showed them a

fatal telegram of Dr. Wise which was dispatched without the knowledge of either Senator Wagner or myself and without any authorization from the Council on the very eve of our interview...which in so many words told the Secretary of State and though /sic/ him the President, that Dr. Wise and many of his associate /sic/ would really and without protest accept their decision with reference to the resolution. 77

Silver claimed that Dr. Goldstein performed an amazing series of flip-flops in regard to his alleged opposition against going ahead with the Resolution. Although opposed, Goldstein on December 5, sent a telegram of support to the Senate Committee. This violated what Goldstein himself alleged to be the unanimous decision by AZEC not to go ahead with the Resolution. Then, on December 7, he reversed himself by appearing in Washington to oppose the passage of the Resolution. On the morning of December 11, the Emergency Council's Executive Committee met in Washington. It had decided that there should be no interference with the passage of the Resolution which the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee

77 "Statement by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver," JPS, 5 January 1945, p. 6c.

was to act upon in the afternoon. However, an appeal should be made to Secretary Stettinius to issue a statement that his personal appearance before the committee did not indicate a change of attitude on the part of the President.

If Dr. Goldstein declared that many Zionists regarded the Resolution as water-downed with the removal of the word "Jewish" and the retention of the word "ultimately," how then, asked Dr. Silver ironically could one account for the fact that the Presidents of Hadassah, Mizrachi, and Poale Zion as well as Louis Lipsky of the Jewish Agency Executive upheld the Resolution in public statements. Dr. Wise had told Congressman Bloom and Silver, on the very day that it was voted on, that it was a "very good resolution."⁷⁸

The Debate within ZOA

There was a meeting of the ZOA Administrative Council, on January 7, 1945, at the Hotel Commodore in New York. Louis Lipsky, the chairman of the meeting, arranged for an equal division of time among the several points of view. Dr. Goldstein and other speakers spoke on behalf of Wise and their decision to support him on AZEC while Neumann and others spoke on behalf of Silver.

Neumann declared that the "Breach of Discipline" ^[sic] issue was a straw horse which attempted to make Silver the scapegoat of other people's errors. Dr. Heller had raised the issue on the December 20 meeting of AZEC and had dropped his resolution to reprimand Silver for alleged contravention of its decisions. Neumann counter-charged that it was not Silver's ill-discipline that had caused disaster but that of others which had "torpedoed" the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. He emphasized that, "Dr. Silver was convinced it was possible both to secure the green light and passage of the resolution while others worked at cross purposes with him with tragic results."

Neumann agreed with Silver's charges that Wise's telegram to Secretary Stettinius on the eve of his meeting

with Senator Wagner and Wise "agreeing to a deferment had helped to sabotage" Silver's efforts. A double standard of justice was being created in which Silver was being condemned for ill-discipline while Goldstein and Wise were not. Neumann denounced the "manufactured hysteria and the anti-Silver campaign carried on through the country through all available channels." The deferment of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution was only a set-back but not a mortal wound. Neumann appealed for unity and contended that Silver had made no mistakes.

Jacob Fishman, a member of the ZOA Executive, also defended Silver. He declared that the "Breach of Discipline" issue had been raised as a myth to hide the deep-seated prejudices against Silver's taking over active political control of AZEC. Dr. Silver had earned an enviable record for mobilizing American public opinion on behalf of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. "I believe Dr. Wise has been ill-advised to pose the question of 'Wise or Silver.' We need both of them."

On the other hand, the three former presidents of ZOA (not counting Wise who was not present since he was a prime member of the controversy): R. Robert Szold, Judge Morris Rothenberg, and Judge Louis E. Levinthal along with ZOA's incumbent president, Dr. Israel Goldstein, took the opposite point of view. Judge Rothenberg charged that Silver had brought about the present situation despite his brilliant gifts and abilities. "The difficulty is that if one differed with Dr. Silver, or failed to do exactly as he wanted, one became a personal enemy in his eyes." Silver did not have the unilateral "right to gamble with the last hope of the Jewish people." President Roosevelt who was going abroad (which turned out to be the Yalta Conference of February, 1945) to deal with world affairs most probably

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 6c.

would discuss the issue of a Jewish State. Although no resolution or censure had been passed against Silver by AZEC, it was, nevertheless, he who had resigned instead of fighting for his position. The Council under the circumstances had no choice but to accept his resignation.

In addition, Dr. James G. Heller, chairman of the United Palestine appeal, maintained that Silver had violated the harmonious discipline that he had always preached--the minority bowing to the will of the majority--the essence of the democratic process. The moment Silver could not get his way, he had tried to misrepresent the issues and to calumniate the other Zionist leaders. Dr. Silver's "use of the bulldozer," Heller contended, had created an atmosphere where the deliberations of the Council had been made impossible. Thus a situation had been manufactured where either Silver or the Council had to go.

Finally, Dr. Israel Goldstein, the current president of ZOA, deplored the press campaign seeking to undermine the ZOA leadership. This discouraged potential members from joining ZOA. He denounced Silver's unwillingness to bow to the decision of the majority by setting up rival offices with large sums of money "to darken counsel [sic] and agitate the public." He stated that Silver had questioned the veracity and integrity of other Zionists, thus damaging the Zionist movement. It was extremely fortunate that Wise had maintained friendly contact with the National Administration for the Zionists. The good will of the President of the United States was essential. He could do things immediately if properly sensitized which could only be done by having friendly access to him. Senator Wagner shared the same attitude. Sol Bloom believed that the re-organization of AZEC would be useful in accomplishing this purpose.⁷⁹

⁷⁹"The Administrative Council," The New Palestine, January 19, 1945, pp. 82-83.

There were other speakers who took the middle road who wished to retain both Silver and Wise by AZEC. Supporters of Silver tried to show that he had a tremendous base of support within ZOA but other spokesmen disputed with contrary figures. Silver's supporters within ZOA did not mobilize enough votes to reverse ZOA's position as had been strongly anticipated by his proponents.

As a result, the support of the ZOA Executive for reorganization of the American Zionist Emergency Council was reaffirmed by a vote of 75 to 23 by the ZOA Administration Council. A substitute resolution offered by Neumann to recall Silver to AZEC's leadership was defeated by a vote of 66 to 30.⁸⁰ Goldstein was relieved that Silver had been defeated and hoped that Silver would accept this additional rebuff and cease his agitation in the rank and file of ZOA.⁸¹ However, this was a still-born expectation.

The Wise-Silver Feud

In a Sunday Sermon, January 8, 1945, Rabbi Wise, founder of the Free Synagogue of New York, claimed that he spoke not in anger to answer pro-Silver, anti-Wise propaganda, since he claimed that it was his practice to keep differences above the personal level. "All my days I have fought for causes, for movements, for ideals, never against persons." Silver, he recognized, was one of the most gifted and brilliant men in American Jewish life. Wise had remained friends in personal life with people whom he differed politically. He had not hesitated to put principle before friendship. In 1931, Wise had helped humble Chaim Weizmann by being one of the persons that prevented his election to the presidency of the World Zionist Congress

⁸⁰"The Administrative Council, p. 82; "Seek ZOA Emergency Convention to deal with issue," JPS, 29 December 1944, p. 4; "Long Island Zionist Region backs Silver," JPS, 8 January 1945, p. 2; Israel Goldstein, "From the President: Controversies--Democracy--Zionism," The New Palestine, Janu-

for not being militant enough.

Then, Wise asked: Should Silver be above criticism? Should Silver have been allowed to flout the will of the majority and carry out his own "improvised" policy? Wise felt differently about it, and this was why Silver had lost and Wise had been the winner. Wise, not Silver, represented the will of the majority in ZOA and AZEC.

Going on further, Wise angrily rebuked four charges that he alleged had been "improvised" against him in a desperate effort to gain support for Silver which he did not merit. First, he was just as militant as anyone. The question of "minimal" versus "maximal" Zionism as an issue was a spurious one since he too opposed partition and desired the establishment of a Jewish State. Second, his opponents charged him with treating the Zionist movement as "a piece of personal property," which was indeed the indictment that he had against Silver. The third charge, the one he felt most bitterly about and had the most contempt for was that he was a "shtadlanut," court Jew, who was a beggar on the doorsteps of political power who pursued a policy of "timidity, appeasement, and backstair [sic] diplomacy." Wise said that if this charge was true and valid, he was not fit to serve as chairman of AZEC to which he had just been elected. The fourth charge was plain arrogance on the part of Silver's supporters. Silver, not Wise, was responsible for the failure of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee to adopt the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution. It was Silver who had gone ahead without the approval of the Emergency Council and against the advice of the State Department into almost certain defeat. Silver had brought about the reorganization of AZEC by making his own policy instead of

ary 19, 1945, p. 81; "ZOA Administrative Council upholds Executive," JPS, 8 January 1945, p. 2.

⁸¹Israel Goldstein, "From the President: Controversies--

carrying out the Council's policy. Thus, in Self-defense the Council decided that Silver had to go.⁸²

Dissenting sharply, Silver sharply defended himself, on January 12. Wise and other members of ZOA had tried to usurp the authority which they had agreed to give him in AZEC when he joined in 1943. He claimed that Wise had assented to play a titular role, but as soon as he, Silver, had improved AZEC's position, co-ordination, discipline, and authority Wise had reasserted himself. Silver thought he had an agreement that had eliminated any conflict of authority. Otherwise, he would never have agreed to become co-chairman and would have let Wise mismanage the show. He was now determined to oust the "small cabal of ZOA office-holders who resented my coming to the leadership sixteen months ago and who have continuously since then endeavored to discredit my work and to bring about my resignation."⁸³

Public Opinion

After the ZOA Administrative Council's decision, Mizrachi announced that it no longer had any intention of leaving the Emergency Council to protest the decision, thought it continued to support Silver.⁸⁴ Poale Zion stated that it could not interfere in the internal affairs of another organization, ZOA. Nevertheless, it would seek reconciliation between Silver and Wise, and opposed Silver's continuing opposition as a diversive tactic which threatened the survival of AZEC.⁸⁵ The Yiddish press: the pro-Zionist

Democracy--Zionism," p. 81.

⁸²"Statement by Dr. Stephen S. Wise," JPS, 8 January 1945, pp. 1c-3c.

⁸³"D". Abba Hillel Silver replies to Dr. Stephen S. Wise," JPS, 12 January 1945, p. 2c.

⁸⁴"Mizrachi requests Weizmann come here to conciliate

Morning Journal and the non-Zionist, Socialist Forverts ("Jewish Daily Forward") continued to support Silver and strongly advocated his recall to AZEC while the Communist Morning Freiheit supported Wise.⁸⁶

AZEC'S Increasing Militancy

On January 19, the American Zionist Emergency Council, the American Palestine Committee (headed by Senator F. Wagner of New York), and the Christian Council on Palestine announced a co-operative drive to get a petition signed by American Jews and Christians⁸⁵ throughout the nation to have the United States rescue the surviving Jews in Europe, open the doors of Palestine to Jewish refugees, and reconstitute Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth. The petition was to be to the President before his meeting with Stalin and Churchill at Yalta in February, 1945.⁸⁷ On January 15, Representative Emanuel Celler of Brooklyn announced the re-introduction into Congress of the Compton-Wright Resolution that had been deferred in March and December 1945.⁸⁸ On March 16, 1945, President Roosevelt fresh from Yalta in an interview with Wise re-iterated his position of October 15, 1944. On the other hand, AZEC was deeply disappointed that Churchill desired to postpone discussion on the problem of Palestine until the war was over.⁸⁹ AZEC tried without success to get official Jewish representation at the San Francisco Conference and other sessions of the United Nations.⁹⁰ AZEC which

Zionist differences," JPS, 12 January 1945, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁵"Poale Zion Statement," JPS, 12 January 1945, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶"Yiddish Press Comment," JPS, 12 January 1945, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁷"Zionist Emergency Council launches campaign for petitions to F. D. R.," JPS, 19 January 1945, p. 1.

⁸⁸"Cellar introduces Jewish Commonwealth Resolution," JPS, 15 January 1945, p. 1a.

had opposed Silver's program was increasingly forced to become more aggressive as the situation demanded it and in self-defense against being accused of being less aggressive than the Silverite forces.

The Zionist Policy Committee

Concurrently, on February 13, 1945, the American Zionist Policy Committee was launched by the followers of Silver to agitate for Silver's return to AZEC by campaigning within ZOA. Emanuel Neumann became the head of the Committee. Harry L. Shapiro, Harold P. Manson, Abe Tuvim, and Harry Steinberg resigned from AZEC to establish the organization. They were the professional, full-time officials that Silver had introduced into AZEC.⁹¹

Silver's "J'accuse" Speech

On March 21, 1945, Silver enunciated his policies before his supporters at the Hotel Commodore in New York. He professed that the time element was the most precious commodity which the Jews had in short supply. The Jews had been the sacrificial victims of the Munich appeasement. Jewish immigration to Palestine had been cut off by the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 while Hitler had proceeded to slaughter the Jews without too much being done by the democracies. The Arabs had received their promised states but had favored Hitler and had belatedly declared war against him in order to be eligible to join the United Nations.

Political pressure, Silver avowed, was the key to opening the doors of Palestine to Jewish immigration. As Chaim Weizmann had affirmed, the Zionist movement was not built over the bodies of Jewish refugees but because their cause was inherently just and right. The world had ignored the suffering of suffering of Jewish refugees. Prime Minister

⁸⁹"Zionist Emergency Council Demands Palestine Decision Now," JPS, 23 March 1945, p. 1.

Churchill, who had in 1921 professed the establishment of a Jewish State, was responsible for the White Paper of 1922 (the establishment of the future Kingdom of Jordan as no longer part of the Palestine Mandate), which was the first to chip away at this concept. Churchill had denounced the MacDonald White Paper of 1939, but upon becoming Prime Minister, he had permitted it to stand. Silver noted that President Roosevelt had similarly hemmed and hawed over the issue of a Jewish State. As late as March 16, five days before Silver's speech of March 21, the President had reiterated his pledge of October 15, but it had been his Administration which had deferred the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution twice in March and December, 1944.

However, one should not conclude that Roosevelt and Churchill were insincere. They were good and great men who were well-intentioned toward the Zionist movement. It would, however, be a mistake by the Jews to leave the fate of the Zionist movement entirely in their hands. Both statesmen were working under great pressure. From many sides, political pressure groups converged on them with their own solution which was anti-pathetic to the Zionist movement. (Emanuel Neuman wrote that these were the oil interests, missionary interests, "misguided" liberals, the State Department, and even the White House and some Jewish leaders.)⁹² As political leaders, both Roosevelt and Churchill, engrossed in many issues, would seek apparently easy solutions for what they regarded as minor issues through formulas which would be expedient and compromises which would only aggravate the situation without solving it.

⁹⁰"Demand seat for Jewish Palestine at San Francisco Conference," JPS, 9 March 1945, pp. 1-2.

⁹¹Harold P. Manson, notes to "Nothing to lose but illusions," in Vision and Victory, p. 73; Harold P. Manson,

Thus, Churchill and Roosevelt were big men who could accept honest differences of opinion that cried out for action without interpreting these efforts as indications of political hostility."⁹³ Political exigencies could deflect the clear purpose of even the most friendly statesman. The political strategies they pursued could be mistaken, such as trying to conciliate King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia at the expense of Jewish rights in Palestine. The Zionist movement must do its best to reinforce their good will and intentions so that they would not yield to pressure at the expense of the Zionist movement. Silver emphasized:

It is important to continue to make the most friendly and effective representation to the great leaders of the democracies, but the most effective representation is thorough [sic] organized public opinion. ⁹⁴
[Italicized in the original.]

As a result, only the quid pro quo or the good, old-fashioned, American, political "deal" would work. The Zionists must scratch the back of politicians to promise them political support, if they would in turn support the establishment of a Jewish State. The Zionist cause was right and just. The American people only needed to be rallied to its support. The day of the court Jew was over, Silver concluded.

Reconciliation

A peace committee, April 1, 1945 under the chairmanship of Judge Louis E. Levinthal was created by ZOA to seek conciliation between Silver and Wise.⁹⁵ The death of Roosevelt in April, 1945, revealed some correspondence which showed that he had been more conciliatory than had

"Abba Hillel Silver--an appreciation," pp. 17-18; Charles J. Rosenbloom, "American Zionist Policy Committee launched by Silverites," JPS, 13 February 1945, p. 1.

⁹²Enanuel Neumann, "Forward," in Vision and Victory,
[pages are unnumbered.]

been suspected by the Wise faction.⁹⁶ On May 18, 1945, the Peter Bergson group (a front for Irgun), the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, managed to have its own resolution calling for a "Hebrew State" introduced into both houses of Congress under bi-partisan leadership which further weakened AZEC's prestige and fragmented its support.⁹⁷

On June 10, 1945, Israel Goldstein spoke before the Manhattan region of AZEC at the Park Central Hotel, in which he urged greater, militant action in the next six months. First, the sincerity and honor of Great Britain must be challenged. "Second, the State Department will have to be challenged to adopt a policy consistent with the will of the American people." Third and last, President Harry Truman must pressure Great Britain to resolve the Palestine issue in favor of a Jewish Commonwealth.⁹⁸

Then, on June 18, Hayim Greenberg resigned from his post as the chairman of the Executive Committee of AZEC. On June 7, Mizrachi set a two week ultimatum for AZEC to be re-organized. The Jewish Agency, in addition, started putting pressure behind the scenes for an amicable settlement between the Silver and the Wise factions.⁹⁹

Finally, on June 25, the National Executive Committee of ZOA met in special session which adopted a peace formula that would not displace the present members of AZEC. Dr. Silver and Dr. Wise would act as co-chairmen. The Executive Committee of the Council would be headed by Silver

⁹³Abba Hillel Silver, "Nothing to lose but illusions," in Vision and Victory, p. 83.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 83.

⁹⁵NYT, 8 April, 1945, p. 29; "ZOA Peace Committee to report in two weeks," JPS, 15 June 1945, p. 2.

⁹⁶Manson, "Abba Hillel Silver--An Appreciation," pp. 17-18.

as chairman. This also included the proposal for the establishment of a small consultive or steering committee as a sub-committee of the Executive Committee. It would meet between meetings of the Executive Committee to co-ordinate policy. A peace committee would negotiate with the other three Zionist groups and the two proposed co-chairmen. Goldstein stressed the "urgent need of restoring unity in the Zionist ranks in the present critical juncture."¹⁰⁰ Goldstein resigned as President while Judge Louis E. Levinthal replaced him as acting president. Thus ZOA and AZEC finally made peace with Silver.

The Third Re-Organization of AZEC

Finally, in the early morning hours of July 13, 1945, an agreement between the Wise and Silver factions was hammered out for the re-organization of AZEC with immediate elections to implement the concord. The provisions were: 1) Abba Hillel Silver and Stephen S. Wise would become chairmen. In this capacity they would head AZEC and preside alternately at the meetings of the Council. 2) Silver would become chairman of the Executive Committee which would have all executive and administrative responsibilities of the Council. Hayim Greenberg of Poale Zion, Leon Gellman of Mizrachi, and Herman Shulman of ZOA would become vice-chairmen. Mrs. Rose Halprin of Hadassah would continue as treasurer of AZEC. However, Hadassah could retain the option of giving up the post of treasurer for a vice-chair-

⁹⁷"Zionist Emergency Council hits resolution on Palestine sponsored by Bergson Group," Jewish Telegraph Agency, 18 May 1945, p. 3.

⁹⁸NYT, 11 June 1945, p. 21.

⁹⁹"Hayim Greenberg resigns from Zionist Emergency Council Post," JPS, 18 June 1945, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰"ZOA Executive Committee Approves Peace Plan," JPS, 26 June 1945, p. 1.

ship. 3) The Executive Committee would be enlarged with the addition of Louis Lipsky and Emanuel Neumann as members at large. 4) ZOA would be obliged to have two of its members on the Council approved by Silver. 5) The chairman of the Executive Committee, Silver, would have the right to appoint key members of the professional staff subject to approval by the Executive Committee. 6) The members of the Jewish Agency Executive in the United States (Goldmann and Lipsky were the only members usually in the United States) could participate in the meeting of the Council without a vote while the co-chairmen of AZEC would enjoy similar privileges in the Jewish Agency Executive in the United States. 7) A Board of Officers would be created to include the six officers of the Council--the two co-chairmen, the three vice-chairmen, and the treasurer (unless Hadassah opted for a vice-chairmanship). The co-chairman who was the chairman of the Executive Committee (Silver) would preside unless he was absent, and then the other co-chairman (Wise) would preside.

As a result, Dr. Silver got the centralized control he wanted as Chairman of the Executive Committee and the Board of Officers plus a working majority to support him in AZEC (with two ZOA delegates requiring his approval) while Dr. Wise had finally gotten a Board of Delegates to watch over the actions of Silver.

Immediately following the meeting of the Council, Silver called a meeting of the Executive Committee in which Silver re-appointed four key members of the Executive Council's staff. They had all been members of the Zionist Policy Committee which had supported Silver's campaign to be recalled as the leader of AZEC. The re-appointed Executives were: Harry L. Shapiro, Executive Director; Harold P. Manson, Director of Press and Information; Abe Tuvim, Director of Activities with Co-operating Organizations; and Harry A. Steinberg, Assistant in Charge of Special Events.¹⁰¹

In a gesture of peace and solidarity, Silver and Wise issued a joint statement expressing their satisfaction that their bitter quarrel which had wracked and almost wrecked the American Zionist Emergency Council for the last six months had been resolved. The American Zionists were now re-united in a coalition which was resorted to its proper strength. They maintained, "We can now speak effectively in the name of the entire Zionist membership at the forthcoming World Zionist Conference in London." All resources would be mobilized to reconstitute Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth.¹⁰²

Post-mortem

On August 16, 1945, at the World Zionist Conference in London, both Silver and Wise were elected as members to the Executive Board of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. These two joined Louis Lois Lipsky so that there was now a three-member American contingent on the Executive Board of fifteen American Zionism, following in the wake of the tragedy of the Holocaust that had bitterly affected European Jewry, had now come of age. Emanuel Neumann, the delegate from the New York section of the American Zionist Emergency Council, declared that the selection of the two rabbis meant that Dr. Silver's policies would become more international in scope.¹⁰³ In October, 1945, Silver was elected President of ZOA.¹⁰⁴

The final culmination was the re-introduction of the Jewish Commonwealth Resolution into both houses of Congress in revised form. On December 17, 1945, the Senate and on December 19, 1945, the House passed a Joint Resolution that declared:

¹⁰¹"American Zionist Emergency Council Reorganized," JPS, 13 July 1945, pp. 1-2; NYT, 17 July 1945, p. 20.

¹⁰²NYT, 17 July 1945, p. 24.

Therefore be it RESOLVED by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the interest shown by the President in the solution of this problem is hereby commended and that the United States shall use its good offices with the mandatory power to the end that Palestine shall be opened for free entry of Jews into that country to the maximum of its agricultural and economic potentialities, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization and development, so that they may freely proceed with the upbuilding of Palestine as the Jewish national home and, in association with all elements of the population, establish Palestine as a democratic commonwealth in which all men, regardless of race or creed, shall have equal rights. 105

Summary and Conclusion

As both Goldstein and Silver agreed, the struggle within the Zionist ranks was democratic. They made their appeals to the public, principally through the membership of ZOA, which decided the outcome. The struggle after seven months between Silver and Wise left the personnel of AZEC virtually unchanged. Both Silver and Wise were still co-chairmen of AZEC, and both had been elevated to membership on the Jewish Agency Executive for Palestine.

What did the struggle between the Wise and the Silver factions accomplish? On the surface, it seemed that Silver had won. In the third re-organization of AZEC, Silver was restored as co-chairman, was head of the Board of Officers, had a say in the representation of ZOA on AZEC, and had a relative free hand in selecting members of the staff. However, the Board of Officers acted as a watch dog committee on Silver. This was Wise's victory.

Who was right? Was Wise too passive and trustful in accepting the assurances of the National Administration? Was Silver too militant and too ready to gamble on the political

¹⁰³NYT, 17 August 1945, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴Howard P. Manson, notes on "After the Anglo-American Inquiry," in Vision and Victory, p. 85.

¹⁰⁵AZEC, p. 15.

field for Zionist rights? I think the essence of the answer is that Silver was more correct than Wise. Silver may have over-stepped his original mandate in regard to the congressional resolution in an effort to achieve the ultimate objectives of the Zionist movement. He may have forced the struggle to mold AZEC and ZOA in his own image of what he considered to be militant Zionism. It was not that Wise was not militant but that Silver was more militant. There was some truth that Wise had acted the part of a "court Jew." Where Wise may have been convinced that his personal ties to American political leaders, notably Roosevelt, would ensure Zionist victory; Silver realized that this was not enough. While Wise may have felt that the personal opinions of leading American political figures might frustrate the popular mandate, Silver seemed to have realized that mobilizing popular opinion might work wonders on these same men. Wise may have been too prone to over-estimate the personal factors involved. President Roosevelt, like any good politician, knew how to use personal friendships to further his political aims. Words are cheap. Silver refused to be taken in by any expressions of friendship but wanted tangible proof.

As a result, the Wise and Silver controversy came to a successful conclusion. Although personal factors may have obscured the debate, it was the proper type of militancy that was the crux of the situation. The controversy came at a convenient time. The subsequent debate clarified the issues, solidified the Zionist movement, and gave the proper directions that were to be pursued. The zeal of Silver's friends in trying to prove that he was totally right have ironically obscured his real contributions to this phase of the Zionist movement. To further compound the irony, although Wise may have been forced none too gracefully from his position of power, he nevertheless achieved a face-saving victory in testraining and ultimately disciplining Silver. Thus, Silver and Wise both won their own wars.

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