



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Series II: Subject Files, 1956-1993, undated.

Reel
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312

Jewish Federation of St. Louis, correspondence, notes, and
speech, 1971.

September 15, 1971

Mr. David Robinowatz
Jewish Federation of St. Louis
611 Olive Street, Suite 1300
Stl Louis, Missouri 63101

Dear Mr. Robinowatz:

This will simply acknowledge that Rabbi Silver's reservations to St. Louis on Thursday, September 23, 1971 have been confirmed. His schedule is as follows:

AA Flight #133	Lv. Cleveland 9:00 a. m. -- Arr. St. Louis 9:23a. m.
AA Flight #134	Lv. St. Louis 5:05 p. m. -- Arr. Cleve. 7:23 p. m.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Maureen L. Day
Secretary to Rabbi Silver

/mld

American Airlines

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AA 366 150

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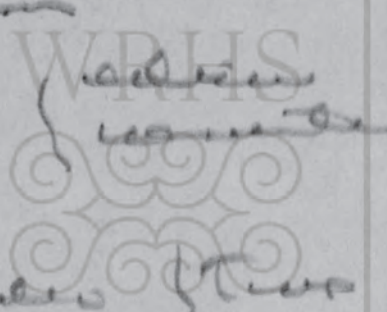
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It would be folly for organized Jewry to assume that a positive climate of opinion towards Israel is ours by some natural and immutable right and it is precisely such a positive climate which has allowed our work in Washington and with the powerful to be as effective as it has. The place of the Arab-Israel confrontation in our political life has changed in basic and significant ways. Up to 1967 there was a breathing space between each crisis. 1948, 1956, 1967. Now we live in a period of unrelenting crisis. Americans traditionally want quick and final solutions. We don't like to back teams which seem to be slipping in the standings. During the 50's and 60's America was internationally oriented. As the 70's begin America is increasingly isolationist. The movement to end the war in Vietnam has become a peace movement, gun shipments are somehow immoral, a vague romantic pacificism has become the operational political philosophy, if not the religion, of some, and these see Dayan not as the protector of settlements but as the unredeemed cold war warrior. Twenty years ago young people looked on Israel as the example of human courage and social pioneering. Today some young people, and blacks who espouse the anti-western policies of the third world, look upon the El Fatah as true revolutionaries, valient rebels against American imperialism. A far more sophisticated Arab propaganda apparatus is in operation. The Arabs have learnt to work through local front groups, graduates of the American University of Cairo and Beirut, missionary societies, the Black Panthers, etc. There exists in some of our cities a small but growing community of people of Arab extraction and they are increasingly finding their tongue. Given these realities it seems to me that a sustained information and education campaign of significant proportions is long since due. Further, I am convinced this campaign must be mounted at the grass roots level, ultimately Washington does respond to basic changes in American opinion and the current trend, unstaunched, bodes Israel little good.

We have brought into being such an activist long range I and E structure in Cleveland. Perhaps in describing our operation, I can suggest what we have learnt, our feeling as to what can be accomplished, our understanding of the problem, as well as suggest our enthusiasm for similar projects nationwide. To be useful I must cite chapter and verse and you must honor the fact that I am speaking off the record. Information and Education covers a multitude of activities. We are careful of how things are done and often seek legal counsel. The correlary to this is that our work is no work for headline hunters or the man-child who likes to play C.I.A.

The information and Education Task Force was created in and through our Federation in January 1969. Its birth was catalysed by a number of discussions in the Community Relations Council and at The Federation Executive Board all of which dealt with specific Mid-East related activities and supported the need to coordinate and rationalize our response. It was determined to bring into being such a coordinative and action program and our Endowment Committee gave the I. E. Task Force an initial grant. As important as the money was the willingness of the Federation, and to a less extent local chapters of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Community Centers, to provide us with staff to coordinate and develop all that was undertaken. Staffing is now entirely from the Federation; the JVS schedules of the non federation pros proved an obstacle, but their help was and is invaluable. I have no idea of the full cost to Federation in terms of staff time; officially, it was something on the order of a man and a half that first year. I do know that at one time or another most of the Federation's personnel have been involved and that their involvement has had important

consequences. Each brought his own circle of community friends, each brought his special skills. Each by his presence made it clear that we represented the organized community and were not just another group operating on its own terms. Let me illustrate the importance of these contacts. One of our local colleges, had a long history of involvement in Middle East missions. Several Arab apologetes were on the faculty and a Middle East Institute, partially financed by the government, staffed primarily by Arab sympathizers existed on the campus. The executive vice president of our Federation and several of our officers were on the Board of this institution. Discussions were begun immediately. The programs of the Middle East Institute began to reflect a broader spectrum of opinion. We assembled information, monitored speeches, collected syllabi. They went out and had further discussions. As of today this college has dropped its Middle East Institute, one of the most vehement professors has moved on, the most active pro-Arabist has been given a year's sabbatical and we have been invited to discuss with them further programming on the Middle East.

I cannot over emphasize the significance of having the central body of the Jewish community undertake this work. Three ingredients are necessary: money, staff, and proper accreditation. Much was achieved because we spoke as the organized Jewish community and not as one segment of unspecified size and consequence. Those who go out need credentials. Because so many people have been involved we constantly receive unexpected information input. There are few places of significance where we cannot tap someone of consequence. When we do there is no question with those we visit of the seriousness of the approach. In domestic terms Federation involvement allows us at least to suggest some community disciplines. Many well intentioned Jews all too

willingly respond to requests to speak to local groups about Israel. After all they had been a great success last year at a UJA parlor meeting; but at the church supper they fail miserably. Good intentions can not replace sensitivity; passion, understanding of the emotional set of the audience; and oratory can not make up for the lack of hard information. To press the example further, Arab propagandists have recently begun to seek out debates with local Jews. They know that their full time propagandists can outpoint most semi-prepared amateurs. They know a local Jew, however verbal, can not match the impression of moderation and concern for refugees before a non Jewish audience as a former UNRRA director. Much harm has been done by well intentioned innocents who could not resist a platform or TV coverage. They have looked silly and made Israel's case seem uncertain. We have not been able to keep all the over eager from the microphone but we have worked to alert our community to these dangers and insisted that no American Jew should publicly debate an Arab national. When we speak we speak as concerned Americans not Israel's ambassador to Washington. Our Speaker's Bureau is constantly busy training speakers to understand a non-Jewish audience, to know the facts, to understand something of the world of misinformation in which most non-Jews and Jews live. Finally, we have been able to discourage many organizations who decide on an Arab Israel confrontation as an exciting monthly program from featuring such debates by suggesting to them that light not heat is what the mid east needs by offering competent speakers to discuss factually the issues of substance.

Sometimes we learn of problems of national scope and can achieve results directly through our own contacts. One example: several people in our community received publicity about a Committee for Responsible Alternatives in the Middle East. Its letterhead listed a blue ribbon panel of liberal academics.

By chance a covering letter not intended for general release fell into our hands. The covering letter made it clear that the rather noble purposes of the communication (peace-self determination) were only a cover for revolutionary Arab propaganda. A call from Sidney Vincent to Leonard Fein to Noam Chomsky, one of the chief signatures, uncovered the fact that the Letterhead Committee had neither seen nor approved the covering letter, and was outraged. It turned out that this Committee was no more than a front created by a determined woman, the organization's secretary, an old Trotskyite with long experience in exploiting such fronts. There is here, to be sure, a lesson in the naivete of many who believe themselves politically sophisticated, but at least this ended an Arab sponsored front.

Our Task Force was originally subdivided into five sub-committees. Each special committee has its own chairman and staff professional.

I. Mass media: This group provides background information on every particular issue as it arises to local columnists, reporters, radio and TV people who otherwise would accept wire service headlines and predigested material without too much discrimination. It has suggested to the papers attractive articles some of which have been published, has cooperated in the visit to Israel of local TV and press people, has repeatedly visited our editors to discuss editorial judgements, to offer to their reporters useful contacts in Israel and to discredit such figures as Elmer Berger by telling them who they are and who they do not represent, has encouraged members of the press to avail themselves of UJA press tours, has organized the TV exposure of important Israeli visitors. We have just screened a rather remarkable half hour with Mayor Kolleck and Mayor Stokes. Everything of local origin is monitored. Some problems have

surfaced. Most news begins in New York and at this level we are out of our depth. National organizations do not usually inform us in advance and in some depth about radio and TV programs with which they have been involved or about their touring speakers or artists who can be used effectively beyond the dinner or speech for which they are invited. We need to know more about these people than just their name. Would they be effective and in what situations? Have they experience in meeting non Jewish audiences, etc. ?

II. Governmental Liaison. This group has arranged participation in Washington conferences, has discussed the Mid-East (followed up locally) with our congressmen, has distributed background material to approximately 500 opinion makers, is now maintaining specific one to one contact with every candidate for national office through someone close to him. We also maintain close contact with the Governor and candidates for Governor - Israel sometimes surfaces at National Governors Conferences. Our problem here is to maintain close contact with AIPAC. We draw the smaller communities in our area into our work so that the rural and mid-state leaders are not overlooked.

III. Education. We have found ourselves active on both the public school and college level. We are busy devising a background unit on Israel for Junior and Senior High Schools. We have sent speakers to local teachers groups preparing themselves in current events. We have countered some mildly negative activities of our Council on Foreign Affairs within the school system. We have made ourselves available to curriculum planning groups and keep ourselves in touch with school boards and superintendents.

The college level has been most demanding. Rather than wring our hands about the new left and unresponsive Jewish intellectuals, we have tried to develop a cadre of liberal Jewish students who could see beyond the third

world litanies and who could work for Israel within New Left organizations; and to build a loose association of sympathetic academics. ' We cooperate closely with the Jewish Community Centers and the American Zionist Youth Federation in maintaining a youth Sheliah. This man has worked effectively on all our campuses particularly in stimulating summer visits, The Junior Year Abroad, and Sherut Le ʼam; together we have planned and financed seminars designed to prepare the outgoing youth for their experience and to build ties to them so that they can coalesce into a campus presence upon their return. Some 300 of our young people are in Israel this summer, a number of them on partial scholarships provided by our committee.

One interesting by-product, the Spring Mobilization Confrontation, of the Peace Movement happened to be held in March at Case Western Reserve. As was to be expected a resolution of fraternity with the El Fatah was introduced but because our Sheliah with a number of his activists was there at our request a resolution voicing support for "our peace loving, socialist brother in Israel" was also immediately introduced. Confronted, the plenum sent both resolutions to committee and none was reported out. A surprising number of young Jewish activists from all over the country rallied around, important contacts were made and for the first time a New Left national conference met, transacted its business and departed without slapping Israel in the face.

We have been active in supporting the American Professors for Peace in the Middle East on both the Case Western Reserve and the Kent State campuses. A number of speakers have been brought in by them, material has been made available, important contacts have been developed. Faced with specific assignments many academics have shown surprising interest. Our work with students and faculty has made clear the need for competent, non rhetorical digest presentations

on all Middle Eastern issues, and, paradoxically, of material which is rhetorical, but in the idiom and jargon of the radical ideologies. One of the by-products of our activity was our "discovery" of Kent State. Somehow, Kent State had several virulently anti-Israel American University of Beirut graduates on its staff and we have called their biased syllabi and course material to the attention of the administration. To most of us KSU was a small school out there. Actually it has 24,000 students, including 1200 Jewish undergraduates and a number of Jewish professors. Catalysed by our activity the foundation of an organized Jewish presence is being layed.

It is clear that the campus presents us with a number of serious problems. Arab propaganda has tried to and in a certain extent succeeded in identifying Israel with imperialism and the war in Vietnam. But the campus need not be handed over by default. If we can give our young people a sense of activity, a cause, if we can give our Jewish professors a sense of being right and being needed, talk with them in their own terms, give them a sense that the organized community is more than a pledge card, much can be done. This must be underscored, no community can afford to work within narrow traditional geographic boundaries. KSU slapped us in the face because it is not in Cuyahoga County, but in the boondocks, the city of Kent has one Jewish family. Major colleges are often out of town, but we can not let them go by default.

IV. Religious Groups. Here we have the longest history of involvement and have made our least tangible impact. At the moment there is some readiness among the Catholic clergy to learn more and respond affirmatively; We sponsored the visit to Israel of the Editor of the Diocesan newspaper. We are developing with the Catholic group a number of college and seminary programs. A much

more conflicted reaction exists in Protestant circles, particularly in those "Liberal" circles with whom both the Federation and our rabbinate maintained close contact over many years. We have brought pro-Israel Protestant clergymen to church meetings - Kinsolving, Lytell, Eckhart (there are remarkably few) but our attempt to create an Interfaith Council on Israel has been unproductive. An on-going dialogue on Israel is being conducted by the Heights Ministerial Association but none elsewhere in town. Missionary ties are strong. The refugee issue is real. Ignorance and naivete are rampant and there is a good bit of theological anti-semitism. To balance some of our failure with the ministry an attempt is being made to involve laymen and to use the democracy of the modern church to our advantage.

Our major effort in this area has been a clergy mission to Israel. We cooperated with local Catholic and Protestant leaders in planning and financing a group of about 25 church people. Our local Professor of Jewish Studies went as mentor. The trip was carefully planned and the results showed some moderate success but, frankly, none of us were prepared for the utter lack of preparation of the group. You would have thought they would have done some reading up on the land they were going to visit. Moreover, the selection process left much to be desired - the Fundamentalist/Liberal// Protestant/Catholic mix did not always mix.

V. The Speakers Bureau and Information Desk. The information desk consists of a library at the Federation with readily available periodical and research material on Israel and the Middle East. We encourage newspaper and mass media people to use these resources and help them in their research. We have devised and do the scheduling for a mounted mobile display which is placed in churches, libraries, schools and from which one can take

useful brochures. Our speakers bureau is constantly finding new opportunities for presentations, retraining its people, providing speakers with more and more up to date information, checking the effectiveness of presentations, etc. I can not emphasize sufficiently that in such presentations good intention and passion are not enough. Audiences tend to be passive and relatively ignorant, nothing can be assumed, latent anti-semitism "The Jews want to get us into another Vietnam" is close to the surface. A speakers bureau in brief cannot be built around those who first volunteer. It needs trained minds, men and women who never stop reading. Care must be used even in dealing with the Jewish groups. Many Jews who are not reinforced as routinely as is a community's leadership have questions and want balanced answers.

Through the speakers bureau activities we have learned of the vast other world of women's organizations and are now creating a special women's committee for these groups. This work too has raised some questions which need to be answered on a national level. We cannot ourselves print and develop the variety of visual and pamphlet material which each group and issue requires. Many national organizations, Hadassah, Pioneer Women, the religious groups, AJC etc. at times print effective statements but no one seems to coordinate this work. There is much duplication, much falls between stools and much is not made available in form suitable for mass distribution.

Though it does not fall under any specific committee, some of our most serious effort has been invested in maintaining significant contact with the black community. A number of its most influential members have made trips to Israel. We have maintained close contact with the Call Post, the black community's major newspaper, and, so far at least have kept anti-Israel propaganda from becoming an accepted part of the platform litany of the black community.

We also maintain a file on known Arab propagandists, tapes of their speeches, etc. so that if our people appear on similar platforms, they will be armed. We are bringing into being a clipping service which will skim the nationality press, church bulletins, college newspapers to keep us abreast. We maintain the voting records of our congress people and clippings of their speeches and pronouncements.

What I am pleading for is an organized, systematic assumption of responsibility by each Jewish community for this public relations work on a continuing and ongoing basis. There must be a delegation of specific responsibility, proper funding, adequate staff, regular meetings. Sporadic effort cannot change a community's climate. Our committee heads meet twice a month at 8:30 in the morning. Each committee meets at least once a month and the entire Task Force meets every five or six weeks. Our meetings are business meetings - no minutes - no speeches. We discuss programs, problems and policy. The Jewish community does not hear of us in the press. They know of us by the press of our activity. We have reported only twice in 18 months to the Board of the Federation. What we do we do because it must be done. No one gets kavod.

We try to move without extraneous procedures yet with responsibility. Everything is discussed between the Task Force chairmen and the Federation staff. Effective funding will come only if the local coordinating body is properly, that is centrally, based. No one demands a line by line accounting, but there must be a pocket for scholarships, trip stipends, publications, travel expenses, honorariums. No one must feel left out but the needs of the hour and not the needs of any given organization or any one's ego must be paramount.

What does it all add up to? A sense that we have done what can be done. A sense of involvement which translates itself both into dollars and

personal commitment. An input of ideas which comes about because we provide a forum for their exchange, the emotional liberation of being active instead of wringing of the hands, a sense of movement instead of frustration, a sharpened awareness that such an activity needs not only local community participation but national coordination---a chance, at least, to meet, discuss, describe, cross fertilize. Finally, a growing realization of the immensity and urgency of the task we have made ours. I have dealt with structure not the substance of what we say. Our answers, necessarily vary with the issue, the occasion, the sophistication of the audience. Will we succeed? I do not know. National moods and national policies are not always national or predictable, but we will have tried.

Let me close in my normal clothes, that of our rabbi. In our synagogues this week we read in the Torah of the spies sent out by Moses to chart the land. The majority saw and wrung their hands in despair: The land flowed with milk and honey but the people who dwelt on the land were fierce and the cities were well fortified. They gave their report, and their advice summed up really in a single cry of self pitying weakness - But, but, - we despair - it's impossible. One spy, Caleb, was undaunted, he too had seen the strong men and the strong cities. Caleb counselled action. Let us immediately go up. We are able to accomplish it. Caleb's courage and advice are relevant. Israel's problems are fierce. The enemy is well fortified, the burden of numbers and all is beginning to tell. But what does one gain if he says: It is impossible - more years of wandering the wilderness. The pessimists made an accurate report but they were wrong in the event,

We are able to accomplish it. - to secure our land.