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Memorandum, from Harold P. Manson on the Statement by Dr.
Abba Hillel Silver on American Policy in the Middle East, 1956.

Air Mail to Dr. Silver

Memorandum

To: ZOA DISTRICT AND REGIONAL LEADERS

Date: April 11, 1956

From: Harold P. Manson
Executive Vice-Chairman, Department of Public Information

Subject: Statement by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver on American Policy
in the Middle East

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, who returned from his visit to Israel a few days ago, made his first public address since his return in his home community, Cleveland, Ohio, on April 8, 1956.

Dr. Silver's references to current American policy in the Middle East are of special significance to all American Zionists and we are therefore sending you the report of his address as it was published in the Cleveland Plain Dealer of April 9, 1956.

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Silver Slaps Attitude of U.S. in Middle East

A grim-faced Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver at the Temple yesterday loosed a barrage of criticism at America's attitude toward the Middle East problem.

The internationally known spiritual leader, usually a supporter of the administration, told one of the largest gatherings ever to attend his regular sermons that he had measured his words carefully.

The crowd which jammed the large Temple included a number of the city's non-Jewish civic and industrial leaders.

Underscoring that America had shipped arms to Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Arabian countries, Rabbi Silver said: "The United States does not fear an arms race there, but to Israel is thrown the spurious argument of an arms race. Why was it trotted out only in the case of Israel and never before?"

He tore into what he termed an American embargo dictated by expediency, which, he warned, might be as bad a blunder as the embargo which defeated the Spanish republic and set the stage for World War II.

Cites Oil Interests

He asserted that those who said the present danger was not great, who declined urgently needed help, were taking upon themselves the gravest responsibility.

The Rabbi rapped the United States program of referring Israeli pleas for defensive arms to other nations. He said it was highly improbable that other nations would do what the world's leader for freedom failed to do.

"I feel this does not represent leadership or morality," he said. "This is not America speaking--it is the oil interests."

He stressed that Israel was not asking American intervention or soldiers, but only seeking to purchase weapons against an imminent danger that threatened her survival.

No one is impressed with the "chivalry, morality or candor" of the State Department's new attitude, he said, his voice heavy with bitterness.

He ripped the contention that the Middle East was properly the concern of the United Nations by asserting that a strong Soviet bloc, plus Russia's veto, would be enough to slow up U.N. action in case of sudden war until tiny Israel was a shambles.

The Rabbi said he felt peace could come to the Middle East--from which reports of new battles came even as he spoke--if only Western leaders would take a firm grip on present opportunities.

Calls Plea Mandate

There are only minor refugee and territorial problems between the Israelis and the Arabs, which could be easily adjusted at a conference table, he said.

"The job of the democracies should not be to bolster truculence, but to call for negotiations for the peace of the world," he said.

He emphasized that, as long as the Arabs know Israel is weak and will be kept so, they will not consent to a conference, but will wait until their new power assures them victory and then strike as they said they would.

For a long time the West thought the Middle East was its own province and did not anticipate the swift entry of the Soviets into that area, he said.

As a result, he added, there has been a general collapse of the British-American policy there and the whole situation is being restudied.

"A small nation pleading for the right of self defense is a clear mandate for all of the free world," he said.

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