

PPF 4520
Silver, Rabbi Abba Hillel

MR. HASSETT:

Although the file shows that Rabbi Wise and Rabbi Silver had an appointment with the President in March 1944, a memorandum dated December 27, 1944 states that "Mr. Niles says he has talked to Judge Rosenman but they both want Gen. Watson to know that they are 'thumbs down' on Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. They think Gen. Watson will be hearing from him soon and wanted the General to know this in case he did hear."

Also -- see marked file card - 10/13/44
Rabbi Silver complained because Wise had appt. with
the President and he (Silver) did not. aw

January 31, 1945

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Dear Dr. Silver:

This is in acknowledgment of your letter of January twenty-ninth, explaining to the President your position with respect to certain aspects of your work as Executive Chairman of the American ~~Zionist Emergency Council~~. I note further your ~~desire to correct rumors and misstatements of fact~~ with respect to your participation in the late campaign.

I shall have much pleasure in bringing this explanation of your position to the attention of the President.

Very sincerely yours,

WILLIAM D. HASSETT
Secretary to the President

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, D.D.,
The Temple,
East 105th Street at Ansel Road,
Cleveland, Ohio.

The Temple

EAST 105th STREET AT ANSEL ROAD
TELEPHONES GARFIELD 0150-0151

Cleveland *Ohio*

WILLIAM M. KRAMER
ASSISTANT RABBI

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D. D.
RABBI

HARRY A. LEVY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

January 29, 1945

The President of the United States
White House
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. President:

When I last had the privilege of seeing you at the White House, you began our pleasant interview by stating that Washington is a city full of rumors. I did not realize how true that observation was until the last few months when many rumors reached me touching my relation to your Administration and to yourself.

Will you permit me to correct some of these rumors? As you may possibly know, I have resigned as Executive Chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council. Nevertheless, out of my high esteem and admiration for you, I should like to correct some impressions which you may have received and for which the "rumor mill" in Washington has doubtless been responsible.

I have been told that there is a widespread impression in Administration circles that I had actively campaigned for the Republican candidate during the last Presidential election. I stated my position during the campaign quite clearly and publicly. As head of the Zionist political work in the United States, I could not take sides in a political campaign without endangering the position of neutrality which our movement must maintain. Our cause has warm friends in both political parties. We succeeded in getting a friendly hearing from both parties because of the non-partisan character of our movement. As Chairman of the Council, I praised the support which both parties gave to our Palestine resolutions in Congress. I hailed both parties for the Palestine planks which they introduced in their platforms. I praised Governor Dewey for the statement which he issued on the Jewish Commonwealth, and, you may recall, I released to the press a most warm and enthusiastic message of thanks to you, which I telegraphed to you, on the occasion of your historic pronouncement on October 15. I tried to be scrupulously impartial. I did not in any way identify myself with the campaign activities of the Republican Party. The enclosed clipping from my own town paper, The Cleveland Press, dated October 14, 1944, clearly represented my position throughout the campaign. Everything else that you may have heard, my dear Mr. President, is mischievous

The Temple

The President

-2-

1-29-45

gossip. The American Zionist Emergency Council fully approved of this non-partisan line which I pursued. Four years ago, when I did not occupy any official post, I felt free to endorse the candidacy of Mr. Willkie, just as eight years ago, and again twelve years ago, I endorsed and publicly advocated your election and re-election. This year, because of my official post, I felt under the moral restraint not to take sides publicly in the election campaign. If anyone has misinterpreted my position to you as one of unfriendliness, I trust that you will reject it out of hand.

Rumors have also been rife in connection with the recent deferment of action in Congress on the Palestine resolutions. These resolutions had been pending in Congress for almost a year. One deferment took place last Spring at the insistence of the War Department. Early in October, the War Department withdrew its objections. The approval of the substance of the resolutions by both political parties in their platforms, and more especially your own magnificent statement of October 15, made everyone believe that favorable action on the resolutions would be certain and speedy as soon as Congress reconvened. When late in November, the Emergency Council learned, through Mr. Stettinius, that you felt that action on these resolutions should be deferred, there was consternation in our ranks. A resolution was adopted by the Council to request a meeting with you in the hope of persuading you to remove your objections. That clear mandate was given to me by the Council. You were not in Washington at that time. When Senator Wagner finally communicated with you in writing, and the Senator and I had finally obtained an appointment with Mr. Stettinius for December 4, in order to present the Council's urgent plea that clearance should be given to the resolutions, the House Foreign Affairs Committee had by that time already acted favorably on the Palestine resolution, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had already had one meeting and had decided to take action on it at a second meeting two days later.

Permit me to assure you, my dear Mr. President, that I did not exert any pressure on Congressmen and Senators in behalf of the resolutions contrary to your wishes, nor did I seek in any way to embarrass you, or to make political capital out of the situation. I do not play partisan politics. This is not my profession. I am a Rabbi in Israel. I do not belong to any political party. I have been an independent voter all my life. My sole interest, when I assumed the Council Chairmanship at the repeated insistence of American Zionists and of Dr. Weizmann, was the opportunity to serve my people, with whatever strength I possessed, in one of its darkest hours. No responsible leader, in possession of his senses, would seek to "embarrass" the one man whose support and cooperation could prove so decisive for our cause, and who had previously given such heartening evidence of sympathy and endorsement.

The Temple

The President

-3-

1-29-45

Many Congressmen and Senators were eager to act on the resolutions. Four hundred of them had approved of them in writing. Especially were they set to act in view of the hearty endorsement which you yourself gave to the re-establishment of the Jewish Commonwealth just a few weeks before then.

Because clearance was not given, and the resolutions failed of approval, my resignation followed. I wish that you might have seen your way clear to give clearance to the resolutions. It would have been a great political gain for our movement and would have strengthened the hands of our friends both here and in England -- and your own hands in the coming negotiations. It would have been a lift to the tired spirit of a people which, in its plight, had pleaded so often and had received so little at the hands of the world. But I wish to assure you, my dear Mr. President, that my faith and confidence in your good will and friendliness towards our cause, remain deep and unshaken.

This is a desperate hour for our people. Half of European Jewry has been destroyed. Never was the tragedy of our national homelessness so sharply accentuated as in the last few years of slaughter and annihilation. I pray that it may be given to you, great leader of a great nation, to help bring about the historic solution for this age-old problem. Our people has such eager and ardent faith in you. You will not disappoint them, I am sure.

As you go abroad on your mission, may our Heavenly Father abundantly bless your endeavors, lighten your burdens, and cause His spirit of wisdom and counsel to guide you. With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

AHS:BK

The Temple

EAST 105TH STREET AT ANSEL ROAD
TELEPHONES GARFIELD 0150-0151

Cleveland

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D. D.
RABBI

WILLIAM M. KRAMER
ASSISTANT RABBI

file
HARRY A. LEVY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

March 12, 1945

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Mr. William D. Hassett
Secretary to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Hassett:

Under date of January 31, you wrote me acknowledging the letter which I sent to the President on January 29, and stating that you would bring my letter to his attention upon his return. I know that the President has been extremely busy since his return from the Crimea Conference, and I am wondering whether you have had the opportunity to bring my letter to his attention.

With all good wishes, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Abba Hillel Silver

AHS:PK

THE CLEVELAND PRESS

Oct. 14, 1944

3

Silver "Gratified" by Dewey's Stand

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver said today in Atlantic City that he was "gratified" by Governor Thomas E. Dewey's indorsement of an open Palestine, but could not comment on whom he would support for president.

The Cleveland churchman, chairman of the executive committee of the National Zionist Emergency Council, met with the Republican

presidential aspirant in New York Thursday. Governor Dewey said he "heartily indorsed" proposals to reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.

"I believe Mr. Dewey is sincere," Rabbi Silver said today, "and I am gratified by his stand. He is a fine gentleman but I am not prepared to make any statements as to my recommendations in the campaign."

Rabbi Silver said he has not discussed the opening of Palestine for unlimited immigration of distressed Jews with President Roosevelt, but indicated that he may do so.