

January 28, 1945

Dr. John Slawson  
Executive Vice President  
American Jewish Committee  
386 4th Avenue  
New York 16, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Slawson,

In addition to my interview with Dr. Weizman, I have had interviews with Mr. Ben Gurion and Mr. Moshe Shertok and with Dr. Werner Senator. The last mentioned is the administrator of the University, and the only so-called non-Zionist representative left on the Jewish Agency.

Mr. Ben Gurion and I had a very long interview. I presented in essence the same considerations as I had laid before Dr. Weizman, and which I outlined in my letter to you of January 20th. As I have already written, Weizman had in between apparently communicated with Ben Gurion, who informed me that it had been decided to answer Judge Proskauer's letter with regard to the possibility of initiating discussions with the American Jewish Committee for the renewal of eventual revamping of the Jewish Agency.

Both Ben Gurion and Shertok asked me if I thought the American Jewish Committee would insist upon the 50 % representation on the Jewish Agency which had previously been accorded to the non-Zionists. The question was asked in a form to convey to me, I think, the feeling of these two gentlemen, that they for their part would not agree to anything like this proportion. I replied that I was not prepared not authorized to enter into discussion of such details now, but that for my part I felt that the American Jewish Committee would certainly not be satisfied with a mere token representation on the Jewish Agency, is indeed discussions got to the stage where it was decided that the Jewish Agency should be reformed along something like its old lines.

I sensed a certain degree of resentment on the part of Ben Gurion that I talked to Weizman before I talked to him. I was very careful naturally to do that with malice aforethought. Ben Gurion replied to my statements that the most important things to be done were to save those Jews of Europe who could be saved and who wanted to settle in Palestine, and to help acquire lands for agriculture and other possibilities for industrial and general economic development there, that he naturally agreed about the primacy of these considerations but asked me if I did not feel that a political mechanism was necessary to translate them from wishes into reality. He went on to say that he himself was really not interested in a state, nor in political authority as such, (statements which I completely discounted), but that he felt that unless the political machinery envisaged in the Biltmore program were provided, it would be impossible to bring in large numbers of Jewish immigrants or to open lands for settlement for them in Palestine. I replied that I thought that was in effect



putting the cart before the horse, that on the whole much had been done without that particular kind of state mechanism that he envisaged, and that all the political realities anyway were against any present possibility of achieving his goal.

I pointed out in bare outline to him what I am personally convinced of as a result of all my contacts, that the British and American governments and people will never agree to give a Jewish minority in Palestine political control over an Arab majority, aside from any other considerations against it. At any rate, I went on to point out to him and to Shertok, that the cooperation of the American Jewish Committee could not be secured, I felt, if the project of the Jewish commonwealth continued to be placed in the forefront of Zionist objectives, and to my way of thinking to the harming of obtaining as much immigration and land as might otherwise be secured.

He then asked me to develop my ideas of what I thought the necessary mechanism for obtaining immigration and land would be. I replied that I thought it was a matter which could be gone into later on, and that anyway I felt that such a mechanism could much more easily be perfected and be widely and officially approved of than the state he felt was so necessary. I find that both he and Shertok and Leo Cohn, the political secretary of the Jewish Agency, with whom I also had an interview, have really now become convinced that even if the gates of Palestine were completely open, if facilities were provided to bring as many Jews from Europe as wanted to come here, it would not be possible within any reasonably near future to obtain a Jewish majority in Palestine. Therefore continued and repeated questions to me as to whether a sufficiently large number of Jews from America could not be induced to come to Palestine. My reply has been definitely in the negative, and if their fears for the Jews in America should unfortunately be realized, and it become impossible for Jews to live there, I declared that then it would be impossible for Jews to live in security anywhere in the world, including Palestine.

Actually, I am convinced that Weizman, and I feel that even Ben Gurion and Shertok would, if they could do so gracefully, retreat from the political impasse which has been created by this insistence upon obtaining the Jewish Commonwealth of Palestine. Weizman had already beat a retreat in several of his recent speeches, in which he has emphasized the necessity of concentrating on practical possibilities. I feel that the compulsion of events will force Ben Gurion to follow in Weizman's wake, as much as it goes against his grain to give up the political advantage he has gained amongst his numerous adherents in Palestine against Weizman. There is much reason, I believe to think that when Weizman comes to America, probably in April, solid constructive results can be achieved by discussions between him and Judge Froskauer.

I have had in addition, as I have already said, a long talk with Dr. Senator, who was very much in agreement with my own thinking with regard to these matters, which, I assume, is more or less in line with the thinking of the American Jewish Committee.



I have had discussions with a highly placed British official, who is an intimate friend of mine, with regard to the general point of view of the American Jewish Committee, and particularly with regard to the necessity of leaving the discussion of obtaining the Jewish Commonwealth out of consideration and of concentrating on less ambitious but more realizable projects of increased Jewish settlement and land acquisition in Palestine. He applauded this point of view, and said flatly that on such a basis alone as that which I outlined to him, could any reasonable degree of solution to the so-called Palestine problem be achieved.

The question of partition has come up again. I have definite ideas with regard to it, but see no reason for developing them at this moment. I can only say that I consider any kind of partition iniquitous from every point of view, and that I fear that Ben Gurion may be prepared to obtain his Jewish state by becoming President of a larger Tel Aviv.

This entire question of Jewish settlement in Palestine can naturally not be divorced from our concern for the welfare of the Jews in Europe. I shall be pleased to have you and Judge Proskauer's reactions on behalf of the American Jewish Committee with regard to these letters.

Sincerely yours

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P.S. I learn that Ben Gurion is planning to come to America at the same time as Weizman. At the moment, I am inclined to think that that will injure the possibilities of successful discussions for cooperation between the Zionist Organization and the A.J.C.