

THE
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT



Offices: 386 Fourth Avenue
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OBJECTS OF THE COMMITTEE

“The objects of this corporation shall be, to prevent the infraction of the civil and religious rights of Jews, in any part of the world; to render all lawful assistance and to take appropriate remedial action in the event of threatened or actual invasion or restriction of such rights, or of unfavorable discrimination with respect thereto; to secure for Jews equality of economic, social and educational opportunity; to alleviate the consequences of persecution and to afford relief from calamities affecting Jews, wherever they may occur; and to compass these ends to administer any relief fund which shall come into its possession or which may be received by it, in trust or otherwise, for any of the aforesaid objects or for purposes comprehended therein.”

—*Extract from the Charter*

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Chairman, Executive Committee

JACOB BLAUSTEIN

Vice-Chairman, Executive Committee

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Presented by JACOB BLAUSTEIN, *Chairman*

To the Members of the American Jewish Committee:

The past year spanned two distinct periods in contemporary history—the final months of World War II and the early months of a most difficult struggle for peace. The activities of the American Jewish Committee during 1945—the 39th and perhaps the most momentous year in its history—reflected this division of periods.

To us, fortunate to be citizens of a great nation and blessed with a firmly established tradition of freedom and a zeal to bring freedom to all mankind, the events presented a crucial challenge and a precious opportunity. Your Committee believes that it accepted the challenge courageously and utilized the opportunity wisely.

Organizational Matters

Splendid progress was made during the year in strengthening our organizational structure at both the lay and the staff levels. The establishment of local chapters of the American Jewish Committee, which has now been accomplished in twenty-eight of the most important communities in the country, has broadened our membership base and is assuring us an informed constituency. The men and women who compose these chapters have indicated by joining them their agreement with the principles and policies of the national organization, and their willingness to participate in our program. Chapter members are kept regularly informed of our activities through the medium of our monthly publication, the *Committee Reporter*, supplemented by timely memoranda on important subjects.

Twenty-five lay advisory committees and subcommittees guide our staff. Their activities are reported periodically to the Administrative Committee which, under the able chairmanship of Mr. David Sher, meets monthly in the intervals between meetings of your Executive Committee. To all those serving on these committees, your Executive Committee wishes to express its grateful appreciation for their helpful guidance.

Progress has been made in expanding our staff to meet our growing and highly ramified responsibilities. There are now nine de-

partments, in addition to our Washington office. To coordinate the functions of these various departments is a task requiring exceptional administrative ability. Fortunately this ability is possessed by our Executive Vice-President, Dr. John Slawson. Despite the complexity of the organization and its rapid growth within the past two years—a growth in no small measure due to his vision and tireless energy—the staff operates as a well integrated whole.

Cooperation with Other Jewish Organizations

Your Committee continues to strive for better coordination of its efforts with those of other organizations, and especially of the Anti-Defamation League. Mr. Samuel D. Leidesdorf has been particularly helpful in this connection. It is good to report that our members and staff increased their participation last year in behalf of the Joint Defense Appeal, through which funds are raised for the support of your Committee and of the Anti-Defamation League. Our treasurer, Mr. Nathan M. Ohrbach, served as National Chairman of the 1945 campaign, and Mr. Alan M. Stroock as New York Campaign Chairman.

Our members and staff also participate in the deliberations of the National Community Relations Council, whose function it is to prevent conflict and duplication between all of the national defense agencies, and to dove-tail their activities with those of local defense agencies.

Believing that, as regards many of the post-war problems affecting Jews, there is mutuality of views among a number of the American Jewish organizations, and that cooperation with respect to these should therefore be feasible, your Committee, shortly after the call for the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, invited the Agudath Israel of America, the American Jewish Conference, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Labor Committee to an informal conference in the hope of effecting concerted action within the area of our agreements. The Agudath Israel and the Jewish Labor Committee accepted and agreed that, while no formal joint program should be submitted, there would be cooperation in urging certain fundamental provisions. The American Jewish Conference and the American Jewish Congress declined to meet with us, taking the position that the former must be sole representative of American Jewish opinion. Nevertheless, we were faced on the scene at San Francisco with some practical problems about which there were

little differences of opinion and we informally worked together with respect to them.

As you know, the American Jewish Committee has a global responsibility, being concerned with the welfare of the Jews wherever they may be, not only in the United States, not only in Palestine, but in every country throughout the world. Our activities roughly divide themselves into three broad categories: (1) domestic, including the fight against anti-Semitism; (2) foreign, including Palestine; and (3) general, or overall. They will be treated herein in that order.

Domestic Activities

While anti-Semitism is not our only domestic problem, it is our most urgent one. Upon our success in coping with it largely depends our future happiness or woe. The past year has been marked by great intensification of the Committee's work in combatting anti-Semitism.

To the mass approach, long skilfully employed by our Department of Public Education (formerly Department of Public Relations), has been added the class approach. Suggestions and materials—articles, speeches, cartoons, posters, etc.—continue to go in a steady stream from our Public Education Department via newspapers, magazines and radio, alerting the public at large to the threat of anti-Semitism to American institutions.

But that is not enough. It is also necessary to impress the fact that anti-Semitism is a direct threat to the self-interest of the individual members of the various class groups that make up our population. The Public Education Department has accordingly engaged a corps of specialists, through whose efforts our message, couched in terms appropriate for these groups, is disseminated to them. To the experts already working a year ago in the fields of women's organizations and labor, have now been added experts on war veterans, youth, and religious groups. A lay committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Walter Mendelsohn, advises the department as a whole; and several subcommittees, composed partly of our members and partly of outside recognized authorities in the various fields, guide the work of the class specialists.

Our Department of Scientific Research is now embarked on a number of projects engaging the cooperation of university and other scientific groups. These projects are designed to probe deeply into the psychology of anti-Semitism, with a view to the formulation

of a scientific approach to the handling of these problems. Some of these projects will require as much as three years for completion. Meanwhile, the department is proving of great immediate value to our work by testing our current materials, and, on the basis of these tests, pointing the way to their improvement. The department is guided as to policy by a lay committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ira M. Younker, and, on its technical problems, by an advisory group of social scientists.

Our Legal and Investigative Department continues to keep the Committee informed of the activities of anti-Semitic agitators and their organizations. The information gleaned by it is often drawn upon and effectively used by law-enforcement agencies and by journalists bent on exposing subversive movements. A lay committee, whose chairman is Mr. Victor S. Riesenfeld, meets fortnightly to advise the staff of this department.

The Department of Library, Research and Publications is still unrivaled in its special field for the completeness of its collections, pamphlets, magazines, and newspaper clippings. Its research facilities and services are essential to the other departments of the Committee, and are much used by outsiders, as well. This department is also responsible for compiling the *American Jewish Year Book*.

The Community Service Department, which Mr. Jerome J. Rothschild serves as adviser, is the indispensable link between our organization and local community agencies and key individuals concerned with combatting anti-Semitism throughout the country.

Great as is our concern with the problem of anti-Semitism, we do not conceive that our responsibility to the American Jewish community is confined alone to combatting that menace. We also have an obligation to strengthen the Jewish community from within and to further the adjustment of Jews to the American scene. A feature of the Executive Committee meeting a year ago was the address of your Executive Vice-President, who urged us to take leadership along these lines. Your Executive Committee gave its enthusiastic endorsement and thereby in effect authorized the addition of a new dimension to the Committee's domestic program.

As an initial step, a Conference on Jewish Adjustment in the United States, the first of its kind ever held here, was arranged with the cooperation of Professors Salo W. Baron of Columbia University, Louis Wirth of the University of Chicago, I. L. Kandel of Teachers College, and Dr. Abraham A. Neuman, President of Dropsie College. The thirty participants in the conference con-

curred in the belief that there are rich possibilities of affirmative Jewish life in this country, but that our cultural heritage requires reinterpretation and reinvigoration. A Jewish educator, long concerned with the problem of cultural integration, joined our staff last fall, and will help us evolve a program, for which no pattern currently exists. The lay committee assisting in the development of this program is under the chairmanship of Mr. Alan M. Stroock.

Your Committee is making a notable contribution to Jewish culture in America through its new monthly periodical *Commentary*, which has replaced the *Contemporary Jewish Record*. The first number appeared in November, 1945, and the enthusiastic reception accorded it demonstrates that it fills a genuine need. Mr. Ralph E. Samuel heads the new publication's advisory committee.

Foreign Affairs

The need of our European brethren for sympathy, encouragement, and assistance is greater perhaps than at any time in the history of man. The diabolical plan of the Nazis completely to exterminate the Jews of Europe was almost carried out. Earlier estimates of a death toll of four out of nine million, were increased to five and then to six million.

Of the survivors, several hundred thousand were far from their former homes, to which most of them were unable or understandably unwilling to return. Nor was the lot of those who managed to remain in, or to return to, the countries of which they were citizens, lacking in most serious complications. The situation of the Jewish survivors in Europe presented and continues to present a complex of economic, social, political and spiritual problems of staggering difficulty, imposing on the Jewish community of the United States tasks of unprecedented magnitude.

Measures for succoring the victims of the Nazi terror were quickly undertaken by the relief agencies. To the American Jewish Committee, whose responsibility it is to protect the civil, political, and religious rights of Jews, fell the task of working for restoration of these rights. How the American Jewish Committee discharged its responsibilities in behalf of our brethren abroad is told in detail in the report of the Foreign Affairs Department. In view, however, of the unusual importance of many of these activities and, since the

present report is the only one to be presented at this meeting, your Committee deems it both proper and useful briefly to summarize them.

Direct contact with Europe was resumed several months before V-E Day, when the Director of our Department of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Max Gottschalk, went first to London and then to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where he conferred both with Jewish leaders and government officials, and was successful in promoting a better understanding of the needs and problems of the Jews in those countries with resultant benefit to them. An office of the Committee has been established in London, and correspondents secured in a number of countries who are keeping our Foreign Affairs Department currently informed of the situation in their respective lands.

In July of 1945, the Chairman of your Executive Committee and Judge George Z. Medalie, then Chairman of your Foreign Affairs Committee, had interviews with the Hon. Joseph C. Grew, at that time Acting Secretary of State, and with Mr. A. Feller, then general counsel of UNRRA. We requested that Jewish organizations be permitted to designate experts to be accredited by UNRRA to visit Germany and to work in behalf of the displaced Jews there. This request was approved, and among others, a team of four representatives of the American Jewish Committee spent several months in Germany.

At the same interview with Mr. Grew, your representatives suggested the appointment of a Jewish layman to advise army headquarters in the American zone in Germany regarding problems arising in connection with the displaced Jews in that zone. This suggestion eventuated in the designation of Federal District Judge Simon H. Rifkind to serve in that capacity. Representatives of your Committee met with Judge Rifkind before his departure and informed him of the steps taken and contemplated by us in behalf of the displaced Jews.

A number of other steps were also taken in behalf of the displaced, especially the most unfortunate groups among them—the stateless and non-repatriable. Before President Truman left for Potsdam, your Committee sent him a memorandum, a feature of which was the request that he urge at the Potsdam Conference substantial liberalization of the policy affecting immigration into

Palestine. Last September, Judge Proskauer, your President, and Mr. Blaustein, the Chairman of your Executive Committee, had a conference with President Truman. We reiterated the request that Great Britain permit large immigration into Palestine and importuned particularly that he persevere in his efforts for 100,000 emergency visas. Your officers pointed out that, irrespective of the ultimate political solution for Palestine, this was a stark matter of saving the lives of certain of the remnants of European Jewry.

Several weeks later, the Chairman of your Executive Committee and Dr. Slawson, your Executive Vice-President, called on the Hon. Dean C. Acheson, Under-Secretary of State, upon whom they urged the following suggestions: (1) that the United States maintain its position, at the forthcoming meeting of the UNRRA Council, that aid be continued to all displaced persons including those "who have suffered because of racial discrimination and who have refused to return to their countries of origin"; (2) that the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees be given the necessary means and authority to promote immediate emigration plans for displaced and stateless Jews; (3) that the refugees without visas at Oswego not be sent back to Europe; and (4) that the State Department immediately establish American consulates in Germany to facilitate the emigration of displaced persons to the United States. Your representatives were assured earnest consideration of each of these suggestions and, as you know, some have since been effectuated.

In October, in a letter to Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, the Chairman of your Executive Committee suggested that a certain percentage of the reparations exacted from Germany should be set aside for the partial compensation of damages suffered by stateless, non-repatriable, and German Jews, and others who have been expropriated on grounds of racial discrimination. It was proposed that a United Nations Trusteeship on Indemnification be set up to handle the claims of the persons in these special categories, just as the claims of other victims will be filed with, and handled by, their own governments.

Early in November, prior to Prime Minister Attlee's visit to Washington, your Committee deemed it necessary to press again for our Government's zealous furtherance of President Truman's proposal for the immediate entry of 100,000 Jews to Palestine. In a letter to Secretary Byrnes, your officers stated that this request expressed the will of substantially all American Jews, however they may differ otherwise on the Palestine question.

On November 13, it was announced that an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry would soon be appointed to study and report on the Palestine question and the situation of Jews in Europe. On November 23, the Chairman of your Executive Committee and your Executive Vice-President conferred with Secretary Byrnes and vigorously urged that the appointment of the Committee "should in no way preclude or delay the granting of President Truman's request for the admission of 100,000 displaced Jews into Palestine." In addition, your representatives expressed satisfaction with the broad directives given to the Anglo-American Committee. We particularly commended the instruction that it consider the possibilities of immigration to countries outside of Europe, and expressed the hope that the United States would share the responsibility for providing immigration opportunities for the stateless and non-repatriable.

Mr. Byrnes invited your representatives to submit additional information on the subject. This was done in a letter calling attention to the fact that during the war years only a small fraction of the established quotas for immigration into the United States from the countries involved has been used, and urging that steps be taken to facilitate the early issuance and use of visas available under existing law. Directives to that effect were issued by President Truman a few weeks later.

Your Committee's emergency activities in overseas affairs were not restricted to the Old World. Since August there have been reports, growing in frequency and gravity, that leaves no doubt but that the followers of Col. Peron in Argentina are emulating their Nazi models by fomenting anti-Semitic agitation and attacking the persons and property of Jews. In letters dated November 27 to Secretary of State Byrnes and to Hon. Spruille Braden, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, your President urged that, in concert with other American republics or with the United Nations, the government of the United States take vigorous action to bring about the cessation of such outrages.

We are in constant and frequent touch with correspondents in Argentina, who keep your Committee fully informed of events and trends of special interest to us. The staff of our Foreign Affairs Department now includes an expert on Latin America, who until recently was a resident of Buenos Aires. Moreover, a field representative has also been engaged. At present in Mexico, he is expected to go to South America later.

San Francisco Conference

In 1944, foreseeing the probability of Allied victory some time in 1945, we appointed a Committee on Peace Problems, composed of recognized authorities in social science and international relations, as well as outstanding jurists and other men of affairs. The task of this Committee on Peace Problems was to work out specific suggestions in anticipation of a Peace Conference, which was then expected to be convened shortly after the cessation of hostilities. Basing its deliberations largely on the painstaking factual studies made by our Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems, established as long ago as 1940, the Peace Problems Committee submitted a report to your Executive Committee just a year ago, which was adopted. These recommendations on the problems of repatriation, migration, reparation, Palestine, etc., were reflected in the steps taken by us to meet the many emergency situations which arose last year, as already reported to you, and were embodied in a brief, *To the Counsellors of Peace*, which was submitted to the delegates at the San Francisco Conference and to other interested parties, including yourselves.

Transcending all of these steps in ultimate importance was our successful advocacy in San Francisco last spring of another recommendation of our Peace Problems Committee; namely, inclusion in the United Nations Charter of provision for a Commission on Human Rights within the United Nations Organization. Respect for the dignity of every human being and the protection of basic human rights, regardless of race, language, religion, or sex, are absolute prerequisites to a better world. That is basic and fundamental. Our conviction as to this was shared by the late President Roosevelt, with whom your President and the Chairman of your Executive Committee had an extended conference on March 24 last, when we submitted to and discussed with him the proposals of our Peace Problems Committee. Expressing a warm interest in our program, President Roosevelt particularly emphasized that in the creation and implementation of a Commission on Human Rights lay the real hope of future security for *all* people, including Jews. The President told us to go to San Francisco and work for that proposal.

A formal invitation to send representatives there to serve as consultants to the United States delegation to the United Nations Conference was received from the State Department shortly there-

after. For the first time in the history of international relations, there was seen at San Francisco an expression of democracy in action where the representatives of the people really collaborated with the governmental delegation of their country.

The purpose of the Conference was to establish a permanent world organization, within the framework of the Dumbarton Oaks agreement. The international protection of human rights was accordingly the only item on your Committee's program falling strictly within the Conference's scope. Your representatives, Judge Proskauer and Mr. Blaustein, therefore concentrated their main effort with their fellow-consultants and with the American and other delegations toward ensuring that the world organization being created in San Francisco would include adequate machinery for this purpose, in the form of a permanent Commission to draft an International Bill of Human Rights and to make provision for its implementation and enforcement.

Although this proposal was also sponsored by consultants representing other important American organizations, it appeared for a time that the official Conference delegates were indisposed to go, or did not see how they practically could go, beyond the abstract, inadequate formulation on the subject of human rights adopted at Dumbarton Oaks. To translate it into a concrete provision in the Charter of the United Nations, vigorous action at the eleventh hour became necessary. On the initiative of your representatives, a group of consultants met with members of the American delegation, including its chairman, the Hon. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., then Secretary of State, and his principal adviser on the subject, Dr. Isaiah Bowman, President of Johns Hopkins University. Responding to the brilliant presentation of your President and to certain practical suggestions offered by the Chairman of your Executive Committee, in which other consultants concurred, Mr. Stettinius and Dr. Bowman pledged support of the proposal with the American delegation and undertook to urge it upon the other delegations. As a result, the United Nations Charter establishes the international protection of human rights as a cardinal objective of the United Nations Organization, and provides specific means for achieving this all-important end.

Also at San Francisco, your representatives successfully supported the efforts of the Zionist organizations to prevent action being taken under the trusteeship system set up there which would prejudice the existing rights of Jews concerning Palestine.

Testimony Before Anglo-American Committee

As already indicated, the San Francisco Conference was concerned exclusively with permanent international machinery for the solution of the world's problems, and not with actually solving these problems there. Many of the situations in which Jews are particularly involved, come within the purview of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry before which Judge Proskauer appeared in Washington on January 9. He there submitted our comprehensive program for dealing with the Jewish situation in Europe as well as in Palestine. There is being mailed to you a copy of his testimony, newspaper accounts of which provoked excellent reactions from both the Jewish and the general public, and the particulars are therefore not being included in this report.

Suffice it to say here that the many questions with which the members of the Committee plied your President at the conclusion of his argument, not only demonstrated how sympathetically they had followed his masterly presentation of this difficult and complex subject, but afforded him an opportunity to reenforce the strong impression already made. We trust that our recommendations will be favorably acted on.

Conclusion

No review of the year could be complete that did not take note of the irreparable loss suffered by your Committee in the passing of your Honorary Vice-President, Judge Irving Lehman. It was to him that your officers turned, particularly in times of crisis, for the sage counsel which, with his profound feeling for his fellow-Jews and his wide knowledge of men and affairs, was uniquely his to give.

Few of our members have given themselves more unstintingly to our work than Judge George Z. Medalie, recently appointed to the New York State Court of Appeals. The well-merited honor that has come to him is also an honor to the Committee. By accepting the Honorary Vice-Presidency to which you have elected him today, he has signified that he will continue to be identified with us.

After seventeen years of service to the American Jewish Committee, Mr. Morris D. Waldman, Vice-Chairman of your Executive Committee and former Executive Vice-President, requested retire-

ment for reasons of health. This was granted as of October 1, 1945. Your Executive Committee takes this occasion to pay tribute to the fine contributions made by Mr. Waldman to the cause of Jewry the world over both before and during his association with your Committee. He will continue to be a member of our Executive and Administrative Committees, where we trust that we may have the benefit of his wisdom and counsel for a long time to come.

In the year now beginning, we shall round out the fourth decade of our corporate existence. This new year is almost certain to confront us with problems as numerous and as serious as those with which we have latterly been faced. The world has still far to go before the aftermath of war, so gravely affecting our surviving fellow-Jews abroad, subsides into true peace. We must also be prepared to cope with a substantial increase in anti-Semitic agitation, now that war-time restraints are being lifted.

To these sacred duties, your Committee solemnly re-dedicates itself. Given the seasoned judgment of our old members, the fresh thinking of those newly joining our ranks, and the devotion of both, we may hope to meet successfully the problems that face us.

Respectfully submitted,

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE