

NEWS

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

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◀ Founded in 1906.

◀ Pioneer American organization combating bigotry, protecting the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advancing the cause of human rights everywhere.

◀ Chapters in 44 principal cities; members in more than 550 American communities.

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Ben Gurion and Blaustein in Joint
Statement Clarify Relationship
Between Israel and Jews in Other Countries

1950 Understanding Officially Reaffirmed;
Statement Issued at 54th Annual Meeting
of American Jewish Committee Here

Frederick F. Greenman of New York
Named Committee's 10th President
Chairman of Executive Board and
New Vice Presidents Elected

FOR RELEASE MONDAY, MAY 1

New York, April 30...The relationship between Israel and Jews in other free democracies, which provoked strong controversy earlier this year, has been clarified by a firm understanding in the form of the joint statement by Israel Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, U.S. industrialist and Honorary President of the American Jewish Committee.

An important point in the understanding, as stated by Mr. Ben Gurion, is that "we, the people of Israel, have no desire and no intention to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of Jewish communities abroad." Underscored in the understanding is the fact that the emigration of Jews to Israel is at their own "free discretion" and that nothing should be done by the Israel government which would "undermine the sense of security and stability of American Jewry."

Mr. Blaustein returned this week to this country after extensive discussions on this issue in Israel with Prime Minister Ben Gurion and members of his cabinet. He reported on his understanding

The American Jewish Committee
JUN 5 1961

Blaustein Library

with the Prime Minister at a plenary session of the American Jewish Committee's 54th Annual Meeting here today.

An announcement of the understanding is being made simultaneously in Jerusalem and New York by the Prime Minister and Mr. Blaustein.

At the meeting today, Frederick F. Greenman, a prominent New York attorney, and education and civic leader, was elected as the tenth president of the American Jewish Committee. He succeeds Herbert B. Ehrmann of Boston who held the post since 1959, and who has been named an honorary president of the American Jewish Committee.

Louis Caplan of Pittsburgh was elected chairman of the Executive Board and four new vice presidents were voted into office: Morris B. Abram of Atlanta, Dr. Max W. Bav of Los Angeles, Philip E. Hoffman of Orange, New Jersey, and Gardner H. Stern of Chicago. (Attached is a full biographical sketch of Mr. Greenman as well as brief biographies of the newly elected officers.)

Mr. Blaustein asserted here today that "in particular, Prime Minister Ben Gurion undertook to do everything within his power to see to it that the understanding in the future is kept in spirit and in letter." The Prime Minister also undertook to advise the members of his cabinet and other responsible members of the government, of his desire "that the spirit and content of the understanding be fully respected."

In effect, Mr. Blaustein, who went to Israel at the invitation of Mr. Ben Gurion, gained a "strong official reaffirmation" from the Prime Minister of their 1950 understanding with an expression of intent to avoid future violations. Mr. Blaustein spent hours in frank and full conversation with the Prime Minister on all aspects of the problem as he had in 1950. A salient point of the Prime Minister's 1950 statement stressed that "Israel represents and speaks only in behalf of its own citizens and in no way presumes to represent or speak in the name of Jews in any other country...We the people of Israel have no desire and no intention to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of Jewish communities abroad."

An equally important point of the 1950 understanding was that "nothing should be said or done which could in the slightest degree undermine the sense of security and stability of American Jewry... The decision of whether they (Jews) wish to come (to Israel) -- permanently or temporarily, rests with the free discretion of the American Jew himself."

Mr. Blaustein reported of his most recent conversation with Mr. Ben Gurion:

"It was admitted that some misunderstanding might have arisen." The further understanding now reached is that "everything should be done on both sides in order to obviate misunderstandings in the future so that it will be entirely clear to everybody concerned that the 1950 agreement had lost none of its force and validity."

On December 30, 1960, the American Jewish Committee, a non-Zionist human relations agency, charged Mr. Ben Gurion with violating an understanding made in 1950 with Mr. Blaustein as to the relationship of American Jews and Jews residing elsewhere throughout the world and the State of Israel. At that time, the Committee said it was shocked by Mr. Ben Gurion's statement, as reported, that Jews throughout the world were obligated to emigrate to Israel and that Jews could not lead a full life in the context of their Judaism outside of Israel. The Committee maintains that any emigration must be an act of free choice. It further asserts that Jews can be fully integrated into the life of America, participate in all phases of its life and at the same time retain their religious identity in every respect.

This statement was issued in reply to Mr. Ben Gurion's remarks at the 25th World Zionist Congress concerning Jews who lived outside of Israel, and Mr. Ben Gurion later asserted that he had been misunderstood.

In referring to the "explicit understanding" arrived at in 1950, the Committee said it was, among other things, that "the government and the people of Israel fully respect the right and integrity of Jewish communities in other countries to develop their own mode of

life and their indigenous social, economic and cultural institutions in accordance with their own needs and aspirations."

Mr. Blaustein pointed out that for the first few years after the State of Israel had been founded, "many statements in Israel and elsewhere were interpreted as being inimical to Jewish citizens in other free democracies." He said that these statements caused great concern to Jews outside of Israel, and that it was this concern which led to the formulation of the 1950 agreement. At that time, Prime Minister Ben Gurion and Mr. Blaustein exchanged statements on the "relationship of Israel to Jews in other countries."

The full text of the statement by Prime Minister Ben Gurion and Mr. Blaustein including some of the salient points of the reaffirmed 1950 understanding is attached.

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