

Published by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

106 East 41st Street, New York 17, N. Y.

VOL. X. NO. 249

Thursday, October 28, 1943

BEN-GURION RESIGNS; JEWISH AGENCY EXECUTIVE REFUSES TO ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION

JERUSALEM, Oct. 27. (JTA)-- David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, today tendered his resignation at a session of the Zionist Actions Committee in a sudden move which came as a surprise even to the members of the Agency's executive.

Giving no reason for his resignation, Ben-Gurion, after making his brief and startling announcement, left his place at the presidium table and took a seat among the rank-and-file members of the Actions Committee.

The session of the Actions Committee was immediately adjourned and the executive of the Jewish Agency held a special meeting which culminated in a statement announcing that Ben-Gurion's resignation would not be accepted by the executive. Ben-Gurion himself did not participate in the meeting.

When the Actions Committee resumed meeting later, it put Ben-Gurion's resignation to a vote. By a total of 28 votes it was decided that the Actions Committee join the executive in refusing to accept the resignation. The four members of the Hashomer Hatzair, the Ichud Party and the left wing of the Poale-Zion abstained from voting.

Dr. Weizmann is Asked to Come to Palestine

While refusing to accept Ben-Gurion's resignation, both the executive of the Jewish Agency and the Actions Committee decided to ask Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of the Agency, to proceed from London to Palestine "as soon as possible."

Simultaneously, the Hashomer Hatzair, left wing of the Zionist Laborites, issued a statement terming Ben-Gurion's announcement "a move against Dr. Weizmann." The statement, couched in strong terms, said that "it is inconceivable that Dr. Weizmann should be torn away from the important work in which he is now engaged."

Mr. Ben-Gurion himself refused to comment on the decisions of the Actions Committee and of the Jewish Agency executive. Nor did he indicate that he accepted their decisions and was willing to withdraw his resignation. The Palestine Jewish Labor Party, of which Ben-Gurion is a leader, held a joint conference with leading members of the other Zionist groups at which it was unanimously decided that Mr. Ben-Gurion must be prevailed upon to withdraw his resignation. The Hashomer Hatzair group did not participate in the conference.

Palestine evening newspapers in reporting the resignation point out that an internal crisis has been brewing in the ranks of the Jewish Agency executive for months. They reveal that it started after Ben-Gurion's return from his visit to the United States.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE ATTITUDE ON CONFERENCE EXPLAINED AT PRESS PARLEY

NEW YORK, Oct. 27. (JTA)-- The reasons which prompted the American Jewish Committee to withdraw from the American Jewish Conference were outlined here today by Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, president of the Committee, addressing a press conference. A formal statement issued to the press following the conference reads:

"The American Jewish Committee associated itself with the American Jewish Conference in the hope that through meetings of representatives of Jewish organizations and communities in a consultative body, an endeavor might be made to achieve a program for unity of action with respect to Jewish problems in the post-war world.

"The American Jewish Committee has at all times taken the position that the American Jewish Conference should be exactly what the name implies - a conference, that is to say, a deliberative body, fairly representative of a cross-section of American Jewry, and that it should not be an authoritative or permanent body superimposed upon the structure of Jewish life in America. Consequently, the Committee entered the Conference on two conditions; (1) the character and accordingly the name of the project should be changed from "Assembly" to "Conference;" and (2) the right of any participating organization to dissent from and, so dissenting, not to be bound by the conclusions of the Conference, should be recognized. These two conditions were accepted.

"As the election machinery developed, it became evident that the inclusion of overlapping organizations, on the one hand, and the exclusion of large local and national agencies, on the other, would necessarily result in a gathering in which significant segments of the Jewish population would have virtually no voice. Prior to the actual meeting of the Conference, we called the attention of its Executive Committee to this situation. Our protest pointed out that the organizations excluded constituted the backbone of a substantial part of every Jewish community and that to exclude them is to confine membership in the Conference to restricted groups in the community.

United Course of Conduct was Expected

"Nevertheless we still deemed it our duty to confer. We continued association with the Conference in the hope that by mutual exchange of views there might be consideration for a unified course of conduct with respect to the problems within the scope of the Conference. However, to a large extent the delegates, though elected as community representatives, came to the Conference with voting instructions, and a large number of delegates felt that their action was determined by virtue of decisions made by official Zionist bodies. Hence, to our deep regret, there was no adequate opportunity for an exchange of views and the character of the meeting as a Conference was essentially destroyed. Indeed, some organizations which had both Zionist and non-Zionist members felt obliged to refrain from voting.

"The resolutions with respect to Palestine were thus adopted without opportunity to effect a possible adjustment between ultimate political Zionist aspirations and the position held by a vast number of Jews not affiliated with official Zionist bodies. These resolutions were, in our judgment, not in the best interest of Jews throughout the world, including Palestine. Therefore, we had no alternative but to dissent.

Equality for Jewish Citizens in Every Land is Emphasized

"In its Statement of Views adopted last January, the American Jewish Committee set forth its principles and program. In that statement we pledged ourselves with all Americans to the winning of the war and the achievement for the

whole world of the Four Freedoms and the blessings of the Atlantic Charter. We urged upon the United Nations relief from the havoc and ruin inflicted by Axis barbarism on millions of human beings, especially Jews, their repatriation, rehabilitation and the complete restoration and safeguarding of their equal civil and religious rights; the implementation of a program under international supervision that shall facilitate voluntary settlement of refugees in other countries; reaffirmation of the principle that Jewish citizens of every land shall be guaranteed the right of complete equality. The acceptance of these principles and the realization of these measures continue to be of first importance.

Non-Zionists also Helped Achievements in Palestine

"We join with all our fellow Jews in proud recognition of the achievements of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine where there has been built up a flourishing economic life and a satisfying spiritual and cultural life. These achievements have been the result of the work not only of Zionists but also of non-Zionists. Leaders of the American Jewish Committee were in the forefront of the efforts which culminated in the enlargement of the Jewish Agency, and the American Jewish Committee joined with Zionist organizations in protests against policies which appeared calculated to place obstacles in the way of the progress of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine. Non-Zionists as well as Zionists helped establish the Hebrew University, promoted substantial cultural, religious and economic activities in Palestine, and contributed generously to the support of the efforts to establish the Jewish Settlement in Palestine on a firm foundation.

"But despite the recognized achievements of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine, it cannot, in the light of the realities of Jewish life in the world, alone furnish the solution of the problem of post-war Jewish rehabilitation. In our Statement of Views we recognized the wide divergence of opinion with respect to the future government of Palestine, and we emphasized that under existing conditions in Palestine and in the world there should be no preconceived formula at this time as to the permanent political structure which should obtain there.

Wants to Preserve Free Position on Palestine

"We affirmed and reaffirm that whatever government be established ultimately in Palestine, there can be no political identification of Jews outside of Palestine with such government. This must be emphasized and we deem it our duty to preserve a position free and untrammelled to urge this view.

"In accordance with our Statement of Views we approve for the present for Palestine an international trusteeship responsible to the United Nations for the following purposes: To safeguard the Jewish Settlement in, and Jewish immigration into, Palestine, and to guarantee adequate scope for future growth and development to the full extent of the economic absorptive capacity of the country; to safeguard and protect the fundamental rights of all inhabitants; to safeguard and protect the holy places of all faiths; and to prepare the country to become, within a reasonable period of years, a self-governing Commonwealth under a Constitution and a Bill of Rights that will safeguard and protect these purposes and basic rights for all. We thus tendered an affirmative program of conduct to which we believed and believe that Zionist and non-Zionist alike might accord support.

"As opposed to this, at a time when the Jews in Palestine constitute approximately one-third of the population, the Conference made the immediate demand for the exclusive exercise by a Jewish body of the sovereign right to control immigration

and for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth. From such demands, clearly incapable of immediate realization, there was bound to be grave dissent. To our regret we could get no consideration for the plea for the withholding of these ultimate, divisive demands in order to concentrate upon present unity of action on matters upon which there was complete agreement -- such as the abrogation of the White Paper, which terminates immigration into Palestine.

Considers Committee's Attitude Sound

"We are profoundly convinced that in the interests of the development of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine itself, as well as the security and welfare of the Jews throughout the world, the position taken by the American Jewish Committee is sound, and that in view of international conditions it is an error to insist upon these ultimate political proposals. We deem it vital that in the interest of Jewry it should be made clear that the assertion of such extreme demands has been unacceptable to large segments of American Jewry.

"The salvation and rehabilitation of the stricken Jews of Europe cannot be achieved through Palestine alone, and certainly not by over-emphasis on the political constitution of Palestine. It can be achieved only by considering Palestine a part of the larger program which looks to the rehabilitation of Jews throughout the world and the restoration of their equal rights.

"Holding these views, we do not see how, on the one hand we can in good conscience usefully continue membership in the Conference which, through its Interim Committee, is now seeking to implement the Resolutions from which we dissented, or, on the other hand, how that Committee, on which we have been asked to take our place, could function unembarrassed were we to remain as a dissenting element. Moreover, in view of the fact that the predetermined position of so many of the delegates renders impossible consideration of ideas that do not conform to that position, it is futile for us to continue what in reality can only be nominal participation. Our remaining in the Conference would give the appearance of unity of action -- but only the appearance, not the genuine unity of action that we have always hoped for. Therefore, in fairness both to the Conference and to the American Jewish Committee, and prompted by the firm belief that it is to the best interest of Jews in this and other countries, we feel impelled, to our keen disappointment, to withdraw from further participation in the Conference.

Ready for Aggressive Action in America, Europe, Palestine

"At this tragic juncture in the history of the Jews we are confronted by grave and immediate tasks. We invite the cooperation of all Jews in a program of action which we mean to continue to pursue aggressively in behalf of Jewry in America, in Europe, in Palestine and everywhere in the world where we can be helpful. Desiring as we do for the stricken Jews of Europe the broadest opportunity which Palestine can offer them, we shall exert our most diligent efforts to bring about the abrogation of the White Paper. Unhindered by intransigent political objectives, we believe we can be the more effective in this direction. So long as countless Jews continue to die day after day in Europe, we believe that all Jews should concentrate on the opening of the doors of Palestine to Jewish immigration rather than on debates regarding ultimate political aspirations.

"But much more than Palestine must occupy the attention of any responsible body which is vitally concerned with the total welfare of Jewry. Through the marshalling of public opinion, through representations to our government and through proper diplomatic channels, we shall continue to seek to achieve the

quickest possible rescue of the Jews persecuted in Europe today and to attain for the millions who will be there tomorrow a normal life on a basis of equality with their fellow-citizens. We insist upon the right of Jews to live as equal citizens in Europe or anywhere.

Hopes for Cooperation with Other Jewish Organizations

"We shall continue assiduously our efforts to deal with anti-Semitism in this country and to expose its true character as a miserable anti-democratic and anti-American manifestation. By a broad educational program, by collaboration with all groups in America who recognize the divisive and demoralizing nature of anti-Semitism, we shall seek to bring about such a community of understanding between all religious and racial groups that bigotry and discrimination will be destroyed. By continuing to cooperate with those many vital Jewish institutions and movements in this country - religious, cultural, philanthropic -- we hope to help nourish and enrich Jewish life in America. In all this we shall be moved by a conviction, shared, we believe, by an overwhelming number of American Jews, that the problems of world Jewry cannot be solved by any single political panacea, but by concentrated activity toward the attainment of a secure place for Jews in all countries of the globe.

"Unity of conduct in these broad areas continues to be our aim. We shall always hope for the largest measure of cooperation by our Committee with all other Jewish organizations to achieve these common objectives.

RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY RESIGNS FROM AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, Oct. 27.(JTA)-- The Rabbinical Assembly of America, deploring the action taken by the American Jewish Committee in withdrawing from the American Jewish Conference, ended last night its affiliation with the Committee.

Describing the Committee's withdrawal as jeopardizing "the effort of American Jewry on behalf of world Jewry," the Assembly expressed the hope that a way would yet be found for the committee to resume its place within the framework of the conference. This, the assembly said, would again make it possible for the Assembly to collaborate with the Committee "for the furtherance of our many common purposes in Jewish life."

GOLDMANN SCORES AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE AT HADASSAH CONVENTION

NEW YORK, Oct. 27.(JTA)-- Dr. Nahum Goldmann, executive member of the Jewish Agency and chairman of the administrative committee of the World Jewish Congress, speaking at the Hadassah Convention tonight, criticized the American Jewish Committee for withdrawing from the American Jewish Conference.

"The support by American Jewry of the Zionist demands will be of decisive importance," Dr. Goldmann said. "Therefore, the vote of the American Jewish Conference is of historical value. The withdrawal of the American Jewish Committee from the Conference is a real stab in the back and an attempt to weaken the authority of the American Jewish Conference and its support of Palestine. It will be the task of American Jewry to make clear to Jewish and non-Jewish public opinion that the American Jewish Committee represents only a limited number of individuals without any real constituency, as the results of the elections to the American Jewish Conference demonstrated.