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IRVING M. ENGEL ELECTED PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Irving M. Engel, New York lawyer and civic leader, was unanimously elected president of the American Jewish Committee today by more than 500 leaders of American Jewry, attending the final session of the AJC's 47th annual meeting. Mr. Engel succeeds Jacob Blaustein, who had completed a five year term as president, and who was named honorary president.

Speaking at the committee's dinner last night at the Hotel Commodore, Henry A. Byroade, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, declared that "Israel as a state is here to stay - and the United States is here to help insure that existence. There is as well no change in the feeling of fundamental friendship which we feel for that new state," Mr. Byroade stated.

"Where some of us would differ is on questions of tactics--tactics as to how to reach that state of stability and peace in the Middle East which is essential not only for the existence of Israel itself but in the interests of every American citizen--as these are matters which vitally affect the security and interest of our own country."

The Assistant Secretary pointed out that it was difficult for American officials to maintain a "balanced course" between Israel and all the nations of the region in the current Middle East dispute. But, he added; "I do not believe success to be unobtainable in reaching the objectives of peace and security in the Middle East - as some would believe. As we proceed in these matters--and as questions arise in your minds--I ask you to judge each issue as to whether it is a question of method in reaching those desired objectives or a question of fundamentals as to our attitude towards Israel which I have given you in all sincerity as being facts which will not change."

Blaustein Awarded Silver Plaque at Dinner

At the dinner, Mr. Blaustein was awarded a silver plaque in appreciation of his services to the committee which he led for five years and whose executive committee he headed for six years before that. The presentation was made by Senator Herbert H. Lehman, who paid tribute to Mr. Blaustein's record of service and who asserted that the AJC was one of those organizations which by their good works have helped to establish abroad a high regard for the United States.

Mr. Blaustein told the diners that "the American people are being caught in a squeeze between the very real menace of Communism and these political demagogues

who are offering a remedy for the cancer of Communism as bad as the disease itself." While he expressed the conviction that the dominant problem in the world today is the threat of Communism, Mr. Blaustein warned that another menace to America was a sharp change in strategy by native bigots who "have abandoned their rock-throwing, rough-and-tumble strategy and are now attacking those institutions of our society on which rests the security of Jews and other minority groups."

"These institutions are fundamental to the survival of democracy," he explained. "Yet, by exploiting cold war tensions and fears, and most of all, the fear of Communism, the hate-merchants are marshalling Americans of unquestioned patriotism to attack civil rights and civil liberties."

Engel Sees New Atmosphere of Amity in U.S.

In his report as chairman of the outgoing executive board, Mr. Engel told the delegates that "a new atmosphere of greater racial and religious amity has been created in America." He cited in support of this point the absence of lynchings in the U.S. in the past two years and the progress in eliminating segregation in the armed forces, and called on "men of goodwill everywhere to join with us of the American Jewish Committee in this struggle to realize in practice the American dream of freedom and equality for all."

At the same time, Mr. Engel warned that the science of human relations must keep well ahead of the science of destruction if civilization is to survive. However, he stressed that the AJC, "like most Americans," are optimists. "We believe in the possibility of progress in our moral and social life as well as in industry and science."

HIAS ANNUAL MEETING ASKS UNITED STATES TO SCRAP MCCARRAN ACT

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- A resolution calling upon the United States Government to repeal the present immigration law and enact in its place liberal measures provided by Sen. Herbert H. Lehman and others, was adopted here today at the 69th annual meeting of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). The meeting also approved a budget of \$1,639,250 for 1954.

The delegates, representing more than 3,000 organizations which support HIAS, also hailed the agreement to merge HIAS and United Service for New Americans to eliminate duplication of function and other inefficiencies and improve service for the immigrants. Other resolutions urged the United States to take action in the UN to bring about peace between Israel and the Arab states and to aid Israel financially, and halting the expanding HIAS program in Israel.

Senator Lehman, who received a scroll of honor from HIAS for his work in the field of immigration, told the delegates that the McCarran Law "must go." He said that the Eisenhower Emergency Refugee Relief Act "has turned out thus far unworkable" and "bids fair to become--unless its defects are somehow cured--a legislative fraud and delusion." He called for an immigration program which would admit to the U.S. 250,000 immigrants annually.

Ben Touster, president of HIAS, in his annual report, said that as 1953 ended there was a case load of 30,000 immigration applications on file in HIAS' European offices. He estimated that 7,000 Jews would enter this country during the current year.

Dr. Arthur T. Jacobs, executive director of the organization, reviewed HIAS' expanded program in many countries during the past year and the increased workload which made expansion necessary. He also reported on HIAS cooperation with international agencies and governments, including that of Israel, in pursuance of its immigrant assistance programs.

FUND-RAISING FOR ISRAEL IN "SERIOUS DECLINE," SONNEBORN TELLS U. I. A.

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Fund-raising for Israel in this country is experiencing a "serious, drastic decline," Rudolf G. Sonneborn, national chairman of the United Israel Appeal, said today at the UIA annual meeting here.

Sounding a "somber warning" to the Jewish people in this country, Mr. Sonneborn, who was re-elected chairman at the meeting, declared that we can "no longer escape the painful and boldly apparent fact that available funds have been sharply reduced while at the same time responsibilities in Israel, particularly in terms of human lives and their productive rehabilitation, have more than trebled." Mr. Sonneborn cited four major areas in Israel which have suffered sharply due to the drastic fund decline:

1. Transition camp conditions under which 100,000 immigrants live in very difficult straits with "food supplies low and malnutrition an ominous specter."
2. Short-term foreign debts totalling \$110,000,000 which must be reduced by a curtailment of imports. "This limitation on purchases abroad is working severe hardships in terms of consumer goods and necessary staples."
3. Agricultural development has had to be limited "to the point where hundreds of thousands of acres produce only one-fourth of their potential due to a lack of funds for implementing irrigation projects in full scale."
4. Social problem cases involving "tens of thousands of widows, aged, handicapped, who require direct assistance and the opportunity to do some kind of work but who are getting the barest minimum of either."

Ellis Radinsky reporting on the activities of UIA agencies in Israel during 1953, announced that a total of \$85,085,559 had been spent for the immigration and re-settlement program. "In the highly-charged atmosphere of political tension and border attrition," Mr. Radinsky said, the UIA agencies persisted in seeking to meet the productive needs of the country through a large-scale emphasis on agricultural development.

For the construction of 43 settlements, the development of those already in existence and the expansion of irrigation projects, the UIA last year spent more than \$54,500,000, Mr. Radinsky said. As part of the agricultural program, a large-scale emphasis was placed on increasing the land area under irrigation. He pointed out that in 1953 an additional 30,000 acres were added to the irrigated area.

\$750,000 PRESENTED AT ANNUAL UIA SOUTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

SAN ANTONIO, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- More than \$750,000 was presented to the United Jewish Appeal by 400 Jewish community leaders from Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana meeting at the 16th annual Southwest regional conference here today.

Guest speaker Drew Pearson, the Washington political commentator, told the parley that the United Jewish Appeal, by helping Israel, was "assisting one of the greatest humanitarian programs of our generation and extending the cause of freedom and democracy by aiding the growth of the Republic of Israel."

(In Washington it was announced that 900 campaign leaders from all over the country will attend the three-day inaugural conference of the 1954 campaign of the national United Jewish Appeal at Miami Beach beginning February 19. The goal this year is \$119,921,150.)

EBAN CHARGES ARAB LEAGUE STATES WITH CONSPIRACY AGAINST ISRAEL

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Declaring that he could not remember a time when "the hostility and lawlessness of the Arab governments was at so high a pitch over so wide a front," Israel Ambassador Abba S. Eban charged this week-end that a whole series of lawless acts by Arab states were concerted by the Arab League governments, all of which were responsible for each violation.

Mr. Eban charged an Arab conspiracy when he addressed a press conference here in connection with the submission of Israel's complaint to the Security Council against Egypt's blockade of Israel-bound shipping. He mentioned the Egyptian blockade, the Jordan refusal to honor its signature on the armistice agreements, the Syrian refusal to accept the verdict of the majority of the Security Council, the Iraqi arrests of innocent air passengers forced down on Iraqi territory and the threats of the King of Saudi Arabia.

A situation exists, he said, of "total hostility" in which "there is a flight from agreements and obligations along the entire front. All this takes place," he added, "with a remarkable lack of alert international counteraction."

Mr. Eban declared it "inconceivable" that at the climax of Arab hostility and lawlessness, military aid should be given to any member of the Arab League whose governments threaten the peace. He singled out Iraq which, with Saudi Arabia, has been mentioned as possible recipient of American military aid, as "the most extremist member" as leader in the original aggression against Israel and as the source of numerous irridentist moves in the Middle East.

Memorandum Explains Israel's Complaints

In a memorandum submitted earlier to the Security Council explaining Israel's complaint against Egypt's extension of the anti-Israel blockade at the Suez Canal and at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, Mr. Eban pointed out that the Anti-Israel Boycott Committee cited in the Egyptian legislation extending the blockade to food shipments as requesting tightening of the blockade included representatives of all member-states of the Arab League.

The memorandum, requesting discussion of the complaint at an early meeting of the Council, listed the Egyptian blockade of the Canal and the interference with shipping bound for the Israeli port of Elath as violations of the Security Council resolution of September 1, 1951, and the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement. It charged that both actions were "equally piratical and illicit."

Avowing the Israel Government's refusal to "acquiesce in this arbitrary violation of its international rights," the memorandum insisted that "the continued practice of these acts of war is bound to weaken the integrity of the Armistice Agreement, to deprive the decisions of the Security Council of their due authority, and to aggravate the threat to peace and security in the Middle East."

BENNIKE PAYS "COURTESY CALL" ON SHARETT IN JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Maj. Gen. Vagn Bennike, chief of the United Nations truce observance staff in Palestine, called on Premier Moshe Sharett this week-end. He was accompanied by his political aides. The meeting, which lasted an hour, was officially described as a "courtesy call" to congratulate Mr. Sharett on assumption of the premiership.

SHARETT TELLS CABINET OF ISRAEL'S MOVES AGAINST EGYPTIAN BLOCKADE

JERUSALEM, Jan. 31, (JTA) -- Premier Moshe Sharett today reported to the Israel Cabinet on developments leading from Israel's protest to the United Nations Security Council last week against Egypt's intensified blockade of the Suez Canal and of the Gulf of Aqaba against Israel-bound shipping.

(In London it was reported today that the American and British diplomatic envoys at Cairo had protested to the Egyptian Foreign Minister against the blockade of the Suez Canal. The report, citing informed sources, said the protests had been made Saturday.)

In addition, Mr. Sharett, who also holds the Foreign Ministry portfolio, reported on the Jordan River hydroelectric project and on the developments in Syria, where the government has cracked down on Druze elements. The Cabinet also began discussion of the budget, which must be approved by Parliament by April 1.

ISRAEL BOND DRIVE ORGANIZATION TO HOLD NATIONAL PARLEY MARCH 26

NEW YORK, Jan. 31, (JTA) -- A National Planning Conference for Israel to consider assistance to Israel's program of economic development will be held in Washington March 26-28, it was announced today by Julian B. Venesky, chairman of the executive committee of the Israel Bond Organization.

Jewish community leaders from all parts of the United States will attend the Conference, which will be devoted to the formulation of plans for the sale of the Development Issue, starting soon after April 1. The new issue is intended to raise \$75,000,000 during 1954, and is part of a total issue of \$350,000,000 to be sold during the next few years to enable Israel to achieve economic independence through the expansion of its industry, agriculture and commerce.

SEVEN ALLEGED ACCOMPLICES OF SLANSKY IMPRISONED; SIX ARE JEWS

VIENNA, Jan. 31, (JTA) -- Seven alleged accomplices of the late Rudolf Slansky, one-time Communist Party head in Czechoslovakia who was executed for "treason" and "espionage" involving alleged Jewish and Zionist conspirators, were this week-end sentenced to various prison terms ranging from 15 years to life, according to reports from Prague. All but one of the seven were Jews, and all were said to have confessed to treason.

Mikulas Lands, a district Communist leader, accused of using Zionist connections to enrich himself under the "pretext of restitution," was sentenced to 20 years. Ervin Polak, described by the prosecution as a "Jewish bourgeois nationalist," received 18 years.

JEWS IMMIGRANTS DEMONSTRATE IN BRAZIL; ASK RETURN TO ISRAEL

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan. 31, (JTA) -- Jewish immigrants brought to Brazil from Germany during the past six weeks in the liquidation of the Fochrenwald camp "returnees" situation, have been demonstrating in Sao Paulo and demanding their transfer to Israel.

The "returnees"--DP's released from Nazi concentration camps who returned to Germany after their transfer to Israel, and brought here from Germany--now insist on returning to Israel.

Dr. Moses Kahan, president of the Sao Paulo Jewish federation, arrived here today to discuss the situation with representatives of the Joint Distribution Committee and the HIAS.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HONORS TURKISH PRESIDENT AT RECEPTION

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Turkey has no minorities and no discrimination because of race, faith or language, President Celal Bayar of Turkey today told some 300 leaders of the American Jewish Committee during a reception tendered the President by the AJC. He stressed that the Turkish Constitution "admits of no discriminations" and bestows equal rights and duties on all the Turkish people, adding that Turkey has separated church and state.

Jacob Blaustein, retiring president of the Committee, presented the President with a silver medallion to commemorate his visit to the United States. In making the presentation, Mr. Blaustein praised President Bayar "because ever since his ascension to the Presidency in 1950 citizens belonging to minority groups, including the Jewish citizens of Turkey," have enjoyed "real friendship and goodwill on the part of the government." He also contrasted this situation with that of previous years when "Jews and other groups of non-Turkish origin had to face occasional difficulties."

Irving B. Engel, who succeeded Mr. Blaustein as president of the AJC, and who presided at the reception for the President, saluted the latter for his "understanding and devotion to the principles of democracy."

WJC UNIT ASKS BIG FOUR SUPPORT OF JEWISH CLAIMS AGAINST AUSTRIA

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JT) -- A request that the Big Four powers use their good offices with the Austrian Government to settle without further delay the claims of the world Jewish organizations for damages suffered by the Jews in Austria during the Nazi regime, was made here today at a meeting of the Western Hemisphere Executive of the World Jewish Congress in the form of a resolution to the Foreign Ministers meeting now taking place in Berlin.

Endorsing the claims submitted to the Austrian Government by the Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria, the Executive urged the Foreign Ministers to "exercise their influence in this decisive hour to persuade the Austrian Government, in its own best interests and in accordance with the principles of justice and morality, to adopt an attitude that will lead to the fulfillment of its obligations." The Executive deplored Austria's action in breaking off discussions on heirless Jewish property claims as the violation of a promise made repeatedly to the Jewish representatives from June 17 to September 30, 1953.

"Austria cannot demand just treatment from the nations of the world without doing justice to the Jews who were subjected to cruel persecution during the Nazi period and who suffered material losses of staggering dimensions. The lamentable fact," he said, "is that out of Austria's pre-war Jewish population of 180,000, at least 60,000 perished in concentration camps and all but a handful of the remaining 120,000 fled from Austria and have been permanently uprooted from their homes."

RABBI SELIGSON RE-ELECTED TO HEAD NEW YORK BOARD OF RABBIS

NEW YORK, Jan. 31. (JTA) -- Rabbi David J. Seligson has been re-elected president of the New York Board of Rabbis at the Board's 73rd annual meeting here.

The group adopted a number of resolutions expressing opposition to the Bricker Amendment, commending individuals and groups which have fought the "tide of pressures by extremists threatening to curtail civil liberties and academic freedom, urging the United States to use its good offices to promote peace in the Near East and recommending that New York State appoint a commission to study the problem of divorce procedures and laws in the state.