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## **Sewing the Seeds of Statehood: Garment Unions, American Labor, and the Establishment of the State of Israel**

*The views expressed in this paper do not represent those of the U.S. Department of State*

In examining the establishment of the state of Israel, one is struck by the large number of non-government organizations that played an important role in its creation. Of these NGOs, the American labor movement played a crucial role in assisting the Yishuv's development of a political and social infrastructure during the pre-state period and beyond. With its combination of substantial financial assets, political contacts, media outlets, and active voters, the American labor movement provided numerous resources to aid the Zionist cause, particularly the Labor Zionist cause, both in Palestine and on the domestic political scene in the United States.

This paper analyzes the various ways American labor organizations, led by members of the Jewish labor movement centered in the garment industry, assisted in the formation of a Jewish state, fostered a fellow labor movement in Palestine, and influenced the U.S. policymaking apparatus. They abetted this process in Palestine through land purchases for colonization by Jewish workers, the construction of trade schools and cultural centers as well as massive economic aid to the Histadrut, the General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine. Within the United States, they pressured their political allies in Congress, the White House and at the local level, ultimately playing a vital role in the 1948 presidential election. Abroad, they pushed British Labor Party officials to remove obstacles preventing the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Ultimately, the development and creation of the State of Israel required help from various sources, but American labor provided both consistent and substantial support.

Jewish labor leadership within the garment industry played the crucial role in mobilizing the larger labor movement to support a Jewish state. However, not all Jewish labor leaders supported this effort initially. It proved a gradual process that generated

momentum over three decades. Although American labor unified against Nazism, many Jews within American labor vehemently opposed Zionist efforts. Several members of the Jewish labor movement leadership and rank-and-file descended from the "Bund" or General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. These Bundists believed Zionism distracted workers' attention from efforts at creating an international proletariat. They viewed Zionism as a "bourgeois hobby," diverting energies away from the fight against capitalism.<sup>1</sup> For them, Jewish culture served as a way to spread the gospel of the proletariat. They considered socialism their religion and viewed all nationalist movements as poisons, including Zionism.

Still, not all Jewish labor leaders dismissed Zionism, especially those socialist Jews who saw in Palestine a potential socialist utopia where a strong workers' movement could be developed with the aid of Zionist organizations dedicated to socialist goals. In 1909, the Jewish Social Labor Party (Poale Zion) formed in Chicago as a response to pogroms in Eastern Europe, and in 1912, Jewish workers sympathetic to Zionist goals formed the Jewish National Workers' Alliance (Farband), a fraternal order meant to counter the anti-Zionist Workmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring).<sup>2</sup> However, these organizations maintained only limited appeal among the large majority of Jewish workers who remained committed socialists or communists, inimical to the consideration of a Jewish homeland.

The release of the British Balfour Declaration in 1917 proved a turning point for American labor's attitude towards Zionism. At the 1917 AFL convention, a resolution passed supporting the Balfour Declaration, and its call for a Jewish state in Palestine. However, many Jewish labor leaders did not support this resolution. AFL President Samuel Gompers backed it because of his desire to support Woodrow Wilson's war aims, which included the goals of the Balfour Declaration, but most of the garment unions' general leadership opposed it.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the 1920s that Jewish labor leaders in the

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<sup>1</sup> Bundists revealed their socialist devotion when they described Zionism as a "sinister deviation from the true path... a mirage, compounded of religious romanticism and chauvinism." See Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961): 158.

<sup>2</sup> Some individual chapters of the Workmen's Circle supported Histadrut even though the organization itself opposed aid to Jewish colonization in Palestine until 1948.

<sup>3</sup> See Sheila Polishook, "American Federation of Labor, Zionism, and the First World War," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 65 (1975/76), March 1976. Since President Wilson played a central role in providing benefits to the American labor movement in his efforts to maximize war production, Gompers supported Wilson's numerous goals for a new world order following the assumed Allied victory.

United States began to view the colonization of Palestine by Jewish workers as a positive effort. The formation of the Histadrut in 1920 presented a new opportunity for Zionists to win friends among American labor leadership. Founders of Histadrut hoped to convince American labor leaders to support their colonization efforts in Palestine under the rubric of supporting a sister trade-union movement. However, Histadrut was more than a trade-union movement in the European context. It acted as one of the central elements in the formation of a Jewish governing body. Additionally, Histadrut developed a socially progressive agenda including forms of social security and subsidized housing years before the United States adopted either. Moreover, Histadrut provided the military defense of the Jewish community in Palestine through the Haganah. Thus, support for Histadrut represented more than assisting a fellow labor movement in another country. It explicitly translated into open support for the colonizing efforts of Jewish laborers in Palestine.

During the early 1920s, Histadrut representatives visiting the United States hoped to win American labor leadership to support their endeavors. They found one of their most important allies in Max Pine, the secretary of the United Hebrew Trades. The UHT functioned as a critical support system in the United States for those Jews who had recently immigrated from Europe and were in need of finding work or assistance. When Pine embraced Histadrut's 1923 appeal for money to aid Histadrut's efforts to develop Palestine, his prestige influenced many Jewish workers in the United States to help in raising money in support of Histadrut. Throughout the 1920s, many Jewish workers in the United States devoted much time and energy to fundraising for Histadrut's activities. However, widespread acceptance of its activities met resistance among many Bundists within the labor movement.

By the 1930s, a shift in attitude occurred among those opposed to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine when the Nazis seized power in Germany and concomitantly anti-Semitism spread within the United States. Many Bundists came to view Palestine as a solution to the need for a haven where persecuted German Jews, and later European Jews generally, could emigrate. Still, while many American labor organizations supported Histadrut's efforts in welcoming immigrants from Europe, they typically focused more of their energy on domestic activities to fight Nazism.

It is worth noting that American labor organizations became actively involved in these efforts to challenge and raise awareness of the looming Nazi threat as early as 1933. The American Federation of Labor called for a boycott of Nazi goods at its annual convention, and in 1934, co-sponsored a rally at New York's Madison Square Garden called "The Case of Civilization versus Hitlerism."<sup>4</sup> By 1934, several Jewish labor organizations and unions formed the Jewish Labor Committee in an effort to mobilize their resources against Nazism. The large number of groups comprising the JLC made it the defacto voice of American Jewish workers. In addition to numerous Jewish labor organizations, including the Workmen's Circle, United Hebrew Trades, and the Jewish Socialist Verband, the JLC represented the most prominent international unions with large Jewish memberships, notably the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and the United Hatters, Cap, and Millinery Workers' International Union as well as 116 locals. The total Jewish membership came to 500,000 members, a numerically large body led by powerful Jewish labor leaders such as Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, and Max Zaritsky, all of whom had influence with general labor organizations, especially the AFL and CIO. Until 1947, however, the JLC remained neutral on the Zionist issue with bitter divisions between Zionists and non-Zionists preventing the JLC from adopting an official stance.

Yet, the horrific revelation of Jewish slaughter in Europe during World War II brought Jewish statehood to the forefront of the Jewish labor movement's agenda. As the Allies first began liberating concentration camps in 1944, urgency struck various leaders of the ILGWU, ACWA and most significantly, the UHCMW. Max Zaritsky, president of the UHCMW, grew frustrated by the internal strife preventing the JLC from actively supporting Palestine and the immediate expansion of emigration to Palestine by European Jews. He worked diligently with other labor leaders to form a new committee expressly designed to present Zionist needs to the American labor movement.

In May 1944, Zaritsky announced the formation of American Jewish Trade Union Committee for Palestine. In an effort to appeal to the entire general labor movement, he

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<sup>4</sup> Gail Malmgreen, "Labor and the Holocaust: The Jewish Labor Committee and the Anti-Nazi Struggle," *Labor's Heritage*, 3 (October 1991): 22. See also David Shapiro, *From Philanthropy to Activism: The Political Transformation of Zionism in the Holocaust Years, 1933-1945* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1994): xxx.

asked CIO President Philip Murray and AFL President William Green to accept honorary chairmanships. This group claimed to represent "several hundred thousand Jewish members of the AFL and CIO," and immediately sought the repeal of the 1939 British White Paper, and the creation of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

The British White Paper, which restricted Jewish purchases of land and limited Jewish emigration to Palestine until 1944, when it ceased Jewish emigration completely, outraged Zionists and many non-Zionists. They believed the document revealed the desire of British policymakers to placate Arab rulers who controlled vast oil reserves necessary for Britain to maintain its empire. Between 1939 and 1943, the White Paper greatly diminished Zionist hopes of finding a refuge for European Jews trying to escape the Nazi onslaught in Europe. With the election of the Labour Party in Britain during the spring of 1945, American labor leaders sympathetic to the Zionist cause became hopeful that the Labour Party would reverse the White Paper's restrictions on immigration and land purchases in Palestine. However, American labor leaders found themselves shocked by their British labor compatriots' continuation of the restrictive policies of their predecessors. Also, it appeared to many American Jews that officials in the British Foreign Office and U.S. Department of State harbored anti-Semitic and pro-Arab sentiments.<sup>6</sup> Displaced Persons, the euphemistic term for survivors of the concentration camps, had lost their homes, their families, and their possessions. With U.S. immigration quotas intact from the 1920s, even most non-Zionists viewed immigration to Palestine as a necessity.

Between 1944 and 1947, Zaritsky's American Jewish Trade Union Committee coordinated massive media attacks on British policy through the union newspapers of the ACWA, ILGWU, and UHCMW. Additionally, Jewish labor leaders received critical

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<sup>5</sup> *The Hat Worker*, May 15, 1944: 10. Samuel Halperin notes that although William Green and Philip Murray were not on speaking terms during the mid-1940s, they regularly appeared together in support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and for Histadrut.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Bevin garnered the most suspicion of anti-Semitism within the British Foreign Office. The Furriers' Union excoriated him for comments he made concerning the excessive power of Jewish influence in U.S. foreign policy decisionmaking. See *CIO News*, July 1, 1946: p.5. The State Department's record of anti-Semitism and its opposition to a Jewish state have been well documented. For one good assessment see *Zvi Ganin, Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979).

backing from the AFL and CIO, both of which supported in 1943 the abrogation of the White Paper at their respective conventions. By 1946, the rival labor federations jointly criticized "the terror tactics" of the British government against Jews in Palestine after Britain endured some terrorist attacks by the Irgun.<sup>7</sup>

Jewish leaders also wished to attract other nationally minded ethnic groups involved with organized labor such as Irish-Americans. The UHCMW newspaper featured editorials by Irish-American Vincent Murphy who served as the mayor of Newark, New Jersey and the Secretary-Treasurer of the New Jersey State Federation of Labor, AFL. In the case of the White Paper, it only helped that the Zionist opposition came from the British, the perennial enemy of the Irish. Murphy condemned Britain for closing "the doors of Palestine at a time when they represent perhaps the only safe and constructive refuge." Such a policy struck him as "not only immoral but inhuman."<sup>8</sup> Labor leaders consistently tied into the condemnations of the British White Paper policy with praise for Histadrut. When the New York and Ohio State Federations of Labor denounced the White Paper at their conventions, they both accompanied a statement hailing "the magnificent contribution made by the Jewish workers of Palestine to the war effort of the United Nations." Both conventions made identical statements for publication condemning British policy and praising Histadrut. This demonstrated a coordinated effort by American labor leaders to promote a message that proclaimed Histadrut and its colonizing activities as the solution to the dilemma facing dislocated European Jews.<sup>9</sup>

American labor leaders did not limit themselves to fundraising, press releases, and editorials. They also met directly with political leaders in Britain and the United States to

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<sup>7</sup> *The Hat Worker*: 10, 13. Additionally, Philip Murray claimed that the CIO had supported Jewish emigration to Palestine for many years prior to World War II and at the 1944 CIO convention, passed a resolution endorsing the "ultimate establishment of a Palestinian Jewish Commonwealth..." The AFL boasted to being one of the earliest endorsers of the Balfour Declaration. In the ILGWU's union newspaper, it reported that "Rarely has an AFL convention, since the inception of the Balfour Declaration, failed to pass a resolution favoring a Jewish commonwealth in that country." *Justice*, November 1, 1947: 4; For CIO, see *CIO News*, October, 6, 1946: 7, and February 14, 1944: 7. For more on the AFL's long-standing commitment to Zionism, see Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 169 and Mark Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 203-204. For AFL and CIO condemnation of Britain in 1946, see *Justice*, July 15, 1946: 3.

<sup>8</sup> *The Hat Worker*, August 15, 1944: 13. Michael F. Greene, General-Secretary of the UHCMW, referred to himself as the "Irish Zionist," see *The Hat Worker*, May 15, 1945: 4.

<sup>9</sup> For the N.Y. State Federation of Labor's statement see *The Hat Worker*, September 15, 1944: 4; for the Ohio State Federation of Labor see *Ibid.*, October 15, 1944, 4.

lobby for increased Jewish emigration and the need for a Jewish state in Palestine. In August 1945, Zaritsky traveled to England and met with several leaders of the newly elected Labour Party, including Harold Laski, Herbert Morrison, Walter Citrine, and representatives from the Foreign Office and Colonial Ministry. He presented them with a declaration demanding increased Jewish emigration and a national homeland in Palestine. In an effort to place more pressure on the British government, Zaritsky acquired over 800 signatures from the most influential trade-union leaders in American labor. He also provided letters from William Green and Philip Murray stressing that Zaritsky's plea had their backing and the support of the organized labor movement in America.<sup>10</sup>

In August 1946, Dubinsky met with President Truman to discuss DP's and the situation in Palestine, and in November, Dubinsky and Matthew Woll, vice-president of the AFL, met with British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin in New York to discuss Jewish emigration to Palestine and the need for a Jewish homeland.<sup>11</sup> A year later, ILGWU vice-president Isidore Nagler visited Britain and discussed with British leaders the "painful subject" of the "short-sighted and wholly unjustified policy" of the British government in Palestine.<sup>12</sup>

In the weeks before ACWA President Sidney Hillman died suddenly from a heart attack in 1946, both he and CIO President Murray sent a telegram to British Prime Minister Clement Atlee, protesting British policy in Palestine. Both men encouraged Atlee to act on the recent recommendation by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to allow 100,000 Jewish DP's into Palestine.<sup>13</sup> Although hailing from the Bundist tradition, Hillman never acted hostile towards Zionism, but he tended to take a neutral stance on it in the years before World War II. However, like so many Jews during World War II, he reeled from the deaths of many relatives in concentration camps as well as the destruction

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<sup>10</sup> *The Hat Worker*, August 15, 1945: 1, 3; September 15, 1945: 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> *Justice*, August 15, 1946: 3 and November 15, 1946: 3. In Dubinsky and Woll's meeting with Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary appeared most interested in the AFL's efforts to open the U.S. to Jewish immigration. This again reveals the continued efforts, even after World War II, by non-Zionists within organized labor to diminish the connection between DP's and Palestine. With more open immigration to the U.S., many DP's probably would have opted for the more developed, prosperous, and safer U.S., leaving Palestine with a less talented and experienced pool of immigrants.

<sup>12</sup> *Justice*, September 1, 1947: 11. Nagler recognized that British resistance developed during this time due to the terrorist activities of the Irgun against British military and police targets.

<sup>13</sup> *Advance*, August 1, 1946: 3.

of European Jewry. His cooperation with Zionists became common for many Bundists after the revelation of the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup>

A second phase in the American labor movement's efforts to develop a Jewish state under the auspices of Histadrut came with the financing of trade schools. In March 1946, the ILGWU donated \$100,000 to construct, in conjunction with Histadrut, the International Trade School for Heavy Industry in Haifa. The school would train Jewish boys in heavy industries such as glass manufacturing, hydrotechnics, foundry and forge works, shipbuilding, oil refining, construction, irrigation, and other vital occupations. A special room would house a historical center dedicated to the ILGWU, helping to promote labor brotherhood.<sup>15</sup> In November 1946, the ACWA raised \$23,000 for the construction of two Amalgamated training schools in Palestine, also in conjunction with Histadrut. By 1948, the ACWA also funded and established a necktie factory, where it sent technicians to train Histadrut workers.<sup>16</sup> By helping build these schools, the ILGWU and ACWA played a direct role in developing the infrastructure of a burgeoning nation and revealed the capability of American labor organizations to transcend national governments in promoting their agenda around the world.

Domestically, the pressure placed on U.S. and British policymakers by Dubinsky, Woll, and Zaritsky had little impact on British or U.S. policy between 1945 and 1946. As long as Britain controlled Palestine and Arab states possessed large oil reserves, it appeared nothing would change the minds of the British Foreign Office or the State Department. In 1946, even President Truman, who would ignore his closest advisers in recognizing Israel in 1948, opposed the establishment of a political Jewish state, instead

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<sup>14</sup> Hillman played an instrumental role in moving the JLC toward a pro-Zionist platform in the year before he died by spreading rumors he intended to withdraw the ACWA from the JLC if they did not adopt a more pro-Zionist policy. See Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 168. Most historians of Zionism ignore Hillman's shift to a pro-Zionist position during World War II, but recent work reveals this change. For further analysis of Hillman's shift toward Zionism, see Gerd Korman, "New Jewish Politics for an American Labor Leader: Sidney Hillman, 1942-1946," *American Jewish History*, 82, 195-214.

<sup>15</sup> *Justice*, April 15, 1946: 2, and July 1, 1946: 3. The trade school in Haifa was the fourth overseas vocational school financed by ILGWU. They had also developed a labor school in Italy, China, and a recreation home for British seamen. This school promoted international labor brotherhood while also helping Histadrut establish a presence in Palestine.

<sup>16</sup> *Advance*, November 15, 1946: 5, and *CIO News*, April 5, 1948: 3.

urging the British government to allow entry for 100,000 DP's, far less than Zionist leaders had hoped.<sup>17</sup>

Truman's unwillingness to press Britain on the issue of Palestine led American labor leaders committed to the idea of a Jewish state to organize the National Trade Union Emergency Conference on Labor Palestine. In May 1947, the first meeting of the NTUECLP met in Atlantic City in an effort "to express the solidarity of all wings of American labor.... The conference will also mark the merger of the AFL and CIO groups, so that American Labor will be able to speak with one voice at this critical period, on matters concerning Palestine."<sup>18</sup> The National Trade Union Emergency Committee for Labor Palestine began the first major fund raising effort for May 1947 with a goal of \$1,000,000.<sup>19</sup> Other unions independently raised money, eventually reaching a total in the thousands of dollars. Fundraising of this type continued after the establishment of Israel in an effort to support the fledgling country, and it dwarfed the financial assistance begun in the 1920s and 1930s.

Within the Jewish labor movement, creating this unified approach meant converting moderate Bundists and silencing the rest. A major step in that direction occurred in May 1947 when the Jewish Labor Committee ended its neutralism toward Zionism and threw its weight behind the leading Zionist organization, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and worked diligently with political contacts and labor groups to win their support for proposals supporting a Jewish state.<sup>20</sup>

The unifying efforts within the American labor movement to gain maximum support for a Jewish homeland reflected a coalescing of Zionist support throughout American Jewry and sympathetic Christians after World War II. This led to the mounting political pressure by Zionist groups on President Truman as he sought his first election as president in 1948. Opposed to the Zionist forces stood a British-Arab alliance with support from the State Department. The United Nations' decision in November 1947 to call a vote on the partition of Palestine into two separate states, one Jewish and one Arab, led to a

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<sup>17</sup> *The Hat Worker*, January 15, 1946: 15. Although Truman opposed a Jewish state in Palestine during the winter of 1946, the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly to support a Jewish state and open immigration.

<sup>18</sup> *The Hat Worker*, May 15, 1947: 15.

<sup>19</sup> *The Hat Worker*, July 15, 1947: 15.

<sup>20</sup> Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism*, 169.

monumental decision by Truman. Until the very day of the vote, November 29, 1947, Truman remained unsure how to handle the delicate situation. However, American labor leaders working in conjunction with other American Zionists, employed all of their political connections to convince Truman to push for partition.<sup>21</sup> Under intense pressure, Truman relented and employed his influence with other nations to vote with the United States for partition. Labor leaders such as Zaritsky also insisted on the United States selling arms to Jews in Palestine. In February 1948, he wired the President urging him not only to support the partition plan, but also to lift the U.S. arms embargo preventing Jews in Palestine from obtaining weapons. Additionally, on March 1, 35,000 cloakmakers demonstrated in New York City against the embargo.<sup>22</sup>

However, under pressure from the British and Arab states, Truman reversed himself in March 1948. In a late twist to the partition plan, the United States reversed its support of partition when the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Warren Austin, announced to the U.N. Security Council that the United States advocated a trusteeship rather than partition. News of Austin's speech led to an immediate response from American labor. Both Philip Murray and William Green wrote personal letters to Truman soon after the speech urging the United States to support partition in Palestine rather than a trusteeship.<sup>23</sup> Zaritsky publicly blasted Truman in New York newspapers, stressing that Truman's switch from supporting a partition plan to a trusteeship served as "an instance not alone of brutal cynicism, but of incompetence and of [a] woeful lack of understanding of world events." He also asserted, "The damage that has been done is not to the Jews alone. Mr. Truman has done tremendous damage to the United States' prestige in the world." Ultimately, Zaritsky lamented that Truman's nomination would be a "misfortune" for any hopes of a Democratic victory in November.<sup>24</sup>

Intense pressure mounted on Truman through the presidential election year. Two New York State political parties founded by labor leaders during the 1930s and 1940s shaped the battle for the state's crucial electoral votes. The special election of an American Labor Party candidate over a Democratic candidate in the Twenty-fourth

<sup>21</sup> Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948*: 145.

<sup>22</sup> *The Hat Worker*, February 15, 1948: 4; *Justice*, March 15, 1948: 1.

<sup>23</sup> *CIO News*, March 1, 1948: 12; *American Federationist*, April 1948: 1.

<sup>24</sup> *New York Times*, March 25, 1948; 23.

Congressional District in the Bronx deeply disturbed Truman since one of the key issues in the race concerned Truman's handling of the Palestine situation.<sup>25</sup> The American Labor Party, dominated by communist influence in 1948, sought the election of Henry Wallace as president. The Liberal Party, created specifically as a non-communist labor party, remained open to endorsing a candidate who would support labor uses and a Jewish state in Palestine. The Liberal Party's leadership loomed as key political players in a state Truman considered crucial to his election. Behind in the polls at the outset of 1948, Truman needed New York's potentially pivotal electoral votes and could not afford to alienate the Liberal Party. Governor Dewey possessed strong political backing in his own state as a moderate Republican, but Truman planned to fight. In March 1948, he made a visit to New York City for the St. Patrick's Day Parade in an effort to rally support among New York constituents, but leaders of the New York State Democratic Party held little faith in Truman's chances to win the election and provided little of the necessary mobilization necessary for Truman to win the state. Therefore, the Liberal Party's support would be crucial for mobilizing voters from the New Deal coalition in New York.

Labor leaders also pressured Truman from within the trade union ranks. In a remarkable sign of cooperation between labor and business, many garment district shopkeepers in New York City closed their shops at 2 p.m. on April 14 in a major show of support for a trade unionist rally at Yankee Stadium. Fifty-thousand workers representing the various garment unions packed the stadium to rally against the shift in U.S. policy. Sponsored by the American Trade Union Council for Labor Palestine, speakers at the rally read like a Who's Who in American labor, including William Green, James B. Carey, Jacob S. Potofsky, Max Zaritsky, Luigi Antonini, Israel Feinberg, Joseph Breslaw, and Joseph Schlossberg. The leading American Zionist Abba Hillel Silver also spoke, and speakers read wired messages from other luminaries, including David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weitzmann as well as labor leaders Philip Murray and David Dubinsky. Carey summarized the policy reversal by the United States as "an ill-considered somersault that has hurt us all, hurt Palestine, hurt the chance of democratic progress for the rank-and-file

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<sup>25</sup> Ganin, Truman, *American Jewry, and Israel*, 1945-1948: 181

Arab people, hurt American moral leadership in a world which is looking to us for light and guidance."<sup>26</sup>

Organized labor's campaign for partition along with efforts by other American Zionist groups placed Truman in one the most difficult political dilemmas of his presidency. International forces, notably Arab and British, pressured Truman away from recognition of a Jewish state, and his trusted Secretary of State, George Marshall, threatened to quit if Truman recognized Israel. The British government, the State Department, the oil lobby, concerns over power vacuums, and a presidential election all tugged and pulled at Truman. The turning point for Truman came when Clark Clifford, esteemed presidential advisor, produced for Truman a list of the essential pressure groups he would need to secure victory.<sup>27</sup> Out of eight groups, Jews listed fifth while labor placed second. Although many American Jews applied intense pressure on Truman, American labor, energized by its Jewish constituency, produced a potent force that Truman could not, and did not, ignore.

After the establishment of Israel in 1948, American labor's relationship with the new state became even closer with the construction of housing and cultural centers in Israel through funding of the AFL and CIO. Additionally, the AFL-CIO established the Afro-Asian Institute in Israel during the 1960s, dedicated to training future labor leaders in Africa and Asia who would work to strengthen labor movements in those regions while also working to prevent communist influence within the Asian and African labor movements. Within the U.S. political structure, the AFL-CIO maintained consistent pressure during the post-war years on presidential administrations and congressional leaders to support Israel. Through its assistance to the development of the Yishuv and its political pressure on American politicians, the American labor movement demonstrated the tangible impact a NGO can play in shaping international affairs both within and beyond the state.

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<sup>26</sup> Justice, April 15, 1948: 1, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948*: 179-180.