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MINUTES OF  
JOINT OVERSEAS COMMISSION MEETING

JANUARY 10, 1962

HELD AT THE JEWISH CENTER  
131 WEST 86TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Present: Moses I. Feuerstein, Presiding; Dr. Jacob Griffel, Mr. Ludwig Jesselson, Rabbi Norman Lamm, Rabbi Zev Segal, Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman, Dr. Samson R. Weiss

In the absence of Mr. Max Stern, the Commission Chairman, Mr. Moses I. Feuerstein presided and opened the meeting at 9:05 P.M.

Mr. Feuerstein gave a condensed review about the activities of the Commission in the following areas:

- India - Bene Israel communities, UOJCI;
- Israel - The Youth Aliyah problem;
- Western Europe - Chief Rabbis Conference, cooperation with Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Europe, COJO Conference in Geneva;
- Russia - Meeting with U.N. Under Secretary Narasimhan.

Mr. Feuerstein stressed the need to organize the variegated work of the commission through the assignment of "desks" to competent leaders, each of them serving the commission as the expert in his respective field. So far, the following desks have been established:

- India - Rabbi Norman Lamm;
- Western Europe - Rabbi Simon Langer;
- Israel - Rabbi Zev Segal
- Russia - Rabbi Theodore L. Adams.

Mr. Feuerstein reported that Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman has agreed to handle the Central and South American desk. After a brief discussion based upon the report of Dr. Weiss of conversations held with various persons acquainted with the Central and South American Jewish scene, it was decided, in principle, upon a motion made by Mr. Ludwig Jesselson and seconded by Rabbi Lamm, that Rabbi Sharfman personally undertake a tour of the South American countries (Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay and Argentina), visiting the main Jewish communities in these countries and establishing contacts with the key personalities. The purpose of this visit would be to investigate the possibilities of, and possibly to lay the groundwork for, a South American Conference of Orthodox Synagogues. Dr. Weiss undertook to further prepare such a visit of Rabbi Sharfman for the months of July and August if Rabbi Sharfman can free himself for a minimum of six weeks during this period.

Rabbi Norman Lamm reported on developments in India. One of the burning problems of the Bene Israel community is the lack of employment opportunities in which the Bene Israel are not compelled to work on the Shabbos. A New York industrialist, a strict Sabbath observer, contacted Rabbi Lamm with the request to establish for him connections with Indian firms for the purpose of establishing a textile manufacturing plant in or near Bombay. It is the policy of the



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Indian Government to encourage foreign investments, provided that 51% of the firm be owned by Indian citizens. In such cases, the Indian Government makes long term loans to the Indian investor up to 75% of the required capital.

After a thorough discussion it was decided that a visit at this time of Rabbi Lamm to India is not deemed advisable. Mr. Jesselson suggested various ways of obtaining reliable information on prospective Indian investors who would join the New York industrialist.

Rabbi Lamm further reported on the present status of the debate concerning the marriage disabilities of the Bene Israel and the recent decision of the Chief Rabbinate abolishing them. One of the conditions of this decision was the request of Chief Rabbi Nissim that an orthodox rabbi be sent to India to supervise their marriage and divorce procedure. Rabbi Lamm and Dr. Weiss had met on Tuesday, January 6th, with Dr. Aryeh Tartakower, the Executive Director of the World Jewish Congress which had inserted itself into this problem. The two candidates for this position were found for various reasons to be unacceptable. The proposal to train a member of the Bene Israel community for the Rabbinate in an Israeli Yeshiva was found the most promising way to a solution. The fact that the Israeli Chief Rabbinate has not as yet instructed the local rabbinic courts in Israel to act upon its decision, is a complication which imposes upon the Orthodox Union and its Joint Overseas Commission the utmost of caution.

The Commission approved the report of Rabbi Lamm, upon a motion made by Dr. Griffel and seconded by Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman.

Rabbi Zev Segal reported on the status of Youth Aliyah and the various technical and political difficulties standing in the way of the implementation of the principle agreed upon by the Jewish Agency to have immigrant children accompanied by religious Madrichim from the point of their origin until their settlement in Israel in bona fide religious institutions or settlements. Rabbi Segal also stressed the need for the establishment of a project which would manifest the presence of American orthodox Jewry in Israel. In contradistinction to organizations representing deviationist ideologies, American orthodox Jewry has no address in Israel. The tremendous support given by orthodox Jewry to the religious Yishuv and to its parties and institutions cannot take and does not take in the mind of Israeli Jewry the place of such a concrete project which would serve as a constant manifestation of our presence in the Holy Land. The Rabbinical Council of America has, therefore, decided on the creation of such a project and Rabbi Segal recommended that the Orthodox Union join with the RCA in its creation.

A motion was made by Rabbi Segal, seconded by Rabbi Sharfman, that the Joint Overseas Commission recommend to the Orthodox Union and to the Rabbinical Council of America the acceptance in principle of the creation of such a project. The motion was unanimously passed.

Mr. Feuerstein stated that the recommendation would be placed on the agenda of the next Executive Committee meeting of the Orthodox Union. Rabbi Segal undertook to report to the Mid-Winter Conference of the Rabbinical Council the recommendation of the Commission. (On Tuesday, January 16th the Executive Committee of the Rabbinical Council accepted the above recommendation).



Washington, D.C. (AP) - The U.S. State Department has announced that it will not issue visas to any Chinese citizens who have been convicted of espionage or who have been involved in the activities of the Chinese Communist Party.

The announcement comes in response to a request from the Chinese government for the U.S. to issue visas to Chinese citizens who have been convicted of espionage or who have been involved in the activities of the Chinese Communist Party.

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Dr. Weiss reported on the need to seek immediate contact with the two existing Israeli synagogue organizations namely the "Ichud Batey Knesseth" and the "Igud Batey Knesseth", the former being sponsored by the Hechal Shlomo with several hundred affiliated synagogues, the latter being independent and having approx. thirty affiliates, with the Yeshurun Synagogue in Jerusalem the most prominent among them. In view of the Conservative Movement's forthcoming Conference in Israel with an expected attendance of 2,000 delegates and visitors, the urgency of immediate steps is obvious, to prevent any affiliation with the Conservative World Council which claims to be "neutral" in the religious sense and to have place in its program even for orthodox synagogues.

Dr. Weiss, therefore, proposed that Rabbi Segal leave as soon as feasible for Israel. His official mission would be to investigate the possibilities of the establishment of the UOJCA-RCA project in Israel and to bring back concrete proposals as to its intended nature and location. While in Israel, Rabbi Segal should utilize his top-level contacts in the following areas: Youth Aliyah - synagogue organizations and their tie-up with the Orthodox Union - investigation of the status of the Bene Israel. Furthermore, Dr. Weiss suggested that this tie-up might best be established by simply requesting the cooperation of the Israeli synagogue organizations in the Convocation of a World Conference of Orthodox Synagogues. This would impose upon them no formal affiliation and no loss of independence and autonomy.

A motion to this effect was made by Rabbi Sharfman, seconded by Mr. Ludwig Jesselson and passed unanimously. Rabbi Segal stated that he will endeavor to free himself as soon as possible for such a trip to Israel and that he hopes to leave not later than early in February.

While it was the consensus of the Commission that we ought not as yet to formalize the UOJCA-RCA project in Israel, Rabbi Segal was requested to develop some of the ideas he deems most beneficial for the intended purpose of making the presence of the American organized orthodox Jewish community felt in Israel. Rabbi Segal outlined the idea of a house near the entrance to Jerusalem, about two miles away from the city proper and located on the highway leading into Jerusalem. This house should contain guest rooms for visiting rabbis and dignitaries; a hall for meetings and symposia to be arranged to bring together American orthodox leaders and Israeli intellectuals representing all shades of political and religious persuasion; a tourist guidance center entrusted with arranging the itineraries of orthodox visitors to bring them into close contact with the religious Yishuv and its institutions and for the further purpose of identifying such visitors as representatives of the American orthodox Jewish community, etc., etc. It was especially the last point which was found most important because at present such visitors tour the country either as part of UJA or Israeli Bond groups or utterly unidentified as representatives or exponents of American orthodox Jewry.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 P.M.

NOTE: The members of the Joint Overseas Commission and the officers of the Orthodox Union and the RCA are requested to treat these minutes as internal and confidential communications.

(Minutes taken by Dr. Samson R. Weiss)