



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
American Council for Judaism Records**

Manuscript Collection No. 17



Collection Summary

Title	American Council for Judaism Records
Dates	1942-1989, undated
Collection Number	MS-17
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	American Council for Judaism
Extent	9.2 linear feet (23 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

In 1942, at its annual conference held that year in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a pro-Zionist resolution supporting the formation of a Jewish army in Palestine. This resolution nullified a 1935 CCAR agreement which stated that the CCAR would remain neutral on the Zionist issue. Immediately after the 1942 conference, several non-Zionist rabbis met to discuss their displeasure with the resolution.

As a result of this meeting, sixteen CCAR rabbis, led by men such as Louis Wolsey, William Fineshriber, and Morris Lazaron, addressed letters to CCAR members concerning the formation of a Jewish "anti-nationalist" organization. Although various attempts were made to appease the "anti-nationalists" (on the grounds that they would split the CCAR as well as the American Jewish community) they remained adamant and held a meeting in early June.

At this meeting a "Statement of Principles" was formulated. In essence, the "Principles" declared that the non-Zionists supported Palestine and Palestinian rehabilitation but, in light of their universalistic interpretation of Jewish history and destiny, and also their concern for the welfare and status of the Jewish people living in other parts of the world, they could not "subscribe to or support the political emphasis now paramount in the Zionist program." Furthermore, they could not help but believe "that Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in society and diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell."

In August of that year, this "Statement," signed by 90 Reform rabbis and lay leaders, was released to the press. By the end of 1942, this group of "anti-nationalists" had chosen a name for itself: the American Council for Judaism (ACJ). They adopted a constitution and named Elmer Berger, a rabbi from Flint, Michigan, as executive director. On March 19, 1943 the American Council for Judaism was incorporated in the state of New York and, by the end of the year, a slate of officers was selected. As president, the Council chose Lessing Rosenwald; as vice-presidents, Louis Binstock, Fred F. Florence, Ralph W. Mack, Irving Reichert and Louis Wolsey; and as treasurer, D. Hays Solis-Cohen.

Because the Council felt it represented the views of the majority of American Jews, it began its anti-Zionist campaign with a massive membership drive. By 1946, the ACJ had numerous local chapters and had established regional offices in Richmond, Chicago, Dallas, and San Francisco.

Throughout its existence the Council continued its membership solicitations while also maintaining a vigorous publicity campaign through press releases and the publication of various articles, pamphlets, and journals. To demonstrate that the American Zionists did not reflect the opinions of all American Jews, the ACJ addressed letters to various government officials, expressing their opposition to the establishment of Palestine or any other independent locality as a Jewish state. Instead, the ACJ advocated a policy of rehabilitating European Jewry through a restoration of civil, political, and economic security in those nations containing a Jewish population.

The ACJ was initially created to represent a religious opposition to political Zionism. But with the appointment of Sidney Wallach, a layman, as public relations representative and the election of several lay officers, the religious aspects were de-emphasized. Indeed, some of the rabbinic pioneers of the idea to create a non-Zionist organization never joined the ACJ, claiming the Council represented anti-Zionism rather than pro-Judaism. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and the ACJ's announced intent to continue its anti-Zionist program, several prominent Reform rabbis, among them ACJ founder Louis Wolsey, resigned from the Council.

After 1948, through press releases and other commentary, the Council continued its opposition to the establishment of Israel, but it also expanded its program to include non-

political aspects of its opposition to Zionism. In the early 1950s the ACJ provided aid to Christian and Muslim refugees from Palestine. In 1955, the Philanthropic Fund of the American Council for Judaism was established to provide assistance to Jews within their own countries and to aid Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Arab countries.

In 1952, the Council opened Sunday schools, based on a program of universal Judaism, in Milwaukee, Westchester (New York), New York City, and Chicago. By 1954 the Council was progressing with a multi-faceted program of creating religious texts free of nationalist bias, conducting annual teachers' institutes and distributing a serial titled Education in Judaism.

In 1955, Elmer Berger advocated the complete assimilation of Jews into American life through a program which called for the establishment of Sunday as the official Jewish day of worship, the designing of a new menorah which "would reflect the appreciation of American Jews of the freedom of life in the United States," and the interpretation of the holiday of Sukkot "to be broadened to take on meaning to [all] citizens of an industrial society."

The Council's statement in 1968 that the Arab-Israeli Six Day War was an act of Israeli "aggression" and that the massive Jewish support for Israel in the United States amounted to "hysteria" resulted again in the resignation of several leading members.

The American Council for Judaism continues with the goal of seeking "to advance the universal principles of a Judaism free of nationalism, and the national, civic, cultural, and social integration into American institutions of Americans of Jewish faith."

Scope and Content

This collection of American Council for Judaism records, coming as it does from disparate sources and donors, is not an organic collection -- rather it is an amalgam of material gathered by persons involved in the administration and work of the ACJ. As a result, there are gaps in the records and the collection does not have a consistent flow as it might if it came from a clear and single provenance.

That said, these records are an important source of primary materials, pertaining not only to the work and founding of the ACJ, but to a movement and philosophy of thought that exerted much influence in American Reform Judaism during the early to mid-20th century. Being a mixture of materials from many sources this collection contains a number of particular, yet diverse, viewpoints on the thought and perspective of the ACJ and its times, which researchers should find useful.

This collection is best utilized in conjunction with the papers and records of other contemporary players in this scene - Zionist and anti-Zionist - some of which are listed in the related materials section of this finding aid.

The American Jewish Archives contains the papers of many of the founders and early leaders of the ACJ. These collections - such as the papers of Morris Lazon, Louis Wolsey, and Elmer Berger - contain important materials that must be consulted for a complete understanding of the organization and its purpose. The AJA also has an extensive nearprint (i.e., printed matter) collection that contains many of the ACJ's publications, together with newsclippings and commentaries on the ACJ written from a variety of perspectives.

For further information on the American Council for Judaism see: *Jews Against Zionism: the American Council for Judaism, 1942-1948* by Thomas A. Kolsky. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

Arrangement

Organized into three (3) series: A. Correspondence, 1942-1989; B. American Council for Judaism Records, 1942-1989; C. Nearprint, 1937-1968.

Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

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Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the American Council for Judaism Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-17. American Council for Judaism Records.

American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Obtained from four sources: Albert B. Belton of Los Angeles, through Alfred Gottschalk, donated the bulk of the collection in 1974. Mrs. Irwin Rhodes of Cincinnati donated one box of materials; Malcolm H. Stern of New York, N.Y. donated one box of materials, and Mark Glickman donated two boxes of Berger correspondence. Additional material received from various donors.

Processing Information

Processed by M. Carolyn Dellenbach, July 1977 and June 2002.

Index Terms

Subjects Rabbis / Reform Judaism / Zionism
Personal Names Belton, Albert B. / Berger, Elmer, 1908-1996 / Stern, Malcolm H., 1915-1994
Corporate Names American Council for Judaism
Media Minutes / Speeches

Series A. Correspondence, 1942-1989, undated

Extent 2 linear feet (5 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement

This series is arranged in four (4) subseries: 1. General; 2. Malcolm H. Stern; 3. Albert B. Belton; 4. Elmer Berger/Clarence Coleman.

Subseries 1. General, 1942-1989

Extent 1 linear foot (2.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Contains information and copies of some of the Council's correspondence along with the correspondence of Gerald Blank as publicity director of the ACJ.

Arrangement

This subseries is arranged chronologically. Overlapping dates are due to separate acquisitions of files.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 1. General correspondence, 1942-1953
- Box 1. Folder 2. General correspondence, 1943-1958
- Box 1. Folder 3. General correspondence, 1955-1956
- Box 1. Folder 4. General correspondence, 1957-1958
- Box 1. Folder 5. General correspondence, 1959
- Box 1. Folder 6. General correspondence, 1959-1966
- Box 1. Folder 7. General correspondence, 1960
- Box 2. Folder 1. General correspondence, 1961-1964, undated
- Box 2. Folder 2. General correspondence, 1967-1973
- Box 2. Folder 3. General correspondence, 1986-1989
- Box 2. Folder 4. General correspondence, 1988 January-March
- Box 2. Folder 5. General correspondence, 1988 April-June

- Box 2. Folder 6. General correspondence, 1988 July-September
- Box 2. Folder 7. General correspondence, 1988 October-December
- Box 3. Folder 1. General correspondence, 1989 January
- Box 3. Folder 2. General correspondence, 1989 January-March

Subseries 2. Malcolm H. Stern, 1942, 1948

Scope and Content Note Represents a separate acquisition to the ACJ collection. It contains information on Stern's association with the Council and his correspondence with his uncle, Henry J. Berkowitz, concerning Zionism and the formation of the American Council for Judaism.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 3. Folder 3. Stern, Malcolm H., 1942, 1948

Subseries 3. Albert B. Belton, 1957-1967

Extent 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of Belton's files as ACJ librarian-researcher-translator. Belton joined the Council in 1956 but soon became extremely disenchanted with the Council because, he felt, it represented anti-Jewish ideals. In 1959 Belton personally resigned from the ACJ but officially remained part of the ACJ's staff. This subseries consists of Belton's official correspondence, a copy of his resignation statement, and his "report sheets," where he kept a running account of the Council's personnel, its activities, and strategies.

Arrangement This subseries is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 3. Folder 4. Belton, Albert B., 1957-1959
- Box 3. Folder 5. Belton, Albert B., 1960-1961
- Box 3. Folder 6. Belton, Albert B. Letter of resignation, 1959 April
- Box 3. Folder 7. Belton, Albert B. Report sheets, 1957, 1959-1961

Subseries 4. Elmer Berger/Clarence Coleman, 1948-1969

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Consists of miscellaneous correspondence of Elmer Berger, the head of the ACJ. Materials have been copied from collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Arrangement Organized by originating collection at the Historical Society and are grouped chronologically within the collection.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 4. Folder 1. American Council for Judaism papers, 1948-1949

Box 4. Folder 2. American Council for Judaism papers, 1949-1951
Box 4. Folder 3. American Council for Judaism papers, 1952-1953
Box 4. Folder 4. American Council for Judaism papers, 1954-1965
Box 4. Folder 5. Berger, Elmer, 1957-1959
Box 4. Folder 6. Berger, Elmer, 1961-1962
Box 4. Folder 7. Berger, Elmer, 1963
Box 5. Folder 1. Berger, Elmer, 1964-1965
Box 5. Folder 2. Berger, Elmer, 1966-1967
Box 5. Folder 3. Berger, Elmer, 1967-1968
Box 5. Folder 4. Rosenwald, Lessing, 1950-1963
Box 5. Folder 5. Rosenwald, Lessing, 1965-1969

Series B. American Council for Judaism, 1942-1989, undated

Extent 6.8 linear feet (17 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note Contains minutes, membership lists, reports, committee records, form letters and memoranda, annual conference material, records of the ACJ Philanthropic Fund, and records of the New York chapter of the American Council for Judaism. Throughout this series are biographical sketches of some Council members. Of special interest are the reports of the ACJ research department, the so-called ACJ "position papers," which present a future study of the Council, and material dealing with Project Concord, an ACJ-financed survey conducted by the University of Washington (Seattle) to poll and analyze Council members for their opinions on Zionism and the ACJ.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 6. Folder 1. ACJ records, 1942-1944
Box 6. Folder 2. ACJ records, 1943-1953
Box 6. Folder 3. ACJ records, 1946-1947
Box 6. Folder 4. Membership lists, 1947
Box 6. Folder 5. ACJ records, 1948-1954
Box 6. Folder 6. ACJ records, 1954-1961
Box 6. Folder 7. ACJ records, 1955-1956
Box 6. Folder 8. ACJ records, 1957 January-April
Box 7. Folder 1. ACJ records, 1957 May-October
Box 7. Folder 2. ACJ records, 1957 December
Box 7. Folder 3. ACJ records, 1958 January-March
Box 7. Folder 4. ACJ records, 1958 April-December
Box 7. Folder 5. ACJ records, 1959 January
Box 7. Folder 6. Membership lists - New York Chapter, 1959 January
Box 8. Folder 1. ACJ records, 1959 February-April
Box 8. Folder 2. ACJ records, 1959 May-August
Box 8. Folder 3. ACJ records, 1959 September-November

Box 8. Folder 4. ACJ records, 1959 December

Box 8. Folder 5. ACJ records, 1960 January-April

Box 8. Folder 6. ACJ records, 1960 May

Box 8. Folder 7. ACJ records, 1960 June-August

Box 8. Folder 8. ACJ records, 1960 September-October

Box 9. Folder 1. ACJ records, 1960 December

Box 9. Folder 2. ACJ records, 1961 January-April

Box 9. Folder 3. ACJ records, 1961 May

Box 9. Folder 4. ACJ records, 1961 June-December

Box 9. Folder 5. Administrative records, 1962-1963

Box 9. Folder 6. Administrative records, 1962-1964

Box 9. Folder 7. Administrative records, 1964-1968

Box 10. Folder 1. Administrative records, undated

Box 10. Folder 2. American Jewish Committee, undated

Box 10. Folder 3. 35th Anniversary, undated

Box 10. Folder 4. Annual Conference, 1966-1968

Box 10. Folder 5. Berger, Elmer, undated

Box 10. Folder 6. Berger, Elmer. "The Further Historic Weakness of Non-Zionism", undated

Box 10. Folder 7. Board of Directors, 1981-1988

Box 10. Folder 8. Books, undated

Box 11. Folder 1. Brochures, 1983-1985

Box 11. Folder 2. Budget, 1963-1985

Box 11. Folder 3. Bylaws, certificates of incorporation, 1943-1980

Box 11. Folder 4. Bylaws revisions, 1960

Box 11. Folder 5. Bylaws revisions, 1963-1966

Box 12. Folder 1. Bylaws revisions, 1978-1982

Box 12. Folder 2. Committee on Position Papers, 1959

Box 12. Folder 3. Dissolution, 1969-1981

Box 12. Folder 4. Documents re: the relationship between the United Israel Appeal, WZO, and Jewish Agency for Israel, 1956-1966

Box 12. Folder 5. Excerpts, 1954-1964

Box 12. Folder 6. Feuerlight, Roberta Strauss, 1983

Box 13. Folder 1. Financial reports, 1981

Box 13. Folder 2. Financial reports, 1982

Box 13. Folder 3. Financial reports, 1983

Box 13. Folder 4. Financial reports, 1984

Box 13. Folder 5. Financial reports, 1985

Box 13. Folder 6. Financial reports, 1986

Box 13. Folder 7. Financial reports, 1987

Box 13. Folder 8. Financial reports, 1988

Box 13. Folder 9. Financial reports, 1989

Box 13. Folder 10. Goals and Activities, 1983

Box 13. Folder 11. Herrmann, Klaus, 1947-1996

Box 14. Folder 1. History, 1946-1983

Box 14. Folder 2. Israel, 1948-1954

Box 14. Folder 3. Jewish Committee on the Middle East, 1988

Box 14. Folder 4. Judaic Studies Program, 1984

Box 14. Folder 5. Kontis, John, 1982

Box 14. Folder 6. Korn, Richard. "The Zionism Dogma, with a supplement on ARZA.", undated

Box 14. Folder 7. Legal Brief. Chapter II, undated

Box 14. Folder 8. Legal Brief. Chapter IV and V, undated

Box 14. Folder 9. Legal Petition and Memorandum to the Secretary of State, 1968

Box 15. Folder 1. Letterhead, 1978-1983

Box 15. Folder 2. Mallison, Jr. W. T., 1964, undated

Box 15. Folder 3. Mann, Rita, 1988

Box 15. Folder 4. Members by Region, 1959-1964

Box 15. Folder 5. Membership meeting minutes, 1983

Box 15. Folder 6. Memos, 1969-1963

Box 15. Folder 7. Morton J. May Foundation, 1976-1988

Box 15. Folder 8. National Executive Committee minutes, 1943-1949

Box 16. Folder 1. National Executive Committee minutes, 1950-1955

Box 16. Folder 2. National Executive Committee minutes, 1956-1960

Box 16. Folder 3. National Executive Committee minutes, 1961-1966

Box 16. Folder 4. National Executive Committee minutes, 1967-1968

Box 17. Folder 1. National Executive Committee meeting transcript, 1968

Box 17. Folder 2. National Executive Committee meeting transcript, 1968

Box 17. Folder 3. National Executive Committee minutes, 1969-1974

Box 17. Folder 4. National Executive Committee minutes, 1974-1980

Box 17. Folder 5. Political Activity, 1981

Box 17. Folder 6. Publications, 1987

Box 17. Folder 7. Questions and Answers, undated

Box 17. Folder 8. Regional News, 1954-1962

Box 17. Folder 9. Religious Education Program, 1953

Box 17. Folder 10. Reports, 1966-1983

Box 18. Folder 1. Rosenberg, Roy A., 1983-1988

Box 18. Folder 2. Statement of Position and Program, with comments, 1976

Box 18. Folder 3. Statements and Lectures, 1959-1962

Box 18. Folder 4. Sussman, Leonard R., 1961-1963
Box 18. Folder 5. Taxes, 1943-1968
Box 18. Folder 6. Weyl, Ruth S, 1986-1989
Box 19. Folder 1. Book I. National Advisory Board and Executive Committee, 1945-1955
Box 19. Folder 2. Book I. National Advisory Board and Executive Committee, 1945-1955
Box 19. Folder 3. Book I. National Advisory Board and Executive Committee, 1945-1955
Box 19. Folder 4. Book II. Offsets and Reprints of Newspaper Articles, 1959-1962
Box 19. Folder 5. Book II. Offsets and Reprints of Newspaper Articles, 1959-1962
Box 20. Folder 1. Book II. Offsets and Reprints of Newspaper Articles, 1959-1962
Box 20. Folder 2. Book III. Offsets and Reprints of Newspaper Articles, 1956-1957
Box 20. Folder 3. Book III. Offsets and Reprints of Newspaper Articles, 1956-1957
Box 21. Folder 1. Book IV. Mimeograph Material, 1957-1960
Box 21. Folder 2. Book IV. Mimeograph Material, 1957-1960
Box 21. Folder 3. Book IV. Mimeograph Material, 1957-1960
Box 21. Folder 4. Book V. Mimeograph Material, 1961-1964
Box 22. Folder 1. Book V. Mimeograph Material, 1961-1964
Box 22. Folder 2. Book V. Mimeograph Material, 1961-1964
Box 22. Folder 3. Book VI. Mimeograph Material, 1964-1967
Box 22. Folder 4. Book VI. Mimeograph Material, 1964-1967
Box 22. Folder 5. Book VI. Mimeograph Material, 1964-1967
Box 22. Folder 6. Book VII. Mimeograph Material, 1968-1969

Series C. Serials and Materials from Other Organizations, 1955-1961, undated

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Box and Folder Listing

Box 23. Folder 1. American Friends of the Middle East [memoranda, minutes, newsletter, misc.], 1955-1961
Box 23. Folder 2. Arab Information Center "Information Papers" nos. 4-16, undated
Box 23. Folder 3. Arab Information Center "News and Views", 1958-1960
Box 23. Folder 4. Arab World, 1959 April, 1959 December
Box 23. Folder 5. The Caravan, 1959-1961
Box 23. Folder 6. Middle East Digest, 1960 August, 1960 December
Box 23. Folder 7. Organization of Arab Students, newsletter and yearbook, 1961
Box 23. Folder 8. Palestine Arab Refugee Newsletter, 1959-1960
Box 23. Folder 9. The Religious Liberal, 1959