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26

Zionist Organization of America. Speech. 3 September 1961.

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ZOA speech

HAF Speeches

MEMORANDUM

Date October 12th, 1961

To Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

From Raphael Levy

Subject

Herewith is an edited copy of your address to the ZOA.

I am making a copy available to the Speaker's Division, and to Carl Sobin who is doing our Speaker's Manual. May I send copies to Ariel Margulies and certain Publicity Directors?

rl:ef
att.

*Disass before
making available to anyone.*

Ull file

9/3/61

I take in all seriousness and in all propriety this invitation to speak completely and categorically off the record. I beg most earnestly that if there is anyone here in the room from the general press, from the Anglo-Jewish press, from the organizational press, that they respect this request that nothing that I say appear in print.

This is a matter I transmit to you as it was transmitted to me in recent days by the highest officials in the Israel Government and in the Jewish Agency whose treasury we attempt to serve through the funds we raise.

The reason for this is that in the matter of the most recent days a new situation has developed which will cause us to mount a campaign in 1962 which will be the largest campaign in a decade. For we may very well be faced with the largest immigration in ten years and that is the fact that I don't want published.

We may very well have coming into Israel in 1962 more Jews than have come into Israel since 1952. This will be quite spectacular if it occurs. There is every reason to believe it ^{might} will occur. I shall not cite figures; I shall not name countries of origin. I think you, of all groups in this country, are disciplined enough to respect the reasons why there will be no public utterances of these two vital matters--numbers and countries.

I ask you to accept as a fact, soberly transmitted, that we may be faced with this situation. We are currently, not in the future, currently, running an immigration at a rate which is the highest in the last ^{four} ~~five~~ years and you have seen very little, if anything, in the press about it.

We must conduct ourselves in the coming months in a manner in which we have not done in many years; namely, we must speak to each other heart to heart without the aid of that which in the United States has come to accompany every mass effort. I mean without the technique of large scale publicity and Madison Avenue approaches;

without advertisements and without headlines. These devices and techniques are not at our disposal in this coming campaign. It will be the most silent campaign you have ever seen or heard in terms of public press, and by that I refer to Anglo-Jewish press as well. And yet it will be the most crucial campaign and the largest in terms of dollars that we have tried to achieve in more than a decade.

Now I have put it as bluntly and as simply as I know how. I should like to say a second thing and I should not like to be misunderstood. While I believe, and have conducted myself publicly and privately in support of this, ^{premise} that all forms of aid to Israel are important and vital and indispensable, all forms—bonds and investments and business grants and loans—I believe that no form is a substitute for placing at the disposal of the national treasury of the Jewish people free dollars with which to do the single unitary task of absorbing immigrants. No public fund of loans or grants from governments, no private funds of investments in businesses, however necessary that may be, can be used for the purpose of real, primitive, elemental "hatzalah."

Hatzalah means rescue and this means picking up that Jew in that country from which he must leave or chooses to leave or can leave when the political opportunity is available to him, and carrying him out to some haven of safety in the free world, ~~out from behind the Iron Curtain, or out from the Moslem World,~~ to some point of safety, and then carrying him from there into Israel.

We have been witness to a vast trans-migration of one million of our fellow Jews. I wanted to make a tremendous ceremony out of the arrival of the one millionth Jew in Israel. I ^{submitted} ~~wrote~~ a long and detailed prospectus as to how that should be handled both in Israel and here in the United States. At the highest level in Israel, my prospectus was vetoed and it was decided that the millionth Jew would enter Israel anonymously, which he did some weeks ago. I wanted to bring him here to the United States. I wanted to put him on the front page of every newspaper. I wanted to boast about the fact that we have rescued one million of our brethren. I wanted to send the man all over this country as a symbol of his 999,999 predecessors and

as a precursor of the million or two million to follow him. It was vetoed. No one knows, not even I, who the millionth immigrant is. The political considerations which led to the decision of anonymity were apparently so over-riding and overwhelming that I bowed to them, as do all of us.

If we want the rescue operation to continue there must be no publicity and there can be no substitute for the money required.

There is no substitute in a financial way for the free unchannelled, contributed dollar which need not be earmarked for a road or a pipeline or a railroad or a factory or this or that. When loans or grants are obtained from governments, they are earmarked. They must be used for that cause or that project for which they are originally solicited. Even when dollars come in through the sale of bonds, they are earmarked.

The free, flexible, maneuverable dollar which ~~they~~^{be} can use at one moment to buy transportation, which ~~they~~^{be} can use at another moment to build housing, which ~~they~~^{be} can use at a third moment to set up schools for the teaching of Hebrew to new immigrants, which ~~they~~^{be} can use at a forth moment to increase the initial food that is given from eight days work to twenty days work if necessary, is the kind of dollar best adapted to the process of the absorption of people into Israel. We have a tendency to forget that.

I think we have made an error in the past two or three years. If this be heresy, then make the most of it. We have committed an error, ladies and gentlemen, in switching the image of Israel too quickly from a country which has a substantial part of its population in need to a country which is a booming, progressive, prosperous economic nation.

I understand why we switched the image. All of us have a passionate desire to be associated with a success. All of us understand the economic imperatives which play a role when you go to the World Bank or any other source and you want to borrow and you must show that you have resources and other avenues to which you can turn.

The Tourist Corporation wants more tourists to come to Israel. They won't come unless you advertise her as a land of sun and the Riviera of the Eastern Mediterranean. We want businessmen to invest in Israel and they won't invest if you describe her as a country of poverty and misery. We are all businessmen enough to understand that. And we are all deeply Jewish enough to know that it was the hope that we poured in that brought us to the conclusion that we had made a quick success of it. We fed our egos too rapidly. It is just as simple as that. Everyone of us has done a terrible disservice by stressing only one part of the picture.

Always in the past, we have managed to keep a sense of balance. In our personal lives, in our family lives, in our religious lives, in our corporate and collective national life, we've kept a sense of balance. But, in our attitude toward Israel the last few years, we've lost that sense of balance.

We've come to think of her only as a great, magnificent, successful, going concern like the Stock Market which is presumed always to go up. We all know that isn't so and I say now very earnestly and seriously, we must recast this image.

We do have a success in Israel. The statistics and the figures are so indubitably present that there is no need to prove the case. And yet, if we think of it only that way, we will fail her now as she enters into what may very well be the most difficult period of her need.

There is going to be an exonomic backlash coming, ladies and gentlemen. The superficial prosperity which all of you ~~who~~^{who} have been there, have seen in terms of the standard of living of the people, will disintegrate within another year or two because that superficial prosperity on an individual basis is due to the funds that individual israelis have received from German reparations. They have used this money to give vent to the desires of a lifetime. After twenty years of waiting for a refrigerator, they now have the money from a one-time repayment of German money to buy that refrigerator. There are even more motor cars; there are more air conditioners; there are more radios. But would you just stop to think for a moment that this is a one-shot proposition.

A man receives once a lump sum indemnification from Germany and once he goes out and buys himself a consumer commodity. He will not be able to buy another motor car in twenty years or another refrigerator in ten. Don't make a mistake. To be fooled by the superficial prosperity of the individual family standard of living is to adopt an attitude which is unworthy of spiritual people.

Secondly, if we turn from the individual family standard of living to the collective standard of living of the nation, it would be unworthy and inadequate of us to judge that there is a natural, collective prosperity which is guaranteed and built in to the growth of the economy. Yes, the gross national product is increasing. Yes, there is no unemployment at the moment. Yes, there is an increase in the number of luxury flats being built in the big cities. Yes, there is an increase in the amount of tonnage coming into Haifa and Elat.

But there is also an increase in the imbalance of trade between exports and imports. There is no need to remind me that there is a foreign currency reserve of a couple of hundred million dollars in the Bank of Israel. It isn't the equivalent of a one-half year payment of the imbalance of trade, not a half year. The imbalance of trade between export and import is more than 350 million dollars.

I plead for a sense of balance. Israel is growing stronger and more prosperous. But Israel is so far from being a prosperous country with a success economy guaranteed not to fail, that if you and I don't understand this, we might as well stop everything that we're doing. And so I say that the form of aid which is required in view of the increasing immigration situation is the free contributed dollar in much larger amounts. Without giving you figures or countries of origin, I will say that next year may see the largest immigration in a decade. In the face of that and in the face of the error that I think we've made in terms of evaluating and judging Israel's economic viability, I suggest we give a hard look at the standards of our UJA contributions.

Is this a time for people to say that it's all done? That's the kind of shortsightedness of which we've never been guilty before, never been guilty. There's one thing we've had...it's always been a long, historic look. But I suggest that our heads are swimming with too much success. Too much happened to us too quickly in the last thirteen years. We rose from the pit of decimation and disease. The courage and the energy and the capacity which we found to receive ourselves may have caused us to lose balance.

"Pamelach, pamelach"...It's a long road here, a long road. It isn't just the immigrants who will be coming in 1962; it's the immigrants who will be coming in '72—for whom we have continuing special obligation. Think, therefore, of this as we go into the next campaign.

We are enjoying a rising curve of capacity in the United States. The Jews of America keep increasing in material wealth. We are not benefitting by a declining curve of need...the needs are going up. As the needs go up and the capacity to give goes up, we must expend the greatest efforts to raise the largest sums possible.

We will not build a nation with slums. We will not build a nation with an uneducated population. It does no good to bring Jews to Israel and then give them three and four hours schooling a day. It's against the Jewish heritage to do that. And yet that's what they're getting today. Three and four hours of schooling. Are you proud of that? I am not. We seek constantly to embrace into the fold of the Jewish people larger and larger numbers to save them and to build a land with them.

But to bring them into a Levantine state where they will live in slums and where they will be under-educated isn't noble. When you bring a Jew, you know what you have to do for him in the way of school, in the way of a hospital bed, in the way of a new farm to train him, in the way of a vocational school to change him from somebody who is not rooted and without skills to a man who has a trade. What does all this cost?

On a basis of 30,000 Jews coming into Israel in 1961, which was our original plan-- and there will be almost twice that number in 1961--we set a budget of \$72,000,000. Of that, the Jewish Agency got approximately \$40,000,000--to \$42,000,000. If we had reached \$72,000,000, they would have gotten \$52,000,000. But we didn't reach it. We will reach \$60,000,000 this year. The Jewish Agency, the Keren Hayesod, will get \$40,000,000 of it. We have an estimate from the treasurer of the Jewish Agency that for every 10,000 immigrants above 30,000, which was the base figure we started with this year, for every 10,000 immigrants the cost is seven and a half million dollars above the 30,000. Once you get above the 30,000, you don't have double overhead and double administration. It doesn't increase geometrically, you simply need some more food and some more houses and some more schoolrooms, if you can afford to put them up. Seven and a half million per ten thousand; twenty thousand, fifteen million; thirty thousand, twenty-two and a half million to go -- we have twenty-two and a half extra millions to obtain if, 60,000 immigrants come to Israel in 1962.

We had a meeting of the UJA Campaign Cabinet recently. The decision taken in the Cabinet has been approved by the national leadership of UJA and takes the form of a resolution that for 1962 we attempt to achieve in a Special Fund Campaign a figure of \$35,000,000 on top of the \$60,000,000 which we raised this year. We're going to break our backs to try to reach that figure. We haven't reached a figure like that also in a decade.

In the year of 1957, which was the year following the Sinai campaign, which was the year Egypt threw the Jews out, which was the year that the Hungarian Revolution took place and there were Jews who fled when the Freedom Fighters fled, which was the year that movement first started from Poland--repatriates coming back from Russia-- with all of that -- with the newspapers full -- with all the publicity at our disposal in terms of awakening the emotions of Jews, with Israel on the front page of the paper every single day until that day in March, 1957, when she agreed to withdraw from the Sinai--you will recall--that that year - 1957 - the United Jewish Appeal was given by the Jewish of America \$79,000,000 in 1957. With none of this at our

disposal for 1962, we are going to try to reach \$95,000,000.

I haven't the faintest notion whether it's possible. I will tell you this. Whether it's possible or not is going to be determined on the most voluntary basis. All I can say to you is that you, not you alone, but you, like every group of dedicated Jews in America, are going to decide, nobody else.

You are either going to move forward in a great burst of action because you see something important happening here for the first time in ten years, or you won't.

I can't do anything other than tell you what the facts are. I can't do anything else than beg you to experience a deep, Jewish, historic comprehension of what this means; I can't do more than say to you; we have the capacity. I leave you with the question - do we have the will?

Thank you very much.

