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American Zionist Emergency Council, bulletin, 1944.



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# CONFIDENTIAL BULLETIN

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Vol. 1. No. 5

March 29, 1944

## WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

So many things have happened so swiftly since the introduction of the pro-Zionist Resolutions into the Senate and the House that the logical connections between developments are perhaps less clear than they should be. Why, it has been asked, were the Resolutions introduced at a time when the argument of military inexpediency could obviously be used against their passage? Might it not have been more reasonable and proper to let the question of Palestine's postwar political status wait till after the war? Have our efforts - frustrated as they are for the time being - made for any improvement in the Zionist political situation? What, in the light of the deferment of the Resolutions, is the significance of the President's statement of March 9th? Where do we stand now?

## WHY THIS OF ALL TIMES?

It must first of all be understood that the timing of the Resolutions was not of our choosing. A natural deadline had been thrust upon us by the fact that March 31st is the day on which the immigration ban decreed by the White Paper is to come into force. Dr. Silver put the issue very clearly at the Madison Square Garden meeting on March 21st, when he said: "To those who say that the Jewish people should wait for the end of the war before they raise the question of the abrogation of the White Paper, with its clear implication of liquidating the Jewish National Home, the answer must be given that vital political decisions affecting many countries are even now being made, and that Palestine and the Near East are quite definitely within the field where political activities looking towards ultimate arrangements are being vigorously prosecuted today."

## WE HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE ICE

Cairo has for many months now been the center of Pan-Arab political activities, while in Palestine itself the Administration has been systematically applying the provisions of the White Paper and as clearly enunciating a postwar policy based on the White Paper. It was evident that in the absence of any official pronouncement abrogating



the White Paper we might well find ourselves faced with a "fait accompli" in the Near East after the War. Despite concentrated efforts by Zionist leaders in both London and Washington, no pronouncement invalidating the White Paper was forthcoming. The situation seemed to be congealed. We therefore reached the conclusion that the only way to unfreeze it in Washington was the introduction of a Congressional Resolution: it is the legislative branch of our Government which by its nature is the most sensitive to the pressure of public opinion.

The Palestine Resolutions were intended as an expression of opinion to be tendered to the Executive which is the policy-forming branch of our Government. The statement made by President Roosevelt on March 9th may be characterized as an outgrowth of the efforts made in behalf of the Resolutions. For many reasons it is a statement of cardinal significance. It is the first favorable governmental pronouncement we have had on either side of the Atlantic since the issuance of the White Paper. Clear proof of its significance is furnished by the bewilderment and disappointment it has aroused among Arab leaders who were apparently certain that no such sympathetic declaration on Zionism would come from the American Government.

#### THE PRESIDENT AND AMERICAN POLICY

The President's message is the first official American statement expressing explicit disapproval of the White Paper of 1939. It thereby admits that America has a general obligation towards the Jewish National Home, as is indeed attested by the record of American participation in the enunciation of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. The State Department has in recent years sought to whittle down this general moral and legal obligation to specific concern with the interests in Palestine of American nationals.

Furthermore, by the very fact of its publication after the military authorities had appeared before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to urge silence on the Palestine question, the President's statement served in effect as an intervention which modified the situation created by the Military. It gave public discussion on Palestine the stamp of approval supplied by the President's own example. As Arthur Krock, Washington correspondent of the "New York Times", pointed out on March 29th, the President's statement has left Congress with the prevailing opinion that the ban imposed on the Resolution for military reasons has been overruled by the President's own authorized statement.

#### THE WAY TO FUTURE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN LEFT OPEN

The influence of pro-Zionist public opinion is not to be discounted in considering the wording of the letter sent by Secretary Stimson to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The letter explicitly states that it is "without reference to the merits of these resolu-



tions" that the War Department believes "further action on them at this time would be prejudicial to the successful prosecution of the war". This wording, as well as the text of the President's sympathetic statement, clearly leaves the door open to further activity on our part. Sharing every loyal citizen's deference to the opinion of the Military, we are yet fully entitled, as the Resolution passed at Madison Square Garden points out, to urge the passage of the Resolution in Congress "at the earliest moment consistent with the exigencies of the war effort thereby serving to join the Legislative and Executive branches of our Government in the expression of a common policy designed to end the sufferings of the Jewish people and to restore it to a place of honor and dignity among the nations of the earth."

#### WHAT WE CAN AND SHOULD DO

It should thus clearly be our policy to keep the Palestine issue alive through continued contact with the Congressmen who have expressed themselves in favor of our objectives; through reiteration at public meetings of the demand for action on the Resolution at the earliest moment consistent with the exigencies of the war effort; through appeals to the President - by such appropriate methods as may be indicated from time to time - to act concretely along the lines indicated in his sympathetic message. Through our effort for the Resolution we have at last broken through the indifference and silence which met us at every turn in recent years. Zionism has become a vital question on the national and international agenda. We must keep it there.

Our experience in recent months has proved how much can be accomplished by the pressure of public opinion - even in the face of tremendous opposition by powerful forces. Our work preparatory to the introduction of the Resolutions and during the Hearings on them, has been responsible for a large-scale campaign of enlightenment and education such as American Zionism has never before succeeded in bringing about. The justice of our cause - presented so ably and vigorously to both Jews and non-Jews by our local Emergency Councils - has been defended in hundreds of newspapers and championed by governors, mayors, educators, leaders in every field of American life. It can be stated without any hesitation that if the Resolutions were to be voted on in Congress today - without intervention by outside forces - they would be adopted overwhelmingly. As far as those outside forces themselves are concerned, they have at least been brought into the open by the introduction of the Resolutions, making the lines on which our struggle must be conducted clearer to us and to those factors among which we must seek our logical allies.

#### THINGS ARE EASING IN ENGLAND

Hope for the future outcome of our efforts is strengthened by the reports brought by Zionist leaders recently returned from England. The



impression they transmit is that the forces favorable to us have gathered strength during the past few months - very probably as the result of the attitude indicated by the Prime Minister himself on various occasions. Our friends are apparently determined to arrive at a radical and permanent solution of the Palestine question in a manner consistent with Zionist aspirations. The timing of any definite political step appears to wait on the course of the war. One of the most heartening developments in England was the presence in recent months of General Smuts who brings with him a sturdy faith in the success of our cause. The great body of the Labor Party continues to be steadfast in its sympathy with Zionism.

It was gratifying to learn, as has been reported in the press, that the differences between Dr. Weizmann and Mr. Ben-Gurion have been ironed out, and that these were concerned not with matters of principle but with questions of administrative procedure within the Executive.

"THIS IS A MORAL AS WELL AS A POLITICAL ISSUE"

An unusually interesting communication, indicative of the profound impression made by the recently held National Conference on Palestine, has been received by the Oklahoma Jewish Emergency Committee for the Abrogation of the White Paper. Mrs. Walter Ferguson, a Tulsa journalist who was a delegate to the Conference, has sent the Committee a comprehensive analysis of the proceedings, stressing Dr. Lowdermilk's plans for a Jordan Valley Authority and Professor Albright's belief that the Arab people as a whole do not share the anti-Zionist sentiments of "the higher-ups whose prestige may be endangered by industrialization". Discussing the War Department's opposition to the passage of the Palestine Resolutions, Mrs. Ferguson points to the general impression that there is an interrelationship between the War and State Departments, the Arabian Oil project, and the policies of the British Colonial Office. She ends: "Washington opinion seems to lean heavily to the belief that we dare not put off the question as postwar business. What we do now about such matters, will most certainly affect the peace and our postwar political prestige. Everybody agrees that this is a moral as well as a political issue - and that it symbolizes everything for which we fight. In any event I believe the Jews will profit. If political expediency prevents us from acting in their behalf in Palestine, there will be such a revulsion of public opinion that something will have to be done; I am hoping of course that the educational benefits coming out of the Conference will be the means of awakening Congress and all the people to their clear duty."



# *The Emergency Council Bulletin*

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## WE HAVE TRAVELED A LONG WAY

The accomplishments of the Emergency Council in the fields of politics and public relations were evaluated a few weeks ago at the gathering in Washington of over two hundred local emergency committee leaders from communities in 38 states. More important even than this "taking of stock" was the demarcation of the Council's line of activity for the next few months - a period likely to be even more critical politically than the months just past.

Dr. Silver pointed out that a year ago it had become clear that the Jewish National Home was taboo in Washington. References to it were beginning to disappear even from the routine messages of sympathy government officials sent to Zionist conventions and gatherings. Some crucial change had taken place: an agreement, it appears, to accept the White Paper as the last word on Palestine. Last summer an official statement was on the point of being issued jointly by our government and that of Great Britain, definitely discouraging discussion for the duration of the political situation in Palestine.

## THE TWO BASIC STEPS

Only drastic action on the part of Zionists could change this threatening picture. To go along at our old pace was impossible. Hence two major steps were taken. The first was the convening of the American Jewish Conference, the most democratic and representative Jewish assembly ever held on these shores. The American Jewish Conference spoke out clearly and forcibly for the full Zionist solution - the establishment of the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine - rather than for a mere immigrants' aid approach to the question of Palestine. The Conference served to give convincing proof that American Jewry endorsed the Zionist objective. That having been demonstrated, the next step was an appeal to the whole of American public opinion. There was no more compelling way to do this than through the introduction of the pro-Zionist resolutions into Congress. In the course of a few months, the campaign of enlightenment preceding and accompanying the introduction of the resolutions succeeded in focusing America's attention on the subject of the Jewish National Home and in winning for it the good-will of the American public.

This major achievement, so significant in the light of the indifference and hostility to Zionism prevailing just a short time ago, must be credited in large part to the extraordinarily effective work done in over three hundred key cities by the local emergency committees working with the national office of the Emergency Council. Not the least rewarding aspect of



the Washington conference of emergency committee leaders was the analysis by a number of delegates of the effective work done in their localities. They drew a picture of energetic, well-coordinated activity. For example, in the state of Colorado under the aegis of the Colorado Emergency Council for Palestine representing practically all local Jewish organizations, close to two hundred pro-Zionist resolutions were passed by non-Jewish organizations, including the State legislature and the Denver City Council, and hundreds of favorable newspaper articles and radio comments were stimulated; in Oklahoma with a total Jewish population of 5,000 in a state of 2,500,000 people, local emergency committees financed and carried through a remarkably effective campaign of letter-writing to Senators and Congressmen and won over non-Jewish newspaper editors and clubs.

#### WITH THE NON-JEWISH COMMUNITY

The report of local activity was augmented by discussion of work with non-Jews led by Dr. Carl Hermann Voss, Executive Secretary of the Christian Council on Palestine, who presented practical hints on such activity and stressed the fact that the Zionist education of the Jewish community is the necessary pre-requisite for successful work with non-Jews. Dr. Voss pointed to the tremendous influence the March 9 National Conference on Palestine had had and to the need for future regional non-Jewish conferences on Palestine of the same type. The Lowdermilk book, too, was everywhere serving as a most effective weapon.

The joint membership of the APC and Christian Council on Palestine is now approximately 5,000. It is our goal to multiply this many times over. A notable step has been taken in the establishment of the American Jewish Trade Union Committee for Palestine under the chairmanship of Max Zaritsky and the honorary chairmanship of William Green and Philip Murray. Built upon decades of work by Labor Zionists among the labor groups, the Trade Union Committee has already received a very cordial reception in the labor press and has taken as its projects for the future the addition of thousands of new members; the adoption of pro-Commonwealth resolutions by state and city labor federations throughout the country; and a general program of education and propaganda to win the sympathy of American labor for Zionism.

#### THERE HAVE BEEN CONCRETE GAINS

The "office" aspect of this Emergency Council's work was described by the directors of the Washington and New York offices. Rabbi Feuer's analysis of the Washington scene emphasized the fact that few measures have been introduced into Congress with brighter prospects of success than our Resolutions, and that they should have clear sailing through Congress once the military reasons against their passage are voided - if only we press for it. The risk, he pointed out, had to be taken. No victories in war or politics are won by remaining in the trenches. In the midst of war other small peoples, too, are pressing their demands with regard to their political futures.

That the introduction of the Resolutions - despite their temporary shelving - has in itself led to certain not inconsiderable political gains



for Zionism was pointed out by Dr. Silver. President Roosevelt's statement that the Government of the United States had never approved of the White Paper was "an act of tremendous political significance," the first expression of opposition to that document from a high American government official. It was a response to the appeal of public opinion which in a democracy can be so effective. Of what fundamental importance this change - or beginning of a change - in the American attitude on Palestine is, can be gathered from a recent remark by the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. Upon his return from the conferences with Dr. Weizmann in London, Mr. Shertok reviewed the Zionist political situation at a meeting in May of the Smaller Actions Committee. He pointed out that the chief change in the situation was the abandonment of the March 31 date which under the White Paper was to have terminated Jewish immigration. This decision, he said, was in some measure the result of representations by the United States Government.

Further evidence that a definite change has taken place in the attitude of our Government toward our problem, Dr. Wise and Dr. Silver stated, had been borne in upon them that very day during a most encouraging conference with a very high official who had recently returned from England and in the course of his visit there saw Dr. Weizmann and discussed the Palestine question. "If what we learned today holds true three months from today, six months from today," Dr. Silver summed up, "then we have every reason to face the future with the utmost confidence."

This optimistic forecast has since been strengthened by the action of the British Labor Party's Executive in accepting as one of the planks of its postwar program a statement on Palestine demanding that Jews be admitted in such number as to become a majority, recommending that the Arabs be encouraged to move into other territories, and that the present boundaries of Palestine be extended by agreement with Syria and Egypt. This statement is particularly significant in view of the fact that the Labor members of the British Cabinet are bound by their Party's decisions.

#### COUNTERING A FLUID SITUATION

Every discussion and every prophecy with regard to the Zionist political situation must, it was stressed, be tempered by the understanding that our political situation changes constantly and will inevitably continue to change until the final settlement is made. We must therefore not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed either by the good or bad news of any given moment, but continue - in the words of an important official with whom our problem was discussed - "to keep American public opinion informed and aroused," since any vital decision which our government will take with reference to Palestine will have to have the moral backing of the American people.

The conviction that it must remain our central task "to keep American public opinion informed and aroused" was confirmed by the interviews the delegates to the Washington gathering had with their own Congressmen and Senators. "Keep bothering us and reminding us," a Texas Congressman said.



Practically every one of the large group seen; asserted definitely that he would vote for the Resolutions when they were reintroduced. Some went so far as to say that they thought they should be brought back out of Committee now and that they would be willing to circulate a petition to have them brought out. Many discounted the military reasons completely. All were sure that the Resolutions would pass when reintroduced.

It is clear that the utmost importance must be attached to maintaining contact with the members of Congress until such time as it becomes possible to bring the Resolutions up again. It was the consensus of opinion in Washington that the crest of the invasion should be reached by the middle of August. The propitious moment for reintroducing the Resolutions would thus be some time after that period and before the November elections.

#### THE LOGICAL PROGRAM

It is plainly our job during the summer months to carry on educational propaganda work both in our own Jewish and non-Jewish communities and with our Congressmen, who should be given the impression that the Jewish community is on the alert, waiting for the proper moment for the reintroduction of the Resolutions.

What precise steps should be taken in connection with this program of summer activity? As worked out by the Program Committee of the Washington conference, headed by Mr. Lester Cohen of Uniontown, the steps to be taken throughout the country include a constant effort towards the reintroduction and successful passage of the Resolutions; the launching of local membership campaigns to enlist non-Jewish citizens in the American Palestine Committee and the Christian Council on Palestine, (the invitations to come from local persons rather than from the central office of the American Palestine Committee); the organization by existing emergency committees of additional emergency committees in neighboring communities, where there are no committees.

In addition, it was recommended by the Program Committee that the Emergency Council develop radio programs to strengthen the understanding and appreciation of Zionist objectives among the American people. It was further "noted with satisfaction that the Zionist Organization of America had embarked on a program for combating the activities of the American Council for Judaism", and it was urged that this program be implemented "with all possible speed and vigor."

The Program Committee had further prepared a statement, approved by the delegates, which condemned the seven members of the Bergson group in "their successive attempts, under various front organizations and guises, to divide and confuse the American public"; pointed out that they had no authority to speak in any representative capacity; and reaffirmed "our belief in the democratic processes of Jewish life" and in the upbuilding of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth by the entire Jewish people through representative and accredited Zionist organizations.