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A Visit to Europe and Palestine, 1937.

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A VISIT TO EUROPE AND PALESTINE - 1937

WRHS
By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple



On
Sunday morning, October 3, 1937

My dear Friends:

This summer I made my fourth pilgrimage to Palestine. I was in the Holy Land first eighteen years ago when that country was still under military occupation. It was shortly after the World War. At that time there were ^{no} more than fifty thousand Jews in the whole of the land and the country showed all the traces of centuries of neglect and the ravages of war. Palestine, at that time, looked like a backward oriental province deep-sunk in the sweep of centuries of old, with little promise of awakening.

In these eighteen years, something unprecedented happened in that country. Nearly four hundred Jews entered that land during these eighteen years. More than four hundred million dollars have been invested by public and private agencies. A country which was, eighteen years ago, stripped, doomed, waste, is today dotted with over one hundred twenty-five Jewish settlements, colonies, towns, cities, has a complete health system, a complete school system crowned by a university at Mt. Scopus, is today a land which is the most modern of all the countries in the Near East.

This summer I saw an epic being completed, an epic of amazing pioneering, enterprise, courage and I was proud of what I saw there, proud of my people who transformed that wilderness into a fruitful and blessed land. We Jews are inclined to underestimate ourselves because we have been under-estimated so often by our enemies. Many of us are inclined to accept the low estimate which our enemies put upon us. Thus, we have heard so frequently that Jews are not pioneers. And we have begun to accept that. Nothing, of course, in our history warrants that because, if given a chance, Jews are pioneers in every

field of human endeavor. Palestine amply provides that proof. Here was a corner of the world nobody cared for. Most of it was not fit for human habitation, a soil unyielding, natural resources hardly existent, the last place on earth a people would come to colonize. Yet the Jewish people, driven there by forces without and attracted by forces within, came there hardly equipped. Yet by amazing initiative, adaptability and willingness to sacrifice for a great ideal, performed there an act of colonization which experts have declared to be unparalleled in the whole history of colonization in the Modern World.

And after I saw Palestine in 1937, a thought came to me that that represents our sole gain since the World War. Many of the high hopes entertained during and after the World War were blasted. You may recall that we fought for and gained minority rights for our people in Eastern Europe and we regarded that a tremendous achievement. And it was. What became of those minority rights? They proved to be scraps of paper. Not only are they being denied minority rights but they are being denied human rights. After the war we hoped for a new era of good will, brotherhood, peace. Look about you and see what happened to that exalted dream of ours in Germany, Italy, Austria, Rumania.

Palestine represents the one real positive achievement of our people in these post-war years to which we can point with satisfaction. This is the one thing gained out of travail and agony of our people during and following the World War.

I was not prepared to find all that I did find in Palestine this summer because of what took place there last year - the riots - and I expected to see Jews depressed, demoralized, their economic life at a stand-still. I am gratified to report nothing of the sort has taken place. The Jewish group was, of course, shaken by the agitation of last

year. Many of them definitely showed the effects of terrorism because of their self-imposed restraint not to hit back. The Jews in Palestine could have hit back but they imposed upon themselves not to hit back. Whether that was wise or not is another question. Ten months of terrorism without the power to hit back, without the willingness to hit back, left many of them wearied, spiritually tired. But the work has gone on. Expansion, construction is visible everywhere. It is an eloquent piece of work.

My friends in Palestine took me to some of the newer settlements formed during and since the riots. I visited a settlement called Tel Amal in the Amek. The whole settlement, dormitories, power house which was in the center and a stockade surrounding it, was erected in twenty four hours in the midst of the riots. I gathered that the settlement was like the stockades built against the Indians. In the center was a tower which was used as a look-out. As I climbed up the top of the tower, I found there a woman watching, scanning the horizon, a gong alongside, to sound the alarm. Under those difficulties they worked. These were all young people, young men and women from all parts of the world, many of them from Germany.

The following day I visited another colony near Beisan, Arab territory. That colony was seven months old. It was called Tirok Zvi, named after Rabbi Zvi an orthodox leader. This colony was settled by young Jews and Jewesses who were strictly orthodox. Many who do not know say that there is among the youth of Palestine a spirit of irreligion. And here are young people, some of them from the University of Germany who were leading a strictly orthodox life, observed all the orthodox dietary laws, worshiping three times

a day in little improvised synagogs and buildinga colony. They also lived in a fort. They were enclosed in a barbed wire fence to protect themselves. In the heat, dust, glaring sun, these men and women were doing the most arduous nerve-racking labor...These young people - that is how these young people were building Palestine.

I visited another settlement to which men and women who graduated ffrom the Gymnasium in Palestine were sent to receive apprenticeships in agriculture. These young people, under expert guidance, supervision, were hardening themselves in that hard labor and in the boiling sun^{to}/_{do} the work which pioneers throughout the world have to do. As I looked at them and almost pitied them, because of the arduous physical labor, and discomfort which was theirs, the friend who took me around turned to me and said to me: "We are giving them a content for their lives." And I understood fully what he meant. It was a complete answer to all the questions which ~~wae~~ coming up in my mind. These young people were being given a content in their lives, something to live for, an inner glow, an inner satisfaction which compensates them for all the discomforts. And they were satisfied. This sort of labor - what is going on in Palestine regardless of all the future arrangements which might take place - this sort of spirit is bound to live.

I visited Tel Aviv, not because I was anxious to see Tel Aviv, particularly, for I had been there. But I was interested to see the new project which the Jews built during the year. That was the Port, the Harbor. I was interested to see it. You will recall that the Arabs called a general strike and refused to unload boats that entered the Habor of Jaffa. And Tel Aviv depended on the Habor of Jaffa. The Arabs hoped to starve the Jews in Tel Aviv by refusing to unload the boats. That

went on for weeks and months. This could not go on indefinitely and the Jews of Tel Aviv appealed to the Palestinian Government to allow them to build a port of their own. Finally, confident that they could never build a harbor, they were given permission to do so. The day the promise was granted, a group of Jews who had never built a harbor before in their lives proceeded to build a jetty. They labored for twenty-four hours and built this jetty. They labored twenty-four more hours and strengthened the jetty. That night, the waves, somewhat anti-Semitic waves, came by and pushed over the jetty. On the third day more Jewish laborers came and they proceeded to build another jetty. Four days - and a week and the jetty was so strong that the waves couldn't overthrow it. Then the first tender left from the jetty to a waiting boat and the first boat was unloaded by Jews who had never unloaded boats before. The first load happened to be cement. Heavy things to carry off! I was told that when the first sackload came to the shore, men stood on the shore and cheered and cried and others waded into the Mediterranean and danced. When the first sackload was brought to shore it was carried through the streets of Tel Aviv and then put into the Museum. There were three ships in the offing being unloaded by Jewish sailors who had now been training for a year. On the shore there were ware-houses where the goods was stored and sent into Tel Aviv. That is what these people are capable of when driven by necessity.

I don't want you to get the idea that the port of Tel Aviv rivals the port of New York - yet. When I was there, a German Jew standing alongside of me as I was admiring the progress which was made and who came from Hamburg turned to me and said: "I wish the port of Hamburg were as far advanced as this port is.

I visited Jerusalem. It is, of course, because of its location, one of the most beautiful cities of the world. What impressed me this time particularly was the amazing cultural and spiritual and religious center which it had become in the last few years. I was told that there were over five hundred Jewish rabbis gathered there from all parts of the world. Not anywhere in the world can you find so many groups where intellectual and spiritual problems are being discussed, power-houses of thought. There is a Hebrew University which, in the last few years, has attracted some of the greatest scientists from Germany. It is vast become the most important cultural center in the Near East. They have in Jerusalem a symphony orchestra which, last year, was conducted by Toscannini. Literature is being created there.

I remember that the Sabbath afternoon I spent in Jerusalem I went to visit the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herzog who, you will recall, was made chief rabbi after the death of Rabbi Kook. Dr. Herzog is a remarkable linguist. When he was summoned to Palestine and greeted by the Arabs, he answered them in Arabic. He is also one of the ablest men in jurisprudence. At ^{his} home that Saturday afternoon were assembled some sixty or seventy Rabbis of Jerusalem. They were spending the afternoon in Talmudic discussion. Sparks flew, swords flashed. One would begin a discussion, another snatched it out of his ~~mouth~~ mouth and another was a mile ahead. There is an excellent intellectual brilliance among those people. That and so many other things make Jerusalem one of the most interest centers in the world.

All through the days I spent there, I could hear the chiseling, the building of all the new apartment houses, etc. - in spite of the

fact that it was scarcely seven or eight months since the riots in Palestine. I carried away from Palestine the impression that our people had sunk their roots deep in that country and that no storm and no upheaval would uproot them. They know how to work. They know how to build.

From Palestine, I flew to Zurich, to attend the Zionist Congress. I have already reported on it so I shall not speak on it again except to say this. There seems to be some confusion in some minds with reference to Partition in Palestine in setting up an independent Jewish State. Some have the impression that it is the Zionists who asked for it. Nothing can be farther from that. The Zionists did not propose it. They did not Ask for it. The Zionists did not set up Partition. The Zionists had absolutely nothing to do with it. They were content to work under the present Mandate. They asked for no revision, only for the faithful enforcement of the Mandate. It was the British Royal Commission which after making a study of the riots and since, came to the conclusion that there were two irreconcilable groups in Palestine, that because they were in conflict that the only solution was to set up two independent states with a corridor for Great Britain. This was presented to the Zionist Congress for acceptance or rejection. That should be borne in mind because it is an important thing to remember.

I am of the opinion that if the Palestine Government had done ten ~~more~~ years ago what it did this week after the assassination of one of its officials, Andrews, if the Palestine Government had removed the grand mufti from office, if the Palestine administration had declared outlaw the Arab High Commission which was a fake organization of terrorists

which it has now done, all the trouble which took place in Palestine in the last ten years would not have taken place and the Jews would have come to a free understanding with the Arabs because such a free understanding is possible because the Jews of Palestine are not there to ^{out}deprive/or to exploit the Arabs. The Royal Commission, in its report, states what untold blessing the coming of the Jews have brought to the Arabs. It gave them prosperity, revived their culture and their own civilization. The Jews in Palestine are eager and can come to an understanding with the Arabs if these mischief-makers are out of the way. It was because the Palestine Government was constantly fluctuating in its attitude that the Arabs got the impression that the more riots there were the more concessions they would get. Now, when the high British official was killed, the Palestine administration has finally done what we urged them to do for a decade and a half.

I want to pass on from Palestine to some of the general impressions I got in Europe. I was in Vienna for a short time this summer. As it is my custom, I walked around the city viewing some of its buildings, chapels, etc. There was one little chapel dedicated to the artillery men who died in the World War that struck me when I saw it. In it was an altar which rested upon two huge shells, some cannon. It struck me very forcibly because I recalled what the Rabbis said. No iron could be used in the altar in a synagogue because swords are made with iron and altars are dedicated to peace. Here was an altar in the heart of Christendom resting upon shells. That, my friends, is true of the whole of Europe today. Its whole spiritual life, its whole intellectual life, its ~~the~~ political life, its economic life, its educational life rest upon shells, cannons, bayonets.

We, too, spend an unconscionable amount of money for our armies today. But after all, our whole lives, our commerce, our agriculture, our science, our art do not revolve around the one theme of war. That is exactly what they do in Europe, even in the democracies. Everything is coordinated around this one thing - preparation for war, the inevitability of war. No industrial establishment created without the thought of what it will contribute to the country in case of war. The whole inventive genius of the people is dedicated to the sole task of defense in case of war. Spiritually, Europe rests today on a cannon and all the immoralities which nations perpetrate under the conventions of war are now being perpetrated without the conventions of war. For example, the lying propaganda which we used to associate with war - I mean propaganda to incite, to poison the minds of people - that sort of propaganda is rampant throughout the world. You can't trust a newspaper in Europe today. ...Piracy ... Though neutral country - the sending of food and supplies to fighting nation..

Undoubtedly, dictators in Europe have confounded, bedeviled and intimidated the democracies. They have disavowed and rejected those ideals and principles by which Europe has lived and developed for over a century and a half. The peoples of Europe for a century and a half have set goals for themselves which they did not always reach but they were nevertheless goals toward which they moved ever since the French Revolution. There were ideals of international law, peace courts of law, ideals of the rights of man, rights of the individual, rights of minority

curbing the power of state, peace, liberty, equality, justice. Since the "world War the states of Europe have shamelessly rejected them. In their place they have set up a new complex of ideas, of ^{all} power to the state, all power to the group. War is national destiny. Race and blood are the bases of citizenship. Freedom of thought is treason to the state. There are no rights of the individual. And then, many of the democracies are frightfully bewildered because some of them are internally divided. There are, for example, great sections of Englishmen in England and Frenchmen in France who are very anxious to see a Fascist victory in Spain regardless of any repercussions which this might have on England and on France and who would do everything in their power to strengthen Fascist powers to offset the threat of communism. The dictators know this and have cashed in upon this division, bewilderment, these idealistic scruples of the democracies, this apprehensiveness of systematic unity of action in the world. That is why dictatorships have lasted so long in Europe.

The dictators in Europe have not had a good year. They haven't made much headway in their own countries. Fascism hasn't made much headway in other countries like Belgium, England and France because the unemotional laws of economics are unimpressed by the parades and the shoutings of the Fuehrers and Duces. These unemotional economic laws are working out to the inevitable end. The dictators in Europe give their people speeches but they can't give them bread. In Germany, today, food is scarce. Food is poor. Raw materials are dwindling. Wages are low. The cost of living is high. Hitler can still rant against the Jews as he did in Nuremberg but it is beginning to penetrate the mentality of the German people even though he has broken the Jews

of Germany/^{he}has not helped Germany.

There is widespread underground grumbling in Italy. The trains are still running on time, the beggars have been driven off the main streets into the side streets, it is true. However taxation is driving the people into the dirt. The standard of living is becoming worse and worse every year. The imperialistic victories and adventures in Ethiopia and in Spain are not enough to compensate for the increasing poverty of the masses. When three Italians meet, they do not praise Mussolini. When two meet - that is a different story.

In Russia, in the Soviet Union - they too have begun a new purge, a new reign of terror. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people, from the highest to the lowest are being summarily shot down, executed on all sorts of charges - Trotskyism, espionage and what not. But the fact is clear that there is in that country a vast discontent which is the result of a realization which has come to the people that the Utopia has gone sour, that life is hard, that all that is needed is wanting. Classes and inequality is coming back again. There is no evidence of relief.

Many people in Europe are coming to ask themselves, "Is this the thing which has terrified the earth?" And many Europeans have come to realize, to believe that in a decade or two or three, all the dictatorships which have taken place and which ~~are~~ will take place will only be the "via purgativa et illuminativa" - the way of cleansing and the way of illuminating, for the earth. The dictatorships are doomed even though they may still score one or two victories in Europe.

I have come back definitely with a conviction re-enforced that we in the United States who this year are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the adoption of our Constitution owe a debt to ourselves first, and to mankind secondly to conserve ~~it~~ ^{at} all costs for ourselves, our children and for mankind this free government of of ours, this government of the people for the people and by the people. Nothing finer has yet appeared on the horizon. You have here what mankind has struggled for throughout the centuries. Let not industrialists and business men worried and harassed by labor troubles persuade themselves that perhaps a Fascist government would curb this. Yes, A Fascist regime will curb it. After that, it will turn round, curb and harass and destroy the industrialist and business man. Socialism is advancing as rapidly in Germany under Nazism as in any part of the world. Let not a laboring man persuade himself that some proletarian dictatorship will answer the problem. The e is death also in that pot. It is far better to ameliorate slowly even though heartbreakingly and conserve for men, women and children those precious human liberties which they do not appreciate until they have been deprived of them.

A visit to Europe I would recommend to any American who is today flirting in the back of his mind with the idea of dictatorship, Fascism, Communism or what not. There are few places left in the world today where people can live peaceable as human beings - very few places. And this country, thank God, is still one of them!

1) 4 Visits - 1919 . 1926 . 1933 . 1937
18 yrs - 400,000 - \$400 Mill . 125 Units.
 Schools - Univ. Health. Culture -
Epic - underestimate -
Our only gain - Minority - Equality -

2. In spite of 1836 Rists - heroic

- ① 1st R - Storkade - Tower - Woman
in 24 hrs . Youth from all pl
- Beisan - 2 months
- ② 123 R16 - Kalsher - Young Menzrahi
Fort - Barbed-wire - parafet -
Kenches -
1/2 down with Malan
Sleeps under sky -
- ③ 518 R - further S. near Jordan
2 weeks old
Heat-dust - Gyasa river
→ עושה פה פירוש נוסף
On way back - boy and girl - Prange
- ④ Post -
Isnt much -
- עוד יש הרבה שם הם יבנו הם יבנו

3/ Jerusalem - Pave House - ^{Chief Rabbi, Hacham} 500 Rabbi's - Ref. scholarship in hist.
University - germ. professors
Medical Centre -
Musi-Tonarium - Theatre -
Literature - Laboratory.

4/ Have gone thru much - Wearied - דלוק
Can still laugh

① Pray - 3 steps דבר דבר וי 20

② New name - "Eng" land

③ Tel Aviv - Canton תל אביב

Then to stay! Roots -

5/ Congress - already spoken

Partition - not of 2. origin -

Irreconcilable - If Pal. admin. had done 10
 yrs. ago what it has been forced to do now

Fluctuating Policy -

Enforce Mandate! our coming a blessing -

Royal Com's own report -

Certainly not Partition. "We cannot yield

6. Europe - Vienna - Votivekirche - small
chapel dedec. to artillery men who died in
World War. There is a ~~small~~ altar there and
it rests on 2 huge, upstanding shells. -
In ancient Israel no iron on the soil - ~~the~~ In
present-day Europe the soil rests on cannon
shells.

Every thing in Europe to-day rests on shells.
Nat. life revolves ~~at~~ around one theme - War!

Industry, commerce, agriculture, education, the arts
& the sciences - budgets - all coordinated for War - all evaluated
as factors in War -
But spirit, activities, - humanity - military.

~~7. More prosperous - more employed - more armaments.~~
~~Non-productive outlays - mounting Nat. deficits.~~
~~How long can that go on? & what will happen~~
~~when with its millions employed in armaments & related trades when the saturation point is reached.~~

8.

Over

(6 cont)

all the immoralities
lying propaganda, on vast scale, to
incite - rampant

Piracy

Inter. gangsterism - quite the rage

Sending armies - is a form of
accredited duplicity - looks

7 - Undoubtedly the dictators - confronted,
bedeviled & intimidated

Publicly disavowed - repeated -
ideals - standards - a century's

goals - Inter corp - law - courts

{ League - disarm - peace
Minorities - Racial Int. Tolerance -
Rights of Ind - Equality - Liberty
Curbing power of State - Tyranny of Masses

are - seemingly - strong & dedicated
Buttally - resolutely

(2G)

new goals: all power to State
War - nat. destiny
Race & blood basis At the end
Freedom 1 - Treason

Democr. are bewildered -

Internally divided along econ. interests
Conservatives - favor Fascist victors
France

Dictators have cashed in on this
bewilderment - division - instability
crisis -
Absence of sustained unity &
action - Gr. Br. + France.

Nf. Hour of decision has not yet arrived. The
approaching. Fas. may yet score other
triumphs in Europe - Poland & g -
- but doomed!

Nf. We in U.S. - 150 yrs -

To pursue it -

- For liberty gains - liberty death
in the past - sovereign rights of
individual - of free men - was the
ambition is shown that we wish
for.

- Let bus. men understand. know
of achievements of Fascist - to curb
labor - He curbs himself!

- Let work & profits. know abhor-
rent of Comm. dictatorship - Exploitation
in a class - his society -

All work for man freedom etc -
on way of showing that for which
the eyes suffered & wept - a free
people self governing people

(5 cont)

any part of it. We cannot agree to remain a minority. But for some time to come we shall necessarily be a minority. And it ought to be possible to work out a working formula with the Arabs -

"My faith is great in time, and that which shapes it to its perfect end."



"A VISIT TO EUROPE AND PALESTINE - 1937"

Undoubtedly, dictators in Europe have confounded, bedeviled and intimidated the democracies. They have disavowed and rejected those ideals and standards by which Europe has lived and ^{de}veloped for a century and a half. The goals which the peoples of Europe have set for themselves ever since the French Revolution, which though never reached, were still directive forces in the life of the world, such as international cooperation, disarmament, peace, the rights of minorities, racial and religious tolerance and the curbing of the power of the state in order to protect the individual, have been brutally and insolently denounced by the dictatorships and in their place new goals have been set - all power to the state, war as national destiny, race and blood as the basis of citizenship, and freedom of thought as treason to the state.

No wonder the democracies are ~~maxin~~ bewildered. They are furthermore internally divided along economic interests. There are considerable sections of the population, both in England and France, for example, who would like to see a Fascist victory in Spain and who would do everything in their power to strengthen the Fascist powers in Europe as an offset to the threat of Communism. The democratic peoples are therefore inhibited by their own internal division from positive and decisive political action in the international scene. The dictators have cashed in on the bewilderment, division and, shall we say, idealistic scruples of the democracies.

Fortunately they are not making much headway in any real sense. The past year has not been a good one for them. The unemotional laws of economics which are unimpressed by the shoutings, the parades and the dramatic meetings of Dukes and ~~Fu~~hrers and working out to their relentless and inescapable ends. Nazi Germany is quite at the end of all of Schacht's amazing financial leger demain. Food is poor and insufficient. Raw materials are dwindling. ~~Rx~~ Wages are low. The cost of living is high. Discontent is smoldering in Italy. Taxation is crushing the people

and the imperialistic victories and adventures in Ethiopia and in Spain are not adequate compensation for increasing poverty.

A wave of terrorism has again swept over the Soviet Union. Men are again being summarily executed on all sorts of charges - sabotage, wrecking, ~~Trotskyism~~ Trotskyism and espionage. The plain truth is that there is a widespread discontent among the people as a result of a utopia gone sour. The hardness of life, the scarcity of all things, the rise of new privileged classes, the prolonged despotism - all these things are shattering the messianic hopes of the people and their discontent is breaking out on all sides.

One returns from Europe with the re-inforced conviction that we have a ~~system~~ ~~new~~ system of life here in our country which, in spite of all its defects, is still the best yet attained by man, and that intelligent Americans, for the sake of themselves, their children, and mankind, ought to do their utmost to preserve it. Industrialists and business men, harassed by labor difficulties, are frequently given to flirting in the back of their minds with the idea of Fascism. Fascism first ~~curbs~~ curbs labor and then curbs business and industry.

Workingmen are sometimes allured by the promises of rectifying all the abuses in our economic life by the quick and forthright methods of a ~~proletarian~~ proletarian dictatorship. There is death also in that pot. The worker only exchanges one form of exploitation and tyranny for another and lesser one. The way of conserving that for which the ages have suffered - a free and self-governing people - is through more freedom, more justice, more cooperation and good will. Dictatorship, Right or Left, as a system and an idea, temporary or permanent, is definitely bankrupt.