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Labor Zionism, 1935.

FROM THE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE MEETING OF
THE CLEVELAND ZIONIST SOCIETY ON MAY 28, 1935

My attitude on the subject of Labor Zionism is, I hope, known to you through my address before the League for Labor Palestine delivered here in Cleveland in November, 1933, my editorial in the Jewish Daily Bulletin of September 30, 1934 "Boom Days in Zion--And After", and my sponsoring of the "Statement Regarding Labor Palestine" signed by the 240 Reform Rabbis in this country.

In my editorial I sought to remind American Zionists of the Program of Reconstruction for Palestine which the American Zionist Organization adopted in 1918 and which, as far as essentials are concerned, is in consonance with the social program of the Histadruth. I called upon the Zionist Organization of America "to align itself with those forces in Palestine which are struggling to materialize those social and economic ideals which American Zionists once regarded as the very heart of the Zionist movement."

It is my conviction that Palestine Labor should be given every form of cooperation in its efforts to establish a just social order in Palestine and to protect Jewish Labor in the cities and on the land against all forms of exploitation.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that either Zionism or Palestine would be benefited by the elimination or the eclipse of the party of General Zionists. Our movement, particularly at this time of tense inner conflict and sharply accentuated extremism partisan tendencies, requires a balance wheel to save it from threatened/and factionalism. A vigorous center party of General Zionists, itself active in prosecuting the total program of Zionism, would be in a position to prescribe the main course for Zionism in the future and to hold the movement to that course. It may find it necessary at times to veer to the right, at other times to the left, as conditions require, but at no time to allow the movement to be permanently detoured into a party by-way. A strong General Zionist Party at the World Congress is the surest guarantee that our movement will retain its classic, comprehensive "national" rather than party character, as well as its total Zionist ideology.

It is not even to the permanent advantage of Labor Palestine to have a weak General Zionist Party at the Congress. If the Zionist movement ever became identical in the minds of world Jewry with a left party movement, it would lose much of the confidence and support of that large section of our people which does not wish to subscribe to that economic platform.

The rift which has developed in the World Zionist Movement and the secession of the Revisionists makes it doubly imperative, if any attempts at restoring harmony are to be made, to have a dominant General Zionist Party at the Congress. It alone could achieve such an objective. That such attempts should be made, is to my mind, indisputable and imperative, if our world movement is not ^{to} be fragmented, broken up into numerous independent, hostile and rival political units which will render all effective political work in behalf of Palestine high impossible and which will make Zionist propaganda in the diaspora extremely difficult.

Had the Zionist Organization of America not adopted the Congress platform which it did, it would not have merited the confidence of American Zionists and would not have justified Zionists to vote for its Delegation to the Nineteenth World Zionist Congress. But it did adopt a platform which reflects the spirit of the Program of 1918 as well as the best traditions of our movement, and therefore can and should be heartily endorsed by every liberal and progressive Zionist in the movement.