



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel
177

Box
65

Folder
391

Zionist Organization of America, 1935.

THE CONGRESS PROBLEMS

Greater Immigration, Opening of Transjordan and Legislative Council

Address by DR. A. H. SILVER

If the new philosophy of human existence espoused by Nazi Germany triumphs in Europe, there will be no room for the Jewish people. In the light of this desperate situation the Lucerne Congress is faced with the most serious problems that a Zionist Congress has ever had to deal with.

What will this Congress, made up of representatives of Jewry the world over, do with the program that has been submitted here? To my mind there are three things to which it must devote itself:

First, it must see to it that the doors of Palestine remain open—wide open until every Jew who needs to go there and wants to go there can be absorbed into the economic life of the country which can and shall absorb him. Any attempt to shut the doors by a fraction of an inch is not only the cause of pain and untold suffering to human beings who are reaching out for a new chance to live, but a betrayal of our national hope and national spirit for which we have labored so long and for which we have made so many sacrifices.

The second item in the Congress program of supreme importance, as I see it, is to stretch the boundaries of Palestine to the uttermost limits, so as to provide room for those who have to go there. Palestine as a divided country, with territory on one side open to Jewish colonization and territory on the other side of the Jordan shut to Jewish colonization is a legal fiction and a betrayal of the intent and the purpose of the Jewish Homeland. Regardless of what we do in the Negeb and in Huleh, Trans-Jordan, historically Palestine, politically Palestine, Jewish territory of old, once the most fertile part of Palestine, the granary of the ancient world—Trans-Jordan, open, empty, unsettled, must now become part of the land of promise for the millions of our people who have to go there. On that score the opening of the doors of Trans-Jordan should be given the spearpoint of the attack of our political efforts.

And the third outstanding item in the agenda of the Congress must be to make provision that no political device, no political contraption like the Legislative Council shall block and prove a stumbling block in the way of the upbuilding of Eretz Israel. As far as I am personally concerned, the gravest problem before the Zionists of the world is the establishment of a Legislative Council at this time in Palestine. For it will do for the Jewish community of Palestine what Zionism has tried to undo; namely, to place us again in a minority status in the very land where we do not want to be a minority status. We are a minority people everywhere, but in Palestine we want to be a majority people. The Jews who are in Palestine today are only the nucleus of the Jewish people. They are the vanguard. We shall have to send many more Jews there before Palestine becomes numerically a Jewish country. But until that time comes, I maintain that it is unfair, and unjust, that it is a contravention of the intent of the Mandate to establish a Council which by force of present facts will make the Jewish community a minority community. It is for this reason that I regard the major problems of the forthcoming Congress, not organizational or even financial (private Jewish capital is now in a large sense supplementing public Jewish capital). The major problems today are political. If we do not watch over the political currents of our movement at this time—the more we work, the speedier we go forward; the more economic enterprises we establish in the

country—the more difficult will become our problems in the days to come. At this time, when we are at the crossroads, we must look to our political position.

I am of the opinion—and if I am an *Apikorut*, I hope you will forgive me—that the internal problems of the Jews in Palestine will not be determined by you at Atlantic City, or our administration in New York, or even by the Congress at Lucerne, but by the Jews who live in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and the Emek of Palestine. And I feel that the sooner we learn to keep our hands off their internal affairs, the better. What we in the Diaspora can do is to protect their political position, to see to it that there be a world-wide public opinion at critical times, that the doors of Palestine be kept wide open, that pressure is brought upon the Colonial Office to open Trans-Jordan, and that the threatened Legislative Council be postponed until such time when the Jewish National Home is established in Palestine. That we can do and must do.

You may regard this as another piece of *Apikorsuth*, I am amazed at the constant recriminations between General Zionists and the Histadruth on why we lost in the last election and could not get more votes. Frankly, I could not get excited at all. If Ticket No. 2 represented ideas, positions, programs that were diametrically opposite and hostile

to our own and a threat to that Zionism which we believe in, then I could understand how you could look upon the results of the last election as catastrophic. But, my friends, in all important lines the General Zionists and the Histadruth are moving parallel, side by side, towards the realization of the great, classic ideals of Zionism. And if at this election they got a few more votes than our ticket, no calamity was involved at all. Our organization does not suffer. If in two years we discover that the Histadruth deviated from our position and menaced Zionism, then we will rally our forces and launch a vigorous campaign in defense of what we regard essential to Zionism.

Let us not go to the next Congress with the idea of fighting the Histadruth, but to discover what is essential in the Histadruth and Labor Palestine that we can back. We should back them to the very limit of our capacity when they are on the right road.

I am chiefly concerned with the possible sabotage of our whole political program in Palestine through the establishment of a National Council. I am amazed that the Jews of Palestine have not yet begun to protest, but are reticent, thus giving the impression to the Government that ultimately they will yield to it. They have not raised their voice in realization of the fundamental menace that is involved. The paramount political issue at the Lucerne Congress will, in my opinion, be the Legislative Council.

NEW STRUCTURAL PLANS

Excerpt of Address
By MAX SHULMAN

The time has come for us to realize that in addition to our work for the upbuilding of our Homeland we dare not neglect "gegenwartarbeit." The Zionist Organization should exercise its influence and stamp its ideals on American Jewish life. Our Talmud Torahs and Hebrew schools, particularly, should be dominated by the national spirit. More stress should be laid on Hebrew. Every Zionist should consider it as a solemn duty to learn Hebrew and see that it is introduced in his home. Every attempt should be made by way of propaganda, written or oral to Zionize our homes. Zionism must be made part of our very existence. It is not a movement for others, but for ourselves and our children.

The future structure of the Zionist Organization of America must be directed to meet present-day conditions affecting

(a) The Zionist as an individual—and

(b) The organization as a whole.

We must first of all return to fundamentals, the "Aleph Beth" of Zionism. We must re-establish the fact that we are a mass movement and find ways and means how to enroll the great mass of American Jewry, either individually or collectively. Our organization must be renovated and our tactics and mode of operation must completely be changed to make room for all to join our ranks. I agree with our President that special stress should be laid on how to enroll organized groups. Let us go back to Herzl's theory of conquering communities for our cause.

We must inaugurate an educational campaign to enroll Zionists. Our members must be made conscious of what Zionism means and represents. We must not permit the raising of funds, important as it is, to supersede all other Zionist activities. Even in our fund-raising campaigns, more stress should be laid on Jewish values. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that it is obligatory upon all Zionists not only to contribute to the Keren Kayemeth, but to learn and become acquainted with the principles and ideals of the fund.

We are also confronted with the problem—are Joint Campaigns with the JDC desirable? There are some

who believe that, although more money is raised through joint efforts, on the other hand, more stress is laid on charity rather than on Zionist ideology. Such campaigns and propaganda are harmful to the cause and we lose the opportunity to meet the Jewish masses and discuss with them Zionist problems.

In order to have a Zionist Organization, we must have Zionists. In order to have a well-functioning, systematically organized, properly regulated and disciplined organization, it must be built from the very foundation. Ours is a voluntary democratic organization. We cannot force our decisions upon the membership. It can only be done through good will, honesty of purpose and complete understanding. There are any number of large organizations that are willing to translate their sympathies to active participation in Zionism.

Our present system of organization does not function properly. The district form is not successful. The membership have no common interest. Clubs and societies should be re-established, but our future structure must also affect the National Office.

I would recommend that we adopt a policy of decentralization. Let us give the Zionist Organization of America a new deal. Let us mold our future structure on the American System and organize State Organizations with full autonomy, each state to be charged with full responsibility to organize all its communities and to hold Annual Conferences. That all State organizations be united into a National Federation which shall meet once in three or five years; that each state be permitted to fix the dues and its members to pay for its maintenance. That each State be required to pay \$2.00 a year, per member, to the National Office, to include the publication.

Let us face the issues squarely. Let us discard old forms. Let us act with understanding of our needs and requirements. Our structure must be all embracing. We are not a party in Jewish life, nor are we a Zionist party. We speak and act for the Jewish people. We welcome different viewpoints, insist on unified action and singleness of purpose.

Social Justice And Labor

Excerpt of Address
By DR. S. MARGOSHES

The first and foremost problem before the 19th Congress of the World Zionist Organization is the recapture of the control of the Zionist Organization from the hands of those who insist on class above people and putting it in the hands of those who believe in the people above classes.

We are not opposed to labor. We are opposed to the domination by any class, be it labor or capital, if that domination militates against the interests of the whole Jewish people.

Years ago in Pittsburgh we of the Zionist Organization adopted a platform calling for social justice in Palestine, and this social justice was no mere phrase to us. We went on record at that time calling for measures that would inaugurate in Palestine and our Homeland a system based on an equitable distribution of income and of justice to every class within Jewry.

We are opposed to groups who believe that they have a monopoly on social justice. This idea of fairness to labor is at the very basis of the World Zionist Organization. And it is we who have as much a share in the work that is now going on in Palestine based on principles of equity as any group represented in the World Zionist Congress.

We have made our position clear with regard to the kind of economy we wish to establish in Palestine. We have gone on record calling for a planned economy, for a planned society in Palestine, a society that will harness the energies of the entire people, a society that will not allow any individual or any group of individuals to exploit the resources of the country for their own selfish interests.

We want to preserve Palestine, not only for those already in Palestine but for the thousands and tens of thousands, nay, the millions who are waiting for their chance to enter the Promised Land. It is in their interests that we wish to have a planned economy in Palestine, not eliminate competition completely, but so restrict competition that it will not interfere with the highest interests of the Jewish National Home.

No one has a monopoly on progress. No one has a monopoly on social justice. We are called reactionary by those who would want to have the label of progress and of all great things in Palestine stuck in their cap. True, we are not parlor Socialists, but we believe in those social theories and ideals advanced by the prophets and in their practical realization in Palestine.

The charge that is being leveled against us that we are merely mouthing those phrases should be referred to those resolutions at the last Congress where we of the Zionist Organization of America fought for those concrete proposals that made for social justice in Palestine.

We are not going to yield our place to any other group that adopts principles that are really ours. And in order that we translate our convictions into reality, it is necessary that those of us who will be sent to the 19th Congress of the World Zionist Organization do not remain isolated, that we join hands with other progressive forces at the Congress, with a view that there may be organized a progressive general Zionist bloc that will stand for those principles that are ours.

The union of General Zionists at the 19th Congress of the World Zionist Organization, based on broad principles of equity, based on considerations of reality in Palestine and not on any radical theories, is the demand of the hour.

THE LARGER ASPECT OF ZIONIST ISSUES

The Need for United Action by All Parties Is Emphasized

Text of Address by LOUIS LIPSKY

At the Prague Congress in 1933 an Executive was elected which consisted of representatives of the Labor Party, of Group A of the General Zionists, and a representative of the Radical Zionists, Dr. Isaac Gruenbaum. In the Jewish Agency, as such, this Executive was augmented by the addition of the following non-Zionist members: Dr. Maurice Hexter and Dr. Isaac B. Berkson of America. On the Zionist Executive there were included four representatives of the Labor Party: Mr. Berl Locker, Mr. David Ben Gurion, Mr. Shertok and Mr. Eleazer Kaplan. Of the General Zionists there were Dr. Victor Jacobson, who died in the course of the year, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, Prof. Selig Brodetsky and myself, without portfolio, residing in the United States. There were no representatives of the Mizrahi on that Executive because the Mizrahi had refused to accept membership on it. There were no representatives of the Revisionists because they were altogether out of harmony with the program adopted at Prague. So that this Executive, which, in the course of the election campaign recently closed was usually called a Labor Executive, was in reality a limited coalition Executive.

During the two years since the Prague Congress many important developments have taken place in Palestine. As everyone understands, any Congress that may be held of any living movement is merely a registry for the things that have happened in the intervening years and a preparation on the basis of that registration of the program for the next two years. The program of the Congress is determined by the events that precede it. The issues to be discussed at the Lucerne Congress can be foreseen in advance by anybody who appreciates recent developments.

The outstanding fact in the composition of the Lucerne Congress will be the absence, for the first time, of the Revisionist Party. Their absence in the discussions, their absence on committees, their absence in every visible manner, in every form of representation of a party, which, in preceding Congresses, exercised a large influence upon the turn of events directly and indirectly, changes the appearance of the forthcoming Congress. The Revisionists may not have had any majority, but in the prevailing system of proportional representation in the Zionist Organization any considerable number of delegates of any party, no matter how much at variance with the majority, has a chance to exercise a large influence upon the trend of Zionist affairs. Whatever one may think of the Revisionist program and of Revisionist methods, by reason of their extreme views, the obstinacy of their delegates, the fanaticism demonstrated by a small party growing and with ever increasing strength becoming more intense in its partisanship, have affected the entire Zionist movement.

Here in the United States we believe influence is recorded only by a vote. But in European Congresses things are determined by the nature of the discussions and by the ideas that are thrown into the discussions, and by what the party builds up, in a practical way, in Zionist life on its own.

So that the presence of the Revisionist Party in the Zionist movement, up to within six months ago, meant that a certain discontent, a certain trend of thought, a certain brutality of method was being thrown into Zionist discussion, and whatever the votes registered, even the enmities created produced results that had their effect upon the turn of events. To what extent the Revisionist Party may influence the Zionist movement through its separation is hard to tell, but even separated, the Revisionist influence will continue to be felt.

There is no doubt that the presence in the Zionist movement of a sharp anti-labor attitude—I am not speaking of organizational differences, of such antagonisms that may prevail between Mizrahi and the General Zionists with re-

gard to organization interests; I am not speaking of that, but I am speaking of the attitude toward the fundamental rights of labor which has developed in Zionist affairs—is largely due to the pressure of the Revisionists, their obstinacy, their unscrupulous tactics; and their influence has infected others.

There is no doubt that the Mizrahi has been greatly influenced by contact with Revisionist thought and contact with Revisionist Party interests. There is a large segment of the Mizrahi Party which accepts, without demur, the theories and methods that come from the Revisionists. They pattern their views on the Revisionist outlook. They adopt the stentorian tone of the Revisionists. In the Mizrahi Organization there is a sharp cleft—not too sharp, perhaps, but still a cleft—between those who are friendly to the fundamental rights of Labor, and those who are decidedly and unequivocally opposed to these rights.

In the General Zionist movement this influence has been even stronger. In Poland you will find a large segment of the General Zionists who take the same attitude toward the Labor problem and the place of organized labor in the Jewish commonwealth that might be taken in the United States by reactionary corporations that resist, with all the power at their command, any concession of rights to the labor force.

It must be confessed that here in the United States there are any number of Zionists who are utterly indifferent about the whole matter. They may be friendly, they may not be friendly, but it is not a very intense matter with them because nothing of personal interest is affected by anything that may be developed in the form of a labor edifice in Palestine. But in Poland there are, in addition to differences in principle, keen organization differences between the General Zionists and the Labor Party; there are keen organization differences between the Mizrahi and the Labor Party, and all of these differences and all of these issues take a more intense form and show themselves in programs that are calculated to be anti-labor in every sense of the word.

Now, although the Revisionist Party will be absent from the election campaigns, and will not send any delegates to the Lucerne Congress, there will be present at Lucerne a fringe of opinion identical in attitude toward fundamental labor questions as was the Revisionist Party when it was within the Zionist Organization.

For there is no doubt that in General Zionist circles, including even members of Group A, as was indicated in discussions held at this Convention, there has appeared—I would not say an antagonism to labor—but a feeling of antagonism to certain partisan aspects that have appeared in the Labor Party. To a large extent, a position is being taken in General Zionist circles that leads inevitably to hostility to the fundamental principles of labor organization in the development of the Homeland.

There will be in the Lucerne Congress sharp differences of opinion based upon differences with regard to the place labor is to occupy in the building of the Jewish National Home. And those liberal and progressive forces in the Congress, who have adopted a sympathetic and friendly attitude toward labor, will have to face not the Revisionists but the heirs of the baggage left behind by the Revisionist Party—those who have taken up the fight which was abandoned by the Revisionists.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that we, sending, unfortunately, not a large delegation but a delegation which is entitled to consideration by reason of contributions made in America to the upbuilding of Palestine, by reason of the position we occupy in the American

Jewish community, should ourselves be clear in our judgments, after an understanding of the facts, with regard to the fundamental problems that are coming up.

The outstanding fact which faces us is that during the past two years Palestine has shown undreamt of capacities. It has come to serve as refuge and opportunity for rebirth. Economic success is written all over the map of Palestine. Not only has the political situation assumed a favorable aspect, but the Zionist Executive, constituted in the manner described, has succeeded far beyond all expectations.

Record of Executive Is Analyzed

The Executive, during the past two years, has redeemed the credit of the Zionist Organization. It has seen the increase of all national funds collected by the Organization. It has maintained and occupied a political position in relation to the High Commissioner which gives evidence of the highest degree of confidence and good-will and influence. The Executive has managed to get out of the rut of old policy. It has not repeated old formulas. It has removed the spirit of defeatism that prevailed since 1929, and has brought into play plans for the future of the National Home which are larger in conception and more far-reaching in purpose than has ever been achieved in our movement. It has also maintained the confidence and good-will of large elements of the Zionist Organization who have hitherto been antagonistic and always critical of everything that has been done by previous Executives. We used to have, as a matter of course, persons who were always in opposition to the Executive, groups who felt that they must be "agin" the Government. From the very beginning of the Zionist movement, from the days of Herzl down, every Executive has been dogged by a chronic disparagement. In the course of the past two years, in spite of inner conflicts of what appeared to be factional differences, the Executive has met and thrown aside much of the criticism, and comes to Lucerne with a tremendous amount of good-will which it has established in Palestine and throughout the Zionist world.

The loan made by the Executive in London (not by the Labor representatives alone, as was claimed in the campaigns which were just closed, but by the pressure that was brought to bear also by representatives of the General Zionists who had no official position at all) represents a step in advance, so far as Zionism is concerned, of tremendous importance. The first loan was followed almost immediately by rumors of other loans that were to be made for various enterprises in Palestine—the National Fund, Tel Aviv, etc.

A great deal of gratification has been expressed with the fact that there are bankers in London willing to give loans to anything that the Jews may want to do in Palestine. That is not such a happy situation as many Zionists think. It is possible to establish a National Home in Palestine, the product of the creative ability of the Jewish people, through loans that will be placed in the City of London, but then that National Home will be paying a long term tribute to groups of financial interests in London, whose interests are not identical with Jewish interests. Why should it not be possible to arouse Jews to do what the banks are doing in London? If there are banks that are willing to lend money at four per cent. for the building of the Jewish National Home, why is it not possible for Jews themselves also to become the bankers of the National Home and advance the

money necessary for the redemption of the land and the rebuilding of the life of the Jewish people?

The Executive has earned the good-will it now enjoys. The absence of the Revisionist Party in person will make it possible to consider, with a lesser degree of partisan animosities than ever before, constructive proposals for the progress of the Zionist movement. In all probability, some of the issues that have become acute in campaigns, that are whipped into states of indignation, will be dissolved when they come to the council table in the Congress. It is our hope that constructive ideas will have the right of way, and that it will be possible for Zionists actually to have a Congress in which deliberate consideration will be given to concrete proposals for the increase of the speed, for the extension of the field of resources, for the turning of a larger flow of Jewish life into Palestine.

I say it is quite possible to create an atmosphere of good-will and constructive intention at the Lucerne Congress provided all of us, General Zionists in America, General Zionists on the Continent, Mizrahi and Labor Party, arrive at Lucerne with the intention of not intensifying differences, not emphasizing irritation, but to find the way to mutual understanding.

I regret that at the sessions of this Convention there are a number of delegates who seem to be trying to get themselves into a frame of mind in which they can continue to be angry at a party or a faction or a person, and to generate violent feelings with regard to labor principles that are fundamentally indicative only of a normal growth of an effective economic state in Palestine.

The Zionist Organization of America is responsible for projecting into the Congress at Lucerne an idea which may bring about reconciliation and a re-orientation of the work for the rebuilding of Palestine. The proposal for the creation of an Economic Board, a planned economy, a period of work to complete the foundations of the Homeland, has become a persuasive thought in the minds of all interested in a normal development of our movement. The proposal for an Economic Board has been echoed by Labor representatives, by General Zionists in England, by Dr. Chaim Weizmann. It has had repercussions all over the Zionist world. In order to build in Palestine permanently, to make it the field of life in which hundreds of thousands of Jews may live, we have to reconsider all our conceptions of the past and to begin working as if this year were the first year of creation.

I hope that nobody will think I am trying to make good-will for Mr. Ben Gurion, but every Zionist who has read his addresses in America will agree that the Labor Party has gone far afield from those dogmatic views that were first uttered in the first days of the Keren Hayesod. Mr. Ben Gurion stands practically in the same position as do many General Zionists with regard to constructive efforts in all branches of life, the development of banks, the development of industries, the union of labor ideals and the ideals of the economics of today.

Many of us remember in 1920, when we were in London, when Dr. Chaim Weizmann used the word "Negeb." He gave a brilliant description of the project to develop the south of Palestine, the land that leads us into the Bay of Akaba, that brings us into close proximity to the great East. Many a Zionist dream has come true. This conception of the development of the south of Palestine changes radically all our estimates as to what Palestine is to be, all our estimates with regard to the rate of progress, how many Jews Palestine can hold. There are people who five years ago spoke of an immigration of 15,000 per year with reserve, and there are people today, known as conservatives, who talk of an immigration of

(Continued on page 10)