



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series VII: Personal Miscellaneous, 1908-1989, undated.

Sub-series A: Biographical, 1908-1981.

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Autobiography/memoirs, Book 1, 1963?.

In 1932, I was given a sabbatical year, leave-of-absence, by my congregation. I spent it abroad in Berlin, Paris, Prague, Rome, Geneva and in Palestine. For the first time I came face-to-face with Fascism and Nazism in their native homes. The Fascist regime in Italy was then celebrating the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's March on Rome. While I was in Berlin in January, 194<sup>3</sup>, the Nazis took over the government of Germany. I also attended the sessions of the League of Nations in Geneva and was present when the critical debate on Manchuria took place.

Everybody knew that the Sino-Japanese conflict over Manchuria had brought the League to the first searching test of its career. Heretofore, the League had intervened more or less successfully in conflicts where only smaller nations were involved. Now one of the Big Five was vitally involved. The League must now reveal its true character. Was it really a competent international organization to ensure peace, ~~which was~~ resolved to enforce the principles and agreements of the pact upon all the signatories alike without fear of favor, or was it merely a creature of the great powers who would allow it freedom of speech and action only when their own private interests were not jeopardized? What will the League do in this critical juncture? All possible excuses for delay had now been exhausted. It was now more than a year since China had appealed to the League against Japan's invasion of Manchuria. It was almost a year now since Japan, at the League's intercession, had agreed to an immediate cessation of

~~the League's~~

hostilities and to the withdrawal of her troops. Following that solemn pledge, Japan had proceeded to ignore it and to do as she pleased. The League had invoked no sanctions against Japan but had resorted to the well-known device of appointing a fact-finding Commission. The Lytton Commission was appointed, and after months of close investigation, its report was finally submitted to the Council of the League. The report, remarkable for its thoroughness and unbiased judgment, found Japan's aggression in Manchuria unwarranted by any consideration of self-defense and furthermore declared that the new state of Manchukuo, which Japanese bayonets had carved out of China was nothing more than a Japanese puppet state.

The Assembly was now meeting to make the final disposition of the case. The hour of decision had arrived.

Many delegates took part in the momentous debate. Dr. Yen spoke for China. Matsuoka spoke for Japan. There were those who spoke for the smaller nations -- for Ireland, Czecho-Slovakia, Sweden, Spain. These all spoke in defense of China and against Japan. If Japan were allowed to go unchecked and the League in this emergency were to be found powerless in checking the aggression of a great power, then their own security from aggression was gone and the League was a broken reed to lean on.

Everyone now waited to hear the spokesman of the Great Powers. Paul Boncour arose to speak for France. One never realized how plain and flexible a language French can be in the hands of one who wished to

zigzag, dodge and wriggle round a moral issue. Paul Boncour's speech was so finely spun, so dexterous and so meaningless that men declared it to be diplomacy at its very best. He was followed by Sir John Simon, speaking for Great Britain. Sir John was also at his barrister's best. He could see both sides of the case. On the one hand, etc., but on the other hand, etc., Therefore, one must not proceed with undue haste.

And so Great Britain, too, would not take sides. It was all over then. The great drama of Geneva had petered out into a sour comedy. One knew now that the League would do nothing in the Manchurian situation. What took place that day in Geneva was the beginning of the end of the League of Nations.

From Geneva I went to Rome and there I had an interview with the Duce. Premier Mussolini was, at that time, riding high. He was celebrating triumphantly the tenth anniversary of Fascism in Italy, which he established. Within another ten years, his battered and riddled body would be hanging face down from a lamp-post in Milan, his empire gone, his country in total collapse. But on the day that I saw him in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, he looked and acted as if he were the favorite of the gods. In our conversation he prescribed not only for Italy, but for the United States as well. He thought that a central master mind and central economic planning and control were necessary in a country like America.



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He prided himself on the religious tolerance which existed in his country and declared that there was no anti-Semitism in Italy. Here Jews occupied positions of high importance. He expressed the thought that the increase in anti-Semitism in Europe in recent years was a result of economic dislocations and said that he thought it would wane with the return of normal times.

It would not be long before Mussolini would join the Axis and would abandon his religious tolerance and accept the racism of the Nazis and their shameful anti-Jewish program.

I arrived in Berlin on January 22, 1933, at the beginning of what turned out to be the most exciting fortnight in the political history of Germany. I found the city on edge. The Nazis were staging one of their quasi-military demonstrations.

Three days later, in spite of bitter cold weather, fifty thousand communists staged a counter-demonstration. "Berlin is ours", they cried.

On the following Sunday, a hundred thousand Social Democrats with bands playing and banners flying marched into the great Lustgarten Square shouting, "Berlin bleibt rot (Berlin remains Red)".

In the meantime, the political pot was boiling and spilling over. Von Schleicher's brief regime of less than two months as Chancellor seemed to be coming to an end.

On January 28th he resigned. Forty-eight hours of terrific suspense now followed. Who would succeed von Schleicher?

Hindenburg now called upon the former Chancellor, Franz von Papen to negotiate with the political party leaders for the formation of a new Cabinet "within the framework of the Constitution and in agreement with the Reichstag". Who would be the new Chancellor? Would it be Hitler? -- Hitler, the firebrand, the agitator, who had promised his followers that heads would roll in the dust once he came into power. But Hindenburg had twice refused him the Chancellorship.

And then suddenly with the force and speed of a thunderbolt came the announcement that a new Cabinet had been formed and that Hitler was made Chancellor. Berlin was stunned. The Nazis were delirious with joy. Their long-hoped-for day of triumph had finally come.

Almost immediately, the Nazi newspaper appeared with screaming headlines: "Chancellor Hitler!" "German Berlin!" "Hang the flags out". A huge torchlight procession was held in the evening. Thousands upon thousands of Hitler shock-troops and Steel Helmets carrying torches marched shouting "Heil Hitler" and singing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles". Past the President's Palace they marched where the erst-while insignificant Army Corporal, now Chancellor of the German Reich, Hitler, received their homage.

I stood on the curb and watched the procession.

I knew, of course, what the rise of Hitler to power would mean to the Jews of Germany but I under-estimated the depth of depravity of the man and his regime. I thought at the time that it was possible, and perhaps likely, that the Nazi leaders, now shouldered with political responsibility, would be sobered by these responsibilities and would not attempt to carry out their fantastic schemes against the Jewish citizens of Germany. I was beguiled by the thought, as were so many German Jews at the time, that "one does not eat his soup as hot as it is cooked".

The German Jews with whom I spoke soon after the rise of Hitler to power, were concerned, of course, but were not greatly frightened. They were preparing themselves for the storm which they knew was coming but which, they were confident, would sooner or later blow over.

This, unfortunately, was not to be.

When I returned to the United States five months later, the Nazis had already shown what their tactics were. Upon my arrival, in an interview with the press, I said: "The Jews of Germany are being sacrificed to a racial Moloch, the like of which the world has never seen. The Jews are doomed to be helots or aliens in Germany unless they obtained a legal status as a minority nationality within the state. The Jew is on the rack in Germany. Nazi atrocities are unlike Tsarist atrocities. They are deadlier.

They are calculated to strangle a community of six hundred thousand souls by encompassing it on all sides with increasingly tighter economic and educational barriers. They are being forced from public life, from the professions, from the arts, from the schools and universities. They are being hampered at every turn in their economic freedom. Czarist Russia made pogroms on the Jews and found it necessary at least to apologize. Nazi Germany is engaged in the meanest dry pogrom known in history and shamelessly brags about it. The military spirit is again rampant in Germany. It is being fostered by the press, the platform, the theatre, the movies, even by the pulpit which has become a lackey of the state. The youth of Germany is being indoctrinated with the same Valhalla complex of military grandeur and imperial destiny which led to 1914. Germany must not be permitted to re-arm. Nazism is a clenched fist raised against the world and an armed Nazism cannot be trusted to preserve the peace of the world. Germany's plea at the disarmament conference for equality is a plea to re-arm and a menace to the world."

Soon after my return I began to work actively in campaigns for the relief of German Jewry. It was at that time, too, that I helped to organize the economic boycott against the Nazis.

After I left Berlin, I went to Prague. Ever since the First World War, I had entertained the hope of some day visiting the <sup>new</sup> ~~New~~ Republic of Czecho-Slovakia, and particularly its President, Tomas G. Masaryk.

I had long been an admirer of this wise and courageous leader who towered majestically over all the political leaders and statesmen of Europe. I was very eager to learn what this man, the most authentic exponent of democratic ideals in the modern world, had to say in these confused and turbulent times.

I was received by the Grand Old Man of Europe in the audience chamber of the Hradcany Castle. He came in tall, erect, impressive. His eighty-three years had not bent his back, dimmed his eye nor abated his intellectual vigor. Very informally, but very earnestly, he spoke about many things for nearly an hour -- politics, religion, the blind gropings of our age for a new order of things, and on all matters the President proved to be a keen and incisive commentator who spoke as one having the authority of great knowledge and vast experience.

Around his democratic country which he, himself, had fashioned out of the chaos of war-shattered empires, now surged the raging waters of Fascism and Nazism. His land lay in the path of the political tornadoes. Everywhere about him, the democratic order was at hand-grips with dictatorships, and desperate experiments in absolutism.

"What do you, Mr. President, think of the future of democracy?", directly and without circumlocution I asked him. We were holding our interview a few days after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. His answer came, without a moment's hesitation, clear and decisive, "Democracy is



passing through a crisis but crisis does not mean defeat. Democracy is safe. Mankind has known monarchical and all forms of autocratic government in countless ages. It has experienced democracy only for a very short time. In a sense, democracy is only just coming to be. Mankind has nothing to put in its place. All dictatorial experiments are impressive but ephemeral. It has been tried before. Democracy, however, needs a great moral content today. We have<sup>2</sup> been exploiting it exclusively for capitalistic individualism and business purposes."

"What is really at the bottom of the world's great moral confusion? What is really wrong with our age?", I asked him. He replied, 'The world is morally ill. The World War was not the cause of this moral illness, but only a tragic symptom of it. The world has come to worship the machine and force, which is an expression of the machine. The things which the machine creates are looked upon as the highest values of life, and men and nations have rushed into headlong pursuits after them. Human aspirations are all too frequently only the desire to possess some kind of machine, or some machine-made toy. The world needs a new mind and a new devotion to spiritual values bound up with a realistic program of social progress.'

Here President Masaryk launched into a criticism of the churches for having failed in their spiritual mission throughout the world. This failure, he held, was one of the causes of our spiritual chaos. The churches today are bureaucratic and institutionalized. They do not go out into the



highways and by-ways of life to reach and mold the personal lives of men. They have their institutions and their functionaries in every town and hamlet in the land. In many countries they have control of the education of the young, yet they fail to inspire the rising generation with enthusiasm for the moral and spiritual essentials of civilization.

There was something of the ancient prophet about this man who, in spite of the burden of more than four-score years, was still battling as fearlessly and as confidently for what he regarded as the basis and indispensable ideals of humanity as he did in the years of his youth and his early manhood.

I was greatly stirred by the faith and the steady vision of this man. The years which were to follow would not vindicate his hope that democracy was safe in the world. His own beloved country would, after a second World War, fall into a ruthless communist dictatorship such as he could never have envisioned, and this dictatorship would engulf a third of the globe. But perhaps Professor Masaryk's outlook had wider perspectives. Perhaps he was thinking in larger epochs when he said that democracy was passing through a crisis. That crisis is still going on and the final outcome is not yet in sight.

The American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights was organized in May, 1933, to fight the Nazi regime by means of a boycott. Its President was Samuel Untermyer. I was the Chairman of the Administrative Committee. When it was incorporated in November, 1933, as a membership corporation, under the laws of the State of New York, "to champion human rights...to combat religious and racial discrimination and oppression...." its name was changed to "The Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League to Champion Human Rights", and its officers were Samuel Untermyer, President; myself, along with James C. Gerard, Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Arthur S. Tompkins and Col. Theodore Roosevelt as Vice-Presidents. A Notable group of Americans from all walks of life constituted its Board of Directors.

The Boycott was widely endorsed as civilization's only weapon against Hitlerism, short of war. Organized labor, the liberal forces of the United States, and outstanding religious leaders in the nation advocated it. There was also considerable opposition to an official boycott, even on the part of organized Jewish bodies, such as the B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and others. Opinions differed sharply as to its practicability and its repercussions. The large Jewishly-controlled department stores in New York City were far more reluctant to cooperate with the boycott movement than the non-Jewish stores.

While some friends of the boycott movement undoubtedly entertained the hope that it would contribute to the fall of Hitler, the greater number looked upon it as an effective weapon of protest, as a means of expressing

the <sup>German</sup> disgust and abhorrence of the American people of the Nazi persecution ~~of~~  
~~the Jewish people~~ and the shameless Nazi propaganda which was beginning  
to infiltrate ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> cities.

I addressed many meetings in behalf of the boycott movement. <sup>such meeting</sup> Two stand  
out in my memory -- one in December, 1933, in the Chicago Stadium <sup>which was</sup> attended  
by some fifteen thousand people <sup>the meeting</sup> which was addressed by Dr. Paul Hatchinson,  
and Dr. Charles Clayton Morrison of the "Christian Century", Dr. John Haynes  
~~Holmes~~ <sup>Holmes</sup> of the Community Church of New York, Col. Raymond Robins Solomon  
O. Levinson, and others. At this meeting, a resolution was unanimously adopted  
"to join in the condemnation of the inhuman conduct of the Nazi government and  
to aid and cooperate to remove this vital ~~man~~ menace to liberty and civilization;  
and to pledge ourselves to refrain from buying or dealing in any and all German  
materials, goods and products, and to refuse to patronize or ride in German owned  
or controlled steamships or other means of transportation until the stigma and  
curse of Nazism were weeded out of the German government".

In addressing this Boycott rally in Chicago, I stated:

" Just why are we so aroused, so deeply stirred? Just why are we so  
passionately indignant at <sup>what</sup> ~~that~~ which has happened and is happening in Germany?  
After all, we are not ~~un~~accustomed to persecution. Many pages of our history  
are red with the blood of Jewish martyrdom. What makes this latest chapter  
in the story of the age-old persecution of Israel so much more horrible and  
dreadful? Why are we rallying to fight against this thing as men fight against  
death and the plague? There are other countries in the world today where the  
Jews do not as yet enjoy full equality, ~~political or economic~~ There are other

lands in which our brethren suffer disabilities of one kind or another.

What is the difference between them and Germany?

The difference is a very vital one. In those countries especially of Eastern Europe where our people do not, as yet, possess a full measure of equality, they are hopeful of achieving it. They have come out of the Dark Ages practically rightless but by dint of effort and struggle over many generations they have achieved a measure of it. They are hopeful that they will achieve more. There is, therefore, in their situation an upward climb, a constant ascent which gives hopefulness and confidence to their struggles and their sacrifices.

But, in Germany, the process has been completely reversed. In Germany there has been a throwback; that which was already achieved through blood and struggle has been again wrested away. In Germany our people through many generations of struggle had reached a position of freedom. They succeeded in winning equality and they have used it worthily. From the days of Moses Mendelssohn to the days of Albert Einstein, they contributed to Germany's cultural, political, social and economic life in fullest measure. In every department of human endeavor, the Jews gave to Germany and through Germany to the world, men of genius, in science, art, literature, in the things of the mind and the spirit-- pathfinders, pioneers, men who wrote the classic text books of the new sciences.

What, therefore, has happened in Germany concerns us not merely insofar as 600,000 men, women and children of our people are being trodden under the ruthless heel of tyranny because the security, well-being and rights of,

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If Hitler succeeds ( and there isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that he will not succeed), if Hitler succeeds in establishing himself and in using that great nation of 65,000,000 ~~A~~ people as a base for his anti-Semitic campaigns throughout the world, then ~~we~~ Jews are facing an era of dread, uncertainty and conflict <sup>all over</sup> ~~in the whole~~ world. It is because we ~~xx~~ want to avert that calamity that we are determined to crush Hitlerism at the outset. I don't want this great land of ours, which has been our hope and our dream as it has been the hope and dream of mankind, this land which is built not upon one race but upon a hundred races, this nation into which all peoples have poured their ~~life~~ blood and their dreams -- I don't want this nation which ~~has~~ <sup>was</sup> been founded on the principle of the <sup>unalienable</sup> ~~inalienable~~ right of all men to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, I don't want this land to be sullied, to be dirtied by Naziism and Hitlerism. <sup>11</sup>

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The ~~xxxxxx~~ meeting, which I recall was the Testimonial Dinner which was tendered to William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, early in 1934. Mr. Green had given outstanding leadership to the boycott movement in the United States. He saw early and clearly the dangerous Nazi assault on organized Labor. Under his guidance, the American Federation of Labor decided by unanimous vote that the American Federation of Labor join with other public-spirited organizations in officially adopting a boycott against German-made goods and services until the German government recognizes the right of the working people of Germany to organize into bona fide independent trade unions of their own choosing, and until Germany ceases its offensive ~~pushing~~ <sup>the</sup> policy of persecution of Jewish people.



At this testimonial dinner I said among other things:

"The same bloody hand which laid waste the Jewish community also destroyed all the agencies and institutions of mutual help and protection which organized labor had established in Germany over a period of many years, outlawed its unions, scattered its forces, imprisoned its leaders, confiscated its funds and reduced the working men to a condition of feudal vassalage.

"This, of course, was the prime objective of the Nazi movement. That is why it was so heavily financed by the big industrialists, bankers and manufacturers of Germany. The bogey ~~of Communism~~ of Communism which the skillful Nazi agitators raised was a ruse and a camouflage. The German Republic was never seriously threatened by Communism. It was the rising power of organized labor and the clear trend towards socialization of industry which the hard-pressed and frightened magnates of Germany were passionately eager to check and which they succeeded in checking. At least for the time being. . . . For no such victory can long endure at this late day. Those purblind industrial rulers of Germany who have succeeded in destroying the only free institutions whereby the progress of the people could have been assured through peaceful ways of evolution have laid up for themselves a bloody day of reckoning.

"It is a commonplace of Jewish history that the reactionary forces of a country which are aligned against the Jew are also aligned against the working classes. The fortunes of our people throughout the world have <sup>always</sup> been linked up <sup>A</sup> always with the progress of freedom and political and economic liberalism. Wherever these ideals flourished, the position of our people was satisfactory.



— Whenever they were suppressed, its position became insecure and frequently desperate. Similarly the fortunes of labor are linked up with the progress of these great social ideals. Those who attack them attack also the security and rights of labor. It is, therefore, no accident of history that Nazism, which is the implacable foe of the Jewish people, is also the implacable foe of organized labor.

" Every reactionary movement has used the Jew as the pivot in the fulcrum for dislodging liberal and progressive ideas and institutions. The enemies of the Third Republic in France stigmatized it as Jewish. Czarist Russia pogromized the Jew because it claimed that he was responsible for the revolutionary movements which were undermining the regime. Hitler attempts to eradicate democracy by declaring that it is fundamentally Jewish and not Germanic...

" Fascism is a deliberate and conscious effort to restore mankind to that system of ideas and social organization which prevailed in the days before the French Revolution. If it triumphs in the world, it will also restore our people to the status which it occupied in pre-Revolutionary days -- political and economic rightlessness and defenselessness. Instead of free men intrenched in inalienable human rights, we shall become members of a disfavored minority group in an hierarchic system of feudal vassalage -- exactly the position which we occupied in the Middle Ages. It was the doctrines of the French Revolution -- Liberty, Equality, Fraternity -- which opened for us the doors of opportunity in Europe and which made the ~~Nineteenth~~ Nineteenth Century for the Jews of Western Europe the Golden Age of their history. Fascism will again shut those doors against us. It has already shut them in Germany. Lacking the basis of economic

idealism, Fascism must find some other social ideal as its basis. It can find it only in an intensified nationalism or racism. Strong nationalism and racism always spell strong anti-Semitism. They are intolerant of all minority groups.

"The Jewish people is, therefore, fighting in self-defense against this rising tide of political reaction, national chauvinism and racial intolerance. But other groups, too, must wage a similar defensive war against this self-same menace, particularly trade unions which are the first to succumb whenever Fascism triumphs. It is, therefore, most logical that in the attack upon Hitlerism and Fascism, organized labor should form one unified front with the hosts of Israel against the common foe. For every anti-Semite is, under the skin, an enemy of freedom and of the working class."

When Samuel Untermyer resigned because of age from the presidency of the Anti-Nazi League, he requested that I succeed him. I could not, because of my many Zionist commitments. Untermyer, a brilliant lawyer and law partner of Louis Marshall, came late to active service in the Jewish field, but thereafter worked with great energy and effectiveness in many important undertakings.

Mr. Untermyer represented Mr. Bernstein of the Jewish Tribune, in his libel suit against Henry Ford for the <sup>latter's</sup> ~~letters~~ and attacks on him and on Jews, generally. He forced Mr. Ford to apologize to Mr. Bernstein.

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Mr. Untermeyer was for some years Vice-President of the American Jewish Congress and President of the Palestine Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod).

Shortly before his death in 1940, he made a request that I should officiate at his funeral. When he passed away I traveled to New York and conducted the funeral services at his home in Yonkers.



The Central Conference of American Rabbis, the organized body of American Reform Rabbis, was founded in 1889. Its founder was Isaac M. Wise, one of the leading Reform Rabbis of his day. He also founded the Hebrew Union College for the training of Rabbis. He, as well as his colleagues of those early days, were strongly anti-nationalist or anti-Zionist and they set the tone for American Reform Judaism for the next two generations.

In fact, their confreres in Germany, where Reform Judaism originated in the early nineteenth century, had already set the tone. They confidently proclaimed that Germany was their Fatherland -- a rather one-sided proclamation. They needed no other homeland. The early Reformers were riding the high tide of nineteenth century liberalism, but they failed to note the dangerous shoals of nineteenth century nationalism, the trends towards the centralizing state, and the threat to the Jewish minority of the fast developing class struggle of their day. Especially dangerous was this oversight in a land like Germany, which was only just then recovering, after two centuries, from the physical and spiritual devastations of wars of religion, among a people periodically swayed by waves of hysterical religiosity, hysterical metaphysics and hysterical politics, whose foremost religious leader in the sixteenth century could indulge in an anti-Semitism which was matched only by the anti-Semitism of the foremost political leader of Germany in the twentieth century.

These reformers were thinking of progress as most men of their day did, in terms of a steady advance, an unbroken march forward, rather than in terms of a succession of cyclical movements, which, over and again, come again and which result only in a slight net advance for mankind. There were ample warnings all around them, portents which less romantic eyes did appraise more realistically -- signs of an irreconcilable opposition, an indurate racial, cultural, economic and religious hostility which had not and would not accept the humanistic and democratic synthesis which a revolutionary middle-class capitalism had popularized in the nineteenth century, and which was destined sooner or later to disintegrate.

Dr. Isaac M. Wise entertained this same premature confidence that mankind was rapidly approaching the era of a universal faith and a universal republic. He declared in 1875:

"Before our very eyes, the world moves onward into the golden age of redeemed humanity and the fraternal union of nations, as our prophets thousands of years ago have predicted. We are fast approaching the universal democratic republic with civil and religious liberty, cemented by the world's advanced intelligence. This century settles old accounts. It is progressive." The following year he declared: "The Jews do not think of going back to Palestine among Beduins and sandy deserts, and the nations in power do not want them to go there. No European country today would give permission to the Jews to emigrate with their wealth or even without it...It is all dream and fantasy. The world goes not backward, its march is onward, and this will expunge the old race prejudices as well as the religious superstitions of the races...."



And so, when Dr. Wise and his colleagues came to formulate a Declaration of Principles for Reform Judaism, as they did in 1885 in Pittsburgh, they stated:

"We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State."

When the Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917. the Central Conference of American Rabbis went on record at its Convention in 1918: "We do not subscribe to the phrase in the Declaration which says: 'Palestine is to be a National Homeland for the Jewish people.' . . We are opposed to the idea that Palestine should be considered the Homeland of the Jews. . . The ideal of the Jew is not the establishment of a Jewish State -- nor the reassertion of Jewish nationality which has long been outgrown "

The Central Conference of American Rabbis always favored the *physical* rehabilitation of Palestine for such Jews as may desire to go there and even urged upon Jews the duty to contribute to the reconstruction of the country but it remained obdurate to Zionism and to the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland.

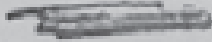


But the sentiment of many of its members, especially of the younger generation, moved steadily away from this doctrinaire position. Life was forcing them to a new orientation. The exponents of the classical, anti-Zionist position in the Conference were soon fighting a rear-guard action. The showdown came in 1935, at the Chicago Convention. It was now fifty years since the Pittsburgh Platform had been adopted. The Conference arranged for a re-evaluation of that Platform, more particularly of its position on Zionism.

Dr. Samuel Schulman of Temple Emanuel, New York, and I were invited to present our contrasting views. I had, from time to time, been honored by my colleagues by being invited to deliver a sermon or read a paper at their conventions on some subject related to Judaism. On all such occasions, I urged a new attitude on the part of ~~the~~ Reform Judaism toward Zionism. In this climactic discussion in 1935, I was also invited to present the Zionist viewpoint. This turned out to be the last major debate on the floor of the Conference on the subject of Reform Judaism and Zionism.

Dr. Schulman, in a very scholarly paper, in the main defended the Pittsburgh pronouncement on Zionism, although he was far less dogmatic than he himself had been in 1918 at the Convention following the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. After all, much had happened in the intervening years....

Dr. Schulman acknowledged that the strength of what he called the nationalist party, consisted in the fact that it had emphasized the importance of Israel by calling it a nation. Indirectly, it had strengthened the backbone of Jewish consciousness, although it braced it artificially.... Its weakness was



that while it wants to strengthen the backbone of Jewish consciousness, it has assimilated away the Jewish soul by making Israel a "goy" like other "goyim", a nation like other nations.

He called for unity and not for bitter controversy among Jews over this issue.... "Let us work together, we the religionists and those who differ with us.... Not to stand aloof is our aim, but recognizing the value of Palestine for hundreds of thousands of our brethren in Israel, let us help increase the settlement, at the same time let us bravely uphold the truth that Israel is not a "goy" like other "goyim". It always was, it is now and if it is to live at all, will always be a witness to God." (C. C. A. R. Year Book, 1935, p. 309 ff).

Thirteen years later, on the eve of the proclamation of the State of Israel, when Israel did become a "goy" like other "goyim", Dr. Schulman wrote me: "I feel the need of saying to you that I hail the courageous assertion of the Jews of Palestine, with pride in their spirit, and I invoke God's blessing upon their efforts. May God bless the new State.... May He give victory to the valiant defenders of their country and may peace come soon.... I congratulate you upon the dignity and brilliance with which you have represented the cause before the United Nations."

In my paper I took issue with the accepted thesis that the Jewish people was nothing more than a religious community and that its mission to humanity precluded the idea of national restoration.

The ideal of the mission of Israel, I maintained, is not a denial, a revision or a substitution for any other concept heretofore held basic in Jewish thought, but only a supplement, an addition, another bulwark for national security. It does not supplant nationalism. It re-enforces it. It does not look upon the dispersion as a blessing. It confronts it as a tragic fact which, however, must not be permitted to endanger the survival of Israel. It does not assume that the Jew must remain in exile in order that Yahweh may become the God of all the nations. It does not proclaim that Israel is no longer a nation but only a religious community, whose sole raison d'être is the conversion of the Gentiles. The prophecies of Second Isaiah ring with the recurrent refrain of Israel's approaching restoration to Palestine. When the prophets speak of Restoration they are not thinking of "the colonization of Palestine as a philanthropic effort deserving of general support" (a concession made to Palestine even by anti-Zionist Reform Rabbis), but of the rebuilding of the political life and home of the Jewish nation.

Zion rebuilt and Israel ingathered are the passionate themes of the prophets following the exile, and they did not regard them as being in any way irreconcilable with the hope of converting the whole world to Yahweh.

Any one who attempts to exploit the historic Mission Idea of Israel as an argument against Jewish nationalism or against the rebuilding of Palestine or in justification of the Galut is guilty of gross distortion of an idea which is very clearly and unambiguously defined in its original sources. The prophets did not believe that the Jews should continue to live in exile, nor that they should welcome the Dispersion as a blessing for the sake of their mission.

Nation, race, land, language were always vital and indispensable concepts in Jewish life, indissolubly associated of course with religion. It was never a case of one or the other. They were all one, organically united. There were times when one or the other had to be stressed. Whenever one of these factors of survival was threatened, the strong instinct of the people rallied to its defense. Hence in our history we find eras of accentuation of one or another of these several concepts and eras of attenuation. But never was any one of them abandoned -- until the time of the Reform Rabbis of Germany which is, of course, a very recent and seemingly a rapidly vanishing phenomenon.

A Messianic hope not bound up with the restoration of Israel to Palestine is simply not found in Jewish religious literature anywhere from the time of the Second Isaiah to our own day. National restoration was the very heart of the Messianic ideal from its very inception. To substitute for this national ideal an anti-national, nebulous Messianic Age, on the plea of religious evolution, is to be guilty not of revision but of distortion. It is both new and counterfeit.

It is idle, of course, to talk of our people as no longer a nation but a religious community, in the face of the fact that millions of Jews are today recognized by the law of nations as national minorities in Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, millions more as a distinct nationality in Soviet Russia, where an autonomous Jewish region is actually being built, and hundreds of thousands in Palestine where a Jewish homeland is being created under the terms of a mandate of the League of Nations which recognizes not only the national existence of the Jewish people but its historic claim to a national home. It is not only idle today to repeat the "religious-community" shibboleth of the early Reformers but also quite fantastic.

The Jewish people produced the Jewish religion, but people and religion are not synonymous terms. The Jewish religion -- and I use the term in its customary sense, for I do not believe that a clever neology -- the use of a word in a new and unsanctioned sense -- is equivalent to a new theology -- is a colossal and world-revolutionizing concourse of spiritual ideas unfolding itself in the life of a people of a particular character and temperament, but the Jewish religion does not exhaust the full content of the Jewish people.

It was Judah Halevi who declared: "If there had been no Jews there would have been no Torah, and the Jews did not derive their high estate from Moses, but Moses derived his high estate from the Jews."

Jewish life possessed in its great epochs a classic balance, and the aim of religious leaders today should be to restore it. Many tributaries flow into the historic channel of Jewish life. In recent years some zealous and mostly uninformed partisans have attempted to reduce Jewish life to what is only a fraction of itself -- to race or nationalism or folkways or theologic abstractions. Quite unconsciously they are all falsifying Jewish life. It is a mark of decadence in the diaspora that so many of our people have lost the sense of the classic harmony in Jewish life and are attempting to substitute a part for the whole.

It is the total program of Jewish life and destiny which the religious leaders of our people should stress today -- the religious and moral values, the universal concepts, the mandate of mission, as well as the Jewish people itself and all its national aspirations. Thus the strength and security of our life will



be retrieved, and, whether in Palestine or in the diaspora, we shall move forward unafraid upon the road of our destiny."

The discussion of my paper <sup>absorbing</sup> ~~proved~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~intriguing~~ that at one o'clock in the morning the Conference which was meeting in a club in the suburbs of Chicago, decided not to adjourn <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ session but to return to the headquarters hotel in the city, and there to resume the discussion. This was done and it was not until the early hours of the morning that the session finally adjourned.

It was at this Conference that the traditional opposition of the Central Conference of American Rabbis to Zionism was finally officially abandoned. It was replaced by a position of benevolent neutrality. It left the acceptance or rejection of the Zionist program to the determination of the individual members of the Conference themselves, and it further resolved that the Conference would continue to cooperate in the up-building of Palestine.

Two years later, when a new set of guiding principles for Reform Judaism, the so-called Columbus Platform, was adopted to replace the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, it declared:

"In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed, but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life."

In February, 1942, I was invited to deliver the sermon at the convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis which met that year in Cincinnati. The time and the city were chosen to coincide with the Centenary <sup>C</sup> ~~celebration~~ of the founding of the congregation which bears the name of Isaac Mayer Wise,



and whose pulpit Dr. Wise occupied for many years. Commenting on this convention, <sup>a</sup> the "Reconstructionist" magazine of reform within Conservative Judaism stated that "The Convention of American Rabbis which took place recently demonstrates again and quite forcefully the happy capacity of Reform Judaism for self-examination, self-criticism and fresh adjustment. . . . The Conference sermon preached by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver from the pulpit occupied for many years by Isaac Mayer Wise, set the theme for the convention. The sermon was a moving experience, and a penetrating critique of Reform Judaism. . . . Additional proof of the central importance of Zionism, logically a spiritual concept synonymous with Judaism, in contemporary Reform Jewish thinking, was the bold and vigorous plea of Dr. Silver for Jewish nationalism and for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a plea which he coupled in his sermon with one for greater consecration to God, Torah, and Israel and which was enthusiastically received by the vast majority of the Conference members."

It was at this Conference that a resolution endorsing a Jewish army for Palestinian Jewry was adopted over the bitter opposition of the "old guard". The resolution read: "The Central Conference of American Rabbis adds its voice to the demand that the Jewish population of Palestine be given the privilege of establishing a military force which will fight under its own banner on the side of the democracies under allied command, to defend its own land and the Near East to the end that the victory of democracies may be hastened everywhere."

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The "old guard" was so outraged at the adoption of this resolution, that it called a conference and organized what subsequently became the Council of American Judaism, a notorious anti-Zionist group from which the Rabbinic constituency steadily withdrew, leaving it almost entirely in the hands of super-patriotic laymen whose chief interest was not Judaism but anti-Zionism.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, in the critical years of the last quarter of a century, during which time the battle for the establishment of the State of Israel was waged, and its foundations were laid, maintained a positive, constructive and most helpful attitude. Many of its members were leading champions in the struggle.



Jewish "intellectuals" have always been a problem to the Jewish people. As a rule they are supercilious fringe-Jews, victims of a conscious or unconscious escapism. They entertain neither love nor reverence for their people's heritage. They have cut their moorings and are adrift.

The term "intelligentsia", like the terms "proletariat" and "peasant", is really <sup>not</sup> applicable ~~not~~ to the structure of American society. They belong, or belonged, to the social stratifications of the Old World. When men speak of the Jewish "intellectuals" in the United States, they have in mind, presumably, Jewish authors, jouranalists, artists, philosophers, professors, etc., not necessarily all the educated, college-bred Jewish men and women of whom there are legion in our country.

Quite a number of this small group <sup>of</sup> alienated "intellectuals" -- if and when they treat Jews and Judaism in their literary productions -- do so slightly, disparagingly and at times with acid and scorn. Some of them do so out of ignorance. But a goodly number of them hail from old-fashioned Jewish homes and from a distinctly Jewish environment where they received orthodox Jewish training. But they have removed themselves from positive Jewish life because they believe that there are sweeter pastures elsewhere -- higher rewards, both social and monetary. To belong to a distinguishable and, at times, disfavored minority group is too difficult a burden to bear. It is only after these intellectuals become disillusioned, when they discover that the rewards which they anticipated are not forthcoming, that some of them return to the welcoming fold of Israel, a bit saddened and embittered and a bit over-zealous....

From time to time these intellectuals are polled by some enterprising <sup>magazine</sup> periodical as to their attitude towards ~~the~~ Jew and Judaism and the results are, of course, largely negative. These findings are then interpreted to mean that there is a sharp trend among all educated Jews in the United States away from Judaism and the Jewish people, and toward non-religion and assimilation.

Back in 1926, the Menorah Journal presented several such intellectuals in a survey of the Jewish cultural and religious scene in the United States. One was Professor Horace M. Kallen, another was Elliot E. Cohen, managing editor of the Menorah Journal and in later years editor of Commentary, and the third was Henry Hurvitz, the founder and editor of the Menorah Journal.

These three "did a job" on American Judaism, the American rabbi and the Jewish theological schools in the United States. Their composite portrait of American Jewish life was one of utter inadequacy, and worthlessness. There was but one hope for American Israel and that was to be found in an adequately financed and endowed Menorah movement. . . .

Especially free-wheeling and gross was the essay of Elliot E. Cohen, whose particular *bête noire* was the American rabbi, but whose distaste for Judaism generally was no less <sup>striking</sup> notorious. Among the rare pearls of wisdom with which his article was adorned were:

The Elders of Zion myth is a by no means distant cousin of the Jewish mission myth.

The little respect our culture receives is that paid to a people who stumbled (*sic!*) on some spiritual ideas capable of being incorporated, in a greatly improved form of course, in the culture of the West.

Lacking wisdom, our leaders take refuge in speech. Good Watsonian behaviorists, they discover the springs of thought in the voice box.

Speeches and sermons are born of the air and destined to vanish with the breath that gave them birth.

But, they [the rabbis] are guilty certainly of a too weak acquiescence in the degradation of the rabbinical function to that of a spokesman -- i.e. mouthpiece, of the ignorance, ambitions and fears of the influential Jewish laity.

Mr. Hurwitz requested me to write a rejoinder to these articles. "Let me repeat again most sincerely and urgently, my invitation to you to write an article for the Menorah Journal, as soon as may be, to present the situation as you see it in answer to Kallen's and Cohen's articles. . . . You will be doing the Journal a very great service -- I believe you will be doing the cause of Judaism in America a great service -- if you will present your analysis of the situation, your description of what the rabbinate and the synagogue have so far had to build up in this country, and what your <sup>believed</sup> ~~rabbis~~ their future service should be. May I count on you for this?" I finally <sup>to write such an article</sup> consented. My article, "Why Do the Heathen Rage", was accepted by the Menorah Journal. Galley proofs were submitted to me which I corrected and returned. The article was announced for publication in the Journal, and ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> a public meeting in Cleveland, Mr. Hurwitz made an announcement of the forthcoming publication of my article as an indication of the broadmindedness and fairness of the Menorah Journal.

On the eve of my departure for Europe in July of that year, I was informed by Mr. Hurwitz that the article would not be published.

I immediately turned over the article to the Jewish Tribune of New York, which published it in four <sup>weekly</sup> installments, beginning with the issue of July 23, 1926.

Mr. Hurwitz attempted to justify the suppression of my article in a letter which he sent to the Jewish Tribune upon my return from Europe. I read his letter and replied to it in the Tribune of August 20th.



"Upon my return from London today I read the letter which Henry Hurwitz wrote to you in explanation of the suppression of my article which had been requested and accepted by 'The Menorah Journal'."

Mr. Hurwitz states in his letter that I made two unacceptable conditions to its publication, one, that it should be printed in full, without change, and two, that no answer to it should appear in the same issue of the Journal.

This is correct. One will readily understand why these conditions were made when one remembers that two of the three authors whose papers I discussed are respectively the editor and the managing editor of the Menorah Journal. When I requested that no answer should be made in the same issue, I asked for my article the same privilege which the articles of Dr. Kallen, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Hurwitz enjoyed. The editor indicated in a note which accompanied the galley proofs that a reply to it would appear in the following issue of the Journal, to which, of course, I raised absolutely no objections.

Mr. Hurwitz was free to reject my conditions. He did not reject them; rather he accepted them with alacrity and is writing.

Mr. Hurwitz refers to the title of my article, "Why Do the Heathen Rage" (a Biblical phrase, by the way) as "the elegant nomenclature of Rabbi Silver." Here again Mr. Hurwitz's memory seems to fail him. I submitted two titles for his consideration, the other being, "A Rabbi Makes Reply," and Mr. Hurwitz, himself, selected the former.

There is a subtle suggestion contained in Mr. Hurwitz's letter that my article did not fully measure up to the established standard of thought

and expression of the Menorah Journal. Of that the reader must judge. I am, however, again compelled to refresh Mr. Furwitz's memory. Upon receipt of my article, he wrote that he was glad to get it "and glad even after reading it." This was in April. Four or five weeks later, during which time the editor undoubtedly had sufficient time to acquaint himself with the palpable deficiencies of the article, he sent me the galley proofs. Shortly thereafter, at a public meeting, he announced its forthcoming publication. In June, then, the article still measured up to the exacting standards of the Menorah Journal. In July it failed utterly. . . .

One must be a dour fellow indeed not to chuckle at the literary vagaries of this distinguished editor."

Thirteen years after I penned my critique of the Menorah Journal, Rabbi Milton Stefnberg, the noted Rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue of New York, felt constrained to write a similar critique of the Commentary Magazine, a monthly journal of Jewish life, letters, and opinion, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. Its editor at that time was the same Elliott E. Cohen, who brought to his new post the same aversion to Judaism and Rabbis, and the same predilection for secularist themes and writers. Only this time he <sup>proposed</sup> literary <sup>confutation</sup> which had a touch here and there of the pornographic. . . .

"I doubt," wrote Rabbi Stefnberg, "whether either the <sup>editor</sup> ~~waiters~~ <sup>editor</sup> or the inner communications Committee representation of the American Jewish Committee are aware of the extent and bitterness of the hostility they have awakened in broad sectors of American Jewry, especially among informed and committed Jews. . . . My complaint is against the spirit which animates it as disclosed in these <sup>three</sup> circumstances, that the magazine has

studiously ignored some of the most significant elements in Jewish life; that it has consistently given distorted presentation to certain others, no less *crucial*; and, finally, that all too frequently it takes on an air of condescension and *superbiousness* towards matters Jewish, including historic Jewish sanctities, and of *insensitivity* towards Jewish sanctities."

The Menorah Journal lacked a positive Jewish program and content. It made much of Jewish "culture" and catered to the Jewish intellectuals, but the culture was secularist in character, avoiding any positive identification with Judaism as a religion. Nor was it Hebraic in character or outright in its "nationalist" identification. It was neither Zionist nor anti-Zionist. Towards the end it became the mouthpiece of the American Council for Judaism. . . . "Culture, with us," to quote Emerson, "ends in headache. . . ."

The Journal ceased being a monthly quite early. It became a bi-monthly, then a quarterly, and finally a semi-annual periodical. The Menorah movement, of which I was at first a member of its Board of Governors and had assisted it financially from time to time, likewise began to disintegrate quite early. It is not possible to launch a vital movement of Jewish renaissance in the Diaspora which is purely secular in character. In my rejoinder, "Why Do the Heathen Rage," I commented on this fact:

Religion was the sole reason why the Jew persisted in maintaining his identity in the world. I have searched high and low in Jewish literature to discover evidences that the Jew struggled to remain a Jew amidst adverse circumstances in order that he might develop, to quote Mr. Hurwitz in his article, "Watchman, What of the Day?", a great "synagogue architecture, mural paintings and frescoes, and sculpture in wood and brass, works in silver, gold and other metals . . . and the old signboards of Polish Jewry." I find nowhere that the Jew objected to intermarriage with other peoples (a practice which would of course have destroyed him) on the ground that the resultant racial admixture would produce less gifted musicians or scientists or writers. There was but one reason throughout the ages: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods."

~~The Jew persisted in racial uniqueness in order to preserve the~~

The Jew persisted in racial uniqueness in order to preserve the integrity of his faith. Loyalty to the faith spelled loyalty to the race. When the American Jew will abandon his faith he will swiftly and surely assimilate. He will intermarry with the peoples about him, and he will destroy himself racially, and no quantum of Jewish music and Jewish art or books on Jewish literature and philosophy will be potent enough to save him. The anti-religious Jew will be the first to go, as he always has been. The religiously indifferent Jews will linger on by sheer force of inertia until ~~the~~ the relentless assimilative forces will scatter and overwhelm them too. The secular nationalist will endure until such time as his ideology derived from the segregated and compact Jewish community life of eastern Europe is dissipated by the dissolving influences of American life. Even the strong appeal which Palestine is making today to many of our people will not prove sufficient to command their loyalty in the days to come. The establishment of a strong Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine will not accomplish the miracle of preservation for the American Jew. The existence of a great German Fatherland has not kept the Germans in the United States from assimilating. The Jew in the United States will not long remain either a Yiddishist or a Hebraist, in the technical sense in which the proponents of cultural pluralism understand the terms. Only the religious Jew who will continue steadfast to his faith will ~~conserve~~ and carry on the culture and the traditions of Israel. The rest will ~~disappear~~, as they always have, as they inevitably must. In other words, Judaism, far from being "a small part of the total fullness of the life of the Jewish people which I am accustomed to call Hebraism" (Horace M. Kallen, in Can Judaism Survive in the United States?) is in reality its very heart and life blood.

Following the large-scale Arab riots of 1936 in Palestine, a Royal Commission was appointed by the British Government under the chairmanship of Earl Peel, "to ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances, to inquire into the manner in which the Mandate for Palestine is being implemented in relation to our obligations as Mandatory toward the Arabs and the Jews respectively; and to ascertain whether upon a proper construction of the terms of the Mandate, either the Arabs or the Jews have any legitimate grievances upon account of the way in which the Mandate has been, or is being implemented; and if the Commission is satisfied that any such grievances are well-founded, to make recommendations for their removal and for the prevention of their recurrence".

The Commission submitted its report in July, 1937. It was comprehensive, fair and sympathetic. It proposed the termination of the Mandate and the division of Palestine into three parts - a Jewish State, an Arab State, and a British Mandated Territory, which would include Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth with a corridor from Jerusalem to the coast, and an enclave near Aqaba (as well as, temporarily, Tiberias, Acre, and Haifa). The area of the new Jewish State would be equal to about one-fifth of Palestine west of the Jordan. It recommended partition "as the only method we are able to propose for dealing with the root of the problem". On the principle of "Half a loaf is better than no bread", it <sup>regarded</sup> ~~thought~~ the solution sound and just. Without working out the scheme of partition in full detail, it made the above general recommendations on the territorial division of the country.



At the Fortieth Annual Convention of the Zionist Organization of America, which met shortly after the issuance of the Royal Commission report, in New York City, the proposed scheme of partition was the chief subject of discussion.

I vigorously opposed this partition proposal of the Royal Commission.

The "American Hebrew" of July 2, 1937, reporting my address before the Zionist Convention, wrote:

"Rabbi Silver attacked Great Britain for failing to carry out the terms of the Mandate to facilitate Jewish immigration and the close settlement of Jews on the land. Dr. Silver also criticized the British Government for failing to provide physical protection and security for Jewish settlers during the recent Arab disorders. Declaring that Great Britain undertook to build a Jewish Homeland in Palestine including both sides of the Jordan, Dr. Silver pointed out that it had failed in that pledge, cutting off from the provisions of the Mandate the whole of Transjordan, a territory twice as large as the present Palestine.

"Now, twenty years after the Balfour Declaration, an effort is being made to cut the Jewish Homeland still further to constrict its boundaries and to consign an expanding Jewish Homeland to what must be a political and economic absurdity.

"The high spiritual exaltation of our people, in 1917, inspired by the Balfour Declaration, has been, through two decades, successively dampened, and chilled, not so much by terroristic resistances on the part of certain intransigent Arab elements in Palestine, as by the failure of the Mandatory

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Government to fulfill the obligations which it undertook under the terms of the Mandate.

"The whole record of the Administration of Palestine with reference to the upbuilding of the Jewish Homeland has been a series of failures, blunders, inaction and non-cooperation.

"Great Britain undertook, under the terms of the Mandate, to place the country (Palestine) under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home. It failed to do that.

"It undertook to 'facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions'. It has failed to do that. Far from opening the doors of Palestine wide to Jewish mass immigration, it has continually wrangled and bickered and bargained, for minimum schedules for immigranas."

The Convention of the Zionist Organization of America which preceded the World Zionist Congress called to meet in Zurich in August, emphatically rejected the partition proposal.

*Added*  
*World Zionist which was held in Zurich in August, 1937*  
At the Congress, the principal issue was the acceptance or rejection of the Royal Commission's *Report.* The debate was on whether negotiations should be undertaken with Great Britain on the basis of the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The majority favored such negotiations. The minority, of which I was one, expressed firm opposition to any discussion with Great Britain *which* ~~that~~ might consider partition, holding that the inalienable rights of the Jewish people to their historic Homeland cannot be bartered away.

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I addressed the Congress on the subject and in the course of my address, I stated:

"The Report of the Royal Commission sets the fashion for illogical conclusions, and this method had been adopted by the Congress. The Report vindicated all our claims, stated that the position of the Arabs had improved greatly, that the Arab land-owners and fellaheen had profited, that the health of the population had improved, and that all this had been made possible through the growth of the Jewish population in Palestine. The conclusion should then have been a recommendation for a vigorous implementation of the Mandate. Instead, there is an unwarranted proposal to dismember the country. Similarly, Dr. Weizmann failed to draw the logical conclusions of his own declarations. He criticized the Palestine Administration, declared that the Mandate could be carried out, that the riots in Palestine could have been prevented, and that the fault was the weakness, blundering, and, in part, definite sabotage on the part of members of the Palestine Administration.

"What, then, should have been his conclusions? A demand, based upon the Report of the Royal Commission, for the removal of those responsible for existing conditions. Instead of which, he, too, recommends partition. Dr. Ruppin pointed out the insurmountable difficulties which are involved by the presence of so large an Arab minority in the proposed Jewish state and the difficulty of transferring this Arab population. What should have been his conclusion? A total rejection of the plan of partition as unsound and unworkable. Instead, he, too, agrees with the Commission's plan.

"What prompted these people to suggest illogical conclusions? The promise of a lasting settlement between Jews and Arabs and the hope of a large-scale Jewish immigration. On all these scores they are likely to be disappointed. Partition does not offer the promise of a lasting settlement with the Arabs. The Arabs have said that they would resist it. A terrific irredentism will be created inside and outside of Palestine. Should trouble arise, and the English Government be called in as the protector of the Arab minority, it would arrive, possibly at the same conclusions as those at which the Commission had arrived, namely, that a further partition or perhaps even a complete liquidation of the Jewish Homeland is indicated.

"Fear is not leadership; surrender is not statesmanship! dismemberment is not nation-building! When the Children of Israel found themselves with the Egyptians at their backs and the Red Sea in front, the word went forth:

'Speak unto the Children of Israel and let them go forward.' "

The Zienist Congress adopted the majority resolution which stated that the partition scheme was unacceptable, but that the Executive should ascertain the precise terms of the Government for the proposed Jewish State, and that the Executive should bring any definite scheme that might emerge before a newly elected Congress for consideration and decision.

The Permanent Mandate's Commission of the League was favorable in principle to an examination of the proposed partition scheme, but opposed to the immediate creation of two independent states.

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The British government soon <sup>was</sup> announced that it was not committed to the Royal Commission's partition plan and that it would send out another Commission to draw up a more precise scheme. This Commission, headed by Sir John Woodhead, unanimously advised against the adoption of the partition scheme outlined by the Royal Commission on the grounds of its impracticability. The British government then announced that it would convene a conference of representatives of the Palestinian Arabs and of the neighboring Arab states, and of the Jewish Agency in an effort to promote an understanding between the Arabs and the Jews. This conference took place in London at St. James Palace early in 1939. The Arabs refused to sit down with the Jewish delegates, so that the conferences of the two sides were held separately. The London conference led to no agreement. When the talks were broken off, two months later the British government issued its White Paper.

All this is almost an exact preview ~~in sequence~~ of what will take place almost a decade later following the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. . . .



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In August, 1939, I attended the twenty-first Zionist Congress in Geneva. It met under the shadow of the White Paper which had been issued by the British government the preceding May and which declared that no more than seventy-five thousand immigrants inclusive of twenty-five thousand refugees, would be admitted over the next five years, and that thereafter no further Jewish immigrations would be permitted unless the Arabs agreed. This was a complete repudiation of the obligations which Great Britain had assumed under the terms of the Mandate for the Jewish National Homeland.

The delegates to the Congress were, of course, bitter. All were united in rejecting the White Paper. Some advocated passive resistance—complete non-cooperation with the government. Others urged active resistance, ~~to the new policy which had been announced by the British government.~~ There were a few who called for armed struggle against the government.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who was the object of some violent attacks because the diplomatic failure was charged up to him—pleaded for the use of peaceful methods only in <sup>combating</sup> ~~castroting~~ the White Paper. I sided with him, and defended his position on the floor of the Congress. I was soundly denounced for the position which I took. The Laborite delegates especially did not approve of my position, nor did all the members of the American delegation. Many of them favored illegal interpretation. *immigration.*

We were on the eve of a second World War. In fact, within two weeks of the opening of the Congress, the war actually broke out. The war would be conducted against the deadliest enemy of our people—the Nazis. Great Britain would be the chief adversary of the Nazis in this struggle. As Jews, we were deeply involved in the outcome of the coming struggle. If the Nazis won, not only would Palestine be lost to us, but the Jewish people would also be lost. In a Nazi dominated world there would be no room for the Jewish people or for a Jewish Palestine any more than there would be room for any free people. Great Britain would be fighting not alone for its own survival and for the survival of the free world, but also for our survival. We should, therefore, not resort

to measures which would gravely embarrass her in her war efforts. *this is my position*

To be sure we could not accpet the White Paper. Its proposals were contrary to law and unjustifiable on moral grounds. We must, nevertheless, I argued, continue our cooperation with the Mandatory Government--in order to avert chaos in Palestine. We cannot fight the British government with violence, even if we wish <sup>ed</sup> to. And we do not wish to, unless driven to desperation. A change is bound to take place. For the present we must continue our work under the brutal regime imposed upon us by a government which would not continue in office indefinitely.

In covering my address before the Zionist Congress, the "New York Times" of August 20th reported:

"In an impassioned speech frequently interrupted by hecklers, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland, Ohio, appealed today to the delegates attending the twenty-first session of the World Zionist Congress here to do nothing that might bring the Jews in Palestine into conflict with the British Government.

"Dr. Silver defended the political policies of Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization. Conceding that Dr. Weizmann may have been 'too yielding on occasion,' Dr. Silver declared ~~that~~ it was not Dr. Weizmann who stood today as a discredited leader, but the British Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald. 'Dr. Weizmann is <sup>closer</sup> ~~closer~~ to us today in the hour of defeat than at any time in the past,' Dr. Silver said. 'It is Mr. MacDonald who stands as a destroyer of covenants and a breaker of mandates.'

"'I make bold to say,' Dr. Silver declared, 'that the British will not long tolerate that their government shall remain branded with the brand of betrayal.'

"He added that he was persuaded that new proposals regarding Palestine were <sup>F</sup>certain to emerge before long.

"That being so," Dr. Silver said, "I am constrained to propose to the delegates to this congress that they do nothing which might bring the Jewish people into conflict with the Mandatory Government. We are not yet confronted with finality."...

"Dr. Silver told the conference that he was not a pacifist and that he was not obsessed with any 'appeasement' idea, but held that some day the Jews might have to pass to an attitude of resistance. He said it was a task of wise leadership to prepare for that day and store up a war chest.

"I am not unmindful of the plight of our poor refugees who are trying to get into Palestine," he went on, "but I am worried about the possibility of our making a colossal blunder at a time when circumstances do not warrant such action."

"Asked by one questioner what he would do about immigration, Dr. Silver replied:

"I propose that we exert ourselves to the maximum within the limits of the White Paper. There is a possibility of bringing in tens of thousands of Jews within those limits. We have been considering in the United States a plan to bring in immediately the twenty-five thousand that the White Paper permits along with ten thousand allowed to enter this year—a total of thirty-five thousand."

Before many years would pass, I would be accused by Zionist leaders and others of being a dangerous extremist and activist. ~~As can be seen from the above,~~ In 1939, I was certainly among the most moderate. To this day I wonder whether I was wrong then...

The Congress rejected the White Paper but refused to go along with those of its delegates who advocated non-cooperation with the British Government. David Ben-Gurion succinctly formulated the official Zionist line—"To fight the White Paper as though there were no war, and to fight the war as though there were no White Paper." This, as one can readily see, was not ~~a long~~ <sup>an easy</sup> line

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to follow;

In the war years which followed, which brought with them the early victories of the Nazis and their conquest of many countries where Jews lived in large numbers, and where the Nazis proceeded to carry into effect their policy of extermination of <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ Jews, the position of the Jews in Europe became desperate. Many fled <sup>from</sup> their homes and many of them sought asylum in Palestine. Great Britain held vigorously to the White Paper policy and refused to admit them. Refugees attempted to enter the country "illegally". Many were deported. Others were apprehended and interned. The tragedies of the "Patria" and the "Struma" ensued. The people of Palestine were soon driven to desperation and an organized campaign of resistance to British rule in Palestine, which was made inevitable by the stubborn and inhuman policy of the government, set in which finally forced Great Britain to acknowledge defeat and to surrender the Mandate to the United Nations. I publicly approved of this resistance both of the Haganah and the Irgun and I tried to compose the bitter rivalry between them <sup>the two</sup>.

At the National Conference for Palestine, called by the United Palestine Appeal which met in Washington in January, 1938, I was elected Chairman ~~of the United Palestine Appeal~~ to succeed Dr. S.S. Wise who had served in that capacity in 1936 and 1937. The Conference was held eighteen days after the issuance of the British White Paper. A feeling of depression pervaded the Conference. Zionist hopes had received a crushing blow.

In accepting the position of chairmanship of the United Palestine Appeal at a time of such low ebb, I felt that first and foremost it was essential to raise the morale of the delegates and workers and our Zionist constituency generally. Without confidence in our ultimate victory, the work of the United Palestine Appeal would suffer enormously.

I was always confident that the inescapable logic of events would, in due time, make Palestine a Jewish State. For a shorter or a longer time this may be halted or retarded, but the re-birth of Israel as a nation in its historic home <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ as sure to come to pass as God's word never returns empty until it has accomplished that for which it was sent.

The inescapable logic of events! When all the doors of the world would be closed to our people, then the hand of destiny will force open the door of Palestine. And that hour, I believed, was rapidly approaching.

Accordingly, I made this the central theme of my speech of acceptance.

"This is one of the rare moments in my life", I stated. "I am keenly aware that the burden involved is even greater than the honor. I am the spiritual leader of a large congregation, which, of course, has the first claim upon my time and upon my energy. Nevertheless, ~~when the summons came.~~



<sup>do</sup>  
I did not feel justified in declining, but I regard myself as a conscripted soldier. This is an hour of battle for Israel. We are fighting on all fronts. Never in our history have we had to fight on so many fronts at one and the same time. I shall give to this campaign during the coming year whatever energies I can command, whatever ability I can command, whatever time I can command. I shall try to be more than the nominal head of the campaign. I am assuming responsibility, and I assume, also, that you wish me to take on a full measure of authority.

"I shall try to benefit by the accumulated experiences of ours during the past years. I shall try a few new experiments, a few new ways. I shall make an effort, with your cooperation, during the coming year to capitalize on the wide-spread pro-Palestine sentiment which exists among our people everywhere. I have found that while ideologically all of our people may not be ready to commit themselves to our Zionist program, there are really few Jews in this country who are doing any thinking at all -- and most Jews have been made to think in the last few years -- who have not become Palestine-minded and Palestine-sympathizers. I shall try, as far as I can, to organize that sentiment and to capitalize upon it.

"I should like to see banished from our midst in these days the mood of defeatism, the mood of despair. No people is at its best when it is frightened. You cannot appeal to the generosity of people when you terrify them. The reaction to fright is flight and hoarding. Bring your people the kind of message

which the prophets of Israel always brought to their people in the dark night of suffering: ~~"Al tira, avdi Yaakov"~~ "Do not be afraid!" Bring them the message of the prophets: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

" You can bring them that kind of a message on the basis of what we have actually achieved and builded in the desperate years since the World War. We have reason to speak to our people in confidence and in hope for the future.

" Following the World War, when more than half of our people were broken and shattered in Eastern Europe, their life disorganized, their economic resources at a vanishing point, when there took place one of the greatest migrations known in the history of our people, when so much of our energies and resources had to be devoted to the elementary work of rescue, of providing bread for the starving and shrouds for the dead -- the Jewish people, nevertheless, had the courage, the vision and the heroism to apply itself to the colossal job of re-building their Jewish national life in Palestine. With their own hands and their own resources they took a land which had been neglected, stripped, and made desolate, and in a few short years populated it, built towns and cities, schools and hospitals and a university and transformed a backward, Oriental province into the most civilized center in the Near East.

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"I appeal to you to go forward as the emissaries of that faith, courage and vision which have not been dimmed in two thousand years! "

I served as Chairman of the United Palestine Appeal for six years, relinquishing the position in January, 1944, to concentrate on the work of the American Zionist Emergency Council.



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A WORD ABOUT MY ATTITUDE TOWARD FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
BECAUSE THESE WERE ~~A PERIOD OF SEVEN YEARS~~ YEARS  
-1- Q

In 1939, the Second World War broke out. It was to mark the end and the beginning for many things in the world. It was to affect the destinies of nations, of empires, of continents. The Jewish people suffered more during this war than any other people on the face of the earth. It was the blackest period in its long and checkered history. Out of it was to emerge the State of Israel.

In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was the war-time leader of our nation. In many ways I admired him greatly. He was the eloquent spokesman of some of the ~~very~~ <sup>highest</sup> ideals which inspired men of good-will in those searching and critical years. I had voted for him twice, but on March 31, 1941, addressing my congregation on a subject which was then widely discussed, "A Third Term for President Roosevelt?" I <sup>had</sup> stated:

"There are citizens who do not favor a third term for President Roosevelt, not because they are his foes--because they are his friends--the friends of the things he stands for. These people greatly admire him. They fully appreciate the monumental services which he has rendered this country during these last seven years... They remember that Mr. Roosevelt, in 1933, took over a bankrupt nation which had gone through the disaster of twelve years of boom and depression. He came in as the head of a people in panic, a people whose industry had been stalled, whose farms were languishing, a people prostrate not only materially, but even more so spiritually. They remember that Mr. Roosevelt succeeded in restoring their confidence and hope. He set about rebuilding what had been shaken or destroyed... They remember to this day, Mr. Roosevelt has not permitted the unemployed to starve, and has kept millions of our people from thoughts and acts of desperation. They bear in mind with gratitude the fact that he established measures of social security, security for the aged and for the unemployed..."



security for the aged and for the unemployed.

"They remember that Mr. Roosevelt endeavored to establish laws which would protect labor against exploitation, and to build up machinery for the amicable adjustment of employer and employee relationships.

"They remember that he was responsible for the enactment of laws to curb the evils of gambling on the stock exchange and the exploitation of the investing public. All these measures he attempted to achieve within the framework of the system of private enterprise. And through the enactment of these measures, he succeeded in averting a violent political and economic upheaval in our land.

"He has worked and is still working not alone for peace, but for a just peace.

"And yet, because of their very admiration for him, these friends of Mr. Roosevelt, among whom I am one, would urge him not to stand for re-election. The Third Term, my friends, is not a law, but a tradition, a tradition which reflects the political views of the American people, a custom even more powerful than a law. It is a custom which has not been violated in one hundred fifty years, and during these one hundred fifty years there have been critical times, some of them more critical than the present."

"It is particularly important in these days, when the indispensable one-man rule is exalted in so many parts of the world at the expense of the democratic faith in laws and institutions, rather than in persons, that it should not be repudiated."

After the two parties met in convention and Mr. Roosevelt was nominated by the Democratic Party for a third term, I was asked by The Cleveland Press whether I would wish to express myself on the nomination of Mr. Roosevelt or on Mr. Wendell L. Willkie, who was nominated by the Republicans.

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In reply, I stated: "My conviction as to the third terms remains unchanged and so does my admiration for the *politics* and achievements of President Roosevelt. What I expressed in my March address represents a *settled* conviction. Only one consideration would have warranted a change of attitude, *if* of the opposition candidate, in this case Mr. Willkie, would have been an isolationist, representing a foreign policy at sharp variance with the *sound* and courageous one which President Roosevelt has been presenting. In which case, the vital interests of civilization, now being threatened, would have outweighed any other considerations. Fortunately, Mr. Willkie has expressed himself clearly and unequivocally *in favor* of tendering maximum aid, short of war, to Great Britain."

The Republican National Committee made extensive use of my statement which was entirely proper. I was asked to become active in the campaign. I declined on the ground that it was an *unvarying* practice of mine not to participate in any political campaign.

I received a warm note from Mr. Willkie:

"Dear Rabbi Silver:

"I am most appreciative of your statement released in the Cleveland Press of Tuesday, August 6, announcing your support of my candidacy for President of the United States.

"As one of the outstanding Jewish rabbis in the country, as well as a noted liberal and leader in the Zionist movement, I am proud to have your support, and I am deeply grateful for all you are doing in my behalf.

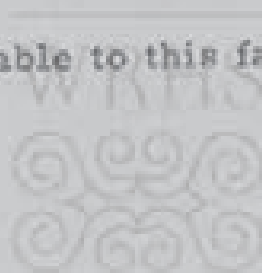
Cordially and sincerely,

Wendell L. Willkie"

Politics aside, I really admired this man whose vision in the *worst* <sup>*midst*</sup> of war

reached out to the "One World", and whose deep humanity touched the hearts of men.

In 1944, when President Roosevelt ran for a fourth term, I again voted for the Republican candidate, Mr. Thomas Dewey. This was looked upon as heresy and was deeply resented by those Jews and Zionists who were completely sold on F. D. R. There were prominent Zionists, close to the Administration, who felt that my Republicanism would prove embarrassing to the Movement in Washington. My troubles in the Zionist Emergency Council in the the next few <sup>years,</sup> ~~weeks,~~ to which I will refer later on, are in the main traceable to this fact.



RM

Early in the year 1942, I received an invitation from Dr. Weizmann to visit England in behalf of the Palestine Appeal Campaign. I accepted the invitation and, travelling <sup>by clipper</sup> by way of Bermuda and Lisbon, ~~by clipper~~, I arrived in England on March 9th and was met by a committee headed by Dr. Weizmann in the Paddington Station. I stopped at the Dorchester Hotel and after dinner that evening I walked out into my first blackout in London. It was a weird and ghostly experience. I <sup>later</sup> stepped into the Underground shelter <sup>where</sup> where men, women, and children were sleeping in iron cots on three tiers while passengers were waiting for their trains.

It was a very distressing time for England. It had quite recently received staggering blows in the Far East. The wounds of Malay, Singapore, Rangoon, Java, and Burma were still fresh. Those were dark days also for our people and trying days for our Movement.

While the full extent of our people's tragedy at the hands of the Nazis was as yet <sup>not</sup> known, enough <sup>the</sup> was known of Nazi diabolic plans to exterminate European Jewry to fill us all with horror. Our Movement was impaled on the horns of a tragic dilemma. Jews everywhere were, of course, solidly behind Great Britain and her allies in the war against the Nazis, the common enemy of civilization. But our Movement was compelled to resist Great Britain in Palestine because, as the Mandatory Government, it had shut the doors of Palestine against our refugees who were desperately seeking asylum from Hitler's concentration camps and gas chambers. Palestine Jews were loyally fighting in the armies of Great Britain, but the Haganah and Irgun, each in its own way, had to resist Great Britain in Palestine in the hope of saving the hapless remnants of our people from extermination.

Those were the days of the White Paper. I arrived in London just ten days after the sinking of the "Struma"—the ship which carried seven hundred Jewish refugees. It had been turned away from the shores of Palestine and had perished in the Black Sea.

Upon my arrival, I met with the representatives of the press at the central Zionist office, 77 Great Russell Street. I spoke to them of the pressing and urgent problem of our Jewish refugees, the victims of our common enemy and of Palestine which should be open and available to them, for in Palestine the Jewish people had an internationally accredited legal status for which they had to thank Great Britain.

" The Balfour Declaration was a product of great political vision and statesmanship and emanated from the deep humanity of the fine spiritual centres of the English people; and the Jewish people would forever remain grateful to this act of statesmanship, of humanity and friendship.

"Unfortunately in the last twenty odd years, for one reason or another difficulties were placed in the way of the full implementation of the letter and the spirit of the Balfour Declaration. White Papers made the work of rehabilitation, reconstruction and actual conversion of Palestine into a homeland for the Jewish people increasingly more difficult. But they were hopeful that the same vision, the same humanity, the same friendship which the English people evidenced during the last war, would again manifest itself now and in the years to come, when it must become increasingly clear to thoughtful people, pari passu with the increased tragic position of European Jewry, that the establishment of a National Homeland for the Jewish people in their historic home was an immediate urgency.



" The Jewish people are asking Great Britain to treat them as friends and allies. Great Britain has no more loyal friends in the world, no more loyal friends in that part of the world which had become one of the most critical points in the far-flung battles of the United Nations in the Near East than the Jewish people. They ask of this great people not to embarrass them in the United States by such incidents as the 'Struma' affair, by sending refugees who fled from ten thousand hells in Europe to a place which they regarded as sanctuary, <sup>to</sup> ~~in~~ concentration camps in the Holy Land and keeping them there to languish ~~for a year or more~~. We are asking this great people to treat them in a way which is in keeping with the dignity of an ancient people; to permit the Jews of Palestine to fight for the common cause, under British command, but under the flag of the Jewish people in Palestine. "

I expected to find the war-beset and sorely troubled Jewish community of Great Britain distraught, and as far as Zionist activities were concerned, all but paralyzed. But to my great surprise, I found it unshaken in its Zionist loyalties, firm in its resolve, and generous in its response. I visited nine cities. Some of them had been recently blitzed and badly done up. The nights were made darker by the universal blackout. Besides London, I visited Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, New Castle, Southport, Harringate, Sheffield and Glasgow. It was a whirlwind tour. I addressed many meetings. Everywhere I received the same heartening impression and the

same warm response. I left the shores of England encouraged by what I had seen, and upon my return to the United States, I conveyed to my fellow-Jews the inspiring impressions of courage, perseverance, and loyalty which I found there.

While in London, I held several press conferences. I addressed the Palestine Parliamentary Committee in the House of Lords. I saw Mr. Neville Butler of the British Foreign Office, and Mr. Richard Law, Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office. I spent an hour with Viscount Cranborne, the British Colonial Secretary. I conveyed to them the shock which was felt by the Jews of America and by the American people generally over the recent "Struma" disaster, and the earlier episode of the "Darien", which had reached Palestine with eight hundred refugees and carried on board also the survivors of another refugee vessel, the "Salvador", which had sunk in the Sea of Marmora with the loss of over two hundred lives, and of the "Patria", which exploded in the Haifa harbor with the loss of two hundred and fifty-seven lives. On landing, the refugees on the "Darien" were all interned. I asked to for the release of the internees. I pointed out/the officials, and especially to Lord Cranborne, the strong opposition in the United States to the White Paper policy which was so badly entangling Great Britain in a web of hostile acts against the helpless victims of Nazi persecutions, which I am sure, the English people themselves did not approve of. I also discussed with British officials the formation of a Jewish army in Palestine and urged the British government to give approval and to cooperate in this project. I was told that

White Paper policy might be reconsidered but not now. Even Winston Churchill would not favor any change at this time. I suggested that administrative discretion could be exercised even within the framework of the White Paper to avert a recurrence of the "Struma" tragedy. I told them that the only true friends that Great Britain had in the Near East -- friends who were actually fighting on its side -- were the Jews, and that Great Britain was sacrificing dependable friends in a critical hour to appease potential or actual enemies.

I was most cordially received, and my very frank and forthright presentation was not in any way resented. Mr. Richard Law promised to repeat faithfully what I had told him to Mr. Anthony Eden. Lord Cranborne said that he would give the matter most serious thought. It was clear to me that they were not at all happy over the measures which the White Paper policy was forcing them to take.

I do not know what good came out of these talks. But future refugee ships were not turned away, but, when seized, were taken to Mauritius<sup>US</sup> and (Check!) later on to Cyprus, for the War's duration. This was a paltry relaxation, indeed, but there were not more "Struma" incidents.

While in London, I also called, in the company of Dr. Weizmann, on the Soviet Ambassador Ivan Maisky. We discussed Soviet-Jewish relations, the problem of the Jewish refugees in Russia, their transit to Palestine, and the general attitude of the Soviet Government toward the Jewish National Home.

R

I left England on March 25th for Lisbon. There I waited several days for a Clipper to carry me back home. I traveled sixteen hours to Baloma on the West Coast of Africa and then on to Natal, sleeping on the floor of the plane in the cloak-room. From Natal we flew to Belem at the mouth of the Amazon. Here we spent the night. As <sup>it</sup> was the eve of Passover, I inquired whether there were any Jews in Belem. I found that there were two congregations of Jews -- one Sephardi, the other Ashkenazi. Towards evening, the Chacham and the lay head of the Sephardi congregation called and invited me to attend Passover Eve service at their synagogue, which I did. Later I was invited to have Seder with the Chacham at his home. It was a charming Seder conducted according to the Sephardi ritual. At about nine o'clock in the evening, a committee of the Ashkenazi community came to the Chacham's house and invited me to join them at their Seder. I went along, bidding farewell to my gracious host and his family. At the Ashkenazi Seder, the Haggadah was begun all over again, and the Passover meal as well...I enjoyed two Sedarim in one night.

Early next morning, we flew to Port of Spain in Trinidad. I attended Passover services there in the small synagogue, where I saw a number of American soldiers. Trinidad was an important American army base. That evening I was invited to attend a lovely Seder which was conducted by a Jewish Chaplain for the Jewish soldiers on the base. Thus, for the first time in my life, I enjoyed three Sedarim in one Passover...

R

The next day we flew to ~~Porto~~ <sup>Rico</sup> and New York. I had taken along with me a package of Matzot. When the Irish customs inspector in New York opened my suitcase and saw the Matzot, he said with a smile: "These are Jew biscuits, ain't they? Me and my missus like them too."





Two important conferences were to be held in the next two years in the United States which were to prove decisive in the history of the Zionist Movement.

An extraordinary Conference was called by the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs in New York City, May 9-11, 1942, at the Biltmore Hotel. It was the first general conference of all the Zionist groupings in the United States since the outbreak of the war and the first important Zionist gathering since the World Zionist Congress in 1939. Dr. Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion were present.

The aims of the Conference were to bring about unity in Zionist ranks in the United States and to formulate Zionist aims in anticipation of the end of the war and the Peace Conference which was to follow. Both Dr. Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion delivered important programmatic addresses, ~~at this Conference.~~ I participated in this Conference.

The Biltmore Conference passed some important resolutions. Foremost among them was:

"The Conference urges that the gates of Palestine be opened; that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for upbuilding the country, including the development of its unoccupied and uncultivated lands; and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world."

This so-called Biltmore program constituted, as the American Jewish Yearbook for 1942 states, "a fundamental departure from traditional Zionist policy. Heretofore official Zionism steadfastly refused to formulate the ultimate aim of the Movement, preferring instead to concentrate on the practical task of building the Jewish National Home. But the British White Paper of 1939, which interpreted the terms of the Mandate in a way that would freeze "The Jewish Community to a permanent minority status", and the war situation which would eventually bring international factors to bear upon the future of Palestine, prompted the Zionist leaders to take a firm unequivocal stand. This demand for a Jewish Commonwealth was subsequently endorsed by all major Zionist groups. . . . The Biltmore program was firmly sanctioned also by the Inner Actions Committee of the Zionist Organization in Jerusalem. In the absence of the World Zionist Congress, which met last in 1939 and may not meet again for the duration of the war, this may be regarded as the official Zionist stand on the ultimate aim of the Movement."

On August 29, 1943, the American Jewish Conference met at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. It was held in anticipation of the problems that would face the Jewish people in the post-war period in Europe and Palestine. It had been planned at a preliminary meeting of thirty-two national Jewish organizations which had been held in Pittsburgh earlier in the year and which had been convoked at the initiative of Henry Monsky, President of the B'nai B'rith, one of the truly great lay-leaders which American Jewry produced. At this meeting it had been decided to summon an American

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Jewish Assembly (the name was later changed to the American Jewish Conference) which would be organized on democratic lines, to establish a common program of action in connection with post-war problems, relating to the rights and status of Jews in the post-war world, to consider and recommend action upon all matters looking to the implementation of the rights of the Jewish people with respect to Palestine and to elect a delegation to carry out the program of the American Jewish Assembly in cooperation with the duly accredited representatives of Jews throughout the world. (The American Jewish Conference, Proceedings of the First Session, 1944, p. 33).

Five hundred delegates attended the Waldorf-Astoria Conference, one hundred and twenty-five representing national organizations and three hundred and seventy-five who were elected by the communities. Elections were held in every state of the Union. At least two million two hundred and fifty thousand Jews participated directly or indirectly in the local elections of delegates to the American Jewish Conference. (Ibid 48). All shades of opinion in the American Jewish Community were represented at the Conference -- Zionists and non-Zionists, Orthodox, Conservatives and Reform Jews -- labor leaders and many who belonged to no special group. All groupings were given proportional representation on each of the Conference committees, each group designating its own representatives and each committee electing its own officers.

The <sup>4</sup>fourth <sup>plenary</sup> session of the Conference which was held on Monday <sup>night</sup> ~~evening~~ August 30th was devoted to a symposium on Palestine. It

was at this session that I spoke. I was given the time allotted to the American Jewish Congress. The time of the General Zionists had been assigned to other speakers.

"My dear friends <sup>I said</sup> the Jewish people is in danger of coming out of this war the most ravaged of peoples and the least healed and restored.

"The stark tragedy of our ravage has been abundantly told here and elsewhere -- tragic, ghastly, unredeemed. To rehearse it again is only to flagellate one's self and to gash our souls again and again. But what of the healing? What is beyond the rim of blood and tears? Frankly, to some of us, nothing. We are being comforted at the moment with the hope that the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms and victory will bring the healing of our people.

"I am afraid that we are again sacrificing cool, albeit bitter reasoning and logic to beguiling romancing in the void. We are again turning away from <sup>the</sup> History to dreams and to apocalypses which some of us amazingly enough choose to call realism and statesmanship.

"The last World War made the world safe for democracy and granted the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe not only the rights of citizenship, but even minority rights. But you remember, or have you forgotten? It brought also in its wake the most thoroughgoing, brutal and annihilationist anti-Semitism that our people has ever experienced.

"Have you already forgotten the story of the first World War? Dare you forget it? And now again, in the second World War, many Jews are hoping

to achieve through another Allied victory what an Allied victory failed to give them after the last war, what a whole century of enlightenment, liberalism and progress failed to give them -- peace and security. They are again confusing formal political equality with immunity from economic and social pressures.

"The immemorial problem of our national homelessness, which is the principal source of our millennial tragedy, remains as stark and as menacing today as it ever was. Yet some Jews are again trying to circumvent it with wishful thinking and to hide the real problem, the nettling, perplexing, insistent problem, crying for expression and solution, under the thick blanket of appeals to Jewish unity and Jewish affability.

"There is a tragic fact which seems to escape so many students of anti-Semitism. The story of Jewish emancipation in Europe from the day after the French Revolution to the day before the Nazi revolution is the story of political positions captured in the face of stubborn and sullen opposition, which left our emancipated minority in each country encamped within an unbeaten and unreconciled opposition, so that at the slightest provocation, as soon as things got out of order, the opposition returned to the attack and inflicted grievous wounds.

"And in our day, stirred by the political and economic struggles which have torn nations apart, this never-failing, never-reconciled opposition swept over the Jewish political and economic positions in Europe and completely demolished them. There is a stout black cord which connects the era of Fichte



in Germany with its feral cry of "hep, hep", and the era of Hitler with its cry of "Jude verrecke". The Damascus affair of 1840 links up with the widespread reaction after the Revolution of 1848 -- the Mortara affair of Italy; the Christian Socialist Movement in the era of Bismarck; the Tisza-Ezlar affair in Hungary; the revival of blood accusations in Bohemia; the pogroms in the 80's in Russia; La France Juive and the Dreyfus affair in France; the pogroms of 1903; the Ukrainian blood baths after the last war and the human slaughter houses of Poland in this war.

"This, my friends, is our persistent problem. This is our immediate emergency -- immediate almost to every generation of our people in almost every country. What we are confronted with today is the frightful aggravation of a situation which has continuously darkened the pages of our history since the beginning of our dispersion.

"Now, what is the solution for this persistent emergency in Jewish life? There is but one solution for that national homelessness which is the source of our millennial tragedy. There is but one solution for national homelessness. That is a national home! Not new immigration opportunities in other countries for fleeing refugees; not new colonization schemes in other parts of the world, many of which were so hopefully attempted in the last few decades, down to our very own day, and with such little success. The only solution is to normalize the political status of the Jewish people in the world by giving it a national basis in its national and historic home.

5

"The world finally came to acknowledge the validity of this solution. In 1917, Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration. This Declaration was not intended to be an immigrant aid scheme, an effort to open up a new avenue for Jewish immigration. Shortly before its issuance, and for many years prior thereto, Jews in very large numbers were finding opportunities for immigration in many parts of the world, especially in the Western Hemisphere. The Balfour Declaration was a political national act designed to rebuild the national life of the Jewish people in its homeland.

"Now, is this my interpretation or that of Zionists only? Not at all. It was the universally accepted interpretation of the statesmen of the world and of those who were responsible in the first place for the issuance of this Declaration: Lloyd George, President Wilson, Jan Smuts, Winston Churchill. They were thinking in terms of a Jewish Commonwealth or, as many of them called it, the Jewish State, which was to be the natural outgrowth and evolution of the Jewish National Home.

"And how did our American Jews in those days interpret that document? When the first American Jewish Congress met in Philadelphia in 1918, a Congress in which Zionists and non-Zionists participated, as in this Conference, it elected a delegation to represent American Jewry at the Peace Conference, and the delegation was given instructions formulated as follows:

They were to cooperate with the representatives of other Jewish organizations, specifically with the World Zionist Organization, to the end that the Peace Conference might recognize the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine and might declare, that in accordance with the British Government's Declaration, there shall be established such political, administrative and economic conditions in Palestine as would assure, under the trusteeship of Great Britain, acting on behalf of such a League of Nations as might be formed, the development of Palestine into a Jewish Commonwealth.

"Why has there arisen among us today this mortal fear of the term "Jewish Commonwealth" ; which both British and American statesmen took in their stride, as it were, and which our own fellow-Jews of both camps endorsed a quarter of a century ago? Why are anti-Zionists, or non-Zionists, or neutrals determined to excise that phrase -- and I suspect, in some instances, at least, that hope?

"Why are they asking us, on the plea of unity, to surrender a basic political concept which was so much a part of the whole pattern of the Balfour Declaration? I suspect it is because they, or some of them, or most of them, have never really reconciled themselves to the fact both of the Declaration and of the Mandate. They would like to forget about them or have the world forget about them or wish them out of existence. Of course, they have no

objections to Jews going to Palestine any more than they would have any objections to Jews going to New Zealand, to Australia or any other part of the world.

It is amazing to me, I frankly confess, that Jews are moved to applaud a fellow-Jew when he consents that Jews should have the right to go to Palestine. Once having made this monumental concession that Jews have a right to go to Palestine and that that right should not be restricted, they feel justified in asking the Zionists to make a little concession of their own -- just a little concession -- namely, to surrender that for which they and their fathers hoped and prayed through the centuries and which is already in the process of fulfillment -- a Jewish Commonwealth of Palestine.

"We are told that our insistence on the Jewish Commonwealth is insistence on an ideology, and why, we are asked, should one create disunity in the ranks of American Israel over an ideology?

"In all sincerity, friends, I ask you to think along with me -- is it an ideology? Is the natural, normal instinct of a homeless people to find a home' for itself after centuries of homelessness and to lead a normal, natural existence, an ideology? Is it an ideology for an Englishmen to want an England, or for a Frenchman to want a France, a Free France, and, when exiled from it, to wish ardently to return to it?

the  
"Why is it an "ideology" for/people of Israel to want the Land of Israel from which it was driven centuries ago and so lost its peace and its rest and its joy of life?

"Was it an ideology which kept alive the hope of national restoration among our people for nineteen centuries? Was it not rather the hard, cruel facts of our existence, exiles, massacres, pogroms, indignities, all the way along the black stout cord of disaster, never broken from 70 to 1943?"

"We are not insisting on ideologies; we are insisting on the faithful fulfillment of obligations internationally assumed towards our people and on the honoring of covenants made with us. We ask for nothing new. It is those who tell us to surrender the demands already acknowledged in international sanctions, that are motivated by ideologies, not we. It is they who are forcing the reopening of a question which should have in all conscience been closed in 1917.

"So, my good friends, we are not concerned here with ideologies. The reconstitution of the Jewish people as a nation in its homeland is not a playful political conceit of ours, a sort of intellectual pastime calculated to satisfy some national vanity of ours. It is the cry of despair of a people driven to the wall, fighting for its very life. It is the pressing urgency of instant and current suffering and of the besetting dangers and disabilities today, and, I am afraid, also tomorrow.

"From the infested, typhus-ridden Ghetto of Warsaw, from the death-block of Nazi-occupied lands where myriads of our people are awaiting execution by the slow or the quick method, from a hundred concentration camps which befoul the map of Europe, from the pitiful ranks of our wandering hosts over the entire face of the earth, comes the cry: "Enough; there must be a final end to all this, a sure and certain end!"



"How long is the crucifixion of Israel to last? Time and again we have been stretched upon the rack for other peoples' sins. Time and again we have been made the whipping boy for blundering governments, the scape-goat for defeat in war, for misery and depression, for conflict among classes.

"How long is it to last? Are we forever to live a homeless people on the world's crumbs of sympathy, forever in need of defenders, forever doomed to thoughts of refugees and relief? Should not, I ask you fellow-Jews, ought not, the incalculable and unspeakable suffering of our people and the oceans of blood which we have shed in this war and in all the wars of the centuries; should not the myriad martyrs of our people, as well as the magnificent heroism and the vast sacrifices of our brave soldier sons who are today fighting on all the battle fronts of the world -- should not all this be compensated for finally and at long last with the reestablishment of a free Jewish Commonwealth?

"Is not this historic justice and is this world today not reaching out so desperately and so pathetically for a new world order of justice? Should we not be included in that world order of justice? Are we not deserving of it? I am for unity in Israel, but unity for what? It is strange; frequently, I am bewildered. If I agree with certain people, that's unity. If I ask them to agree with me, that is disunity.

"I am for unity in Israel, for the realization of the total program of Jewish life, relief, rescue, reconstruction, and the national restoration in Palestine. I am not for unity on a fragment of the program, for a fragment of the program is a betrayal of the rest of the program and a tragic futility

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besides. We cannot truly rescue the Jews of Europe unless we have free immigration into Palestine. We cannot have free immigration into Palestine unless our political rights are recognized there. Our political rights cannot be recognized there unless our historic connection with the country is acknowledged and our right to rebuild our national home is reaffirmed. These are inseparable links in the chain. The whole chain breaks if one of the links is missing. Do not beguile yourselves. Do not let anyone beguile you with the thought that the Arabs in Palestine or the British Colonial Office, for that matter -- and the two at the moment seem to be synonymous -- will consent to a large-scale immigration into Palestine as soon as we give up our idea of a Jewish Commonwealth. They are not that naive -- they are opposed both to a Jewish Commonwealth and to Jewish immigration.

"If we surrender our national and historic claim to Palestine and rely solely on the refugee philanthropic appeal, we shall lose our case as well as do violence to the historic hopes of our people. On the basis of sheer philanthropy, of satisfying pressing immigration needs, Palestine has already done its full share for Jewish refugees. It has taken in more than one-half of the total Jewish refugees of the world, and the Palestine Arabs and their sympathizers in England and here have been quick to point out that Palestine has already done all that can be expected from a small country and far more than most of the larger countries have done. It is because Palestine is the Jewish Homeland that we ~~cannot~~ have the right to insist upon unrestricted immigration.

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It is because of the historic connection of the Jewish people with that land that the Mandatory Government in the first place undertook to reconstitute it as a National Home and pledged itself to facilitate Jewish immigration and the close settlement of the Jews upon the land. In other words, it is on the national idea that the upbuilding of Palestine as a place of large-scale Jewish immigration has always rested and can alone continue to rest. Our right to immigration in the last analysis is predicated upon the right to build the Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. They are inter-linked and inseparable.

"To ask, therefore, the Jewish people to abdicate the political positions which after centuries it finally acquired in Palestine, or, by remaining silent about them, to suggest to the world that we have abandoned them, on the vain assumption that this would lead to the opening of the doors of Palestine to large-scale Jewish immigration, is utterly fantastic. I am for unity, but here I must point out in all humility that unity of action in democratic organization depends not upon unanimity but upon the willingness of the minority to submit to the decisions of the majority.

"It is folly to expect universal agreement among five million Jews of America, or among their chosen representatives here, on all basic problems affecting Jewish life. It is folly to expect it. It is naive to anticipate it. However, this is no reason for avoiding these basic problems. This is no reason for preventing the majority from endorsing the program which the minority may not be inclined to endorse. If the overwhelming majority of American Jews

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believe in the upbuilding of a Jewish Commonwealth, they should have the right, through the medium of this solemn conclave, to say so and to make their demand upon the world. A strange thing has occurred here. We are asked not to relinquish our convictions but at the same time not to express them.

The minority, if it is wise, as I believe it is, and responsible, as I know it is, and responsive to the democratic process, will abide by the decision and accept the role of a loyal opposition. We are not a government and we have no authority to impose decisions, but there is a tremendous moral authority in a solemn conclave such as this of the chosen representatives of our people, and when after due deliberation it speaks in overwhelming endorsement of a certain program, its decision ought not to be lightly disregarded.

"I close with this word, my friends. The heroic Yishuv in Palestine has prayerfully appealed to us to uphold its hands. You have read it in the public press. Our Yishuv today is fighting a desperate fight against enemies stretched all the way from Jerusalem through Cairo, through newspaper offices in the city of New York. It is fighting a desperate fight against enemies who are organizing another conspiracy to strangle its further development and to extinguish the great hope of national freedom which has sustained the faith and courage of those splendid men and women who are building the Jewish commonwealth. They have appealed to us, their brothers and sisters in America,

to approve of their struggle, to defend their rights and to appeal to the political leaders and statesmen of this great, free and blessed land to help them now in this, the approaching hour of decision, with the same sympathy and the same understanding as the Presidents of the United States from Wilson down, and the Congress of the United States, helped them in the earlier years. I ask you, good friends, shall we let them down?

"Shall we pass a Palestine resolution here which will mention nothing about the historic Balfour Declaration and its clear intent and underlying purpose -- the upbuilding of the Jewish Commonwealth? Will it be perhaps our purpose to send a delegation to the peace conference with nothing more than an immigration aid plea to let Jews go to Palestine, as if Palestine were for us another Santo Domingo?

"Are we to ask merely for the right of asylum in our historic home, the right which any people may claim in any part of the world, though, unfortunately, such claims are only infrequently recognized? Is this Jewish statesmanship? Is this Jewish vision, courage, faith? Or are we to declare in this great assembly, when the proper time comes, that we stand by those who have given their tears and their blood and their sweat to build for them and for us and the future generations, at long last, after the weary centuries, a home, a National Home, a Jewish Commonwealth, where the spirit of our entire people can finally be at rest as well as the people itself?

"Are we going to take counsel here of fear of what this one or that one might say, of how our actions are likely to be misinterpreted; or are we to take counsel of our inner moral convictions, of our faith, of our history, of our achievements,



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Louis Lipsky, who was <sup>an important</sup> ~~a key~~ figure in the leadership of the Conference, described the effect of my address in the "Congress Weekly" of October 13, 1958:

"At this halting moment, with the Zionists greatly troubled, with the non-Zionists uncertain as to where this confusion would lead, the man destined to play that part of deus ex machina revealed himself, in the person of Abba Hillel Silver, who was the next speaker -- representing not the Zionists, but the American Jewish Congress bloc which named him as their spokesman.

"He rose from his seat in the second row on the platform. He moved somewhat clumsily and with uncertain steps in the direction of the speaker's desk. He leaned his hands on the desk and braced his shoulders. His voice rang out resonant, fresh and arrogant. He was the debater, the pleader, the rebuker. He was interested in making a case and winning it and used all the arts of the advocate who wanted to convince and win a verdict. He sought the right word to describe what he wanted to say. He was not evasive. He was not tactful. He gave a moving, penetrating analysis of the prevailing conditions of Jewish life and what Zionism meant and wanted.

"Any summary of this remarkable address would be inadequate to convey the public impression it made upon the audience that heard it. The electric excitement it created seemed to bind every syllable uttered by the speaker to the nervous system of every listener. It was indeed the climax

of a great moment. It brought back the Zionist groups to the mood of unswerving loyalty to their cause, to a refusal to bandy words and make compromises. It made the Zionist program vividly clear. It strengthened the conviction of the Zionists that they could carry the whole Jewish people with them on the wings of their faith in the great struggle in which the Jewish people were immersed."

I was made a member of the Committee on Palestine which consisted of sixty-seven members and I was elected its chairman. After a free and full discussion in five sessions of the Committee, of the three separate resolutions which were introduced, agreement was finally reached. Before the resolution was to be presented to the Conference, <sup>Judge</sup> Proskauer, supported by Jacob Blaustein of Baltimore, President and Chairman, respectively, of the American Jewish Committee, attempted to get all action postponed by introducing a motion "that the action of the Conference with respect to Palestine be deferred until a future session to be called by the Praesidium, and that meanwhile the Palestine Committee be continued in existence".

The resolution was decisively defeated.

On Wednesday evening, September 15, at the Plenary <sup>presented</sup> session of the Conference, the Resolution which had been adopted by the committee with only two dissenting votes, ~~to the Conference~~. The gist of the resolution was:

"The American Jewish Conference, meeting at a time when the policies of the peace are in the making, and conscious of its historic responsibility and

of its position as representative of American Jewry and spokesman for the silenced Jewish communities of Europe, calls for the loyal and faithful fulfillment of the covenant entered into between the nations of the world and the Jewish people.

"We call for the fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration, and of the Mandate for Palestine whose intent and underlying purpose, based on the 'historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine', was to reconstitute Palestine as the Jewish Commonwealth.

"We demand the immediate withdrawal in its entirety of the Palestine White Paper of May, 1939, with its unwarranted restrictions on Jewish immigration and land settlement. The White Paper is a violation of the rights accorded to the Jewish people under the Mandate for Palestine. It was characterized by Mr. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons as a 'breach and a repudiation of the Balfour Declaration'. The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations refused to recognize its legality or its moral validity.

"The Conference demands that the gates of Palestine be opened to Jewish immigration, and that the Jewish Agency for Palestine, recognized under the Mandate as the authorized representative of the Jewish People, be vested with authority to direct and regulate immigration into Palestine, to develop to the maximum the agricultural and industrial possibilities and the natural resources of the country, and to utilize its uncultivated and unoccupied lands for Jewish colonization and for the benefit of the country as a whole.

"The measures here urged constitute the essential prerequisites for the attainment of a Jewish majority and for the re-creation of the Jewish Commonwealth."

This Resolution which was eloquently seconded by Henry Minsky, was adopted by the overwhelming majority of the delegates with only four dissenting votes. This was followed by a long ovation and the singing of "Hatikvah". Judge Proskauer presented a "statement of dissent" on the part of the American Jewish Committee. Concluding remarks were made by Dr. Wise and myself. The audience rose and sang "The Star Spangled Banner".

I was asked to speak again at the conclusion of the last session of the Conference. I said in part: "This has been the only great assembly, the only great K'nesia (Convocation) of American Israel in the last twenty-five years. . . Here was revealed the Jewish mind in all its intellectual vigor and clarity. We all experienced some very high and exalted moments at this Conference. There were solemn moments; there were also great, joyous moments in the last few days that spoke of high hope and unbroken confidence in ourselves in our destiny.

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"A great hour has not found us, thank God, a small people. We faced our problems with realism, with frankness and with courage. We met each other here in a fine spirit of comradeship and tolerance.

"The future is still very uncertain. Many curtains are still to be drawn aside....

"In all humility I pray to God at this great moment that when we meet again we shall meet in an hour of victory, in an hour of redemption, in an hour of peace."

