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ZIONISM NO REMEDY

A VOICE FROM AMERICA

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PALESTINE NOT A SOLUTION OF THE JEWISH PROBLEM.

Zionism in the last twenty-five years has become one of the most articulate Jewish weapons directed against anti-Semitism. As such it has been a barometer of the progress anti-Semitism has made in various lands. Whenever a pogrom takes place the adherents of Zionism increase in number. If there is a lull in the anti-Semitic movement Zionism registers that lull by a loss in aggressive strength. After the pogrom in 1881 the Zionist movement as a political force received great impetus. Even in America the tragedy of Kishineff brought many unsynagogued Jews into the racial fold. The sufferings of Israel gave even the agnostic and radical Jew a consciousness of kind from which the Zionist and Nationalist movement gained. This movement became the refuge of many Jews to whom Judaism as a religious message had ceased to appeal. Zionism as a political weapon against anti-Semitism has always represented a minority in Israel.

For the purposes of clear thinking we must consider Zionism, first, as a solution to the general Jewish problem; second, as a movement which can satisfy the soul of the Jew; third, as a limited experiment for the

purpose of establishing Jewish colonies and a Jewish cultural centre; and, fourth, the message of Zionism, if it has any, to the Jews of America.

The general Jewish problem is created by the civil, political, **economic**, and other disabilities from which the Jews have suffered. These are removed whenever progress is made along the lines of general emancipation. By a successful Russian revolution and the establishment of a free Government, whether a republic or a constitutional monarchy, Jewish disabilities in Russia will be automatically removed by granting to them equal rights. Roumania, as is probable, will follow the Russian precedent and will make the Roumanian Jews the beneficiaries of this advance of general emancipation. The vast majority of the Jews located in Russia, Roumania, Galicia, and Poland will thus be liberated. This is the major and most important phase of the Jewish question affecting the welfare of the majority of the Jews in the world.

Deeper and more complicated is the subjective phase of the Jewish question; for, even if the Jews obtain equal rights in the various lands of their birth or adoption, is the Jewish question solved? Social anti-Semitism will still persist, for the removal of social prejudice cannot be effected through the granting of civil, political, and economic rights. Social prejudice exists even in democratic countries. It depends in the final analysis upon the development of the Jew and the non-Jew alike.

The establishment of a Jewish State will not necessarily remove it. Such prejudice has existed against races which have had a concrete historic State. Therefore it cannot be claimed that Nationalism or Zionism will directly solve the problem of prejudice. That must be fought out, wherever races do not understand each other,

by contact and by an effort on the part of the Jew and the non-Jew alike to establish relations which are based upon mutual respect merited by both sides, and especially by the removal of ignorance, which is often the chief basis of prejudice.

The advocates of Zionism as a solution of the subjective phase of the Jewish question assume, first, that Judaism, in its broader sense, is worth preserving, and consequently that its preservation is made possible only by the establishment of a Jewish State, acting as a cultural centre which will exist primarily for the purpose of perpetuating it. The Zionists say vaguely that Jewish culture is worthy of preservation. Whatever is of distinctive worth in a nationality should be cultivated and contributed for the enrichment of humanity.

But what constitutes the distinctive worth in Jewish culture? Surely it cannot be claimed that Jewish science, art, or even philosophy or scholarship is distinctive. The realm of science and scholarship has always been properly international, and where the Jews have produced great scientists they have not made their contribution to science, scholarship, or philosophy as Jews. The Jews have produced great scientists, a few great artists, and many scholars of distinction, but in all this realm of human activity it cannot be said that they have been superior to the achievements of other races. In fact, if we were frank with ourselves we would say that they have not shown first-rate originality in many of these fields. The distinctive contribution of the Jew has been in the realm of religion and ethics.

The most precious gift of the Jew to the world has been the Hebrew in him. It has been his sensitive spiritual idealism. Remove the Scriptures and the rich literature

and lore which represent the reaction of the Jewish soul upon the fundamental spiritual problems of life, and there is very little left which would be considered distinctive or superior to the achievements of other races.

Believing that the Hebraic element in life is worth preserving, is a Jewish State essential for the preservation of this attitude toward life? Has the hope of Zion as a political movement been the cause of the Jews' survival, despite centuries of persecution? Is it not a fact that the survival of Judaism and the Jews as a people can be attributed more to the loyalty of the Jew to his religion than to his nationalism? And even where the hope of Zion's redemption has persisted in the life of the Jew, that hope was the product of a spiritual rather than a political concept.

The Zionists cannot point to ancient Jewish liturgy as any confirmation of secular political Zionism—a recent phenomenon in Jewish life. The Jewish religion has always attempted to make a spiritual appeal, and even Reform Judaism, which Zionists are prone to condemn by characterising its normal evolution as an unsuccessful effort of the Jews to assimilate non-Jewish religious elements, attempted at least to strike a spiritual note and to awaken a religious emotion as distinguished from a romantic, a social, or a nationalistic one.

It is important to make this distinction between a spiritual and a romantic emotion. In the great fervour which the Zionist movement has developed during the last twenty years, not a little of their emotion is romantic. How much of this nostalgia of the centuries is a racial yearning to obtain what has once been its precious possession and to idealise the distant at the expense of the present? How much of this *Heimweh* for Palestine is

deeply sincere among many of those who now sing the Jewish Nationalists' hymn, the "Hatikvah," with revivalistic fervour? How much of it would actually persist as a spiritually motivating power if Palestine were obtained?

In other words, will the existence of Palestine as a Jewish State actually result in developing in the Jew that Hebraism, that spiritual view of life, which has been his distinctive contribution, and will it help to solve the problem of the vast majority of the Jews who have cast their lot with America, with Russia, with Germany, with France, and with other countries of their birth or adoption? This is, after all, the largest part of the Jewish question.

The Zionists say that if the Jewish State existed the rebound upon the Jews of the world would be regenerative. They would draw their inspiration from this centre, and would contribute their distinctive idealism to the peoples with whom they are living. How much of this is a hope and a prophecy? And what are the serious moral dangers in this nationalistic point of view, from the standpoint of the Jewish soul? Here are some of them:—

First, it is apt to breed a racial egotism. What we want to preserve is the best in the Jew—which is the Hebrew. By that I mean his idealism. I sometimes believe that a conscious emphasis of nationalism leads to an acceptance of racial qualities just because the race happens to possess them. The Jews, like other people, have good and bad qualities, and to improve as a type they must eliminate and minimise the bad and cultivate the good. Sometimes a racial self-assertion leads to a subtle acceptance of limitations and prevents a frank facing of

them. It is good for the Jew to get in touch with other races, to grow by struggle, and even at times by suffering. A conscious emphasis of nationalism leads almost imperceptibly to a form of spiritual domination—to a lack of humility, which religion has frequently counteracted—but not nationalism.

The world to-day is suffering from the tragedies of a false nationalism—of a nationalism in which the idea of domination has given certain nations a form of megalomania—and, if any emphasis is needed, it is rather along the lines of internationalism and human fellowship. If the Zionists reply, “We desire to realise the national self of the Jewish people without any thought of domination,” the answer is that any conscious effort at national self-realisation results not infrequently in a form of spiritual domination which is unwholesome, and which tends to develop race limitations quite as much as virtues.

After all, there is less need of emphasis and development of social individuality than there is for laying stress upon international interdependence. If such an individuality really exists, it should express itself without conscious effort. The world is passing through a revolution in which the principle of international federation is being stressed as never before. From a spiritual point of view Jewish nationalism is reactionary.

But there are some Jews who find themselves inwardly isolated, and who feel at home only in a Jewish atmosphere. They say, with a well-known Jewish philosopher, that even in the midst of emancipation they are in slavery. They feel with him the need of a Jewish ideal source which will satisfy their inner complex.

If these Jews are so constituted that they can obtain

their deepest soul satisfaction only by the existence of a Jewish spiritual source, they should have it. The vast majority of the Jews do not feel the need of it. Their soul can be satisfied, and is satisfied, not only with the message of the Hebrew prophets and the rabbis, but with the spiritual movements of the present day. They are inwardly at home when they come in contact with great Jewish and non-Jewish personalities who are attempting to solve the social and religious problems of the present day.

Millions of Jews satisfy their souls by contributing their Jewish idealism to the world problems of human freedom. They are conscious while participating in these non-racial movements that they are contributing the native idealism of their people and their traditions. The subjective satisfaction of the latter may be more enriching to the world than the former, and at the same time it is none the less enriching to the Jews.

But the Zionist may answer, "Do you wish the Jews and Judaism to be preserved," and with freedom will not the process of assimilation so go on that the Jews as a people will finally disappear unless a Jewish State exists? This question is, and for generations will be, an academic one. First, because the racial idiosyncrasies of the Jews will prevent for a long time, if ever, their blood assimilation. Secondly, the Jews have no more right to historic race persistence than any other nation unless they justify it.

The only right that a people has to persist in history is that right which is based upon the fulfilment of their mission. As long as they contribute to civilisation they ought to exist. If the Jews fail to make their distinctive

contribution to the world they have no right to exist. They should exist upon a qualitative basis only if Judaism prevails as a spiritual force.

Do their distinctive contribution depend upon a spiritual inbreeding which is apt to be the result of a Jewish State? Creative spirituality is a product of struggle and of suffering. The history of the Jews will show that their most fruitful religious contributions have come at the point of contact with other races. Spiritual creativeness needs the battleground of contacts to produce its full fruitage.

The world needs at the present time more than ever a spiritual revival. In the friction of cultural contacts and in the revolutionary melting-pot of ideals which is now taking place, the great religious message must be born, and the Jew has a wonderful opportunity to develop and amplify that Hebraic spirit which has been his most precious contribution to the civilisation of the world. It does not need, and has never needed, a political State for its existence or its development. On the contrary, political considerations, national hatreds, and other complications resulting from the establishment of the Jewish State may coarsen the quality of Hebrew spirituality and result not in a pure, but in an alloyed, idealism.

There can be no objection to the existence of a cultural centre where Jews, who are willing to go there, can preserve and develop their race traditions, but there are strong objections to a philosophy of Jewish nationalism as a condition for the preservation of the Hebraic spirit, and there are many dangers in that philosophy. Reference has been made to the tendency of such a philosophy to develop race egotism. Another objection is that it

narrows the horizon and tends to the acceptance of forms which the conscience and intellect of a great many Jews have discarded.

From a practical point of view the existence of Palestine as a homeland will not solve the problem except as a refuge for those Jewish dreamers who will consecrate themselves to make their Jewish dreams come true. But they are not the only dreamers. The dreamers of Israel have lived and suffered, and have made their Jewish dreams come true for the world without a Jewish State, and they will still exist and their dreams will have a spiritual quality, as distinguished from a mere romantic one, to contribute to the profoundest problems of life, which are, in the final analysis, spiritual and religious. They will meet the problems of the newer day with an open mind, and with their native vision will be perfectly willing to cast away the old cups for the new wine and will be perfectly frank to accept the new forms, if need be, to contain the new waters of life as they well up from deepest springs.

The most constructive work that the Zionists have accomplished is the encouragement and financial support that they have given to the Jewish colonies in Palestine. They have afforded some of the pioneers from Roumania and Russia an opportunity to work out their practical and spiritual problems. This limited experiment in Jewish colonisation is encouraging, and has received the approval not only of Zionists but of non-Zionists, who are interested in any practical scheme which will help solve the problems of those Jews who have sought a refuge from persecution.

But interest in practical colonisation is quite a different matter from risking the prestige and impairing the influ-

ence of Judaism as a religious force by the failure of a Jewish State. A practical colonist is not burdened, nor is the success of his experiment threatened, by the diplomatic, political, nationalistic, and racial difficulties involved in the attempt to establish a Jewish State. He need not concern himself with such questions as the representation in the State of the many varying shades of Jewish religious, political, social, and economic opinion—the rocks upon which States have been wrecked.

Wherever Jews can be brought back to the land they should be encouraged. A constructive programme for meeting the newer Jewish immigration to America, whereby American citizens, both of Jewish and non-Jewish extraction, would make possible the establishment of colonies where Jews can be brought back to the land, would have powerful value. Interesting and encouraging beginning has been made in various Jewish agricultural experiments in America. Therefore the Zionists' attempt to aid Jewish colonisation is practical. But these colonies should not be restricted to Palestine alone, although the latter colonies should receive every support possible.

To the Jews of America Zionism has no positive message. The American Jew is nationally an American only. He is thrilled by one flag, which symbolises the ideals of a democracy in which men and women of all races have joined together to make government of the people, for the people, and by the people, a success. The very first tenet of American democracy is the separation of Church and State. It has demonstrated that citizens can have one common political allegiance and as many religious allegiances as their consciences may dictate.

The American Jew will not tolerate any other national political loyalty. Any movement which emphasises racial

groups in America is inconsistent with the spirit of this democracy.

Fortunate, indeed, for the Jews of America that they are participating in a political experiment which does not encourage national groups and which prevents the race hatreds resulting from such a recognition. The United States, through the wisdom of its founders, has been free of those national and race wars which have characterised the history of Austria, where racial groups have been organised and recognised as a part of the larger State. It may be natural to recognise racial groups in Austria and even in the new Russia—one cannot anticipate what will be the outcome of the loose federation of national groups—but even there the majority of the Jews are seeking recognition in the lands of their birth and their adoption, rather than the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, as a solution of their problems.

They are properly attempting to work out their destinies on the basis of free and equal rights in these lands. Responsible organised English Jews are fearing the establishment of a free republic in Palestine upon the basis of special Jewish rights. What they want is equal rights for their people, wherever they live. This is a much sounder position for the Jews to take than the dangerous political experimentation of Zionism. But to the Jews in America Zionism has no positive message.

My conclusion, finally, is that Jewish nationalism as a philosophy of life is not satisfactory; that it is reactionary; that it leads to a racial egotism, and that it does not conduce to profound moral and spiritual, but rather to romantic, emotions. However, this is not inconsistent with approval of the Jewish cultural centres, where those Jews who yearn to preserve and develop their Jewishness

can live if they wish to. If they feel the necessity of such a centre, they should obtain the right to have it, just as other peoples have. But the existence of such a centre is not essential to the development and even preservation of the best in the Jew, which is the Hebrew.

What the Jews need is that Hebraic spirit which the prophet expressed in the insight that "without vision a nation perisheth"; which made Micah say, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" Jews need to be bathed in a revival of that Hebraic spirit which gave birth to Isaiah's visions, to David's Psalms, to Spinoza's God—intoxication, to that rich literature of distinctive Jewish worth which is theirs and the world's heritage.

No romantic movement can effect this miracle—no message of racial self-assertion will bring it about. Only by a return to the source of Jewish power—Hebrew idealism—can the goal be approached. Not through the easy and roseate-hued path of romanticism and emotion, but through the difficult road of spiritual and moral effort can the subjective phase of the Jewish problem be solved, wherever may be the Jewish habitat.

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