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# Jewish Frontier Main Factors in Zionist Politics

by Moshe Shertok

Doc 00456

WE ARE entering upon the the last stage of the war. Post-war political plans are already under discussion, and it may very well be that a decision on Palestine will be reached during this period. Today it is clear that the problem has been re-opened. It may be that new circumstances will again congeal a situation which has become fluid, but there are trustworthy signs that for the time being at least our problem is up for consideration.

This could not be the case if the foundations of the White Paper were not shaken. The very fact that Palestine is being discussed in political circles proves that this is so, even though the White Paper is far from having been abandoned. The White Paper policy has certainly been weakened and there are factors in world politics and in the Jewish and Palestinian situations which will continue to undermine it.

## I

The Jewish problem is not the only unsolved one in the Middle East. The whole question of the future of the Arab countries is on the order of the day. Considerable political activity is developing in all the countries around Palestine. Syria and Lebanon have been added to the list of sovereign or practically independent countries. The independence, in fact as well as in theory, of Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi-Arabia has been strengthened. The future of these countries and the ties between them, their relations to the Great Powers and particularly to Great Britain, are all open questions.

At this time the Arab problem is developing upon lines not precisely foreseen by theorists, whether Arab, English, or Jewish. It was an accepted hypothesis that the Arab countries were developing toward a Federation. But in fact no Federation is being discussed and there is no sign of any approach to such a solution. To be sure, there are some who, being disappointed in their hope of a Federation covering the whole Arab world, have retreated to the idea of a so-called Greater Syrian Federation, including Palestine. But there are strong Arab groups who oppose even this. As the Arab countries grow more independent, they become more anxious to preserve their sovereignty, not only against the Great Western Powers but against each other. What is happening now among Arab countries is a process of rapprochement through the creation of mutual bonds, not through the abandonment of sovereignty. On the one hand, treaties are being negotiated between neighboring countries on specific points, and, on the other hand, there is an attempt to unite all these countries in consultation and cooperation on a common political program.

There is no way to forecast how far this process will go, but this is the purpose of the frequent conferences now being arranged between Arab leaders.

It is clear that as neighboring countries become independent, Palestinian Arabs will become more anxious for independence. The Palestine Mandate today is the only "A" Mandate applied to a territory whose inhabitants have not attained self-government. The pressure for independence and the rapprochement between Arab countries are forces acting upon us and against us, directly and through their effect upon the Great Powers. On the other hand, since the discussion of mutual relations among Arab countries has become an urgent political question, our existence as a national unit, and the consequent difficulties for the attainment of Arab political aspirations have been sharply underscored.

We must continue our efforts to make contact with the Arab world about us as we have always done. If not for our work in this field heretofore we could not be as well informed as we are about these matters, and even if only for the sake of such information we are bound to seize every opportunity for further contact. But we are also interested in having the Arabs understand our strength and our purpose: that we have come here to be independent but not isolated; to be a constructive power and not a foe; and that we hope for mutual aid and reciprocity—a hope which we are prepared to realize even if it must be piece-meal and intermittently.

The reactions on the part of Arabs in the neighboring countries have been of four kinds. First there are some Arabs who refuse to meet us altogether, in spite of efforts which we have made over a period of years.

Secondly there are Arabs who are always prepared to meet us, to talk, to maintain contact—but who will not agree to political negotiations. The explanation of this attitude, as we have heard recently from some Arabs, is that, after all, the question is between us and the Palestinian Arabs, and that neighboring countries have no right to negotiate. At other times we are told that, after all, the problem is an international one and will be decided by the Great Powers, so that there is no point in negotiations now: it is better to wait for the decision and postpone any arrangements that may be necessary as between them and us until a later date.

This does not mean, of course, that the Arabs are sitting passively while they wait for such a decision: they are active, they exert their influence, and they fight for a decision of a specific sort. Apparently they hope to achieve more than they might attain

by any negotiations with us. The White Paper gives them grounds for such hope. By the White Paper they have already achieved much, more than would be possible to hope for from any compromise agreement with Jews—even with Jews who are prepared to accept conceivable "compromises," let alone other Jews. But the fact that the White Paper is losing ground is no secret. Perhaps one of the reasons for its weakening is the lack of confidence in that document's future that has been deeply impressed upon large Arab groups from the very beginning. They were never convinced that it could be carried out, for they knew very well that it was opposed to the real, effective trends in Palestine. Yet a position like that which the Arabs have under the White Paper is not likely to be abandoned without a fierce struggle. For this reason the Arabs are disinclined to make any advance concessions.

There is still another reaction to our advances: while always prepared to meet and to discuss issues, this group at the same time always declares that there is no possible compromise, and that it must be war to the bitter end. This group is prepared to fight and see who prevails, so that if the Jews prevail it will not have been through Arab "submission".

Finally there are those who meet us and propose compromises as a basis for discussion. We welcome such reactions for they show that things begin to move. Some are beginning to realize that we are a real force in the Middle East, and that our position in Palestine cannot be ignored. Yet the compromises which are proposed suffer from these weaknesses: The maximum that the Arabs are prepared to offer is very far from the minimum upon which we are forced to stand; and furthermore those who propose these compromises are entirely incapable of carrying them out.

## II

All this brings us back to the conclusion that the center of gravity for our political effort must be sought in a different sector, in the area between us and the Great Powers, who will decide the issue insofar as any human power can determine the fate of the world after the war.

The Jewish people constitutes a world problem which seriously concerns the Great Powers and commits the whole civilized world to a grave responsibility.

Among the Great Powers the most important with respect to this question is Great Britain. Here we face a severe struggle, and the essential point at issue is whether the decision is to be a British one or an international one: in the interest of England or in the interest of world peace; within the limits of Palestine or on the scale of the Jewish problem the world over. It is our duty to insist on the international character of our demands and to work for them by approaching every power that is concerned

with the question, and which we can reach, particularly the Big Three.

The Arabs have always spoken in terms of their ultimate aspirations. The British, on the other hand, never spoke in terms of ultimate goals, and for a long time what little they did say gave us the opportunity for unrestricted work and progress: that is to say, we were restricted at each particular stage, but unrestricted with regard to our potential achievements of population increase, extension of our zone of settlement, and our growth toward political self rule, consequent upon our increase in numbers and expansion in area.

The majority of the Zionist movement, in Congress after Congress, firmly opposed any attempt to divert attention from its immediate vital tasks and the utilization of every available concrete opportunity. It opposed attempts to force a debate concerning ultimate goals which then seemed, and was, barren. But a change took place. Its beginnings can be traced back beyond the White Paper of 1939 to the Report of the Peel Commission of 1937. This report spoke in terms of ultimate goals and attempted to set up definitive constitutional arrangements. Of course no constitutional order can be definitive forever, historically speaking. But, as far as the policy of those who proposed these arrangements and those who were to accept them was concerned, it was an attempt to settle once and for all the status of Palestine. The Report of the Woodhead Commission was a similar attempt, and certainly the White Paper intended to define the permanent status of Palestine.

Even if the war and everything it brought had not taken place, our appropriate reply to this policy would have been to declare today that the reconstitution of our nationhood in Palestine is not merely a vision but our concrete political objective. However, until the war broke out, with all its gruesome consequences for the world and particularly for us, we adopted a defensive attitude. Thus some of us, who saw no escape from the Partition Plan, reconciled themselves to this offer because they regarded it as the lesser evil; we were then in a defensive position, with the initiative in the hands of others. But the World War brought radical changes. A crucial decision, not only in the Palestine problem but in Jewish history, had to be made. Not alone does the Jewish people face a historic turning point as a result of the slaughter in Europe, but the war has brought the whole world to a crossways. These circumstances, in their relation to the problems of Palestine and the whole Middle East, have made it possible as well as necessary for the Zionist movement to fight for a more radical and immediate solution of our problem.

If this analysis is correct, there arises the serious question, whether our policy is adequate to the situation. We must decide above all this question: Have we now a chance for a new political campaign,

unprecedented in the power which can be marshalled behind it and the prospects which lie before it? If so, it is clear that a demand for the continuation of the mandate is totally inadequate. If there is room for argument among us, it can only be on this basic question: whether we now have the opportunity to abandon our defensive position, for, if this can be done, we must be clear what we wish to achieve. Shall we undertake a political campaign to restore the mandate? Do we wish to achieve a situation in which vital decisions about our future will be in the hands of others? Or is it our aim that such matters be in our own hands, so that we may be given a real opportunity to save as many Jews as possible in the shortest possible time?

We do not enter upon this road without serious doubts of the prospects of success. The whole world today is struggling for great aims whose realization is similarly doubtful. It struggles with its own weakness and cowardice, its confusion and divided counsels. There is a receptivity in the world today to grand conceptions, bold conclusions, and radical solutions—above all, of the problems which caused this war that has grown to unprecedented dimensions. These, it seems to me, are the only terms in which we can make our proposals to the Great Powers, to world opinion at large, and certainly to the Jewish people.

### III

In dealing with the Great Powers, we must be aware of their differences. In the American sector, we have a wide field of activity but with one important central point: In the Presidency of the United States, in one man, or at least in one office, lie great powers of decision on international political affairs. We must be aware, of course, of the reservations which must be made to such a statement. We have all witnessed the difficulties of great American Presidents precisely with respect to international affairs, owing to the rights and prerogatives of the United States Senate. Nevertheless, the White House is still an important forum for our political activities. But precisely because it is so definite a point to which to address our efforts, it is the more difficult to determine a policy in regard to it. We can work systematically with respect to the press and public opinion, but to influence the Presidency of the United States is a task depending upon occasions and opportunities. I am far from believing that we have done everything that we should or could have done even with our limited resources to place our case before the White House. But we have attempted something; and we have learned of doubts entertained in high circles about the practicability of our project, and with regard to the size and potential capacity of Palestine to contribute toward a solution of the Jewish problem. There is also the problem concerning America's relations with the peoples of the Middle East,

who are using every possible means to oppose us. However, there are also good reasons to assume that America can bring to bear a favorable influence for us.

Our prospects of help from America will be increased to the extent that our support in England grows stronger—and not *vice versa*. America has just entered the Middle East, chiefly through its interest in oil. This fact, in addition to the close relations with England on broad international problems, creates bonds of solidarity and mutual consideration, not all of whose consequences are favorable to us. There are, nonetheless, powerful factors which work in our favor in America. There is the existence of a Jewish community of five million. The United States, moreover, is a democratic country, in which Jews are free to express their views, to think as they please, to organize themselves, and to exert their influence upon public opinion. Another favorable factor is the rapid growth of a realization of America's responsibility for peaceful conditions in the postwar world. This is creating a more favorable climate for an understanding of the Jewish problem and the acceptance of constructive solutions.

Another fact which has aided us greatly in America is the constructive, progressive character of our work in Palestine. During the war the Jews in Palestine have come into contact with people of many countries, to a greater extent than had previously been the case. Not all the Americans who came, and saw Palestine and the Middle East, returned friends of Zionism. But I do not know of a single American who came to Palestine, in whatever capacity, who was not deeply impressed by what we have already accomplished and by our ability to multiply these achievements still further. This creates a special kind of a bond between us and the citizens of that great power, America, who have always had a special appreciation of construction, development, economic potentialities and needs. American public opinion will not easily agree, if the matter is placed before it, to have a creative enterprise arrested in its development.

We thus have a broad field for our activity; but it is highly doubtful whether the most intensive campaign can bring the United States to take decisive measures unless supported by other Powers, or at least unopposed by them.

### IV

The question of our relations with the Soviet Union is unique. It is an altogether new problem for Zionist politics, raised, strangely enough, by the meagre opportunity which we have lately been granted for reaching that great Power. As long as there was no contact, which was the case for a sufficiently long time, there was no problem. Attempts to enter into relations and our first contact



began a considerable time before the war, but, as a result of the war, something changed which made possible much more frequent and tangible contacts. But two things are lacking with regard to Soviet Russia which, in relation to Great Britain and the United States, have always seemed so natural that we paid no attention to them and did not appreciate their value: first of all, the right of entry; and secondly, the existence of a free Jewry. Did it ever occur to anyone to consider it important that British Jewry is permitted to maintain a Zionist Organization and meet in convention? Has anyone ever appreciated the importance of the fact that American Jewry has similar rights? Have we ever understood the value of being granted visas and space in airplanes during a war, even though it was clearly understood that these were granted to persons who intended to combat the current policy of the government which extended them?

We have not these facilities with respect to Russia, and it is not in our power to see that they are granted. There is a deep stirring of feeling for Jewish concerns among Russian Jews. This is attested by voices that have been heard from the Soviet Union at a number of Jewish conferences. But even though these conferences would never have been held if it were not for the revival of Jewish conscience, they are not the result of independent initiative nor do they express the free wishes of Jews. It is inestimably important that we have received the evidence that such a revival has taken place among the Jews there. It would have been very strange if this were not the case, but it is still very important to have received the evidence. And yet, we still lack the support of a free and organized Jewry which we have in other countries, and it will not be easy to obtain it.

Our contacts with Russia at this time are restricted to a few fleeting, accidental meetings, and I am not aware of a single real opportunity that we have neglected. But we must beware of two things: On one there is complete agreement not only in our labor circles but in the whole Zionist movement. In our effort to establish better relations with the Soviet Union, we must do away with any feeling that we may have because of the past. Wherever we appear, we must needs appear as loyal Zionists. But it is unthinkable that anyone should allow grievances of the past to act in the slightest degree as an inner block, impeding our unceasing effort in this quarter. The second thing we must beware is to despair of breaking through the obstacles which the Soviet Union has set up around itself. There are, too, encouraging signs. There have been conversations, at least one of which came not through our seeking, but at the initiative of the Soviets. To be sure, it was easy for this initiative to be taken, for it did not require traveling long distances. In fact, it was so natural as to be practi-

cally inevitable; and still it was important. The content of this conversation was also marked by a certain initiative on the part of the other party; there was an expression of interest going beyond mere curiosity and apparently leading towards a definite purpose, or at least, implying the assumption that it was necessary to reach some political conclusion with regard to the Jewish cause. It seems to me that this detail alone is enough to banish despair, but we must still be fully aware of the actual situation.

## V

Reality brings us back to Great Britain as the pivot of our political efforts at this time. In a conversation which I had on one of my visits to London with someone in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he said: "What has happened to the Jews in Europe has forced us, willy-nilly, toward Palestine." I replied: "What we see about us, if we are clear-sighted, forces us back to Great Britain."

It is not a question of loyalty or moral obligation or of preserving a doctrine once established. We alone determine our course. But we must determine it through a clear-sighted view of things as they are and not as we might like them to be. We must guard jealously our free and recognized power of political representation and independent approach to any power which we think has some relation to our cause. Just as we go directly to Great Britain, so we must go to the United States directly, and to Soviet Russia directly, and to the Arab world directly. If we lose this freedom, our campaign with respect to Great Britain loses its value and purpose.

This does not mean that all the Powers are of equal significance at all stages. They are not equal, whether in their influence, their power of decision, or their control over our fate.

We are now being falsely represented—and I came across this charge frequently on a visit to Egypt—of being foes of England. There are those who defame us intentionally, and others who have been sincerely impressed with this false idea. We, too, sometimes fall into the error of indiscriminating judgments and hasty generalizations about others, so we should not wonder that others do the same about us.

We are not anti-British. We shall never forget the great days of the Balfour Declaration; nor the first precursors of Zionism who arose among the British people long before the Balfour Declaration. We shall certainly not forget figures like Wedgwood, Mrs. Dugdale, Sir Wyndham Deedes, General Wingate, our comrade Middleton, Duff Cooper, and many, many others.

We cannot permit ourselves to forget that we are engaged in a political struggle and that such a struggle is different in kind from a military campaign. In a battle all relations with the enemy are broken, except at the point of a gun. The objective

of a military campaign is to vanquish the opponent, and this is the purpose of all its tactics. It is not the purpose of a political campaign. In such a campaign not only have we no interest in breaking relations, but on the contrary we are interested in more and closer relations in so far as this is at all possible in the light of our strength and in consideration of our honor. As long as we are engaged in this political effort, we shall not neglect any opportunity of attacking in the forum of public opinion, the policy officially accepted, or of leading the government to question their own policy and particularly their willingness and ability to follow it to its logical end.

If this is our situation—and it is not such a sad situation; one could conceive of worse—then we must follow a complicated path. Our policy cannot be a simple one. We must do everything possible not to appear to be what we are not—foes of England. There are complications of two sorts in such an attitude. Under no circumstances can we give up essential positions or avoid vital controversies for

the sake of making "the right impression." But this implies self-restraint, it implies constant exercise of judgment. We must not rely upon impulses, but upon political judgment. In the light of such judgment, opposition must be firm and uncompromising on certain matters; but it should also counsel us to avoid reckless words and acts. I do not say that we have sinned much in this respect, yet I am not sure that such judgment has been constantly exercised by all of us.

In politics, not good intentions but the result and the impression are decisive. Everything spoken or written by one of us should take this into account,—of course not as the sole consideration. What we say and write should first of all express the truth of our convictions; but the form of expression must always be guided by good judgment so long as we are engaged in a political campaign. Even after we shall have achieved great things, we will have much to do in this part of the world with Great Britain, and we will still need good and mature judgment.