

DEMOCRACY AND THE JEWISH FUTURE

Mr. Shertok Addresses Press Meeting in Tel Aviv

The triumph of democratic efficiency in England, the growing awareness of world issues in America and the attitude of public opinion in both these countries to Jewish needs and Palestine, were described by Mr. M. Shertok, Head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, at a press meeting in Tel Aviv.

Democracy alive and fighting—that is what one sees today in England and America. The democratic spirit has emerged from its former torpor and shaken off its inferiority complex. It governs the internal life of the peoples and animates their war effort against the foe.

The war-time organization of life in England—a country, which has from the beginning, of the war been in a virtual state of siege—is a triumph of democratic efficiency. The import of food supplies and their equal distribution to all—the effective checking of the rise in the cost-of-living, the elimination of extremes of luxury and poverty, the ensuring of a fair wage to labour, the State care for children, and the just distribution of taxation—in these respects England seems to have beaten all records and she has succeeded in doing so not by sacrificing, but by applying the ways of democracy.

The present regime is based upon the readily accepted discipline of the people and is carried through with the assistance of a host of voluntary organizations, Mr. Shertok continued. It is subjected to continuous and open criticism by the public and press. Public alertness in regard to the problems of war policy, the political set-up of the post-war world and the social future of England is steadily rising.

America is progressing in the same direction and striving for the same achievements. There, too, public interest in political and social problems is on the increase, and various politically minded circles are engaged in the intensive study of world issues.

The strength and confidence shown by the western democracies in the present struggle, revealed so magnificently also by the Soviet Union, still further

doubling its creative capacity and carrying through a work of reconstruction which seems difficult of achievement, under normal conditions.

Both conceptions are now current in England with regard to the post-war organization of social and economic life. America is already pondering the vast problem of reintegrating into productive life the many millions who will be found to be uprooted by the war. Ideas of development and of a creative economic policy find wide currency. One of the results of this process is that public opinion is becoming more receptive to the idea of large-scale work of reconstruction in Palestine and is showing faith in the constructive potentialities of Zionism.

Enhanced political alertness in the democratic countries and the sombre impression made on the public mind by the Jewish catastrophe in Europe both tend to revive interest in the Jewish problem and the future of Palestine. There is marked heart-searching with regard to the established policy, a process which is due also to causes other than those indicated. Doubts whether the policy is inherently workable are on the increase. Consciously or unconsciously many are driven by the impact of facts towards the only radical solution of the Jewish problem.

Certificates for Children

From this standpoint the British Government's decision to admit to Palestine 30,000 Jewish children from enemy countries was of far-reaching significance. The decision came in response to insistent requests for a practical programme for saving Jews. Those who pressed for such action did not insist on any particular country as a haven of refuge. They mentioned Palestine, but it was clear that their main interest at the moment was the rescue of Jews and not their settlement in Palestine. But the meaning of the official statement announcing the action taken was that as far as the British Government was concerned, there was only one country which could be counted upon for Jewish refugees. This was the positive aspect of the decision.

But it also had a negative side. The permits did not represent a special or additional contribution to the alleviation of the disaster. They were part of the old framework by which their number was determined. Why 30,000? The number was not fixed by reference either to the means of