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I BELIEVE  
(PART FROM SPEECH  
AT ZIONIST CONGRES 17)



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# I BELIEVE . . .

*Revisionism's testament of faith as logical and as inspiring to-day as when it was first expounded by Jabotinsky at the Historic Zionist Congress of 1931.* Basel July

I COME to the question of the aim of Zionism. It is generally expressed in three different terms: a homestead guaranteed by public law (oeffentlichrechtlich gesicherte Heimstaette, as in the Basle programme)—National Home—Jewish State. Let us, therefore, examine each of those expressions.

It is clear that the expression "a homestead guaranteed by public law" is not clear. - This term has no legal standing, and therefore admits of various interpretations. This expression had been adopted for the very reason that it was nebulous and could be expected not to irritate the Sultan of Turkey. The expression "National Home" is also not clear. We see this from the many arguments about its precise significance. It, too, has no legal tradition. The expression "State" has a varied meaning in political usage. It is never quite clear whether this word designates complete independence or not. France is a State within the meaning of complete independence. But Illinois or Kentucky are States, too, and yet merely parts of a State. As to the idea of majority the word State does not give a reply either. South Africa, for example, is the State of the Boers and the British, and yet these do not form the majority of the population.

The word State is clearer than the two other terms, but it is our duty to clarify it even more, and to find out which characteristics form for us the "conditio sine qua non" of Zionism. We find that the essence of the term "Jewish State" is contained in the following two factors:

(1) An ethnic majority of the Jewish element in the population of the land; and (2) self-government. This second factor is rather elastic. If we had to-day a Jewish country with a preponderantly Jewish population, but occupied by another Power, we would certainly combat this Power, but Zionism would not exist; for the Jews of that country would be in the same position as many normal nations already living in their own country.

It is conceivable that in future sovereignty—even that of an independent State—will be defined still more narrowly than to-day. After all, a certain institution in Geneva has been created to restrict the sovereignty of States and to give the *Comitas Gentium* a certain possibility to interfere even in the domestic affairs of sovereign States.

THIS factor of self-government, of sovereignty, is an elastic one. When Palestine will be Jewish, Palestine will govern itself; but we do not know whether it will stand alone or be a member of a larger conglomeration of States, perhaps something like the British idea of a "British League of Nations." But one factor is not elastic. It exists or it does not, and that is numerical majority.

The country becomes a Jewish country the moment it has a Jewish majority. I know that there are many among us who believe that you can develop and permanently safeguard a nationality without even a majority if you have created economic and cultural values in that country. They point at our colonies, our Tel-Aviv, our Hebrew language, our schools, and other values, and say that those defend themselves, that they would grow for ever and a majority is not necessary. The world would be beautiful if it were like that; but it is not.

There are, and have been, peoples larger and stronger than we who in various countries created vast cultural values but no majority. There were the Greeks. For four thousand years they were the only bearers of culture around the Eastern coast of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Everything cultured was Greek, even the peasants and workers were Greek. The name of every town was Greek. Greek workers were to be seen in every factory, in every port. Then, five hundred years ago, there came another nation, without culture, without factories, and created a majority and reduced the Greek minority to a depressed class, and finally in 1923 deported all Greeks from the country. In the world of to-day it is unfortunately not enough to create cultural values. They retain their permanency only where the people which creates that culture remains a majority in the country.

A National Home is a country in which the people whose National Home it is forms the majority. This is not the ultimate aim of Zionism. One million Jews would suffice to create a majority in Palestine. But this is not the limit of our hopes: we want a Home for all the suffering Jews, and nobody can predict how many Jews there will be to suffer during the next few generations. But the immediate aim of practical Zionist work must be the creation of a majority.

Nobody here, I think, will doubt that those who demand a Jewish State visualise it as a State of complete equality of rights. We who have observed developments in Austria have never shared that confusion of ideas so prevalent in England or France according to which nationality is connected with a passport, with being the subject of a certain State. Our

conception of the equality of nationalities was fixed 25 years ago at Helsingfors. But even there where there is the most complete equality of nationalities, where two honest and civilised peoples live together in full equality, even there we must admit that the majority impresses its national character upon the State. The Swedish minority in Finland does not complain of any discrimination, equality is established, the culture of the country is still Swedish in part, but the country is Finland because the Finns form the majority. That is a state of things which we consider normal and desirable.

It grieves me, Ladies and Gentlemen, that at a Zionist Congress I have to deal with the question—as though it were a question!—whether this aim, to be a majority in Palestine, is really consonant with Jewish aspirations. There are some who have denied it, and I shall, therefore, have to "prove" a truism.

IT is no use denying that Herzl advocated a Jewish State. What kind of reasoning is being used? Herzl, it is said, had written his book "Der Judenstaat." But why? Because he did not think of Palestine. Subsequently he discovered Palestine, and fell in love with it to the extent of rejecting the idea of a Jewish State for love of Palestine.

Let me suggest a different interpretation of Herzl's mood. He wrote the "Judenstaat" because he was convinced that only for Palestine could he mobilise the necessary enthusiasm of the Jewish people, and then he said "thus we will create the Jewish State in Palestine." That is why Herzl later proclaimed his "Charter." Do you know what Charter means? Charter is something much more radical than the conception I have just outlined. Our conception is first a majority and afterwards, of course, parliamentary institutions determined by that majority. A Charter for a "Society of Jews" aims at a state of things where a Jewish administration would govern the country before the Jews have become a majority. It is, as it were, a tool, a sort of Mandatory for colonisation.

The Basle Programme does not contain the words "Jewish State." But it was in 1897, when the Sultan reigned in Turkey. A programme in those days could be expressed only in the way we had to do it in ancient Russia. If we had to disguise our political programmes it would not have been right to cling to the literal interpretation of those programmes and to tell us "you did not write down the words Equal Rights"—I did not do it to avoid being imprisoned—and therefore you do not want equal rights! And if Dr. Max Nordau, in 1916, somewhat camouflaged his introduction to an English pamphlet—well, it was in 1916, at the height of Young Turkish fanaticism, and he was writing with due consideration for tens of thousands of Jews actually in Turkey. This caution must not be abused, and his words must not be quoted as representing his intentions. Let us rather remember what Max Nordau said in 1920 at the London Conference, and how he stormed because they had omitted to put the words Jewish State into the Balfour Declaration.

During the years when the wording of the Mandate was being drafted Jewish intentions were completely obvious. The American Jewish Congress submitted its formula to the Peace Conference stating clearly: the aim of Zionism and the British Mandate will be that of facilitating the creation of a Jewish majority and, when this majority is established, self-government. Self-government—somewhat more than administrative autonomy. Sir Herbert Samuel said in 1919, two years after the Balfour Declaration, formulating his conception of the aim of Zionism and the Mandate, that "within the shortest possible period the country must become a purely self-governing Commonwealth under the auspices of a settled Jewish majority."

Achad Haam has been quoted here as an interpreter of political Zionism, but even he has protested against the allegation that his conception of a spiritual centre was a ghetto. In 1926, three months before his death, I had a chat with him in the presence of his secretary, Mr. Pogrobinsky. Achad Haam said to me: "I never saw it like that." And he showed me in black and white in his article, "Three Steps," what he understood by our spiritual centre: "a country in which we shall be the majority."

Let us not forget the most important part of the Balfour Declaration, its preamble. It contains an expression which has successfully passed through the censorship of about 25 sober statesmen and was left in: the reconstitution of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Every Englishman and every Jew, Zionist or not, knows what it means when a document like this speaks of reconstitution. This cannot mean something new; you can only reconstitute something that has existed before; and the nature of the Jewish National Home that once existed in Palestine is well-known to any child, Jewish or

English. The statesmen who drafted the Mandate did not understand anything else by "Jewish National Home."

What I am saying here is not an alteration but an interpretation of the Mandate. Our partners interpret the Mandate; it is therefore our duty also to say how we interpret the Mandate and the expression "National Home."

I SHALL be asked why we should proclaim our interpretation aloud. It must be stated because it is the only legal basis for our demand for large-scale immigration. My friends and my opponents are in vain looking for a place in the Mandate which specifically mentions our right to large-scale and rapid immigration. Our opponents are making use of this. The only legal basis of our right to demand large-scale immigration is that the expression "National Home" means Jewish majority. I would advise you not to renounce that basis, for the enemies of Zionism assert that a minority could also create a National Home and that a small immigration would suffice for it. If you want a legal basis for large-scale immigration you must insist on this interpretation.

The second reason is that the elan of the Zionist Movement has decreased. This is apparent in all countries. There is little accretion for pure Zionism: Zionism has lost its spell over the Jewish soul. There are parties who have filled this gap with other things, things which may be good but are not Zionism. Purely Zionist enthusiasm is in danger of disappearing, and the hour demands that we proclaim that the aim of Zionism is in truth the solution of the Jewish problem and the creation of that which is named the Jewish State.

And another thing: truth has a purifying effect. Are we not all tired, are we not all nauseated by this eternal evasion? Cleansing the atmosphere has become a political necessity, and this is done by speaking the truth. Why should we allow the word Jewish State to be called extremism? The Albanians have their State; the Bulgarians their State; a State is, after all, the normal condition of a people. If the Jewish State were in existence to-day nobody would say that it is abnormal. And if we want to normalise our position who dare call it extremism—and are we ourselves expected to say it?

I ask Congress to establish emphatic clarity in the question of the Jewish State. Why should we resolve things here which require commentaries afterwards? There is only one word, clear and simple, which must appear in our resolution: majority.

But there is another question, that of the frontiers of the territory to be colonised. My formula may be subjected to alteration, instead of "on both sides of the Jordan," you may say, "the historic frontiers at the time of King David," or "at the time of the twelve tribes," or "colonisation in the whole of the mandated territory"—but the formula must deal with both sides of a certain river. Do not, however, modify another part of this formula, but simply say: majority. The resolution will be:

"THE AIM OF ZIONISM, EXPRESSED IN THE TERMS 'JEWISH STATE,' 'NATIONAL HOME,' OR 'A HOME-STEAD GUARANTEED BY PUBLIC LAW,' IS THE CREATION OF A JEWISH MAJORITY IN PALESTINE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE JORDAN."

IN conclusion I must pronounce a brief confession of faith, an optimistic confession of faith. We all are deeply shocked by England's attitude. . . . None of us is satisfied. None of us will say that England plays the game. But we are confronted with the main question: How could it come to this? In politics, too, the parallelogram of forces determines the result.

One of the components in our policy is England, England's conscience, England's interest. But our policy is another component force, and its direction determines the direction of the resultant. And why are results what they are to-day? Either it is a fatality, it would have come to this even with better methods and under better leadership, and nothing could help us because fate and the objective factors of the world wanted it so—or else our own errors have been responsible.

Of these two conceptions one is deeply pessimistic: if it were true that the best of methods would not avail, then hope is lost. But if we can assert that even under present circumstances better methods would have produced a better result, then there is some hope left. The real optimists are those of us who say: our policy is responsible for it. It has convinced the British people in innumerable speeches that the political situation is satisfactory. Now we want to embark on a new and final experiment, but with different methods. I think I am entitled to say, perhaps, on behalf of the whole of Congress that the Jewish attitude in these questions is invincibly optimistic.

Before the Jew admits that the whole world is against us, that one of the greatest among the civilised nations is devoid of honesty, that even the Lord has averted His eyes from us—before we say that it would be more honest to say "Ashamti bagad'ti" (I have sinned), and to change our methods and our system. . . . And as naively as those who foregathered in Basle many years ago when I was still a boy, as naively I believe in the honesty of the world and the power of a just cause; I believe that great problems are decided by the powerful influence of moral pressure, and that the Jewish people is a tremendous factor of moral pressure. Accept it or not—it is my, and our, Confession of Faith: "ani maamin" I believe!

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