

The credo of an American Zionist



This seminal article appeared in the Atlantic Monthly of February 1945. It set the tone for post World War II Jewish support for Zionism. Though the full impact of the massacre of European Jewry (later called the Holocaust) was not evident in this article, it was still evident that US Jews had come to support Zionism based on the achievements of the Jewish community in Palestine and based on the tragic vindication of Zionist ideology demonstrated by the Nazi persecution of European Jews. Many of Steinberg's points remain as pertinent today as they were in 1945. For example:

ANTI-ZIONISTS, last of all, exhibit a distaste for certain words. It was Thomas Hobbes who, anticipating semantics, pointed out that words are counters, not coins; that the wise man looks through them to reality. This counsel many anti-Zionists seem to have neglected. They are especially disturbed by the two nouns *nationalism* and *commonwealth*, and by the adjective *political*. And yet these terms on examination are not at all upsetting.

Jewish nationalism means no more than recognition of the peoplehood of Israel, and of the propriety of that people's being a religio-cultural group in America, a nationality in Eastern Europe, and in Palestine an actualized nation.

Nor is the word *political* more horrendous, even when it precedes *Zionism*. For what does it signify? It refers either to methods for realizing the Zionist objective or to the objective itself. If to the former, it denotes the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and their

transactions with the Mandatory Power and others on immigration into Palestine and related problems. If this be *political* Zionism, what can be wrong with it? Anyone wishing Jews to be free to enter Palestine knows that governments must be dealt with and understandings negotiated. Or are there some so naive as to approve of results but not of the only means for attaining them?

Steinberg may be responsible for originating a popular error about Zionism. He wrote:

If so, let it be noted first that when organized Zionism supplanted its traditional slogan, a "Jewish State," with the formula, a "Jewish Commonwealth," it made its program pliable, adaptable to future circumstance. *State* is a very precise concept with clear connotations of unrestricted political Sovereignty. A *commonwealth*, on the other hand, can be a state or a dominion or a locally autonomous unit within a federation. The Zionist proposal then is that Jews, when conditions are ripe, be accorded some as yet unspecified type of self-determination. And can any request be more reasonable? If Jewish immigration into Palestine continues, as it must, the Jews some day will constitute the preponderant element in the population. Shall they, just because they are Jews, be forever denied the fact or hope of autonomy?

In fact, Steinberg was about 180 degrees out of phase with the evolution of political goals of Zionism. Zionism did not ever previous to 1942 have a "traditional slogan" of a "Jewish State." Though Theodor Herzl wrote "The Jewish State" as a novel to popularize Zionism, organized Zionism was first founded at the Basle Congress in 1897. The congress resolved:

Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.

Contrary to what Steinberg wrote, the need for an independent state emerged only in World War II, when it was clear that the British Mandate would not safeguard the rights of Jews in Palestine or allow Palestine to become a national home for the Jews.

The last paragraph of the article expresses an opinion that was to

become an integral part of the image of Israel maintained for many years, at least until 1967, by Americans, and particularly by North American Jews:

I see Jewries at ease and secure in the various lands of their residence, devoted citizens of these lands, and at the same time the bearers and the transmitters of a living Hebraism, significant to them and to the world. And I see in Palestine a Jewish Commonwealth where the homeless Jews of the world shall have found rest; where the Jewish spirit shall have been reborn; whence shall flow to the Jewries of the Dispersion inspiration and the stuffs on which it feeds.

This well-meaning prose launched or perpetuated a very harmful idea. Israeli Jews would be inferior to and dependent upon American Jews, a kind of big "Yeshivah" (religious seminary) that would generate "Jewish culture" in return for philanthropy. The Jewish state would be for the unfortunates, not for American Jews. Israel would be a big refugee shelter, where the unfortunate, penniless and defenseless refugees might engage in cultural pursuits, supported by their affluent and secure brethren abroad. It was the expression, as a sincere philosophy, of a joking definition of a "Zionist" once given by Shmaryahu Levin, "A Zionist is a Jew who gives money to another Jew, to send a third Jew to Palestine. The "poor relation" model of Israel influenced not only US Jews, but US foreign policy. Israel was not a normal country or an ally or an asset to the USA. In the best case, Israel was viewed as a sop to to the conscience of the world, a refuge for Holocaust victims and other unfortunates born by the US and the world to assuage their guilt. Indeed, newsreels of Israel shown in the USA in the early years abounded in photos of penniless and disheveled immigrants descending from the gangplanks of rickety ships, bearing all their belonging in sacks.

In the worst case, Israel came to be viewed as a necessary evil imposed by the sinister and "all powerful" Jewish lobby (or Zionist lobby) whose "pernicious influence" had blackmailed US politicians into acting against the best interests of the United States.

Note

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by Rabbi Milton Steinberg

1

A generation ago the native-born, homebred American Zionist was a *rara avis* indeed. Some few of the species were about, men of insight and courage -- Louis D. Brandeis, for example. But most American Jews were altogether indifferent to the Zionist program. And as for the rabbinate, only the Reform branch was articulate at the time, and that was anti-Zionist almost to the last man.

Now, three decades later, there are still many Jewish anti-Zionists, among them men and women of intelligence and sincerity. That they have a case can be seen from Rabbi Morris Lazon's thoughtful article in the November *Atlantic*. Yet American Jewry as a whole no longer accepts that case. It has turned overwhelmingly Zionist.

When ninety rabbis recently issued an anti-Zionist pronouncement, almost nine hundred rabbis joined in repudiating it. Witness the fact that the Central Conference of American Rabbis -- representative of the Reform ministry and once the fountainhead of anti-Zionism --

has of late consistently voted pro-Zionist by approximately two to one. Let the American Jewish Conference speak -- an assembly of five hundred delegates, appointed one-quarter by all important national Jewish organizations, and elected three-quarters by popular vote. That body went on record, with only *four* dissenting ballots in favor of a Jewish homeland and commonwealth in Palestine. And whereas a generation ago anti-Zionists were anti-Zionists without qualification, they tend these days to be anti-Zionist but "pro-Palestinian."

What has happened to the Jews of America in all their varieties and conditions? Have they, as has been suggested, yielded to counsels of desperation? Have they succumbed to the wild chauvinism now sweeping mankind? It would be a most unusual madness that could unhinge so many Jews of deep religious convictions and broad human perspectives. Besides, Jewish chauvinism could scarcely fire non-Jews into incandescence -- non-Jews like Jan Smuts, Reinhold Niebuhr, Wendell Willkie, Dorothy Thompson, Henry Wallace, and Walter Clay Lowdermilk.

No, the great transformation in the attitude toward Zionism is neither aberration nor despair. It reflects simply the cogency and practicality of the Zionist idea. What is that idea? Put tersely and in the idiom of official documents, it is that a politically secured, legally recognized Jewish homeland be established in Palestine, in which Jews who so elect may settle as of right; and that this homeland become ultimately a Jewish commonwealth. As for the practicality and cogency of the idea, let me present it as it appears to a typical American Zionist -- myself.

Perhaps I ought begin by clearing the ground of a stubborn misconception. It is not true that I am a Zionist because I am not content to be an American, or because I doubt America's future. This land, I am deeply convinced, is on its way to new horizons of freedom and justice. In other words, it is not the fact that, pessimistic about the Jewish prospect in America, I have one eye cocked on Palestine -- just in case. And I am no less sanguine about the future of democracy elsewhere. I make this point so explicitly because it has been bruited about by some Jews that to be a Zionist is to be compromised in Americanism and deficient in democratic

faith. On behalf of hundreds of thousands of American Jews who, like myself, are Zionists, I wish to affirm that these grave allegations represent, at the best, ignorance and, at the worst, slander.

2

IN part I am a Zionist because of the record of Zionist accomplishment. Inspired by the Zionist ideal, supported by Zionist funds, operating under conditions made possible by Zionist political effort, thousands of Jews migrated from Europe to Palestine and there set about incarnating an ancient dream. It was from many points of view a grotesque enterprise to which they committed their lives. They were told that the whole business was superfluous -- Jews in the West being already free and in Eastern Europe on their way to emancipation; that an emigrant from the Old World had the whole globe open to him; that Palestine was an arid, backward country where Jews could not survive, let alone be creative; and that in any case it could absorb no more than a handful of settlers. Discouraged from all sides, grappling with heartbreaking difficulties, these Jews accomplished the impossible.

What an achievement is theirs! In one generation they built a community of almost 600,000 persons, free and self-reliant. Out of ghetto alleys they took Jews who had lost all rapport with soil and workshop, and made them into farmers, mechanics, sailors, and fishermen. They caused the desert to blossom and sand dunes to hum with the myriad sounds of cities. They evoked a great flowering of Hebraic culture -- the greatest perhaps in two millennia. They experimented boldly and idealistically in new forms of social living, in cooperatives, collectives, and communes. They introduced modernity and democracy into the Near East, awakening it from its immemorial medievalism.

When liberty stood with its back to the wall, they rallied to its defense. About 35,000 of them enlisted in the British military forces -- the equivalent proportionately of an American volunteer army of seven millions. From their farms they helped to feed Allied armies; in their upstart factories they forged or repaired military materiel. And meantime they gave refuge in ten years to 280,000 of their brethren, who otherwise would now be dead to the last soul.

This is a superb record, achieved, be it remembered, by Zionists, not by anti-Zionists, not by non-Zionists, not even by pussyfooting "pro-Palestinians." Of and by itself it constitutes a compelling Zionist case. And yet I cannot claim it as the ground of my conviction. For, truth to tell, I was of my present persuasion before that record was achieved. Which brings me to the core of my case.

I am a Zionist in the first place because I am a religious Jew. From my Judaism I have derived a God faith, an ethical code, personal and social, a pattern of observances, but also, interwoven with these, a love for Palestine and the yearning that at least a part of the House of Israel be restored to its soil. That aspiration is written deep in the Bible. It is inscribed boldly in the whole rabbinic tradition, ancient and medieval. And it pervades Jewish ritual. My religious heritage, then, makes me a Zionist.

Does this sound unrealistic? We shall soon see that it is not without common sense. But since at the moment I am in peril of being hanged as a sheep, let me be bold enough to perish as a wolf. Let me confess to an even wilder vision, to the historic confidence of the Jewish religion that something is destined to come out of the reassociation of Israel with Palestine. Twice this people struck foot on its ancestral soil and wonderful events occurred. The first time, prophetism came into being; the second, Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity, and the foreshadowing of Islam. I should be less than candid if I did not admit to a high expectation concerning the third encounter -- an expectation of new instruction coming out of Zion, of some fresh word of God sounding in Jerusalem.

But my thinking on Zionism is not altogether so high-flown. I advocate Zionism as the most immediate and practicable answer to a vast, terrible and very tangible need. Long ago, in the halcyon days of the nineteenth century, Herzl and his associates already perceived the incipient pressure of political reaction, economic constriction, and psychic mass embitterment. They foretold that brute powers might bring down in ruins the centuries-old edifices of European Jewry. They pleaded that, against the evil hour, the Jews should prepare a homeland of their own.

And has not the Old World House of Israel been trampled into

blood-drenched splinters? And in the grim devastation, does not Jewish Palestine shine as a joy-bringing, hope-dispensing beacon? What is more, the need of a haven of refuge will in the future be more, not less, acute.

No Jew, no Zionist, no person of good will and democratic persuasion, can tolerate the thought of any Jew's being denied residence and equality status in the land of his birth or citizenship. For this objective, among others, the present great war is being waged. The continued abuse of Jews in Europe would mock our professions and sacrifices alike. As I have already intimated, I have warm hopes for the future peace and security of Jews who elect to remain in the Old World. For a time, until mankind returns to sanity and the democratic spirit reroots itself, the United Nations may have to guarantee the rights of all minorities. But in the not too distant future, I expect, every European, regardless of creed or origin, will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make him afraid. And yet there will be thousands of Jewish survivors for whom a return to former scenes will be impossible. First, anti-Semitism will not immediately vanish from Central and Eastern Europe. Again, there are those whose last roots have been severed. No person, synagogue, household, or occupation will remain to draw them back. And for still others the very word *home* will be surcharged with unbearably painful recollections. Those who want to go elsewhere must have the full right.

And where, one asks, are they to turn? In the earliest days of Hitlerism, the Evian Conference demonstrated that no government wanted homeless Jews. Now, what with World War II, with demobilization, reconversion, and the dread of mass unemployment, immigration barriers almost certainly will go up, not down. As for undeveloped areas, the earth has been combed for possible havens for Jews. The result -- next to nothing. Each suggested territory, it turned out, was either already overpopulated, or unsuited for colonization by Europeans, or closed by political considerations. And all suffered from a common disadvantage -- years would be required to prepare them for mass colonization. Meantime, what are the homeless Jews of the world to do with themselves?

I would not be misunderstood. In proposing Palestine as the focus of Jewish migration I do not debar other sites. The position of European Jews is so tragic that they can no doubt use many centers of resettlement. I do mean that we must not lose the bird in the hand for any in the bush. Palestine is assigned by international covenant to large-scale Jewish settlement. It is ready now, without the spadework necessary elsewhere. Jews *want* to go there -- no trivial consideration. Witness how before the war they clamored for visas; witness further the preferences expressed by refugees in Italy.

The country, small though it is, is large enough. It now has a population of about a million and three quarters. How many more can it accommodate? The first century of our era, according to historians like Baron and Schurer, it contained anywhere from 2,500,000 to 4,000,000 human beings, and that without modern agriculture and industry. In our one generation it has absorbed a half-million Jews, and the saturation point is not even remotely in sight.

What is the maximum? Estimates vary. A group of Jewish authorities hold: "Palestine should be capable of absorbing another three million inhabitants." But these are Jews speaking; their pleading may be *ex parte*. Consider then the conclusions of Walter Clay Lowdermilk, Chief of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. After a long study, he has decided that the country is capable of receiving four million immigrants beyond its present population. Let us cut his estimate in half. Six years ago, what remains might not have been equal to the needs of European Jews. Today, alas, it will suffice.

3

BUT I am impelled to Zionism by a more personal consideration, by the needs of my own spirit. No tradition can coast along merely on past momentum. Every religion and culture must for its health be constantly regenerated with new elements fashioned after its genius but stamped in the mold of the day. Now, though Judaism is extraordinarily rich in accumulated resources, it too requires infusions of the fresh, novel, and contemporaneous. Yet it is everywhere a minority religion and culture; even its most devoted

adherents expend themselves mainly in the larger civilization. To Judaism they come with the remainder of their time and energy. But people are not normally creative under such circumstances, as the state of Judaism demonstrates. Hence there must be a place where Hebraism will be a first culture, where it can flourish without hindrance, and whence transfusions of new values may emanate.

Nor is this abstruse verbiage. The brilliant renaissance in Palestine, the revival there of Jewish music, art, letters, folkways, the theaters and the Hebrew tongue have invigorated, stimulated, and enriched every Jewry in the world. That too is why I am a Zionist; because, while I would remain a Jew without Jewish Palestine, my Judaism, by virtue of it, is more meaningful to me and my Jewish fellows.

There are other reasons for my Zionism, over which I cannot pause: the contribution it has made to Jewish self-respect at a time when so many forces conspire to break it down; the promise inherent in the social experiments afoot in the Jewish homeland. But tempting as such themes are, I must forgo them to deal with another matter closer to our line of inquiry: How, if all I have said is true, can any Jew be anti-Zionist?

In posing this question I do not have in mind deJudaized Jews, indifferentists, escapists, or psychic rebels against being Jewish. Such negative Jews will all be anti-Zionist. I mean, how can informed professing Jews resist Zionism?

Differing conceptions of the nature of Judaism and the Jewish identity -- here is the continental divide where Zionists and non-Zionists part. To the non-Zionists Judaism is purely a religion, the Jews members of a church. Hence notions of a homeland and commonwealth are altogether inappropriate.

But is this definition valid? Obviously not. For, if it were, no Jew could be irreligious and remain a Jew. And yet there are atheists, agnostics, and skeptics who consider themselves, and are universally considered, Jews. Even some of the leading American anti-Zionists, who are most insistent that Judaism is a communion only, neither profess nor pray, feast not on festivals and fast not on days of penance. A pretty paradox! For how can they be Jews by

virtue of a faith they do not possess?

Incontrovertibly, religion is a motif in Jewish living -- the major motif, I should say. But other elements are involved also. Race, anthropologically speaking, is certainly not one of these. A culture is. Present in the Jewish patrimony are a large literature, secular as well as sacred, music, folklore, art, mores, and institutions. But many a modern Jew acknowledges the culture no more than the faith, and is yet subjectively and objectively a Jew. Something more remains. That plus is a social identity. It consists in the fact that Jews are a historic entity, an organic group sharing memories, interests, and hopes; that they are in sum a people.

The first error of the anti-Zionist is that he misconstrues Judaism. He blunders again for lack of imagination. It escapes him that other Jews live in scenes different from his, and that circumstances alter cases. America is a uni-national and, except for secondary cultures, a uni-cultural land. Judaism here naturally takes the form of a religio-cultural entity. But Poland, Rumania, and the Soviet Union are composed of many peoples, cultures, and nationalities. There Jews also constitute in law and public opinion a *nationality* body.

As for Palestine, there the Jews are a nation in maturation. Being a people as well as a communion, why should Israel not take on various forms with various settings? With these actualities the American anti-Zionist refuses to make peace. He will not allow other Jewries any status but his own. Having misinterpreted Judaism, he compounds his fallacy by generalizing it. Willy nilly, all other Jews must be what he is, exclusively a member of a sect.

But would not Jewish "nationality" status in Eastern Europe, and especially a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, affect the political obligations of American Jews? Would Jews not owe allegiance to the Jewish homeland? Did the establishment of Norway or Eire as a self-governing state modify by a hair's breadth the relation of Irish or Norse Americans to America? The American Jew has only one political duty: to America. To Palestine he will be bound by ties of religion, sentiment, and culture, as other Americans are so often related to their land of origin. But whatever Palestine is or may become, the American Jew remains an American citizen, knowing

no political sovereignty save the American.

The anti-Zionist is troubled further lest Zionism contravene the great universalistic motif of Judaism, its glorious doctrine of the primacy of mankind over individual, clan, and nation, its historic ministry as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Is not all this ado about culture, commonwealth and peoplehood a retreat from the advanced position so long and so nobly maintained? Does not Zionism constrict the wide horizons of the Jewish spirit?

To which my response is that over objectives there is no dispute among us. Where we differ is on method. Anti-Zionists seem to feel that Jewry does best by mankind when it suppresses all distinctiveness except in religion. Zionists hold that Jews can give more to the world by developing their peculiar heritage to the full, provided always the heart is firmly set on the service of all humanity. This position I accept, first because it is sanctioned by the very prophets who conceived universalism. As Scripture testifies, they loved mankind and the world, but Israel and Zion also, loving them for themselves, and as witnesses to God's Kingdom. Besides, I cannot see how either an individual or a group, possessed of talents, benefits anyone by being less itself. To me the indicated course would appear self-cultivation dedicated to the overarching ideal.

But Judaism, religion and culture alike, needs Jewish Palestine for its fulfillment. Wherefore considerations of universalism, far from negating Zionism, endorse it. For only when enriched and stimulated by a Jewish homeland will Jewry be equal to its destiny.

4

ANTI-ZIONISTS, last of all, exhibit a distaste for certain words. It was Thomas Hobbes who, anticipating semantics, pointed out that words are counters, not coins; that the wise man looks through them to reality. This counsel many anti-Zionists seem to have neglected. They are especially disturbed by the two nouns *nationalism* and *commonwealth*, and by the adjective *political*. And yet these terms on examination are not at all upsetting.

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religio-cultural group in America, a nationality in Eastern Europe, and in Palestine an actualized nation.

Nor is the word *political* more horrendous, even when it precedes *Zionism*. For what does it signify? It refers either to methods for realizing the Zionist objective or to the objective itself. If to the former, it denotes the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and their transactions with the Mandatory Power and others on immigration into Palestine and related problems. If this be *political* Zionism, what can be wrong with it? Anyone wishing Jews to be free to enter Palestine knows that governments must be dealt with and understandings negotiated. Or are there some so naive as to approve of results but not of the only means for attaining them?

Or is the *politics* in Zionism against which anti-Zionists protest a matter of ends? Is their objection leveled against the ultimate establishment of a Jewish *commonwealth* in Palestine?

If so, let it be noted first that when organized Zionism supplanted its traditional slogan, a "Jewish State," with the formula, a "Jewish Commonwealth," it made its program pliable, adaptable to future circumstance. *State* is a very precise concept with clear connotations of unrestricted political Sovereignty. A *commonwealth*, on the other hand, can be a state or a dominion or a locally autonomous unit within a federation. The Zionist proposal then is that Jews, when conditions are ripe, be accorded some as yet unspecified type of self-determination. And can any request be more reasonable? If Jewish immigration into Palestine continues, as it must, the Jews some day will constitute the preponderant element in the population. Shall they, just because they are Jews, be forever denied the fact or hope of autonomy?

But why do Zionists press their political goals? Why not simply allow immigration to continue? Because without the commonwealth formula there will be no further immigration! On May 17, 1939, Britain issued the notorious White Paper that first repudiated its obligation to establish a Jewish commonwealth, and then, once that was out of the way, limited all future Jewish immigration to 75,000. That policy, the misbegotten child of Chamberlain appeasement,

was denounced in Parliament by persons as diverse as Josiah Wedgwood, Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Herbert Morrison. Winston Churchill called it bluntly "a breach of faith." It was castigated by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. It has contributed to the death of thousands of Jews. So it has engendered the bitterness that recently breached with acts of terrorism the splendid, long-sustained self-discipline of Palestine Jewry. Still it stands. And if it continues to stand, an intolerable paradox will come into being: Palestine, the land assigned by international agreement for Jewish settlement, will be open to all immigrants except Jews.

On what ground is the White Paper assailed? As inhumane? Only in part. After all, Palestine has done its philanthropic share for the Jews. The real bases for protest are public covenants, notably the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. And these as interpreted by Balfour, Wilson, Lloyd George, and Churchill boil down to a commitment for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. This pledge is the writ by virtue of which the abrogation of the White Paper may rightfully be demanded, the lease whereby homeless Jews claim entrance to the land. It is Jewry's *locus standi* in its crucial cause now hanging in the balance. At all times it must be presented in evidence before the bar of humanity's conscience.

5

ONE question remains: Where does this leave the Arabs of Palestine? Does it not entail the gravest injustice, moral and physical, to them? Arab-Jewish relationships in Palestine are complex, far too tangled for proper presentation here. But let me at least indicate the chapter headings of the Zionist view on the matter.

First, I think we ought look at the record. What has been the effect of Jewish immigration and achievement on Palestinian Arabs? Whereas in near-by Moslem lands populations have remained static, in Palestine Arab numbers have soared from 664,000 in 1918 to over a million at present. This increase has been due in part to the better living conditions, to the modern hygiene, and to the advanced agriculture Jews have introduced. But in addition Arabs by the thousands have been immigrating into Palestine from all

Near Eastern countries. Jewish enterprise has made the land one of promise for them as well as for Jews. Further, the value of Arab industry in Palestine quadrupled between 1922 and 1937, the area of land under cultivation increased by over 50 per cent. Even Arab culture has benefited. Thanks to the taxes paid by Jews, the country has been able to maintain educational facilities such as would otherwise have been impossible.

Nor is there any reality to the notion that Arabs have been driven from the soil. That charge, once noised about widely, is heard no more -- at least not in responsible circles. For when the British government went looking for Arabs made "landless" by Jews, it sought everywhere but found only a corporal's guard. And of these, many had been tenant farmers who had been compensated but had preferred not to invest their reimbursement in farms. But how is this possible? Much of the ground occupied by Jews was not only uncultivated hitherto: it was classed as uncultivable. No one lived where now Tel Aviv stands, and almost no one in the recently drained Huleh Swamps, or in the once malaria-infested valley of Esdraelon. Again, where land under cultivation has been purchased, a portion of it has been given to its former tenants, who, freed from the sharecropper's lot, now get along better than ever.

But if the Arab has not only not been hurt but even helped, why his fierce resistance? In the first place, that opposition is less universal than is supposed. Of what there is, some is the class interest of rich landowners and urban employers of Arab labor whose feudal grandeur is being threatened. Some reflects the natural resentment of any populace over the entrance into its midst of new elements. Some echoes Axis agitation, propaganda, and bribery. Some reflects the weakness of the Mandatory administration. But much of it -- perhaps most -- is straightforward, unexceptionable nationalism. The Palestinian Arabs know that but for the Jews they would some day enjoy autonomy. Now at the best they will have to share political authority with another group; and should Jewish migration continue, they will in the end occupy a minority position. This is a real, in fact the real, grievance.

In sum, two legitimate ideals have come into conflict in Palestine. Two peoples are attached to the land. Both have deep aspirations

concerning it.

Quite clearly, as Reinhold Niebuhr once put it, neither perfect satisfaction nor perfect justice can be rendered to both sides. The best to be hoped for is the greater justice, the minimal wrong.

What are the alternatives? One is the freezing of Jewish Palestine in its present dimensions and, if the former Grand Mufti and King ibn-Saud have their way, even the expulsion of the Jews now in the land. The other is the continuance of Jewish immigration, the achieving of a Jewish majority, the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth. In this commonwealth all Arab rights, religious, cultural, economic, civic and political, whether individual or group, would be guaranteed. Arabs would of course vote and hold offices, conduct their own school system, follow their own culture and faith.

Now, how do these prospects stack up against each other?

As to urgency: On one side the Palestinian Arabs, injured not a whit, are denied only a political aspiration. On the other side are Jews by the millions to whom entrance to Palestine is truly a matter of survival.

In terms of *Realpolitik*: Which is the safer solution, a Jewish minority in an Arab majority, or an Arab minority in Palestine protected by guarantees and backed up by a deep Arab hinterland?

In the broader view: Has not the Arab world as a whole vast territories on which to realize political autonomy? Is not Palestine a mere 5 per cent of that world? Are not the 95 per cent, often without effort on their part, achieving independence? As for Israel, where else can it incarnate fully its peoplehood and culture?

With still wider vision: Jewish Palestine is the outpost in the Near East of modernity and democracy. Will not the prospect of the entire area be brighter if the Jewish settlement continues to grow?

And for the advantage of universal humanity: The most that mankind can expect from the Arab prospectus is the establishment of another Arab state. The Zionist program means the salvaging of

lives, the rebirth of Hebraic culture, the promise a progressive Jewish Palestine for the Levant and the world, and, let it not be forgotten for a moment, the solution of the centuries-old and otherwise insoluble problem of Jewish homelessness.

There is, I repeat, an Arab case. But not in anguish, urgency, or import does it begin to equal the Jewish.

How, in conclusion, do I as an American Jew and Zionist envisage the future of Jews and of Judaism in the emerging world? I see a society in which men are free, politically, economically, culturally, spiritually. I see Jewries at ease and secure in the various lands of their residence, devoted citizens of these lands, and at the same time the bearers and the transmitters of a living Hebraism, significant to them and to the world. And I see in Palestine a Jewish Commonwealth where the homeless Jews of the world shall have found rest; where the Jewish spirit shall have been reborn; whence shall flow to the Jewries of the Dispersion inspiration and the stuffs on which it feeds.

This dream has been spoken to me in almost every syllable of the religious tradition I cherish. It represents a desperate need, physical and spiritual, for world Jewry. It is fraught with infinite promise for Israel and mankind.

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[Labor Zionism - Early History and Critique](#) - Contribution of Labor Zionism to the creation of the Jewish state, and problems of Labor Zionism in a changing reality.

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[Revisionist Zionism - US Library of Congress](#)

[Essential Texts of Zionism](#)

[Jewish Agency Zionism pages](#) - Links to basic information about [Zionism](#) from the Jewish Agency

[Ambassador Herzog explains Zionism in the UN](#)

Advocacy

[Israel Advocacy handbook](#)

[Realistic Religious Zionism - moderate religious Zionist Web site](#)



[ZioNation - Zionism-Israel Web Log](#) [Israel News](#) [Israel: like this, as if](#) [Christian Zionism](#) [Albert Einstein](#) [Bible](#) [Palestine Nakba 1948](#)
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Excerpted from *The credo of an American Zionist*
http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionism_steinberg.htm

[READABILITY — An Arc90 Laboratory Experiment](#)
<http://lab.arc90.com/experiments/readability>