

The history of Zionism and the political structure and problems of modern Israel, presented from a Zionist viewpoint.

What Zionism Wants

by Larry Hochman

ZIONISM, or Jewish nationalism, originated in nineteenth-century Central and Eastern Europe. Out of the great current of revolutionary thought generated by the national uprisings of the 1830's and 40's came the first Zionist theorists. Financed largely by Baron de Rothschild, a group of Russian Jewish students known as BILU began the first Jewish return to Palestine since the Jewish expulsion some 2,000 years earlier.

Theodore Herzl, the first great political Zionist, a prominent Austrian lawyer and journalist, became converted to Zionism under the impetus of the Dreyfus affair. He wrote a pamphlet called "The Jewish State" (1896) maintaining that the Jews constituted a nation and that Jewish national life must be renewed. Less concerned with immediate immigration, he attempted to obtain a political setup which would permit an unhindered immigration to Palestine. To this end Herzl successfully negotiated with many of the most powerful representatives of European governments including the Turkish Sultan, who then controlled Palestine. These agreements allowed Jews to enter Palestine and buy land. Land was purchased through the Jewish National Fund (JNF), an organization of the colonists, from the Turkish Government and from Arab landlords living in Turkey and elsewhere. At no time was land bought upon which Arabs had been living, and no Arabs were directly displaced right up until 1948. One of the conditions for using JNF land (which was leased to the settlers for 99 years) was that no labor be hired to work upon the land. These settlements and those which followed were organized as collectives.

Some thousands of Jewish families had remained in Palestine all through the twenty centuries of the general Jewish dispersion. Spurred on by the anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1870's and 80's, the first wave of Jewish immigrants came to Palestine from Poland and Russia. This brought the Jewish population of Palestine up to about 50,000 by 1897. The second wave, between 1900 and 1914, came also from Eastern Europe—about 40,000 Jews. Whereas

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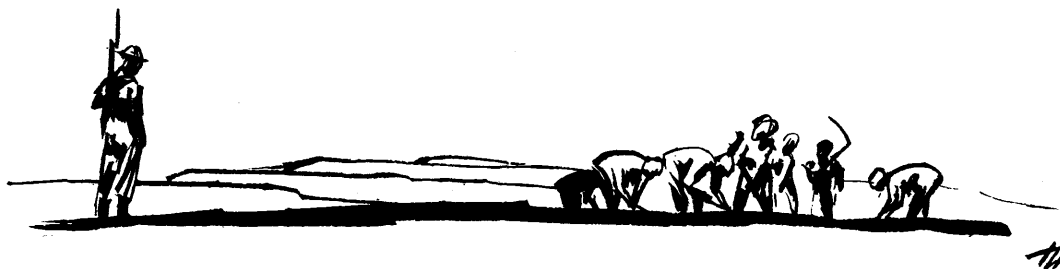
the first group of immigrants was motivated by catastrophe, the second was motivated by conscious political Zionism. From this group come most of the leaders of present-day Israel. The third wave came between the two wars so that by 1939 there were half a million Jews in Palestine.

The ideologists of the second immigration came from the Russian socialist movement. Many of them later participated in the 1917 revolutions. The outstanding leaders were Vladimir Medem, who argued that a socialist national community of Jews should be set up in Russia, and those favoring Palestine: Haym Zhitlovsky, Nachman Syrkin and Ber Borochov. These maintained that the economic, social and cultural differences of the Jews from the majority inhabitants of every country made their life abnormal. Concentration in Palestine would solve this problem and Palestine must, furthermore, be built as a socialist state from the start.

The socialist pioneers wanted to create ties with the Arab majority. Their attempts were fairly fruitful on the level of Arab villages in proximity to Jewish settlements. But this level of contact was insufficient to solve the one overriding problem: the integration of a national movement of modern European background into an underdeveloped Arab world. What the rural settlements could accomplish with considerable success the Arabs and Jews of the cities often could not. Inevitable conflicts arose. After 1917, the fact of British overlordship in Palestine, the question of a future Arab, Jewish or binational state, and the existence of feudal Arab economies in the surrounding regions made a smooth integration impossible.

THE theory of Zionism starts from the premise that the dispersed Jews throughout the world constitute one nation. This is not the place to thrash out this premise. Nevertheless, one incontestable fact stands out: After a dispersion of 2,000 years there are still people in many countries of the globe who call themselves Jews. Why? Other peoples were driven from their lands and no longer exist. Where are the Phoenicians, the Assyrians? Some who regard Jewishness mainly as a religion will contend that a supernatural "Messianic Ideal" held the Jews to their separate identity. But other now-extinct peoples had their own strong beliefs and rituals. It is too much to believe that a people, scattered and without inter-communication through centuries in widely diversified cultures, would retain an identity on the strength of religious values alone.

There must have been another element which kept this people from assimilating out of existence. This element is that the Jews in whatever country they found themselves retained—in part were forced to retain—a separate *economic* identity. Through the centuries when humanity made its living chiefly in agriculture, the Jews were prohibited from owning or working land. Being displaced from the then-thriving commercial Mediterranean area, the Jews were confined to mercantile and artisan tasks. The Jews were first introduced into Europe as slaves. But other conquered peoples brought into Greece and Rome as slaves were made slaves on the soil. The



Jews were made slaves in the mercantile centers.

A traditional occupation pattern thus emerged for Jews and this pattern separated the Jews from the majority populaces. Jews were regarded, and regarded themselves, as strangers. The persecution that Jews encountered followed from the fact that they were an easily persecuted group. If a scapegoat is required, it is easiest to arouse passions against a group of "strangers." In turn, this persecution further strengthened the separate Jewish identity.

BOROCHOV coined the expression "conditions of production," including in it the Marxian "relations of production." He held that the Jews in every country found themselves in a common "condition of production"—that of being peripheral to the economy of that country; being dispensable; being part of what later became known as the middle class. Borochov claimed that one condition for a people being a nation is that the people have common conditions of production. (The other condition for nationhood is a common feeling of kinship.) The production of a normal capitalist nation is carried on in a territory in which upper, middle and lower classes struggle within one economic unit. By Borochov's reasoning, the Jews are a nation, but a "sick" nation. His "cure" for this sick nation is for the Jews to have a common territory where *the normal division of occupations* must come about. To further this aim, shopkeepers and students of Russia transformed themselves into farmers and workers in Palestine.

Obviously all Jews do not regard themselves as part of a Jewish nation and this is not an attempt to convince them otherwise. What should be recognized, though, is that there has been and continues to be a world-wide Jewish problem and that many Jews have attempted a national solution to this problem and that they are within their human rights in so attempting. The idea that socialism solves all national problems may be correct in some ideal world that we do not yet live in. But after 40 years of socialism in Russia there remains a physical and cultural Jewish problem. There was an early Soviet attempt to set up an autonomous Jewish republic in Birobijan. But there was no attraction to this territory for Russian Jewry. Then, Birobijan was so neglected by the Soviet Government that many of the few thousand Jews who did go there returned. About all that remains of this venture is the song "Hey, Zhankoye" which, ironically, means "thank you," the idea being "thank you, dear Stalin, for solving the Jewish problem with this barren piece of wasteland!"

A Jew certainly has the prerogative of assimilating into his nation of birth or residence if he is allowed to do so.

Perhaps in the U.S. and other places he can do so successfully. It should be remembered that the pre-Hitler German Jews were an assimilated group, or so they believed. Nevertheless, it should be accepted as a just aspiration that some Jews seek nationhood as a solution for their physical existence, their existence as a people and for the perpetuation of their culture.

POLITICAL forces in the Zionist movement and in Israel today cover a wide spectrum. With the creation of Israel, two labor parties emerged. The majority party, Mapai, is molded similar to the British Labor Party. Mapai is a social-democratic party with considerable strength in the rural settlements and overwhelmingly entrenched in the urban working class, also drawing ample support from some segments of the middle class. The leaders of Mapai were, by and large, the leaders of the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Congress, and other bodies which carried on the political struggle for the creation of the state. Ben Gurion and Sharett are among them. One of the outstanding labor leaders of Mapai, a staunch proponent of Arab-Jewish friendship and a man who would have been one of today's key personalities, was Haym Arlosoroff, tragically assassinated in 1929.

Mapai "inherited," so to speak, the government of Israel. Before the birth of the state, Mapai called for a Jewish State in all Palestine but it quickly supported the UN partition plan of 1947 when it was proposed. Mapai is the controlling force in the Histadrut, the federation of labor. The Histadrut has created large cooperative industrial and commercial enterprises of its own. These enterprises comprise a considerable portion of Israel's economy—Solel Boneh is the largest contracting and building concern in the Near East, with about 25,000 workers. The Histadrut has holdings in transport, textiles, chemicals, shoes, baked goods, and other enterprises.

Along with all the other Zionist parties, Mapai calls for the ingathering of the Jews to Israel. Internally, Mapai's program includes a state-planned economy based on "constructive private enterprises." Under the Mapai governments, foreign investors in Israel have had many advantages bestowed upon them. On paper, the Mapai foreign policy calls for non-identification with any bloc. In actuality, the Mapai policy has evolved to identification with the United States. Considering Israel's economic and political situation, it is easy to criticize this policy but difficult to offer decent alternatives.

Like any long-entrenched party, Mapai has built up a massive and cumbersome bureaucracy. In the first Israel elections in 1949 Mapai polled 38 percent of the vote, but this declined to 33 percent in 1955.

The left wing of the Labor Zionists joined with Hashomer Hatzair, a collective-oriented Marxist group, to form the Mapam party. The bulk of the strength of Mapam comes from the most completely collective settlements. Such a collective is known as a "kibbutz." Mapam draws minimal support from the cities. Hashomer Hatzair had called for and worked towards the creation of a bi-national, Arab and Jewish, state in Palestine.

ONE of Mapam's main principles is the complete integration of the Israeli Arabs into the society. Mapam members were the backbone and leaders of the Palmach—the shock troops of the makeshift Israeli army in the 1948 war, which bore the brunt of many of the battles. Palmach officers had no separate quarters or identifying insignia. There was no saluting, and the officers did not carry pistols. The organization was disbanded after the war.

Mapam garnered 16 percent in 1949 and 13 percent in 1951. Between the '51 and '55 elections there was a split in Mapam, and a new group called Ahdut Ha-avoda was formed. Among other reasons for the split, Ahdut Ha-avoda was desirous of much less identification with the Soviet Union than Mapam displayed at that time. (At no time was Mapam the handmaiden of the USSR, although its sympathies lay there. For this role Israel has its own minute Communist Party.)

A smaller split occurred in Mapam in 1952. As a consequence of the Czech trials a Mapam member, Mordecai Oren, was imprisoned. Mapam condemned the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic nature of the trials and placed no credence in the confession that Oren was forced to make. (Oren, recently released, verified that the confession was forced.) A small number of people in Mapam, with Moshe Sneh as leader, justified the whole trial, double-talked away the obvious anti-Semitism, and "proved" that Oren was truly guilty. This group was expelled and later joined the Communists. The 1955 election results were: Mapam 7½ percent, Ahdut Ha-avoda 8 percent and the Communists 5 percent.

Mapam's position has been in consistent opposition to the idea of a preventive war against Egypt and the Arab States. When Ben Gurion brought his Sinai plans to the cabinet last October, Mapam (part of the present government) voted against them. But when Mapam found itself alone in opposition it decided to support the military action rather than to bring about a government crisis by resigning. Mapam leader Meir Yaari explained his party's position as follows: "Mapam . . . believes that from the long view . . . even a shaky peace is preferable. But the die was cast, and when it happened, we . . . fulfilled our vow to be with the people defending its soil and with . . . the Defense Army of Israel."

The aforementioned Ahdut Ha-avoda party appears to be the most rapidly growing party in Israel today. The party strongly supported the activist retaliatory policy of the government in which it is a participant. Led by young, vigorous, and competent people, it is conceivable that Ahdut Ha-avoda will become the dominant force when Ben Gurion steps down.

The largest anti-labor party in Israel is Herut. Whereas

Herut received only 6½ percent of the vote in 1951, its vote jumped to 12½ percent in 1955 due to the chauvinism engendered, in some Jewish circles, by seven years of tension. Herut is strongly anti-Arab, anti-Histadrut, and in favor of an economy based solely on private initiative. Herut calls for a Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan River. For some time Herut has urged a preventive war.

HERUT is the political party that grew out of the former underground terrorist movement Irgun Zvai Leumi. The guiding spirit of the Irgun was Vladimir Jabotinsky, in whose works are found glowing praise of Mussolini and his corporate state. In the mandate days, the Irgun carried out terrorist raids against the British and against the Arabs. It also tried to break up Histadrut meetings and, at times, to break strikes. At that time, there existed the Haganah (Jewish self-defense), which effectively opposed the British by bringing in illegal immigrant ships, establishing new settlements, and initiating well-disciplined raids against British arsenals and such. Haganah did not engage in individual acts of terror. The Irgun had only a fraction of the strength of Haganah, but the bombastic nature of its bravado was well-publicized by its supporters in the U.S.

In April 1948 the Irgun perpetrated a massacre in the Arab village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem. Added to the personal tragedy of this act was the political tragedy that this was the friendliest Arab village in the area. Only a short time before, the leaders of this village had refused Jordan's Arab Legion permission to occupy their village.

After this incident the Provisional Government, led by Ben Gurion, outlawed the Irgun and ordered its members to place themselves under Haganah control. But the Irgun made one last bid for power when it tried to bring to Israel a private arms ship during the first truce of the 1948 war. The ship was discovered by Haganah and ordered to surrender. When the order was ignored, a pitched battle ensued in Tel Aviv harbor and the Irgun was destroyed and the ship sunk.

The General Zionists are the more moderate right-wing party, representing the biggest industrialists and citrus planters. Their chief demand has been for an end to all economic controls. Their electoral strength dropped from 16½ percent in 1951 to 11 percent in 1955. This decline largely accounted for Herut's rise.

The strength of a coalition of religious parties has remained at about 13 percent. However, the influence of this bloc upon the country is far out of proportion to its strength. Mainly out of deference to the religious sentiment of many U.S. Jews, the religious forces in Israel have been able to impose their will on the majority of Israel. Fearing that funds from the U.S. would dwindle if the demands of the religious were rejected, Mapai has effected a situation where, among other things, public transport does not operate on Saturday (except in Haifa which, as the strongest labor town, did not allow this restriction), and all marriages must be performed by the rabbinate.

Of the remaining 8 or 10 parties (including 3 Arab parties for those Arabs who are not in the other parties) only the Communist Party is worthy of mention. It is



very small; its present strength is 5 percent of the vote. Although this figure represents its rock bottom support, it likewise amounts to about its "rock top" strength. It has few real roots in Israel and, standing in opposition to Zionism, its potential for growth is limited. Shortly before the Egyptian-Czech arms deal of 1955 was announced, there were rumors in Israel about this transaction. The Communists squelched these rumors with a blurb to the effect that Israel's socialist friends would never endanger her by selling arms to a hostile neighbor. When the deal was confirmed, the Communist paper announced that the arms sale would stabilize conditions in the area!

IN 1947, the UN adopted the plan for the partition of Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states. The Jewish Agency announced its plans to declare the State of Israel on May 15, 1948. From November 1947 on, the Jewish community was attacked, mainly by the Palestinian "National Liberation Army." The British, in their waning days of power in Palestine, ignored the attacks and continued their search of the Jewish settlements for Haganah arms. The Labor Government administration carried out the 1939 Chamberlain White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to 1,500 a month right to the last day of its control on May 14. At the same time Britain refused to allow the Jews, in the face of Arab attacks from within and threats from outside, to organize for defense. But Britain did countenance the occupation of parts of Palestine by the British-armed-and-led Arab Legion of Jordan. Britain obviously decided that the best way to secure her oil and other interests in the Arab world was to ensure a still-born Israel.

In one day (May 15) both the government and army of Israel were organized. On that same day, seven Arab nations attacked Israel—the most important being Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Israel not only survived the attack but ended up with more territory than was allotted to it.

Since the provisional days there have been three elections in Israel. Until the 1955 elections, the governments were coalitions mainly composed of Mapai and, at different times, the General Zionists and the religious bloc. The first government disbanded the Palmach, to Mapam's displeasure, and established a regular national army—a process that had started during the war. This changed the character of the army and, to some extent, the character of the whole country. The present government is the first labor coalition, including Mapam and Ahdut Ha-avoda. Mapam entered the government with reservations on foreign and economic policy.

THE chief restrictions imposed upon the Israeli Arabs are those of travel and curfew. All Arabs must obtain permits to change their residence and Arab villages along

the borders are subject to curfew regulations. Arabs do not serve in the army, with the exception of one Arab sect—the Druse—which has volunteered to accept army service. In other respects the Arabs receive equal legal treatment. Arab workers, for example, must receive Histadrut wage scales. Segments of the Jewish population do, however, discriminate against Arabs in everyday life.

No socialist can deny that the Arabs have just national aspirations: independence, health, prosperity. Many new Arab nations have arisen—Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Sudan. Most Israelis welcomed these new states. These just aspirations need not be endangered by the existence of Israel. The desire to eliminate Israel is *not* a just aim. The uprooted Jewish people, many of whom have been in continuing need of a haven, must be allowed the luxury of a long-delayed return to their land—not at the expense of the other inhabitants of that land but in cooperation with them. The main responsibility for the historic lack of cooperation rests elsewhere than upon the Zionists. The foremost guilt lies with imperialist power in the Near East.

There is a complexity of reasons why the Arabs themselves have not made peace either with Israel or with the Jewish pioneers that preceded it. These range all the way from the desirability of using the Jews as a convenient scapegoat on whom to channel the emotions of their miserable subjects, to the fear of competition on the part of Israeli capitalism against nascent Arab industry.

Is it possible that Nasser and others really believe that Israel is an imperialist pawn? Some of Israel's votes in the UN on colonial questions would seem to indicate this. Israel deserves criticism on this voting record even though it is not hard to imagine what pressures were put upon her. But what these Arabs do not realize (or perhaps they do) is that they are *forcing* Israel to play this role since Israel cannot stand alone economically. Israel has stood alone politically and with unhappy results. Were Israel allowed peace there would be no danger to the Arabs and there would have been no action last October.

It is not in Israel's power to bring about a settlement alone. Israel has offered peace to the Arabs with no success. Israel has attempted to establish normal relations with Asia but has met response only from Burma. Israel could have aided the situation by a better treatment of her Arab minority, by more far-sighted stands in the UN and so forth. But the solution to the problem lies with forces outside Israel and mainly, perhaps, with the Asian democracies. There is some hope in this direction as evidenced by this statement by R. S. S. Gunewardene, Ceylonese ambassador to the U.S. in an American Forum discussion (November 11) with New Zealand's Munro and Israel's Eban: "I assure my colleague from Israel that the Asian nations are very greatly pained about the state of affairs that have existed for a number of years between the Arab states and Israel. A good many of us would have been glad to assist Israel and we also think that that fact, of course, has to be realized and we have to go on a basis of equality to all states and it is necessary to bring them all around together for a conference and have a negotiated settlement."