

Triple Crisis of Zionism and

(Continued from Last Week)

By HAL DRAPER

III

The Ideological Crisis

Like (I) the political-partisan antagonism, and (II) the nationalist antagonism in the Zionist movement, the present ideological crisis also arose automatically with the fact of the existence of Israel. As we have explained, what is involved is the very reason for existence of the Zionist movement as a distinct movement, in the diaspora.

Before Israel came into being, the mission of the Zionist movement was clear: to work for the creation of the Jewish state. The non-Zionists did not support this aim, would not do so, and certainly would not contribute money to do so. But now, with Israel in existence as the Jewish state, virtually all in the Jewish community (not to speak of many non-Jews) are for aid to Israel, aid to its development, and interested in how the U. S. government treats it.

Of course, the Zionists can claim, probably with justice, that they are the best and most singleminded supporters of Israel, but this is hardly reason enough for the Zionist movement to continue in its present forms. Why not dissolve, for example, to give way to a broader "ginger group" of both Zionists and non-Zionists—that is, actually, a group not based on the Zionist ideology, in which the former Zionists can still be the spark plugs—if it is the broadest aid to Israel that is the object? This is what the soul-searching is about.

It is very clear that a large section of the Zionist movement has in fact decided that there is nothing for it but dissolution. This section is not heard from in the discussions that have raged because it consists of those who have already voted with their feet; for example, the more than 80,000 who quit the Zionist Organization of America in the last year or two.

In an important programmatic article in which ZOA leader Emanuel Neumann went through the problems before the World Zionist Congress at Jerusalem, to-be-or-not-to-be is the first question he raises (*Zionist Quarterly*, summer issue). "We may now proceed on the assumption that the question has been answered in the affirmative," he says reassuringly, while indicating that "doubts were entertained by some leading personalities in Israel—men who only yesterday had held positions of highest responsibility in the movement."

A REASON FOR EXISTENCE?

It is easy to answer in the affirmative but to find a reason for existence is harder. He presents two: (1) "a strong Zionist movement in the diaspora, with high morale, is indispensable to the state of Israel, for an indeterminate period," because of the state's precarious position. But as pointed out, a broader "Society of Friends of Israel" could be even more effective by dissociating aid to Israel from Zionism as a special movement, to which much of the Jewish community is antagonistic. And (2) "a vigorous Zionist movement is equally essential from the point of view of Jewish life in the diaspora, its health and vitality, its spiritual bond with Israel and the bracing sense of world-wide Jewish unity." Here again there is nothing distinctively Zionist.

The same is true with all other proposals heard for what Zionism can do today: community work, cultural work, etc. They are simply irrelevant to the basic problem. An organization like the ZOA might continue to exist in some such way for some length of time but not meaningfully as a ZIONIST organization.

"The time has come," writes Neumann, "for the World Jewish Congress to be merged with the Zionist movement, which can take over its functions as an important branch of its activity." It would seem to be more logical the other way around, to dissolve the Zionist movement into the broader organization, on the basis of Neumann's perspective!

But Neumann is aware there is another answer, which was indeed the answer which was shored before the noses of the American Zionist delegation at the Jerusalem congress. That is:

that the Zionist movement today can only be a movement, primarily and overwhelmingly, to bring all the Jewish people back to Zion, which is now incarnated in Israel—a *halutz* (pioneering emigration) movement.

This, of course, has always been viewed as one task of the Zionist movement, but only as one task, and especially in the U. S., a minor one. American Zionism has been primarily "philanthropic Zionism." Its day is over; such philanthropy could be distinctively Zionist yesterday; today it is not.

During the congress sessions, the Jerusalem Post took a bitter jibe at this type by quoting the definition of a "Zionist" as "a rich Jew who gives money to another Jew to help a poorer one go to Palestine." Reflecting the Israeli point of view, it is quoted bitterly and contemptuously. Now the Americans are wondering whether they can even be philanthropic-Zionists.

This soul-searching has been going on since 1948 but it was raised to new intensity and sharpness by Ben-Gurion's visit to these shores—on that occasion (at long last before catching the boat) when he finally appeared before a gathering of Zionists. He laid the meaning of Zionism before them, punctuated with table-banging. A Zionist, he told them, is a Jew who identifies himself fully with Israel by giving up all his allegiance and loyalties to the country of his birth or domicile and settles in Israel with his wife and children; no one can describe himself as a Zionist so long as he and his family remain living outside Israel!

If the American Zionists thought that this was a personal crotchet of his, they found at Jerusalem that the overwhelming majority of the congress agreed with Ben-Gurion, across all party lines. For convenience we shall refer to the "Israeli" point of view versus that of the Americans, but it was not limited to the Israelis. It was the Americans who were out of step and virtually isolated there on this question.

It has not been sensibly answered by the American Zionists, unless feeble squirming can be called an answer. They know they want to be Zionists and they just know that emigration to Israel is unthinkable for them—that's for the poor Jew who needs a refuge—and they find it hard to adjust themselves to the notion that there is a contradiction. But on the other hand, they also can see that their own view is no longer the basis for a movement.

In a very interesting article in the *Student Zionist* for February, the president of the student Zionist organization explains how his group groped its way through the question, spurred to quicker decision by the fact that, on the campus above all, lack of a clear viewpoint meant immediate disintegration. The viewpoint they came out with was that the organization could continue to exist only if its reason for being was to orient youth toward emigration.

While this is a basis for a movement, he rightly explains, it means a much smaller movement than before. But it is something.

But this decision cannot simply be made merely for lack of any alternative reason for existence. The whole situation brings the Zionist up before the question: Has this in fact, whether we recognized it or not, been the real meaning of Zionism all along, the rest being auxiliary or peripheral? If this is what is left of the Zionist ideology, what was that ideology?

"INGATHERING OF THE EXILES"

What is left of the Zionist ideology is indeed its heart and soul. What stares the American Zionist in the face, clearly for the first time, is indeed that which has always been the essential basis of the Zionist ideology, now no longer overlaid by rationalizations. From the Marxist viewpoint, it is no new discovery. For many Zionists, it is. It took the creation of the state itself to confront them with it. Their crisis consists only in the fact that they refuse to look it in the eye.

Ben-Gurion is reported to have said in New York: "I deny that there is a crisis in Zionism. There is a crisis—in some Zionists." In a sense, he was right.

That which is left of the Zionist ideology, and which has always been its essence, is summed up in the Zionist slogan "The Ingathering of the

Exiles." The Americans heard this phrase more often in two weeks in Jerusalem than they had in the U. S. in years.

Earlier this year an American Zionist commission headed by Israel Goldstein got up a new draft "Jerusalem Program." Its formulation of the task of Zionism was "to further the speedy ingathering into the state of of Israel of all Jews who wish to go and live there . . ." (*Congress Weekly*, May 28.) But they did not even try hard to get away with this sidestepping formula at the world congress. The slogan of the Ingathering of the Exiles rent the air at Jerusalem.

WHO ARE THE EXILES?

What "exiles"? Who are the exiles? World Jewry—the "Jewish nation." The tribes (Zionist term) were dispersed but are now to be rescued from the diaspora. The tribes have been in Galuth and are now to be brought "home" from their exile. This is the mission, the law, the constitution, the reason for existence for Israel, as Ben-Gurion said. Without this, Israel has no Zionist meaning.

Does that mean we all have to go to Israel if we are to be good Zionists? The American delegates were given a minimum program on this. Not that they were totally absolved from personal "self-fulfillment." Golda Myerson, in her rebuttal to Rabbi Silver, declared that "if American Zionist leaders had come to Israel and settled there after the state was established, it would have been an 'inspiring example' of immigration for American Jewish youth." (JTA, Aug. 20.)

At a press conference before the congress opened, Silver was asked whether he planned to settle in Israel; he countered with "Do you need another rabbi?" The smart retort was fittingly answered at the congress by an Israeli General-Zionist leader (anti-religious) who suggested to him that he come and establish a reform-synagogue movement in the country.

But the Israelis did not insist on the condition of personal "fulfillment." Their minimum demands were: (1) Send your children; (2) make emigration the main task of your organization; (3) compulsory Hebrew education in the Zionist movement.

On the last, Ben-Gurion had declared: "No one can be a Zionist who does not feel the duty of educating his children in the Hebrew language. . . . Otherwise, neither they nor their children have any connection with the Jewish nation. A Zionist can either live in the state of Israel or he must at least live in that spiritual state of the Jewish nation which is the Hebrew language." Another Mapai leader urged the Zionist leaders overseas to Hebraize their names.

The Americans protested in effect: But these demands are impossible, absurd, unreasonable. You obviously don't know us Americans. Our American Zionists don't want to go to Israel. There's no use you or us agitating them. They just won't.

Your job is to change that, to "Zionize" them, they were told.

The Americans protested but all they had to say, stripped of bluster, was: The Americans won't go because they're comfortable, secure and better off where they are . . . which is a perfectly good reason, for a non-Zionist.

THE TALMUD TO THE RESCUE

It is difficult to say which side was and is more outraged by the other's viewpoint. But it is not difficult to say which has a right to be outraged from the Zionist viewpoint. The Americans were saying in effect: Zionism is all right in theory—for some poor Jews in other places—but not when it's a matter of exchanging the fleshpots of America for the hard realities of Israel. Their first and last argument remained something like the Talmudic one which Neumann had quoted in his pre-congress article, from Mordecai Kaplan:

"Nothing can be more fantastic than to assume that a considerable proportion of American Jews can be persuaded to migrate to Israel. The Talmud enunciates the principle that an ordinance by which the majority cannot possibly abide should never be issued. Such an ordinance creates an unnecessary sense of guilt. It is destructive of peace of mind and soul. To find fault with Jews who are satisfied to make their permanent home outside Israel is to violate that sound Talmudic principle."

It would seem from the reports that among the American delegates only the president of Hadassah had the guts to blurt out in so many words what they believed: "We cannot accept the concept that we are in exile." But the Americans accepted the "exile" concept for the others! "Exile" apparently is only where they won't let you live. . . .

Most of the Americans were discreet enough not to be as plainspoken. They gave and give lip service to *halutzuth* and *aliyah* (emigration to Israel) but, resting on "realistic" grounds, mostly claimed to be helpless before the reluctance of their ranks. It was only thin concealment for the fact that they agreed with the ranks.

The Israelis blasted away. Dobkin of the Jewish Agency pointed out that the neglect of the *halutz* movement in the U. S. was illustrated by the fact that a

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single youth center in Brooklyn had a larger budget than the entire *halutz* movement in the country. It was reported that only 7000 immigrants had come from the U. S., Britain, South Africa and Australia since the creation of the state (and we do not know whether this figure includes those who later left).

"Zionist parents [in America] tremble at the thought that their children might become infected with the idea of emigration to Israel," charged Dobkin. The Americans were informed, by Nahum Goldmann, that the Zionist Ingathering of the Exiles also applies to Jews in "free countries where they are not forced to depart for a safer area. . . . So long as a majority of the Jewish people remains outside Israel, Zionism's aims have not been attained. . . . The function of Zionism . . . is to 'Zionize' both the Jews in Israel and those outside the Jewish state."

We have to quote further from Goldmann, perhaps the outstanding non-Israeli in the world movement and furthermore considered a "moderate," for both of which reasons he was elected president at the congress. In the polemic against the Americans, the overwhelming majority at the congress made the meaning of Zionism crystal-clear.

"Take away the Galuth," cried Goldmann, "and you take away Zionism." He is referring to the concept that Jewry as a "nation" is in exile.

This was re-emphasized and hammered home in more than one speech. Goldmann again: "Galuth does not cease being Galuth because Jews are happy and well-treated there. Galuth is not measured by good or bad treatment."

A MYSTICAL CONCEPT

And he added: "Galuth is a mystical concept. If you deny that America is Galuth, you might as well deny the need for Israel." (My emphasis.)

Of course, this is the concept which is also behind Ben-Gurion's definitions of Israel as a state founded on the "Law of the Return." In his August 8 speech he had said: "A Zionist must himself come to Israel as an immigrant," as he had said in New York. And he made clear that this was no new interpretation: "From the beginning Zionism meant for us only *halutzic* Zionism"—that is, Zionism as a movement to return the Jewish "nation" to Palestine.

The concept is as "mystical" for the majority as for Goldmann. Goldmann's use of that word was not an aberration. Even Neumann—even Neumann, spokesman for the anti-Galuth Americans—had to put it that way (in the article above-quoted) in explaining why the philanthropic-Zionist Americans choose to direct their philanthropy toward Zionism:

"They [in America] were in dispersion but had little sense of exile. . . . They wish to further the cause not only as a duty toward Jews less fortunately placed, but out of a deep, if mystic, sense of obligation toward the Jewish past, of identity with Jewish destiny and the vision of a nobler future."

The view that the Jews of the world, and not merely the Jewish *yishuv* in Palestine, constitute a nation in the Zionist sense is a view which can only have a mystical basis.

What in non-mystical terms is the "Jewishness" which they have in common and which is discussed at such great length? Religion? Not for the non-religious, secular Zionists, though we shall see what is happening on this. Common persecution? Yes; but if this is to be the basis for the concept of *nationhood*, it is an inverted acceptance of the anti-Semitic view of the Jewish people as a "peculiar people" with whom the non-Jew cannot live. The fact is that the Jews, in their dispersion, have become even more varied than most imagine.

THE "NATIONHOOD" OF THE JEWS

This is rather spectacularly illustrated by a passage in Ben-Gurion's August 8 speech, thrown in apparently not so much for its relevance in the context but because even he had just been "shocked":

"I was shocked to the core by the seriousness of the problems connected with the absorption and fusion of the Dispersions, when I saw the abyss lying between two types of Iraqi Jews that cannot live together, the townsmen and the hillsmen. Now we have brought them together at Halsa and at Bet Lydd and they cannot live together even though they speak one language and come from one country.

"I met a Yemenite, a Tunisian and a Moroccan. They demanded that separate synagogues be built for them. I learnt that where a Moroccan prays, a Tunisian will not perform his prayers, even though both pray according to Sephardic rites, although their cantillation differs. The Yemenite told me that Yemenites need two types of synagogues, one for the natives of San'a and another for those originating outside San'a."

It is rather extreme, but still these are Jews who speak the same language, come from the same country, and practise the same Sephardic rites. Then there are the others. . . .

Persecution, distress and need are driving the many and disparate Jews of the Dispersions to Israel, and the Israeli leaders have cause to be appalled at the task of welding them into one nation; this was a task also for the United States with respect to the many-nationed immigrants who were driven to its shores by persecution, distress and need, in spite of the fact that the pre-history of the United States (in its colonial development) had already provided a base. But if it is a difficult task, it is because it is not a "one-nation entity" (Ben-Gurion's term) which is "returning home." The great majority are fleeing their homes.

The "mystical" concept which is at the heart and soul of Zionism (in spite of the American Zionists' disclaimer) is that of tribal blood-solidarity. For the Zionist (in greater or lesser measure depending on the degree to which the individual's Zionist ideology is diluted by concessions to

other ideologies), it is inevitable that this mystic sense of tribal blood-solidarity should be their overriding motivation.

To be sure, it collides with class solidarity, both for the bourgeoisie and the working class; and for the latter, both in Israel and in the diaspora Zionist movement, it is an alien and corruptive element in any attempt to build a consistent, genuine socialist movement. It collides with the solidarity of internationalism; and most specifically, it collides with the need for a policy of equality, toleration and peace with the Arab peoples. Scientifically, ideologically, philosophically if you wish, it does not have much to recommend it above the "Aryan" theories of the Nazi theoreticians.

RELIGION, THE NATIONAL CEMENT

The Zionists set as one of their tasks to "achieve the unity of the Jewish people." Aside from anti-Semitism, which is doing this job more effectively than they, the outstanding common element of the various Dispersions is religion. Religious Zionism has always been only one kind of Zionism among many, but as Zionist ideology boils down more and more clearly to its mystic tribal core, it is the religionists who feel their ideological strength.

More boldly than ever could the Religious Zionist (Mizrachi) caucus at the Jerusalem congress adopt its manifesto, calling for greater efforts to preserve religious values and traditions "which have always been and must continue to be in the future the main guarantee for the unity of the Jewish people throughout the world."

But that's the Mizrachi, who have always said so. It is interesting to read the following from a leading theoretician of the traditionally secular American Labor Zionist movement, in a pre-congress article entitled "Notes for a Labor Zionist Program":

"A religious designation to denote the totality of Jewish life in this country imposes the duty upon the Jewish community to adhere to certain mores and observe certain rituals which have their origin in the Jewish religion."

It is, of course, not the "religious designation" which "imposes" this duty. It is the Zionist's search for the elements of nationhood. He continues:

"The same duty should devolve upon the individual Jew. The voluntary acceptance of a minimum of observances must be his spiritual membership dues to the Jewish community, even as his participation in its budgetary requirements must be his financial dues. This is necessary both to preserve Jewish identity in this country and to integrate the American Jewish community into the unity of Jewish peoplehood. We are approaching a time when the Jews of the world will no longer have a common living language. The cultural barriers between the Jews of one land and those of another are getting higher every day. In proportion as a Jewish community becomes integrated into the affairs of its native land and shares with the rest of the population fundamental values which do not belong to the Jewish legacy, the factors contributing to the fragmentation of the Jewish people will be strengthened. Only the preservation of meaningful Jewish traditions, the observance of Jewish holidays and folkways, and the fostering of modern Jewish culture and education, centered about and supplementing the creative efforts of Israel, will prevent Jewish disintegration." (C. Bezalel Sherman, *Jewish Frontier*, June.)

By "disintegration" he means assimilation. Sherman, no doubt, wishes the "observances" without the them, making of them not a ritual for the unseen God but a ritual for the hard-to-see nationhood. But in dealing with masses, as the Israeli leaders have to do, it is easier to eliminate the subtle distinctions. In Israel itself religion and religious observances play the role of a NATIONAL CEMENT. We have no doubt that Ben-Gurion and the secular Israelis have little personal sympathy for many of the excesses that characterize Israeli society in foisting religious practices upon all the people; but if there is less separation between church and state in Israel than almost anywhere else in the modern world, that scandalous fact is not solely due to the pressure or influence of the Mizrachi or the rabbis. It performs a nationalistic function.

At the Jerusalem congress, there was an attempt (most particularly, apparently, by the Mapam delegates) to put the Ingathering of the Exiles on another and seemingly less mystical basis. Mapam delegates repeatedly, while supporting the majority thesis in favor of the liquidation of the diaspora into Israel as the goal, direly "warned U. S. Jews that they might meet the fate of some European Jewish communities, which ignored the call to Zion and perished." The state of mind of the American Jews was compared with that of the German Jews before the rise of Hitler. Come to Israel, they argued in effect, because anti-Semitism will get you in the long run anyway.

DANGER OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Only a Lessing Rosenwald or his co-thinkers might deny the gross reality of this danger; it is surely true that anti-Semitism in the West may yet rise to the heights of Hitlerism. But this horrible prospect is only a part of another, with which it goes hand in hand: the deterioration, totalitarianization and brutalization of capitalist society in decay on the one hand and of Stalinism on the other. But the Mapam delegates were not making their point in order to urge a fight against anti-Semitism; their argument was: Flee from anti-Semitism, flee now before it is too late!

It is the theory of the inevitability of anti-Semitism. This theory can have only one of two bases: (1) The working-class, socialist and democratic forces in the world are inevitably doomed to defeat; or (2) anti-Semitism is inevitable as long as Jews live with non-

Jews, for reasons which cannot be less mystical and "tribal" than those we have already discussed. And as far as Mapam is concerned—it considers itself to be "left socialist" (actually Stalinoid)—it hardly subscribes to the first thesis. If any do, one may ask how much of a haven can be provided in such a world by Israel, which is surrounded by hostility even today.

Actually, the motivation of this argument is, again, an inversion of anti-Semitism itself: there is "something about the Jews" as such which makes persecution inevitable. . . .

At the Jerusalem congress, on this question of the Ingathering and emigration to Israel, a compromise had to be reached, as everyone knew in advance. Ideologically, it was a rotten compromise, as it had to be. The Americans accepted the formula "Ingathering of the Exiles" as the task of Zionism—with their own rationalizations in mind. But the draft formulation had read: "the redemption of the Jewish people through the Ingathering of the Exiles." They bogged at tying up the Ingathering with redemption, and the latter was struck out, in order to achieve a unanimous vote (the chauvinist Herut delegates abstaining). Furthermore, the document was represented as the "tasks" of Zionism, not the "aims" of Zionism, the latter being held over for the future.

THE EXPANSIONIST GOAL

We must mention, in addition, another aspect of the declaration adopted which did not figure in the debates (as far as the reports have shown, pending the verbatim minutes). But it appears in the text. Set as the task of Zionism is "the Ingathering of the Exiles in Eretz Israel."

"Eretz Israel" is not the state of Israel. It is the whole of Palestine, that is, all of the land which the Zionists from the very beginning set as their homeland goal. It can be achieved only by expansion beyond the borders of the present state in conflict with the Arab Near East.

The use of this term in the document is not simply a nostalgic nod in the direction of a sentimental aspiration. Discussion of the use of this term as against simply Israel may or may not have taken place at the congress (though it certainly did in the commission which drafted the declaration). The difference is highlighted by what happened with the draft for a new program which was prepared earlier this year by an American commission and which we have already mentioned. This draft read "ingathering into the state of Israel." Writing in the *Congress Weekly* for May 28, Joseph Schechtman, a leader of the Revisionists who participated in the commission's deliberations, reports that he proposed to amend it to read "land of Israel" or Eretz Israel. He leaves no possibility for misunderstanding:

"The alert reader will easily discern the fine point of difference of emphasis in the term 'State of Israel'—a recently established, internationally recognized, sovereign territorial entity—and 'Land of Israel'—the everlasting patrimony of the Jewish people, the unique object of Zionism. . . . A 'Jerusalem Program' cannot disregard the wider concept of 'Eretz Israel' in its Zionist program. In this respect, 'Eretz Israel' is different from the State, which is bound to be the bearer of the legalistic, static interpretations of the term 'Land of Israel.' The Zionist movement can and must remain the bearer of the dynamic interpretation."

It was "Eretz Israel" that appeared in the congress document. It was the Revisionists and their allies who particularly insisted on it. Quite possibly, the others might have preferred not to make explicit the expansionist aims which cannot be divorced from the Zionist ideology; if its inclusion was a concession to the Revisionists or under their pressure, as may possibly though not certainly be true, that was not because of any opposition to the concept. The mystic tribalism of Zionism cannot help being implicitly expansionist.

As the ISL's resolution on Israel and the Jewish Question makes clear (it appears in full in the July-August issue of the *New Internationalist*), it is necessary to differentiate clearly between Zionism and its distinctive ideology and the need and desire of dispossessed Jews of the world for a land of refuge. There are many other questions that ramify from the issues which came up directly at Jerusalem, bearing upon the Jewish question and on Israel. Even in limiting this article to the present crisis of the Zionist movement and ideology, as mirrored at the world congress, it has not always been possible to leave unmentioned the important problems that arise tangentially. But in the discussion of all of these problems, the Jerusalem congress will be of historic significance, not because it solved them but for the opposite reason—because it made clearer than before the historic impasse of Zionism in the diaspora.

'VPERED'

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