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ZIONIST PUBLICATIONS

*Zionism aims to create a publicly-secured,
legally-assured home for the Jewish
People in Palestine.—BASLE PROGRAM*

CORRESPONDENCE

ON THE

ADVISABILITY OF CALLING A CONFERENCE
FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMBATING ZIONISM



ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA
55 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY
1918

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CORRESPONDENCE

On the Advisability of Calling a Conference for the Purpose of Combating Zionism

During the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis at Chicago in July, 1918, a number of those present expressed a desire to see measures taken to combat "the menace of Zionism." A committee of seven, later enlarged to thirteen, was appointed, with the Reverend Doctor David Philipson as Chairman, to take such steps as might be deemed necessary in the premises. The committee decided it to be advisable to hold a conference of a number of prominent American Jews, rabbis and laymen, to discuss the subject, and determine what action should be taken to counteract the activities of the Zionists.

At the end of August the Chairman wrote to a number of persons for permission to append their names to the call for such a conference.

The following letters give the reasons of three of those addressed for declining the invitation to participate in the call.

*Mr. Oscar S. Straus to the Reverend
Doctor David Philipson*

New York, September 2, 1918.

RABBI DAVID PHILIPSON,
3947 Beechwood Avenue,
Avondale, Cincinnati, O.

DEAR SIR:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your favor of August 30.

Permit me to say that I regard the holding of a conference to counteract the activities of Zionists as distinctively unwise and harmful. In view of the fact that Great Britain, France and the other allied nations through their highest officials, have given assurances for the welfare of the Jews in Palestine, regardless of the fact whether one is a Zionist or not, to oppose such a beneficent purpose on the part of a section of our people can only be hurtful and show a lack not only of unanimity, but of appreciation for these welcome assurances, which should receive the gratitude not only of Jews as such, but as Americans, for this first significant and concrete move on the part of the allied nations to assure freedom of development for subject nationalities.

I do hope that your committee will recall its proposed action, which to the extent it may enroll a protest, can only do harm. I make this suggestion, yea, request, not as a Zionist, as I am not affiliated with that organization, but as an American and as a lover of our people.

In every crisis of our history, from the destruction of Jerusalem, there has always developed a fractional few who have prevented that solidarity so necessary to achieve beneficent results.

Do you wish Palestine to remain under the tyranny of Germans, or, what is equivalent thereto, under the subjection of their brutalized tools, the Turks? The purpose of your committee, could it be successful, would have no other result than to further this most deplorable end.

I write you thus frankly and emphatically because of my high respect for you, with the hope that you and your colleagues will reconsider your proposed action.

Very truly yours,

OSCAR S. STRAUS.

*Mr. Jacob H. Schiff to the Reverend
Doctor David Philipson*

Bar Harbor, Me., Sept. 5, 1918.

MY DEAR DOCTOR PHILIPSON:

Replying to your communication of August 30th, I regret I cannot see my way to give permission for my name to be used in connection with the call of the Conference in opposition to the Zionist Movement.

I believe I have already heretofore explained to you the reasons which, soon after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, have induced me to change my former attitude towards the Zionist Movement and I have since become more and more convinced that it was in the best interests of our People that I did this.

Greatly more than I did when I first ceased my opposition to the Zionist Movement, do I feel now that the creation of a Jewish Home Land in Palestine is most desirable.

I am very much afraid that conditions in Russia, Poland, Roumania, Austria, perhaps even Germany and elsewhere are such that the outlook for the Jews there—and these form a vast majority of the Jewish population of the world—is far from being a favorable one and that for reasons which would lead too far to go into here, but which by all those who want to use their eyes, can be well seen, considerable unhappiness, if not suffering, is likely in store, in the countries I have named, for the Jewish population.

American Israel alone, in co-operation with its English and French co-religionists, is in a position to effectually help this proposed creation of a center where the Jew, forced out by impossible conditions under which he may have to live in the diaspora, shall be able to go with the assurance that he shall find very sympathetic surroundings and conditions under which he and his posterity shall be willing to live.

There can be no doubt that the success of these endeavors will have the most healthy and refreshing effect upon entire Israel, wherever in the world its members may be located, and the proposition which you bring forward that American Israel combine to oppose these efforts, is, in my opinion, nothing less than preposterous.

Your proposition, in the nature of things as these have developed, cannot be successful and will only bring forth bitterness, recrimination and marked division among the Jewish People of this country, which, I am sure, is greatly to be deprecated.

Believe me, dear Doctor Philipson, that I continue to have the highest esteem for you and I am unhappy to feel that you are about to place yourself at the head of a move-

ment which is certain to fail, as it should fail, and bring moreover hurt to the Cause which you represent in your ministry and to which, as you know, I feel personally much attached.

Faithfully yours,

JACOB H. SCHIFF.

P. S.—With you I deplore the grievous error the Zionist Organization, of which I am not a member, had made in its questionnaire sent to members of Congress, but it would be a mistake to endeavor the pouring out of the child with the bath.

*Extract from a Letter Addressed by Mr. Louis Marshall
to the Reverend Doctor David Philipson
under date September 5, 1918*

“I do not see what can be gained by embarking on a campaign of controversy and polemics, especially at this time. The Jews should be united, with their minds intent upon but one thing, and that is, the winning of the war. I am afraid that you do not give due weight to the ideas which underlie the Balfour Declaration. They are of great political importance so far as the interest of the allied nations is concerned. To combat Zionism at this time is to combat the Governments of England, France and Italy, and to some extent our Government in so far as its political interests are united with those of the nations which it has joined in fighting the curse of autocracy.”

*Correspondence on the Same Subject between
Mr. Louis Marshall and Mr. Max Senior*

MR. MARSHALL TO MR. SENIOR

New York, September 26, 1918.

MY DEAR MR. SENIOR:

I am informed that it is contemplated to hold a convention in Pittsburgh in the near future for the purpose of protesting against Zionism, and that you are to take a prominent part in the gathering. I feel a delicacy in making any suggestions on the subject, especially where my opinion has not been asked and the intrusion of my views may be regarded as offensive. I trust, however, that my entire freedom from partisanship and my great interest in all that pertains to Judaism may be considered as in some degree warranting me in saying what I am about to say.

A few weeks ago, in common with many others, I received from Dr. David Philipson a request to become a signatory of a call for a conference to be held in New York City for the purpose of combating Zionism. In declining to become a participant in the movement I wrote to Dr. Philipson a letter of which I enclose copy.

The reasons which I then urged have been emphasized by the rapid march of events since that time. The Allied armies have now swept the Turks and the Germans out of Palestine. There is every reason to believe that within the next month the advancing armies will be in possession of Syria and a considerable portion of Asia Minor. It is significant that Jewish units constitute a part of the victorious army.

Subsequent to the time when Dr. Philipson wrote his letter, President Wilson expressed his personal views in support of the principles laid down in the Balfour Declaration. France, Italy and Greece have formally adopted the terms of that Declaration. There is, therefore, a unanimity in sentiment on the part of the Allied Powers, which make the Balfour Declaration a part of their united policies.

The American Jewish Committee, although its members are in the main non-Zionists, recognized the political importance of the Declaration, and its strategic significance as a factor in the effort to defeat the Central Powers and for strengthening the cause of the Entente. For that reason, and as a result of the most careful deliberation, the committee adopted, with practical unanimity, at a general meeting of all the members, the statement of which I enclose a copy. Major Lionel de Rothschild, who is the President of the League for British Jews, informs me that that organization is in practical agreement with the American Jewish Committee, although he has suggested some changes in phraseology which, under the circumstances, are not feasible.

I am confident that the Balfour Declaration and its acceptance by the other Powers, is an act of the highest diplomacy. It means both more and less than appears on the surface. Zionism is but an incident of a far-reaching plan. It is merely a convenient peg on which to hang a powerful weapon. All the protests that non-Zionists may make would be futile to affect that policy.

If that were the sole consequence of a protest, I would stand mute, but I am confident that action in hostility to the carefully formulated pronouncement of the Allied Gov-

ernments would be resented, the Jews as a whole would be the sufferers, and those engaged in combating what these Governments would regard as their policy would place themselves in serious jeopardy. It would be at once charged that their act tends to give aid and comfort to the enemy. It would subject them individually to hateful and obnoxious investigation. It would put them under suspicion. I could give concrete examples of a most impressive nature in support of what I have said. I am not an alarmist, and even my enemies will give me credit for not being a coward, but my love for our people is such that even if I were disposed to combat Zionism I would shrink from the possibilities which might be entailed were I to do so. I have never been identified and am not now in any way connected with the Zionist organization. I have never favored the creation of a sovereign Jewish State. My interest in Jewish affairs is largely from the religious point of view. Yet I am so impressed with the reasons which I have sought to present to you, that I would regard public antagonism to Zionism at the present time as an act of treachery to the welfare of Judaism. I'm not attempting to criticize anybody else's act. I am only telling you how I would regard my own action in the present circumstances.

Finally, let me say to you as one who has for many years studied Jewish conditions in America and who understands the beating of the public pulse, that nothing would so greatly tend to strengthen the Zionist cause at this time as the holding of a convention whose purpose it is to attack that cause. The Zionists, whether their views be sound or otherwise, are the advocates of an affirmative policy. It is one that appeals to the imagination. It is replete with

poetry. It is regarded by the religious-minded of all creeds as tending to bring about the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. It aims at the reconstruction of a land which has been under the oppressor's heel for centuries and which inspires enthusiasm in the hearts of those not easily stirred. At this moment the entire civilized world is on fire with the inspiration that follows in the wake of a dramatic military victory. What can a handful of men, whose program must be one of negation, accomplish against so positive a program as that of the Zionists, endorsed as it is by the great liberal Powers of the world? The outcome would be pitiable from the standpoint of the anti-Zionists. If I belonged to the Zionist organization I would ask for nothing better than that such a convention as that which you have in mind be held. It would be like Mrs. Partington seeking to keep back the Atlantic Ocean with a broom—you would be simply overwhelmed.

But even that would not concern me. I believe ordinarily that every man should be permitted to seek happiness in his own fashion. But what does concern me is the welfare of the Jewish people, not only in America, but in foreign lands. Knowing as I do the sacrifices that you have made for them, the splendid service that you rendered while abroad in the interest of the Joint Distribution Committee, I regard it as my duty to ask you to do all that lies in your power to defer the holding of any convention of the kind proposed until the war is over. Give me the credit of believing that I am speaking advisedly.

Very cordially yours,

LOUIS MARSHALL.

MR. SENIOR TO MR. MARSHALL

Washington, D. C., Sept. 30, 1918.

MR. LOUIS MARSHALL,

Guggenheimer, Untermeyer & Marshall,
120 Broadway, New York City.

MY DEAR MR. MARSHALL:

I have your favor of the 26th inst. You need make no apologies for addressing me on the Zionist matter. We are hopelessly apart. But I have long foreseen the danger in Zionism and I welcome the opportunity you afford me to express my views.

I have always regarded Zionism as incompatible with Nationalism. I have no divided allegiance. I repudiate any connection on national, religious, racial or cultural grounds, with a "national home land for the Jewish people in Palestine." We have seen how demoralizing a divided allegiance was to the Germans in this country. I do not want to have the Jews repeat that experience. I want to be an American Jew, if the Zionists will let me—I absolutely refuse to be a Jewish American.

I do not pretend to know the inside political history and the intricacies of policy at which you hint. President Wilson has declared for the utmost publicity in state matters and so I know only what is public property. But I cannot see the connection between Zionism and the capture of Palestine. In my opinion the Allies captured Palestine as they are now capturing Bulgaria and redeeming France. Having found that Palestine was a weak

point in the German-Turkish line, they took it, regardless of Zionism or non-Zionism.

I am not to be intimidated into silence by either of the threats you mention; first, that I may incur danger to myself; second, that I may injure the Jews. The former is too trivial to notice. I regard the real danger to Jews to lie in silent acquiescence to the Zionist claims. To my mind, it would be a crime to be silent now.

I had hoped that the Zionists would postpone their political activity until after the war, for I wished to preserve the Jewish solidarity for relief purposes. You recognize that the non-Zionists did not precipitate the rupture. The break was bound to come, of course, but the recent Tammany-like circular to Congressmen was certainly the breaking point.

As to being on the losing side, that presents no terrors to me. I have been on the losing side all my life. I have fought for free trade, municipal reform, Jewish rights, in Russia and Roumania, better housing and similar matters for over twenty years, and have always been defeated. But I continue to protest in these matters and, similarly, I refuse to accept the Zionism coup d'etat as an accomplished and sacred fact.

Finally, you and I and the Zionists know that Palestine offers no solution for the Jewish question in Russia, Galicia and Roumania. Six million Jews in these lands of oppression cannot be removed to Palestine under any circumstances. I certainly have no objection to Jews moving to Palestine, or Persia, or Patagonia, if they can secure freedom in those lands. But emigration is only a palliative. The Jewish question must ultimately be worked out in

Russia, Galicia and Roumania and can be solved only by the adoption of the admirable doctrine of President Wilson, who declared a few days ago that "there shall be a common standard of right and privilege for all peoples and nations.

Yours very truly,

MAX SENIOR.

MR. SENIOR TO MR. MARSHALL

October 14, 1918.

MR. LOUIS MARSHALL,
New York.

DEAR SIR:

The Zionist agitation in the United States and the criminal silence of non-Zionistic Jews have brought us quick and bitter fruit. A leading article in the New Republic of October 5, 1918, characterizes Jews as "aliens among more or less friendly peoples, restricted by law or custom to a narrow range of vocations, ever conscious of a separatist solidarity instead of the general solidarity of which members of a compact nation are conscious."

This is the logical, and, in fact, inevitable deduction from the Zionist argument. Will you, as an individual Jew, as a loyal and devoted American, as President of the American Jewish Committee, allow this statement to go

unchallenged? I hope not. And I trust it will open your eyes to the terrible menace of Zionism to the Jews throughout the world, to which you have been most unaccountably blinded.

Yours truly,

MAX SENIOR.

Attitude of the Reverend Mr. Nathan Krass

AN OPEN LETTER TO DOGMATIC ANTI-ZIONISTS

What will you do if Zionism becomes a reality? You have constantly maintained that the Jews are only a religious denomination. You have reiterated most emphatically that the Jews do not constitute a race. You have minimized almost to the zero point the ethnic aspect of Israel. You have vociferously urged that Judaism is a religion only and that Israel merely means those people who believe in Judaism. You have maintained that inasmuch as the Jews are not a people, they cannot be a nation.

I am very much concerned as to what will become of you in case the Jews under the aegis of the Allies are granted not only full domiciliary rights but also some measure of autonomy politically in Palestine. Will you resign from the Jewish race? Will you change Judaism into monotheism and call yourselves monotheists? Will you deny historical relationship or any other kind of relationship with the Jews who may live as a separate nationality in Palestine?

You have maintained that it is God's will that Israel be

eternally scattered among the peoples of the earth. If Israel should return to Palestine what will you do with your theological asseverations? There are many like myself who, looking into the future, are not only curious but anxious to know what you have in mind in regard to the progress of Judaism in case Zionism becomes a reality.

There are many of us who are not as enthusiastic about the Palestine commonwealth as others are. Nevertheless, we see that such a state of affairs is not only possible, but probable. You evidently deny not only the possibility, not only the probability, not only the desirability, but also the international aspect of restored Zion. What will become of your theological theories, of your philosophic phrases, of your self-assurance in the possession of the secret of God as regards the destiny of Israel? These questions are asked you in good faith. There is no desire to arouse contemptible controversies or to stir up raucous hostility. We want to have clear thinking on all important subjects and I believe a clear and dispassionate answer to the questions I have propounded will be of invaluable interest to those of us who are deeply concerned in the future, not only of Judaism but of the Jews.

Cordially yours,

NATHAN KRASS,
Rabbi Central Synagogue.

New York City, October, 1918.

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