

Zionist congress. 21st, Geneva, 1939.

**MEMORANDUM TO DELEGATES TO THE
TWENTY-FIRST WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS**

1939

[Geneva, 1939]

956:1^u

2

MEMORANDUM TO DELEGATES TO THE TWENTY-FIRST WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS

It is the purpose of this memorandum to discuss briefly the main political issues which must be settled by the Congress. These issues are as follows:

- 1) Leadership: Should Weizmann continue or be replaced in the Presidency of the World Zionist Organization?
- 2) England: Should Zionist resistance to the White Paper go beyond "non-cooperation?"
- 3) Arabs: Should the policy of *havlaga* be modified? In what direction?

To a large degree, the first issue is dependent upon the second and third. If there is no cause for dissatisfaction with the past Zionist administration in its dealings with the Mandatory government and with the Arabs, there is no reason for considering a change in the leadership. It is therefore necessary to leave this issue to the last, and first to discuss Zionist policies toward England and toward the Arabs.

ENGLAND: HOW COMBAT THE WHITE PAPER?

Revisionists and those who accept their outlook say that we must do more than refuse to cooperate with the White Paper policy. They say that the Arabs succeeded in winning respect and new rights by the use of force and that we can counterbalance that victory only by using more force.

But the White Paper is not a concession to Arab force. It is well known that the Mandatory government greatly exaggerated the terror and idealized its character to the outside world. The terror was obviously more an excuse than the reason for the White Paper.

What is the reason for the White Paper? The main reason is the approaching numerical majority of the Jews in Palestine. England wishes to avoid this because she believes that a Jewish majority in Palestine would threaten her control of the country. With a Jewish majority, England could no longer utilize "democratic" principles to justify anti-Zionist restrictions. The whole effect of Zionism is to create in Palestine a Western type of community, based on the use of machinery and on popular literacy. A Western type of community might prove less tractable than a feudal, illiterate community. Finally, England may also have wished to counteract the prestige of the Fascist powers among the Arabs by championing Arab independence in Palestine.

Can Force Help

The Revisionist tactic of "using more force" cannot reverse the White Paper. England served several understandable motives by seeming to bow to Arab force. She has no such motives for seeming to yield to Jewish force. The achievement of a Jewish majority may appear to England a threat at her control; the continuation of the Arab majority cannot be a threat. England has handled Arab majorities before. The development of a progressive, industrial community may appear undesirable to England; the continuation of an undemocratic, ignorant community cannot create concern. The Mufti may threaten to support Germany in war; there is no power opposing England with whom Jews may threaten to form an alliance. A show of Jewish force could not be used by England as an excuse for anything she wants to do. The force would therefore be belittled, widely misrepresented and crushed.

In the eyes of many Zionists, England's actions in Palestine are governed not only by her interests, but also by her

respect for the moral validity of Zionism. Today, England offers two justifications for her anti-Zionist policy: a surprising espousal of "self-determination" for the Arabs, and Lord Halifax's plea of "administrative necessity" (presumably in preparation for a war with Germany). In the face of the plight of Jewish refugees, the White Paper is being enforced with a bad conscience. Jewish terrorism would ease the bad conscience and would undermine the possibility of even partial mitigation of the harsh Palestine policy.

Terrorism would also have a bad effect on American public opinion. Once Zionism lost its high moral stamp, it might be impossible ever again to muster in its favor the American forces which have proved to be of value at critical times past.

The Meaning of Non-cooperation

Against the Revisionist demand to oppose England by force there stands only one alternative: non-cooperation. It is already beginning to be apparent what this means: non-participation in government, non-payment of taxes, avoidance of support of government services, organized evasion of regulations on Jewish immigration, and continued purchase and colonization of land in spite of attempted restrictions. Adoption of this policy implies that there will be no cooperation with England, regardless of any favors or threats on her part, until the fundamental rights of Jewish immigration and colonization in Palestine are once more recognized. The policy impedes execution of the White Paper, and at the same time keeps the Zionist case on the highest political level.

Among the supporters of this policy of non-cooperation there is a difference over the question of how much emphasis this policy must receive. Some would make it the main pillar of Zionist political policy. Others would subordinate it to a new policy toward the Arabs.

The Loyal Opposition

Those to whom non-cooperation with England is primary in Zionist policy always formulate protests against the White Paper in terms of the "higher interests" of England herself. They make of Zionism essentially one section of the "loyal opposition" to Chamberlain policy.

The supporters of this viewpoint are no more realistic than are the Revisionists. The Revisionists argue by analogy from Arab tactics, although, as we have seen, the Arabs and the Jews are not in analogous positions. The pro-British Zionists argue by analogy with former times, although the times have fundamentally changed. So long as the Jews in Palestine were insignificant in numbers, it was possible to allay the fears of some Imperial statesmen that the Jews might some day be in the majority. But they are now within reach of a majority. So long as the British Empire was not on the defensive, the moral claims of Zionism could perhaps be profitably pressed. But now self-preservation and the protection of the *status quo* are becoming the only morality for England. Recent years have given anti-Zionist Arabs the great advantage of being able to threaten a switch of allegiance from England to the Axis. Meanwhile, Zionism has lost tremendously by the destruction of Jewish rights in most of Europe.

Doubtless, there will still be a range of vacillation in British policy between Jewish and Arab demands, which pro-British Zionists can best exploit. But the center of this range moves constantly in an anti-Zionist direction. It helps little to argue that the England of Balfour still lives, while the England of Chamberlain acts against us. It does little good to have faith that somehow the justice of our case must receive official recognition in London, while the Zionist position progressively deteriorates.

If the Revisionists may be expected to outrage public opinion in America, the pro-British Zionists tend to stifle it. Under a policy of insistent loyalty to England, it is impossible to carry on the publicity and free discussion which are necessary to form a widespread public opinion. Facts of British anti-Zionist actions have in the past been suppressed to save England embarrassment.

The difference between the pro-British Zionists and the Revisionists is essentially a difference in tactics and not in objectives. Both believe it is possible (though by different methods) to change England's mind, and both consider this the primary political task now facing the Zionist movement.

A Realistic Perspective

We can change England's mind neither by force nor by education. The rulers of England have their own estimate of how we fit into or conflict with their interests in the Near East. So long as control of Palestine is necessary for the protection of British trade with India, England will not allow the development of an industrial Jewish community. We can and must struggle boldly, both within Palestine and outside, against the execution of the White Paper. We can and must keep the door open to the possibility that the pattern of world forces will sometime in the future support our interests. When this will happen, we cannot tell. We must always be ready for it. *But we cannot rest our hopes fundamentally upon a contingency so remote from our control.* That would be Messianism, not Zionism.

Opposition to terrorism as a political weapon against England; firm non-cooperation with England so long as the White Paper policy continues; subordination of the whole issue of our relations with England to activities which we can more definitely control—these are the policies on the British score indicated by the realities of today.

ARABS: HOW END THEIR OPPOSITION?

The "strong hand" of the Revisionist is in practice not so much anti-British as anti-Arab. In this they follow the lead of the Arab terrorists who find it easier to murder innocent Jewish wayfarers than to attack representatives of the Empire. But there is also a rationale for the anti-Arab tactic. One is told that force is the only language Arabs understand, and that Jews must fight now or themselves be vanquished.

It is probable that the terrorist outrages of recent months against the Arabs have had one effect—to force Arabs who had begun to resist the leadership of the Arab terrorists to give up their resistance. It is well known that large numbers of Arabs—urban and rural—have not willingly supported the terrorist bands. But the actions of the Revisionists seem to prove to them the contentions of the Mufti, that Jews have come to dominate the Arabs of Palestine and that the Arabs must fight now or be destroyed. If unchecked, the Revisionists will make of the Arab terrorism what it has never been—a popular movement of national defense.

Counterpoised to this tactic is only *havlaga*. The spokesmen for self-restraint believe, no less than the Revisionists, in answering attacks and rooting out anti-Jewish terrorists. In fact they, not the Revisionists, have borne the brunt of the self-defense. But they believe that it is necessary to keep clear in our own minds, in the eyes of the Arabs and of the world, that our military vigilance is only for self-defense and that we do not consider conflict between the Arab and Jewish people to be necessary.

Havlaga does not crystallize Arab gangsterism into an Arab national movement. But the passivity of this tactic actually strengthens the appeal of the Revisionists. It does nothing to *end* the attacks, nothing really to liquidate them. It is moral and optimistic, but it does not lead to security.

The principles on which *havlaga* is based need to be carried further. We must do more than merely keep clear the distinction between the non-vocal Arabs and the Arab terrorists. We must deepen, crystallize, and organize that distinction.

This does not require that the Zionist Organization follow the lead of the Brith Shalom in searching for friends among the influential Arabs. Most of these Arabs are members of wealthy landlord families, whose long-time interests (the preservation of "landlord rule") are fundamentally opposed to the interests of Zionism. Arab landowners gain, as individuals, from Zionism; they can sell their land at greatly inflated prices. But Zionism brings capitalism to Palestine; the rule of the landlords is based on feudalism; the landlords will fight for a continuation of aristocratic supremacy in Arab society; they will therefore use the very financial profits which Zionism brings to fight the progress of Zionism. A program meeting with the approval of the Arab landlord group cannot at the same time answer the needs of Zionism.

What To Do

Far more important is the establishment of cooperative activities between Jewish and Arab business men, between Jewish and Arab laboring men, and between Jewish and Arab peasants. Jewish construction in Palestine brings more than material benefit to these classes of Arabs. It also brings them the possibility of freedom from feudal domination. For these classes Zionism makes possible a democratic Arab political and cultural movement. These classes have suffered together with the Jews from the years of terror. In many places they have refused to support terrorist action and sometimes have given aid to Jews.

Some feudal leaders have also resisted the terror but their

resistance is mainly an expression of rivalry with the Mufti for the personal leadership of the feudal society. The program of the "moderate" Nashishibis is as anti-Zionist as the program of the Mufti. Members of the business and working and farming classes have had no voice in making programs. Members of these classes, making up well over ninety-five per cent of the Arabs of Palestine, actually stand to gain from Zionism.

Many of them do not know this and the few who do lack the means for acting by it. We must clearly demonstrate this unity of interest over and over. The following list of joint actions which Jews can institute with Arabs is suggestive: campaigns for revised import duties, for tax reforms, for better credit facilities, for schools, roads, and hospitals; establishment of trade unions, marketing cooperatives, and credit co-operatives.

At the same time that we demonstrate joint Jewish-Arab interests in action, we must drive the point home to Arabs by effective political propaganda. By every means of education available, we must expose to Arabs the selfish class interests of anti-Zionist "nationalist" Arab leadership. We must be ready to encourage *bona fide* Arab organizations whose programs oppose this leadership. We must build a network of local peace pacts between Jews and Arabs. Jews must crush their own anti-Arab terror as they expect Arabs to crush their anti-Jewish terror. The Arabs must know of this attitude on our part.

Necessary for Life

This program toward the Arabs will be immediately branded by some as "impractical." They will speak of the ignorance and the backwardness of most Arabs, of the iron grip of the Mufti and the effendis, and of Jewish isolation from Arabs which makes joint activities very difficult. They

will complain that any program which raises the level of Arab living beyond that which Zionist activity cannot avoid raising it tends to "fill up" Palestinian opportunities with Arabs, and to limit the opportunities for Jews.

The truth is that such a program would have sounded "impractical" in the early days of the Mandate, because it was believed that our task could be accomplished without it. But now England has clearly defined her interests and these are anti-Zionist. The Mandate is renounced, our political strength in the Galut is yearly diminishing, and we may find ourselves in the not distant future with no natural ally in the world except these same "ignorant, backward Arabs."

Under these circumstances, Zionism has no choice but to undertake such a program. There is no question that results will come slowly, that there will be many setbacks, and that the cost in men and money will be very great.

The attitude of Zionists toward this program is the greatest barrier to be overcome. At this moment, there are individual Jews who know the Arab language and Arab life who are not being utilized for educational and political work. There are opportunities for peace pacts between Arab villages and Jewish colonies which are not being thoroughly exploited.

The program of Herzl to win international recognition for Zionism was not easily achieved, but it was clearly necessary, and *it was done*. The program of chalutzit to establish a new type of Jew on the soil of Eretz Israel was also no light task, but it too was clearly necessary, and *it was done*. Today's need, without which we face only bloody self-destruction, is Arab-Jewish cooperation. It cannot be "impractical." *It is necessary for our life.*

A rejection of retaliatory terrorism; rejection of superficial "discussions" with intellectuals and landlords; implementation by the Jewish Agency of the principles of *havlaga*

through a well organized campaign for Arab-Jewish cooperation; concentration on this program as the main pillar of Zionist political policy—these are the policies on the Arab score demanded by our needs.

LEADERSHIP

For some Zionists, the real issue of the Congress is whether or not Weizmann shall continue as president of the World Zionist Organization. They believe that the White Paper marks the bankruptcy of his leadership, that he should have resigned voluntarily, and that we can best symbolize our determination to resist the White Paper by replacing him in office.

The fact is that Weizmann has been a leading supporter of the policy of strong loyalty to England and of *havlaga*. Under his leadership, too much energy has been wasted in attempting to educate England and too little spent in organizing and educating the Arabs. Should he be replaced?

To answer this question we must understand the opposition to Weizmann not only in theory but also as it is likely to work out in practice.

Who Opposes Weizman?

Dissatisfaction with Weizmann stems from several sources. First, Weizmann symbolizes for many Zionists the insistent loyalty to England which has been discredited by the White Paper. Second, while verbally committed to a belief in Arab-Jewish unity, Weizman has achieved little in this field. Third, Weizmann's social progressiveness is disliked by Revisionists and Group B General Zionists. Fourth, the policy of *havlaga* is identified by many with Weizmann, and those who oppose *havlaga* and desire anti-Arab terror would like to depose Weizmann.

Those who oppose Weizmann because of his progressiveness and his opposition to terrorism are following a clear, consistent course. They have opposed Weizmann before. *What is new is the unique opportunity to unseat Weizman with the aid of liberal Zionist forces.* They have had little success in the past with frontal anti-progressive attacks. But at this moment of deep general disappointment, they may come forward with the offer of "strong men to lead Zionism away from defeat toward success."

The Danger of "Symbolism"

Those who oppose Weizmann because of Zionist inability correctly to define and cope with British interests and because of inactivity with the Arabs are not equally clear and consistent. Practically the entire Zionist movement has supported Weizmann in these matters. *What is obviously needed is not so much a change in leadership as a change in policy.* Concentration on the symbolical task of changing the leadership may prevent the full discussion necessary to the formulation of a correct new policy.

It is probable that the majority of any anti-Weizmann vote would be motivated by a desire for a more correct emphasis on work with England and on work with the Arabs. If this majority could replace Weizmann with a man who has always been properly wary of England and sensitive to the need for Arab-Jewish cooperation, who is socially progressive, and who can maintain the unity of the Zionist movement, then this choice would be ideal. But if there is no such man, the only existing center about which anti-Weizmann forces may rally is the Group B anti-progressive leadership. These anti-progressives are better organized than any other critics of Weizmann. It therefore appears likely that a victory for the anti-Weizmann coalition would give materially greater repre-

sentation for Group B in the Executive and might even give them effective control.

What would control of the World Zionist Organization by Group B mean? It would certainly mean a "strong" tone toward England, at least verbally. But this can also be achieved by Congress decision and instruction of Weizmann or by a new liberal leadership. Group B control would bring a "stronger" tone with the Arabs—but more in the direction of militancy than of economic and political cooperation. A liberal leadership could far better implement a thorough program of joint Jewish-Arab action and of Arab political education. Group B control would probably mean a breakdown of the progressive social structure of the Yishuv, in the name of "national unity." It might lead to a re-entry of the Revisionists into the World Zionist Organization, bringing with them undisciplined factionalism.

It is unnecessary to risk the unity and progressiveness of the Zionist movement for the questionable gain of Group B's "expert" leadership. Questions of personality, of "a new type of leadership" must not be allowed to overshadow the real issues. *A fight against Weizmann may symbolize disappointment with the White Paper. But the answer to the White Paper must be a carefully reformulated program toward England and toward the Arabs.* A new liberal leadership could best implement this program. However, Weizmann can also be depended upon to carry out the policy of the Congress. The great need is the formulation of the policy.

Immigration, Land and Construction

Although the questions of continued land purchase, immigration, and settlement are not likely to be controversial questions at the Congress, these issues cannot be excluded from a summary of Zionist political policies. Our practical achieve-

ments in the Yishuv will continue to be, as always, the most important factors in the shaping of our future. There is no question that there must be in the leadership of Zionism a man who appreciates the importance of practical work and who is able to represent and unify all the constructive elements of the Yishuv.

ZIONIST NEEDS

Our task is to face Zionist needs and to reject all else—to reject hope in “strong men,” to reject mystical faith in England, to reject the demands of party ties, to reject the allurements of symbolical solutions.

Our needs can be listed as:

- 1) Complete non-cooperation with England so long as she retains the White Paper policy.
- 2) A great emphasis on the creation of economic and political unity with Arabs of the business, labor and farming classes.
- 3) Re-affirmation of the unity and progressiveness of Zionism.
- 4) Increased practical work in and for the Yishuv.

Every Zionist delegate knows that to rise to these needs demands great honesty and courage. World events have forced us to revise our political outlook fundamentally. Even loyalty to political parties must be transcended, if the parties lag in facing Zionist needs. The Zionist movement must move into the new era signalized by the White Paper armed not only with justice but also with clarity and with a positive program of action.

JUL 28 1939

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
LIBRARY