

1939

CONFIDENTIAL COPY FOR MR. WALLACE

THE RECORD OF
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
IN RE PALESTINE

33

Report of the Executive Committee

at the

Twelfth Annual Meeting, November 10, 1918

The Balfour Declaration removed the future of the Jews in Palestine from the realm of idealistic conjecture and political propaganda to the plane of a practical probability if not a reality. It opened up a vista of inspiring possibilities which filled all Jews with a sacred enthusiasm.

Your Committee, desirous of joining in this general acclaim of all Jews and express its willingness to aid in the realization of the success of this great and responsible undertaking, made a careful study of the Balfour Declaration and drafted a statement of such views of it as was felt would be endorsed by the great majority of American Jews, irrespective of their previous attitude toward the subject. This statement, submitted to you for ratification at a special meeting called for that purpose on April 20th last, in New York City, was adopted by you. It is well to repeat it at this time:

"The American Jewish Committee was organized primarily to obtain for the Jews in every part of the world civil and religious rights, to protect them against unfavorable discrimination, and to secure for them equality of economic, social and educational opportunity. These will continue to be its objects.

"The Committee regards it as axiomatic that the Jews of the United States have here established a permanent home for themselves and their children, have acquired the rights and assumed the correlative duties of American citizenship, and recognize their unqualified allegiance to this country, which they love and cherish and of whose people they constitute an integral part.

"This Committee, however, is not unmindful that there are Jews everywhere who, moved by traditional sentiment, yearn for a home in the Holy Land for the Jewish people. This hope, nurtured for centuries, has our whole-hearted sympathy. We recognize, however, that but a part of the Jewish people would take up their domicile in Palestine. The greater number will continue to live in the lands

of whose citizenship they now form a component part, where they enjoy full civil and religious liberty, and where as loyal and patriotic citizens, they will maintain and develop the principles and institutions of Judaism,

"When, therefore, the British Government recently made the declaration, now supported by the French Government, that 'they view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object,' the announcement was received by this Committee with profound appreciation. The conditions annexed to this declaration are regarded as of essential importance, stipulating as they do that 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.' These conditions correspond fully with the general purposes for which this Committee has striven and with the ideals of the Jews of America.

"The opportunity will be welcomed by this Committee to aid in the realization of the British Declaration, under such protectorate or suzerainty as the Peace Congress may determine, and, to that end, to cooperate with those who, attracted by religious or historic associations, shall seek to establish in Palestine a center for Judaism, for the stimulation of our faith, for the pursuit and development of literature, science and art in a Jewish environment, and for the rehabilitation of the land."

MEMORIAL ON PALESTINE.

The President:

As representatives of the delegates elected at the American Jewish Congress, held in Philadelphia December 18, 1918, we respectfully ask that the Peace Conference recognize the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine; that such action be taken by the Conference as shall vest the sovereign possession of Palestine in such League of Nations as may be formed and that the Government thereof be entrusted to Great Britain as the mandatory or trustee of the League.

Under this mandate or trusteeship, Palestine should be placed under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment there of a Jewish National Home and will ultimately render possible the creation of an autonomous commonwealth, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country, that there shall be forever the fullest freedom of religious worship for all creeds in Palestine, and that there shall be no discrimination among the inhabitants with regard to citizenship and civil rights on the ground of religion or of race.

THE HISTORIC BASIS FOR THESE CLAIMS.

Palestine is the historic home of the Jews. There they achieved their greatest development. From that center, through their agency, there emanated spiritual and moral influences of supreme value to mankind. By violence they were driven from Palestine, and through

note:
This organ
which opened
in 1920 is
not to be
confused
with the
existing
American
Jewish
Congress
which
was
established
in 1924.

attain such standards. Local autonomous communities shall be empowered and encouraged to combine and cooperate for common purposes.

(4) Assistance shall be rendered from the public funds for the education of the inhabitants, without distinction of race or creed. Hebrew shall be one of the official languages and shall be employed in all documents, decrees and announcements issued by the Government.

(5) The Jewish Sabbath and Holy Days shall be recognized as legal days of rest.

(6) The established rights of the present population shall be equitably safeguarded.

(7) All inhabitants of Palestine who on a date to be specified, shall have their domicile therein, except those who, within a period to be stated, shall in writing elect to retain their citizenship in any other country, shall be citizens of Palestine, and they and all persons born in Palestine or naturalized under its laws after the day named, shall be citizens thereof and entitled to the protection of the mandatary or trustee.

We are confident, Mr. President, that in common with the representatives of the Allied Governments, you will lend to these aspirations the powerful support which through you the American people is ready to exert at this historic moment.

Respectfully submitted,

JULIAN W. MACK,

LOUIS MARSHALL,

STEPHEN S. ~~HESS~~ *Wise*

March 1, 1919.

February 12, 1918; Italy, February 25, 1918; Greece, March 14, 1918; Holland, April 25, 1918; Siam, August 22, 1918; China, December 14, 1918; Japan, December 27, 1918.

President Wilson replied to the Memorial concerning the rights of the Jewish people in Palestine, as follows:

WHITE HOUSE, March 2, 1919

As for your representations touching Palestine, I have before this expressed my personal approval of the declaration of the British Government regarding the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine. I am, moreover, persuaded that the Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our own Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.

WOODROW WILSON¹

President Wilson returned to Paris on March 14, 1919; but no action was taken on the establishment of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine during the remainder of the Peace Conference. It is a fact, however, that on March 20, during a secret session of the Four Heads of States — President Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando — the question of partitioning Turkey under the old secret treaties came up for discussion.² The minutes disclose the President's opposition to both French and British claims.

It is indeed true that the Jews were fruitfully active while the Peace Conference was sitting. Though the Conference itself gave no definite answer to the demands for a Jewish National Home, the Allied Powers, after the meeting in Paris, proceeded to put their program into effect. We have seen, how at San Remo,³ the Mandate for Palestine was awarded to Great Britain; and that three months later, civil government was established and a Jew appointed High Commissioner.

We have seen, also, how the Council of the League of Nations approved the first⁴ and also the revised⁵ draft man-

¹ This letter is printed in the same document containing the Memorial.

² Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, vol. II, pp. 26, 27. See vol. III, Document 1, for full minutes of this meeting.

³ *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. Edited by H. W. V. Temperley. Published under the auspices of the Institute of International Affairs. Vol. VI, pp. 505-06, 519, 521-23, and Appendix V, p. 645.

⁴ Cmd. 1176 (1921).

⁵ Cmd. 1500 (1921).

Resolution Adopted by the Sixty-Seventh
Congress of the United States

Sixty-seventh Congress of the United States of America; at the Second Session, begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the fifth of December, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two.

JOINT RESOLUTION favoring the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people.

RESOLVED by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the United States of America favors the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of Christian and all other non-Jewish communities in Palestine, and that the holy places and religious buildings and sites in Palestine shall be adequately protected.

(Signed) T. H. GILLETTE,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,

ALBERT B. CUMMINS,
President of the Senate Pro Tempore.

Approved:

September 21, 1922.

(Signed) WARREN G. HARDING.

Resolutions Adopted at the Annual Meeting
of The American Jewish Committee, January, 1938

WHEREAS, The American Jewish Committee, at a special meeting held on April 28, 1918, greeted with profound appreciation the Balfour Declaration issued by the British Government; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 1919, The American Jewish Committee joined with other bodies in submitting a memorial to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, asking that the Peace Conference recognize the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine, and that the government of Palestine 'be entrusted to Great Britain as the Mandatory or Trustee'; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Allied Council meeting at San Remo on April 24, 1920, did actually entrust the Mandate of Palestine to Great Britain, embodying the Balfour Declaration, and providing for the establishment of a Jewish Agency as a body authorized to represent Jewish interests in Palestine; and

WHEREAS, in 1929, the then President and other officers of The American Jewish Committee took a leading part in the establishment of the extended Jewish Agency; and

WHEREAS, the Royal Commission appointed by the British Government to investigate recent disorders in Palestine, has submitted a report in which it proposes the partitioning of Palestine;

NOW, therefore, be it resolved:

THAT, The American Jewish Committee expresses its opposition to this proposal with regard to Palestine which ignores all of the guarantees embodied in the Balfour Declaration, to wit: 'His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'.

RESOLVED THAT The American Jewish Committee opposes the partition plan recently proposed and, until another solution that will preserve the guarantees of the Balfour Declaration is offered by the British Government, favors the continuance of the present Mandate; and

THAT, The American Jewish Committee expresses its confidence in the sense of justice and fairness of the people of Great Britain and its hope that the British Government will not implement any proposal not in harmony with the Balfour Declaration and the provisions of the Mandate that has been entrusted to them;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

THAT The American Jewish Committee pledges its cooperation to other bodies, particularly the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to help bring about a just, equitable and workable solution of the present Palestine problem and authorizes the President and Chairman of the Executive Committee to take all steps deemed by them necessary to implement this resolution.

CABLEGRAM

Addressed to Weizmann

October 7, 1938

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE EXPRESSES THE EARNEST HOPE
THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MANDATE FOR PALESTINE IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

(signed) STROCK

STATEMENT TO CORPORATE MEMBERS

Immediately upon learning of the recent crisis in Palestine affairs, the American Jewish Committee sent Mr. Waldman, its executive director, to England. Mr. Waldman has conferred with the persons best informed in Europe, including Jews and non-Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists, and has kept in touch with our office by cable.

As can readily be realized, the situation is not simple, but very complex, as Palestine is one of the many difficult focal points growing out of the cataclysm in European affairs generally.

It is the purpose of our Committee, by all legitimate means, to endeavor to keep the doors of Palestine open for immigration of our afflicted brethren and to protect them within the framework of the Balfour Declaration. We are keeping unremittingly at that task.

Meanwhile, in our own country, we are encouraging and cooperating in all proper efforts to enlist the interest of our fellow-Americans. These efforts, we believe, will not be furthered, but will be hampered, by emotional appeals upon the government of Great Britain at mass meetings or otherwise.

Sol M. Stroock

Chairman, the Executive Committee

October 19th 1938

March 13, 1939

The Honorable, the Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

At a regular meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee I was requested to ask you to be good enough to convey to the government of Great Britain the following statement of the views of the Committee regarding the discussions now in progress respecting Palestine: The American Jewish Committee expresses its confidence in the sense of justice and fairness of the government and people of Great Britain and its hope that the British Government will not adopt any policy in respect of Palestine which is not in harmony with the Balfour Declaration and the provisions of the Mandate entrusted to the British Government by the allied and associated Powers and the League of Nations. Specifically the American Jewish Committee strongly hopes that Palestine will continue to remain open to the immigration of Jews to the extent of its absorptive capacity and that no steps will be taken which would impede the continued development of the Jewish national home in Palestine. We earnestly hope that you will see your way to communicate this statement to the British Foreign Office or to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in connection with conferences which are now going on in London.

Cyrus Adler, President
386 Fourth Avenue

July 19, 1939

NLT
RIGHT HONORABLE NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON

THE UNDERSIGNED PROTEST AGAINST THE CLOSING OF THE DOORS OF PALESTINE TO ALL JEWISH IMMIGRANTS FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD BEGINNING OCTOBER FIRST AS ANNOUNCED BY COLONIAL SECRETARY MACDONALD AND APPEAL TO THE ENGLISH PEOPLE AND THEIR GOVERNMENT TO AVERT THIS PUNITIVE ACTION AGAINST THE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF AN UNPARALLELED PERSECUTION STOP THE SOCALLED ILLEGAL REFUGEE IMMIGRATION THAT BEATS AGAINST THE GATES OF PALESTINE IS AN ENFORCED IMMIGRATION DRIVEN TO SEEK SANCTUARY IN THE PROMISED LAND WHICH NEITHER ENGLAND NOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE CAN CONTROL OR RESTRAIN STOP IT IS A PROBLEM THAT SHOULD APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WHOLE CIVILIZED WORLD STOP TO MEET THIS PROBLEM BY PUNISHING THE VICTIMS OF RUTHLESS OPPRESSION AND BY RETALIATION AGAINST THE BUILDERS OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME SHOULD BE REPUGNANT TO THE BRITISH PEOPLE AND THEIR GOVERNMENT WITH THEIR HONORED TRADITION OF FAIR PLAY AND SERVICE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITY

Zionist Organization of America	Stephen S. Wise Acting President
American Jewish Committee	Cyrus Adler President Sol M. Stroock Chairman Executive Committee
American Jewish Congress	Louis Lipsky Vice President
Hadassah Womens Zionist Organization	Judith Epstein President
Mizrachi Organization	Leon Gellman President
Poale Zion	David Wertheim Secretary