

JEWISH NATIONALISM

The principle of the "right of self-determination" has not yet been clearly defined or accompanied by guiding rules for its application. One result has been the discovery of "nations crowding to be born"—of the existence of national self-consciousness where unsuspected, and of confused racial situations, as in Hungary—where no practical rules could be devised to insure without discrimination this right of self-determination.

There has been no attempt to limit the application of this principle either in a political or in a historical sense. There has been no indication to what an extent historic wrongs might properly be righted. The privilege of raising embarrassing questions concerning the rights of the Egyptians, of the Irish, of the Filipinos and the negroes, not to mention other nationalistic problems, has in no way been circumscribed. Apparently there is no limit to the tendency to undermine the foundations of existing political arrangements. Everything is subject to challenge and revision: a situation that presages many years of uncertainty and unrest.

One of the most interesting nationalistic problems raised by this war is that of Jewish claims to Palestine. The Zionist movement of course has long favored the return of Jewish colonists to the home of the race. But this movement had no political significance until after the famous declaration on the subject by Mr. Balfour, British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in November, 1918, following the occupation of Jerusalem by General Allenby's forces. This declaration was addressed to Lord Rothschild, the leading representative of Jews in England, and read as follows:

The Government view with favor the establishment of Palestine as 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 will be done that may prejudice the civil or religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.

The effect of this declaration on the scattered members of the Jewish race was almost dramatic. To many it was the realization of Talmudic prophecies; to Zionists the achievement of their dearest hopes; and to all Jews a historic event appealing poignantly to their emotions.

The Zionists were quick to follow up this important declaration

by the adoption of plans for the immediate penetration of Palestine under the ægis of British military occupation. A British Zionist Commission was organized with the consent and active coöperation of the Government to proceed to Palestine for purposes of investigation and counsel. A few foreign representatives were permitted to be added, one of whom, Mr. Walter Myer, was an American.

This commission reached Palestine early in April, 1918, and proceeded to play a most active rôle. Among other things, it concerned itself in the administration of relief to needy Jews, in organizing Jewish civic communities, in advising with the military authorities, in political negotiations of a varied character, and in investigating conditions generally. One of the most impressive acts of the commission was the laying of the foundation-stone of a Jewish university on a spur of the Mount of Olives. Instruction in this institution is to be entirely in Hebrew, and is to be open to all nationalities.

The commission was particularly preoccupied with political questions affecting the Moslems and the Christians, who had become greatly perturbed over the prospective establishment of a Jewish State. The Zionists endeavored to allay these fears by assurances to the effect that they did not seek political independence, but desired merely freedom for Jews to settle in Palestine under the protection of a liberal régime such as Great Britain would afford. They interpreted the words "national home" used by Balfour as having only a moral and ethical sense, and as having no political significance whatever. These efforts were apparently without success, as the Moslems and Christians have made common cause in refusing to sell any more land to Jews and in generally antagonizing the plans of the Zionists.

Despite the protestations of some Zionists, there can be no doubt about the awakening of Jewish national self-consciousness as a result of the declaration by Balfour. The attempt to limit the meaning of "national home" has failed, and most Zionists now advocate openly the foundation of a "Jewish State." The arguments in behalf of this scheme stress not so much the need of an asylum for oppressed Jews, as they do the need of a national rallying point. The heart of Zionism seems to be the preservation of the solidarity and integrity of the Jewish race. Its main objective is to arrest the process of assimilation of Jews throughout the world by reviving their sentiment of loyalty to the old home of their race.

As has been pointed out, the principle of the right of self-determination has not been so clearly defined as to indicate to what extent historic wrongs may be righted. It would not appear reasonable, however, to attempt to revive claims reverting eighteen hundred years ago. The dispersal of the Jews was so complete as to make it impossible for them to maintain even the nucleus of a national culture or preserve any real historic continuity. What militates more forcibly still against the demand for a Jewish State is the fact that Palestine has come to have a very special significance for Christians and Moslems as well as for the Jews. It is truly a "holy land" for them all; and no one sect or race can now claim with justice any special privileges.

It is this fact of the international significance of Palestine that makes it impossible to consider Jewish nationalistic claims on a par with the claims, say, of the Poles, the Czechs, or of the Albanians. The right of self-determination in these instances does not encounter the difficulties of a religious and of a historic character that it does in the case of the Jews. The problem is unique and can only be solved in some unique fashion. The solution, however, might not be as difficult as would now appear, provided all parties were willing to concede the international significance of Palestine. In this age of "internationalism" there could hardly be found a more suitable spot for the practical application of the idea of internationalization than in the land revered by the three great theistic religions which have exerted so profound an influence on the world.

If the Jewish race is determined to resist all assimilative tendencies and to preserve its integrity, and is not satisfied with the internationalization of Palestine, there would seem to be but one other alternative, namely, in a much larger spirit of tolerance and a more liberal attitude on the part of nations toward the foreigner within their gates. Modern ideas of sovereignty have been much affected by feudal notions to the effect that "a man was possessed by the land"; and has identified national jurisdiction with territory. Lorimer once pointed out that the idea of a nation without territory, as in the case of the Jews and the Gypsies, was not utterly unreasonable, provided they were permitted to preserve their peculiar institutions under a régime of the character such as has prevailed in Turkey, Persia, Siam, China, and elsewhere. Under the "extritorial" or "personal" theory of sovereignty, great concessions might be made to the

peoples of many nationalities who wished to preserve their own national and racial ideals, provided, of course, that these ideals in no way imperilled the morals and public security of the sovereign state granting these concessions.

It is doubtless too much to expect so liberal and tolerant an attitude among nations today. In spite of many internationalizing agencies, most nations today are still more or less chauvinistic, and, in a sense, bigoted in their jealous adherence to their own ways and ideas. But it is this very fact that makes the need for mutual toleration all the greater. Nowhere is this need more apparent than in the case of the Jew. He must either seek a "national home," or obtain a much greater measure of tolerance than has yet been accorded to his race or any other race, or he must reconcile himself to the gradual loss of his racial identity. These are the alternatives before him. The problem of the right of self-determination in the case of the Jew is by all odds the most baffling of the many nationalistic claims now clamoring for recognition. It is not strange that the Peace Conference in Paris has been unable to find a solution.

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