

OPENING SPEECH

*Delivered before the 13th ZIONIST CONGRESS, on 6th August, 1923,
at CARLSBAD, by*

Mr. NAHUM SOKOLOW, *Chairman of the Zionist Executive.*

Honoured Congress,—In the history of our movement there have been few more eventful periods than the period since the last Congress, upon which we are looking back to-day. Successes and disappointments, severe struggles and new problems have followed rapidly, one after another.

In the internal work of our organisation we have undoubtedly advanced, and the period from 1921 to 1923 marks clearly a stage further in our progress. We can look back on a successful extension of our propaganda. The local organisations in different countries and the societies have been increasingly active; the Federations, each in its own manner, have developed



satisfactorily; the junior societies, the great importance of which is not to be disputed, are constantly adding to their membership.

“KEREN HAYESOD.”

The constant development of Zionism in every direction is best shown by the history of the Keren Hayesod. This institution was first founded a few years ago; we endowed it in the beginning only with these two Hebrew words—it was the first of our institutions to receive none but a Hebrew name. The Keren Hayesod was born in that time of stress, at our London Conference of 1920, when fear overtook us and

a feeling of infinite loneliness overcame us in face of the gigantic task and duties before us, though in the end we were able to persuade ourselves that there were still causes for encouragement and to close our Conference upon a note of hopefulness. And even though the material results achieved by the Keren Hayesod are but a fraction of what was aimed at, even though there are still many classes of Jews who do not acknowledge the claims of this institution or have not even heard of it, even though the ideal form of the voluntary tax, the Maaser or tithe, is at present accepted by few as the principle governing their collaboration, yet we know well the reasons of these deficiencies. The whole world is suffering from a severe economic crisis; large sections of Jewry—and precisely those who would be most in sympathy with us—are cut off from communication with us, or live in such abnormal conditions that their contributions are almost insignificant; and finally, the Keren Hayesod has been at work only for three years. In those three years this institution has, however, gained such a position that it has become one of the most popular institutions of the Jewish people, it has placed a uniting band round the whole of the Diaspora, it has become a centre of life and a bridge uniting Zionists with those Jews who are outside the Zionist Organisation yet are desirous of building Eretz Israel.

A full report on the work of this institution will be given to you. We shall only try to indicate in general what has been achieved by our organisation. Free from any narrow party spirit, anxious to unite the widest sections of Jewry under the banner of work for Palestine, we have given to the Keren Hayesod the character of a Jewish institution, free from other distinctions. If the two words Keren Hayesod have now in the world of Jewry something of the magnetic power of the ancient sacred words “*Sh'ma Israel*,” if these words have drawn together almost 400,000 Jews in all the countries of the world, and have brought them not merely to express agreement but to bring sacrifices for the fund, in order to promote the reconstruction of Palestine, this in itself is the best proof of the spread of Zionism among the Jewish people and of the potent activity of the Zionist Organisation.

AMERICA.

We owe this success for the most part to our brethren in America. We have the pleasure of being able to state that Zionism in America has advanced with gigantic strides. Those who are working and fighting for us in that great country have not only increased numerically, but have attained a concentration of purpose and a depth of feeling which justifies the confident hope that the Zionist ideal is destined, in one form or another, to unite all the Jews of America under its banner.

THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES IN ENGLAND.

The progress of the Zionist idea among the Jews of the dispersion is to be seen in the resolution passed by the oldest Jewish organisation in England, the Board of Deputies (with which the Anglo-Jewish Association expressed its agreement) in favour of assisting in the reconstruction of Palestine. This resolution was preceded by a lively discussion of the question among the Jewish public of England. A number of our Zionist workers and friends of Zion devoted all their efforts, all their energies, to the service of our cause, they pressed incessantly for a clear decision on the part of this organisation, and they did not allow the burning ardour of their enthusiasm to be quenched either by cool calculation or by checks and difficulties, until they had achieved the desired result.

JEWISH PUBLIC OPINION IN POLAND.

Should there still be any doubt as to the significance of Zionism for the Jewish masses, it would be enough to point to the results registered by the Jews in Poland a year ago at the Parliamentary elections. It is not our business here to deal with the politics of any one country. We would only emphasise that Zionism is the greatest rallying force existing among the Jewish people. The united voice of the Jewish people in Poland has affirmed this.

THE IDEALISM OF THE "HALUZIM."

This idealism (there can be no question of any material motive), which is more and more penetrating the Jews of the world, is a product of Palestine. We are all living on the silent heroism of our brethren in Palestine. We reap a thousandfold what they sow. By drinking deeply time and again from the springs of longing and of enthusiasm, which these truly noble men have laid bare with their gallant labours, we have been able to increase our moral possessions and our influence. No one who has an eye for touching simplicity of mind can avoid being affected by the spell of the *Haluzim*. There is, indeed, the fountain of youth for our nation! The young, whose intelligence, sincere feeling and readiness to sacrifice are worthy of our nation, who are our pride and our future, have again shown, during the period since the last Congress, what men can endure and achieve, when moved by an ideal, when aglow with a great longing. The ardent vigour of these young people, who, in an arena of trying toil, suffer and struggle, battle and rejoice, has become a spectacle, which wins the admiration of the most indifferent, the most alien spectator. It is the keynote of Jewish hope, overpowering all minor themes, the joyous hymn of praise to national emancipation through labour.

Connected with the pioneer work in Palestine is the work for Palestine in the diaspora, the training of pioneers, *Hachscharah*. To this important work the most careful attention must be devoted, and a report on the subject will be submitted to the Congress.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN PALESTINE.

When we speak of pioneers, we do not confine ourselves to the "Haluzim" of recent years—we think also of the older pioneers of colonisation, the artisans and traders, and above all those who have taught the young. Home and school are for us inseparable. For it is not only the daily bread but also the bread of the spirit which we must have, and all honour to those who

supply it to the people. They are the men who preserve for our future the greatest treasure. Honour to those who, with anxious work, supply the bread of knowledge and who teach the young that the spirit of the Jewish people must grow and blossom in the Jewish heart! They have placed themselves at the service of education and have given to it their best heart's blood with inexpressible devotion. They have achieved the super-human in order to maintain the national educational system, which had been erected with such great labour and heavy sacrifices—they have maintained it, even if many less important positions have had to be given up. We follow their efforts with the closest attention and are ready with sincere zeal to make sacrifices, according to the measure of our means, for the maintenance and the development of national education.

CULTURAL LINKS BETWEEN PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA.

This work has a preserving and fertilising effect on the Jews throughout the world. All the new Hebrew elementary and secondary schools in Eastern Europe and elsewhere obtain their teachers, their models and their Hebrew vocabulary from Palestine. This great field for activity in the Diaspora, which claims in all an immeasurable amount of Zionist will-power, energy and sacrifice, has, it is true, no direct and official connection with our Zionist Central Organisation, and is left in charge of the Zionist Federations in the different countries or of the *Tarbut*. But it is in this way alone that Zionism can not only spread temporarily and superficially, but can root itself firmly in the growing generation. If the educational work in Palestine were weakened, this work in the Diapora would collapse. This must not be. Zionism is closely connected with the Hebrew movement, and in recognition of this fact we have also renewed the publication of our Hebrew organ, *Haolam*, and are glad to be able to state that during the brief period of its publication the journal has secured a wide circle of readers.

PROGRESS IN PALESTINE.

The educational work in Palestine is being maintained, and some remarkable advances should be noted. In the report you will see details concerning the work of the new Board of Governors (*Kuratorium*) of the Technical School in Haifa. The fine building has been completed and will soon be in use. The trustees of the Wolffsohn Fund, which is intended to perpetuate the name of our late President, David Wolffsohn, in Palestine, have decided to build a David Wolffsohn House in Jerusalem. This house will be the first great monumental building erected by the Jews to serve a secular purpose. In it, the National and University Library will be permanently housed, and for some decades, too, the building will provide shelter for the Faculty of Arts and Letters, for the Jewish Historical Archives selected from the material collected by Herzl and Wolffsohn, and likewise for the Zionist Archives. We are thus approaching the realisation of the projected Hebrew University, which will begin its work with the opening of the Medical Institute and the Faculty of Arts and Letters.

The transference of our oldest Zionist institution, the Jewish National Fund, to Palestine, is an important step on the way to the centralisation of our work in Palestine. We are confident that this institution, which has been supported from the beginning of modern Zionism by the loyalty and affection of the greater sections of the Jewish people and on the success of

which the very foundations of our colonisation are dependent, will develop in accordance with the high importance of its tasks. The Palestine Land Development Company has progressed greatly during this period.

If we add that the Rutenberg electrical project is being carried out, that certain industrial undertakings are being started by the investment of capital, that steps are being taken to provide the necessary mortgage credits, that the building of houses has assumed a relatively large scale, that the former oppressive elevation of prices has been not inconsiderably reduced, that the tourist industry increases with the improvements in communications, and that, most important of all, a number of new settlements have been brought into being, you will admit, without being guilty of undue optimism, that in spite of the great anxieties of the day and of the almost snail-like rate of progress of the work of construction, there are signs of a firm, though not too obvious, progress. In every incipient undertaking there are moments when most people can see no progress; such moments cause dissatisfaction, but they prove nothing. And finally, we should like to mention that name which has come to be so dear to the Jewish people in connection with Eretz Israel: Baron Edmond de Rothschild. This noble friend of Palestine stands loyally and actively by the banner of reconstruction and his work is entering upon a new development.

POLITICAL ANXIETIES.

Honoured Congress,—Many believed that the confirmation of the Mandate for Palestine meant an end to political anxieties. But these anxieties have increased of late. There has been a flood of complaint and accusation against Zionism. Grotesque exaggerations, fables, phantasmal legends, in which an uncurbed imagination has enjoyed orgies, have been recklessly woven round our work and intentions. Our programme was clear and distinct before the eyes of the world; but this availed nothing, for programmes were invented for us, of which we had no conception and which were even directly opposed to our own programme. We, who by tradition and community of interest are the most sincere friends of the Arab people, who stand as enthusiastic supporters of the principle of mutual religious esteem, who have innumerable times declared our intention most carefully to respect the Holy Places of Christendom, we were abused as the enemies of the Arabs and of Christendom. Through senseless and contradictory fabrications terrible phantoms have been created, distorted visions to terrify the simple. If a light were held up before one of these ghosts, its terrors vanished but only to make room for a new phantom.

It is deeply to be regretted that we have found such confusion, such fundamental misunderstanding of the actual conditions, in places where we were accustomed to find mature political judgment, in a Press which honours the principles of justice and of liberty, in certain organs of the English Press.

This is a serious phenomenon, but it must not be taken too tragically. There are four causes that have brought about the anti-Zionist Press campaign: reaction, anti-Semitism, Zionist achievements, and political exigencies.

REACTION.

The Balfour Declaration marked the rise of national justice, an expression of higher morality in politics.

But here we are met by the law of action and reaction. An idea has overcome opposition through the exertions of its adherents, through favourable circumstances, through its inherent moral power, and has become realised. But the defeated forces gather together again and begin new attacks upon the reality. With terrible clearness the working of the law of reaction has been seen after every emancipation of the Jews throughout all history and in all countries. How could there fail to be such reaction after the national emancipation?

ANTI-SEMITISM.

This reaction finds ample sustenance in the wave of anti-Semitism which has burst like a flood over different countries during and after the war. The free institutions, the respect for law, and the common-sense of the English people make the spread of anti-Semitism in their country a hopeless chimera. Yet it is no secret that there are classes and newspapers not free from the poisoned breath of Jew-hatred. Besides, this hatred is not necessarily a purely British product. Anti-Semitism, which is never tired of accusing the Jews of being international, possesses the most highly developed international organisation that has ever existed. The breeding places for its maleficent activity, situated in different parts of the old and new world, are closely inter-connected; the underground mole-passages go from country to country. The method of working is always the same: the passion for ruling or for exterminating the Jews hides behind an alleged fear of the Jews. The Jew in the Russia of the Czars, standing outside the law, having responsibilities but no rights, the slave of duties without protection, it was he from whom it was necessary to protect the people. The Pogrom of Kishinev was proclaimed by Plehve as a measure for the protection of the population of Kishinev against the Jews, and who knows whether the bloodthirsty Hetmans of the Ukraine had not such an idea of giving protection? Now we are told Palestine is to be protected. Then, there is another method adopted by the anti-Semites—the use of the magnifying glass. These opponents see everything monstrously magnified. If the Jews acquire human rights, they have seized all privileges and prerogatives. If the right of rebuilding a home for their people in the land of their fathers is acknowledged, this idyll grows in the imagination of the anti-Semites into a powerful State. Proofs and corrections are powerless against these ingenious and systematic exaggerations and distortions. We are not surprised that Zionism is one of their chief objects for attack. Zionism is the most noteworthy phenomenon in Jewish life; would anti-Semitism fail to slander and to abuse it?

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

If envy and spite have not hitherto expressed themselves, this was only due to the fact that the "Jewish National Home" seemed to be intangible, abstract, the echo of an ancient myth. When this abstract idea became tangible, visible, when it became a reality, then the whole method of dealing with the question changed—then the point of view of humanity, of history, of justice to nations was replaced by the petty, ostensibly practical—in reality, however, very unpractical and short-sighted considerations, which dim the sight and prevent mankind from seeing the grandeur of that which is great.

POLITICAL EXIGENCIES.

Thus has it come to pass that the Balfour Declaration, an event of historic importance in the world, was made to play a part in the election campaign and in the politics of the day, in the world of domestic conflicts and party passions, of controversy, agitation, and sensation, and even that there has been a difficulty in many cases in defending this international decision with all its moral authority against the opportunist cry of "economy." The common seized hold of the noble, the momentary grasped the eternal, and that which is mean would have dragged down to the dirt that which is great.

BETTER PROSPECTS.

But in spite of temporary errors and confusions, of passing misunderstandings and ill-humours, we never doubted for an instant the sense of justice of the English people and of the English Press. We said to ourselves:—These stages must be passed through, there must still be costly battles, we must be on the watch for lurking dangers, and there is no victory without a conflict. The new political creation, the National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine, must quietly win its place and its right to existence by labour. We know that we are serving peace and order, and experience will ultimately show the true intentions of our people. It is for us an encouragement that recently powerful voices have expressed themselves in favour of our just cause in the great newspapers of England. We feel that we have been helped on our way and inspired by the statements of Lord Milner and by the recent article of Mr. Lloyd George. They have raised their voices to urge, to warn; if poisonous tongues incite to hatred, if they mislead public opinion with false news, these friends of ours have spoken in defence of Justice and of Truth.

THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION.

It has been a real satisfaction to us to hear from the British Government that all attempts against the Mandate and against the rights granted in the Mandate have failed. We are therefore justified in hoping that the efforts made in accordance with the Mandate to attain a successful colonisation, the need for which we so greatly feel, will overcome every difficulty, and that the work done in the land of our fathers will continue undisturbed. With sincere and serious determination we approach the important tasks that face us in connection with this work. Fully convinced that the solution of every economic question secures greater prosperity for the whole country and for the whole population of the country, we shall promote all our undertakings in a spirit of peaceful collaboration, in a spirit of justice and fairness, but always remembering the responsibility placed upon us of furthering the National Home for the Jewish people.

OUR POLICY.

Our immediate aims are four in number: The utilisation of the rights granted us in the Mandate, the most considerate attitude towards the non-Jewish population, moral influence by means of exemplary cultural activities, and the promotion of an intellectual understanding. Undoubtedly these are difficult tasks, but it is not impossible to accomplish them. The third course is the most hopeful, namely, that of achieving cultural activities, which will set an example to the

whole country; on this our whole future must ultimately be based, but we attach no less importance to a friendly approach to the non-Jews of the country.

The organised opposition has continued its agitation. Its attitude has proved that it does not intend to adapt itself to unavoidable political necessities. This is the profound and unavoidable difference that separates us from the standpoint of these opponents. For us the Mandate granted by the Government of Great Britain, with the recognition of our National Home which is contained therein, is an unalterable political ordinance, which may be developed by progressive needs, but can never suffer an arbitrary repeal of the principle wisely and unanimously laid down by the Great Powers. Without taking up the point of view that international agreements must stand for all time, it is certain that, in the interests of peace and civilisation, in consideration of historic traditions and the principles of international law, when an ordinance has been passed and when the Powers mainly concerned have solemnly undertaken to maintain and support it, every opposition to such an ordinance must be considered as a severe blow to an international agreement and to the power of the alliance that has created such agreement, and must be repelled as an attempt to undermine the very basis of right in the minds of the peoples.

Full of sincere devotion to the peoples of the East, to whom the reconstruction of Palestine can only be a blessing, we shall endeavour on the basis of the Mandate to collaborate with the representatives of the Arabs in Palestine, and it has truly not been our fault if our continual efforts failed through their unyielding resistance. But we do not despair. Despite disappointments, we are convinced that a solution will be found—not in the overheated atmosphere in which showy but empty political phrases are concocted, and in which hostilities have been artificially fomented, but in the field and in the garden, in the workshop and the factory, where productive work will be done. A new, a powerful and a healthy breeze will blow from Palestine through the East. The old spirit, stagnant and apathetic, opposing all progress, economic and cultural, will depart and in its place there will be a powerful, a peace-loving and a work-loving movement. It is not true that Zionism stirs up unrest; it is the opponents of Zionism who cause confusion and complications. But in the long run they will not succeed.

Honoured Congress,—Our survey shows us the more distant aim which we have to attain and points the way along which it is to be reached; it allows us to distinguish clearly the tasks that we have to carry out in regard to Palestine. The aim to be attained is the same as that for which we have always struggled: the reconstruction of Palestine, the founding and securing of our National Home. All that we desire and are struggling for is contained in this aim: Peaceful and conciliatory adjustment of national differences, union between all the forces, which too often break and waste themselves in fruitless contest, for the sake of a common fruitful labour. The aim is high, but by the right methods it can be attained. It can be attained by a firm and loyal solidarity between all Jews, by a collective, serious and persevering effort in which the eye is kept fixed upon the lofty goal and the will unshakably fastened upon the eternal principles of truth and right. It can be attained if in the conflict of opinions and efforts

there is combined with assurance and perseverance that measured calm which derives from the consciousness of serving the good cause the power to withstand the most violent attacks without fear and without passion; it can be attained if we can succeed in convincing through our words and deeds many well-meaning but still wavering sections of our people that the spirit of our organisation is one of reconciliation and that our efforts are in the interests of the highest morality.

COLLABORATION OF NON-ZIONISTS.—JEWISH AGENCY.

We have to carry out this time a great task.

The constitution of the Jewish Agency and the problem of securing the co-operation of non-Zionist representatives will claim your fullest attention.

This question has long been within the scope of our plans. The idea of a collaboration of Jewish organisations for the work in Palestine had already been the subject of animated discussions in former stages of the activity of our Zionist Organisation. Besides, some small and one-sided attempts in this direction were made, though without success. The idea remained in the domain of pious wishes, though it emerged here and there as a theme of discussion in our Press. Under the then circumstances there did not seem to be any necessity for the realisation of this difficult project. The little that our organisation, with its former Palestine Budget, could do, it was able to accomplish without the co-operation of other bodies. The only Jewish organisation besides ours that worked in Palestine was that of Baron de Rothschild, but it held aloof from us. As for the other Jewish organisations, they were indifferent.

That this question has become the question of the day is good proof of the great progress which our movement has made. We are faced with tasks incomparably greater than the budgets granted to us in former times will permit us to carry out. The greater our obligations the greater our responsibility, the greater our cares. And do not let us deceive ourselves. If we can with pain and trouble meet these obligations, shall we be able to reconstruct Palestine? Shall we be doing what is generally expected from the Jewish people in accordance with the Mandate? We are told: The people are disillusioned and tired of big words. They have been promised golden mountains, lofty aims have been put before them, but the glories that they hoped for are ever more thickly veiled with clouds. No promise has been followed by fulfilment, no resounding speech by a creative act. The promised land is still but a land of promise, not fulfilment.

Yes, they are right who speak so. We agree. We should have cultivated all the acres we possess and which are still without settlers; we should have founded twenty times as many colonies, brought twenty times as many Haluzim into the country as we have done! But we needed the means for this work! And we have not even enough to carry out the little that we undertake to carry out, to develop steadily what has been successfully created, to continue as time and circumstances suggest and to promote with foresight and with care the economic progress of the Yishub.

This is the heart of the question. And as a matter of fact we have solved this question in the sense of securing co-operation by establishing the *Keren Hayesod*, for by means of this institution we have

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made a serious step towards winning over the non-Zionists. It is here that we must place our lever.

Of course, the continuance of our organisation, the maintenance of its rights, of its authority and of its driving power, is an indispensable condition of our success. It has created all the institutions that now work autonomously, and it will form further instruments. Of course, nothing in regard to principle will be abandoned; but we must not remain obstinate, and we must not refuse to accept with confidence and with sympathy those who are willing to help in the reconstruction of Palestine as representatives of organisations willing to work in a responsible manner and by taking part in the Jewish Agency, in so far as there is a prospect that by this course of action we shall be extending the circle of those who contribute to and co-operate in the work for Palestine and the Jewish Agency will gain in influence and authority.

We must never forget, whatever be our contradictory views, that Jewish organisations must under all circumstances maintain a community of interests, and that therefore the present position must not become so embittered that it will be impossible for all to work together for common purposes. There are things more important than the feelings of the moment or the controversies in the Press.

A World Jewish Congress is certainly the most ideal form in which to bring about the collaboration of all sections of our people for the building up of Palestine. But the necessary conditions must be created before such a Congress could be convened.

We have entered into negotiations with representatives of English Jewry, and we are able to state with satisfaction that they are ready to work with us for the reconstruction of Palestine. This problem, however, still calls for careful examination, and it will be the business of the Congress to devote its attention to this question.

PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS.

We have likewise to consolidate our own forces: we must try to co-ordinate the work of our financial institutions.

A question of considerable importance is the question of the Economic Council. Public opinion in our movement is deeply interested in the question of the development or modification of the Actions Committee and of the Annual Conference, and new suggestions on the subject have been made. The unification of the

value of the shekel and of the Suffrage for the Congress will also have to be considered. The relations between the Keren Hayesod and the Zionist Organisation need to be determined. Finally, it is of the greatest importance to gain financial security for the Zionist Organisation. We are confident that proposals for the solution of this question will obtain your earnest consideration.

Honoured Congress,—Our assembly is intended to influence the world outside as well as the world inside our movement. The world without is to be enlightened and convinced. The public opinion of the world must understand that the Zionist movement is an elemental force which animates the Jews throughout the world; and it must possess sufficient sense of justice to admit that the Zionist movement in its essence and in its historic significance is both sound and salutary. When a people that for long centuries has lived in conditions of misery and of defencelessness presses forward with all its moral powers towards a real participation in civilising constructive work, the bad conscience of oppressors, the obstinate egoism of enemies, and the foolish fears of petty-minded men may cause them terror and rage; no noble-minded, no freedom-loving people can be other than deeply sympathetic with the causes and the origins of the phenomenon.

As regards our internal problems, the Congress will strengthen our Organisation and unite our people. We live in a time which calls imperiously for the union of forces in every department. We believe in the indestructibility of the Jewish people and in its revival. We are convinced that we have to carry out a cultural mission in Palestine, not only for ourselves but for the whole of humanity. We are convinced that as we defended in times of old the ideals of right and of morality against heathendom and barbarity, we now have to hold aloft the torch of the spirit in order to illumine the dark places of the East. And we believe that from there will come the light that will show the way out of chaos to bewildered humanity.

May the blessing of God rest on this *Bar-Mitzvah* Congress.

Mr. Nankin, Kopjes, O.F.S., wishes to express his thanks to Rev. I. Schwartz, of the same town, for the able manner in which he officiated at the *Bris Melah* of his infant son on August 23rd, and warmly recommends him as an efficient Mohel.—Advt.

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