

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים  
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY, JERUSALEM

MAGNES

January 17, 1947.

Mr. Joseph Dushinsky, Vice-Chairman  
Jewish Labour Committee  
175 East Broadway  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Dushinsky,

I am taking the liberty of addressing a message to you for the Convention of the Jewish Labour Committee.

The fate of Palestine is now in the balance, and I would urge you most earnestly to prevail upon the Jewish Labour Committee to clarify its stand and to bring the full weight of its influence to bear upon the decisions which are soon to be made.

I think the history and make up of your Committee justify the assumption that you are more inclined to the idea of an integral, undivided Bi-national Palestine than to any other solution. I would therefore urge you not to yield to the defeatism of the Partition solution, which is, in large measure, the off-spring of the despair and weariness of those who say, the Jews and the Arabs can not live together. Jews and Arabs do live and work together today, and if they be given a chance through the adoption of a moderate and feasible policy they will cooperate increasingly in all walks of life.

It is partition which will keep them from this cooperation. Partition will create two independent sovereignties on either side of the two unsatisfactory boundaries, and this is bound to produce extremist irredentas, and this, in its turn, will lead to armed conflict between the two peoples. Moreover partition will in all likelihood, Heaven forbid, lead to internecine warfare among the Jews.

Tiny Palestine must not be further divided. It should be kept whole, and thus give Jews the right and the opportunity to develop and settle in the whole of the country without any restrictions whatsoever.

The Ihud (Union) Association, for which I have the honour to speak, advocates a Bi-national Palestine for two equal nationalities, the Jews and the Arabs. We hear constantly that in important circles both in England and the United States and in some Arab lands the idea of bi-nationalism is regarded as just, reasonable and practical. Nevertheless it is held to be "impractical", not because of any inherent obstacles, but because both the Zionist and the Arab leaderships have led their followers into such an emotional, almost hysterical impasse, that it is difficult, if not impossible to propose a reasonable compromise.

This makes all the more important the need of your own leadership to rise above the political situation thus created and to give evidence that there is, at least on the Jewish side, some statesmanship with imagination, authority and practical sense.

The Ihud (Union) Association outlined its views in detail before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, and we think it a thousand pities that the Committee's Report, both in its spirit and in its practical proposals, was not carried out without delay.

Mr. Joseph Dushinsky

17.I.47

Permit me to give you a brief outline of the program which we suggest to you as a basis of discussion and, as we hope, for adoption, at least in its general tendencies.

1. Immigration : A large block of immigration certificates - as many as possible of the 100,000 proposed by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry - should be issued at once for immediate use in transferring Jewish refugees from the Camps in Europe to Palestine.

Further immigration is to take place in accordance with the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and this economic absorptive capacity is to be enlarged through an adequately financed Development Plan for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the country without distinction of nationality or creed. It has been said on more than one occasion that the Government of the United States is ready to help finance such a Plan.

2. Land : Legislation restricting the sale of land to Jews is to be annulled, and Jews and Arabs are to be free to purchase land in all parts of the country, it being understood that legislation for the protection of farmers and peasants is to be enacted.

3. Self-government : Forthwith with the announcement of policy, Jews and Arabs are to be appointed in equal numbers to the Executive Council of Government, to executive posts in the Secretariat, as heads of Central Government Departments, as Presidents of Courts and as District Commissioners. These appointments should be made in such a way as to result in an equal number of Jews, Arabs and British in such positions.

A Committee on Constitution, consisting of equal numbers of Jews, Arabs and British, is to be appointed forthwith, and upon the conclusion of their work a Constituent Assembly, composed equally of Jews and Arabs, is to be convened for the adoption of a Constitution. The experience of other multi-national countries should be drawn upon.

4. Independence : The announcement of policy should contain a provision to the effect that after the elapse of, say, seven years, the Bi-national Palestine based upon two equal nationalities is to become independent. This will give time for Jewish immigration and for the transfer of all authority to the Bi-national State. At that time the legislature of the independent Bi-national Palestine will be able to determine if and in what way Palestine is to become a member of a wider Union of neighbouring countries.

We submit that a program such as this is reasonable, is fair and is practical. It can be carried out by the Mandatory Power under the terms of the Mandate, without seeking new authority, such as may be required for setting up two independent sovereign states, Jewish and Arab. This program can be carried out quickly, without the delay and the quarrels usually caused when boundaries are to be drawn up.

If you ask me whether the Arabs will acquiesce in such a program, I say Yes. The Arabs will not acquiesce in the setting up of a Jewish State. They will acquiesce in the development of a unitary Palestine with self-government and with independence as its goal. If you ask me whether the Jews will acquiesce, I say Yes. They will have the opportunity of immigration and settlement and the chance of working out their future together with the other ancient Semitic people dwelling in the land and in the neighbouring countries.

Mr. Joseph Dushkinsky

Should the discussions in London break down for any reason, we suggest that the British Government be urged to send to Palestine a Cabinet Mission, similar to the Cabinet Mission to India, with full authority to negotiate with all parties concerned and to arrive at a settlement.

Thanking you for bringing this statement to the attention of your Convention,

I am,

Sincerely yours,

  
J.L. Magnes