

## Zionism: Way of US Life

By RABBI ISRAEL MILLER

(President, American Zionist Federation)

What is the future of Zionism in America? Is it viable? Does it still have a useful function to perform?

These are fair questions for the American Jewish community to ask, particularly at this time some fifteen months after the American Zionist Federation was organized in Philadelphia and a few months after the reconstitution in Israel of the Jewish Agency which created a formal separation between the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

As the late Al Smith would say: Let's look at the record.

The American Zionist Federation was founded in Philadelphia during the Memorial Day Weekend in 1970 because the American Zionist leadership was dissatisfied with the then existing American Zionist Council. It was felt that the Council was not the effective instrument the Zionist Movement required, that it suffered an inertia born of a lack of authority to operate and the necessary funds to carry on a meaningful program.

The American Zionist Federation, organized in accordance with the decision of the 27th World Zionist Congress in 1968, provided for a functioning, unified central organization capable of acting in behalf of all Zionists in such areas as aliyah, youth, Jewish education, public information and internal Jewish communal affairs. Also, unlike the American Zionist Council, the new Federation was open to individual membership as well as organizational membership of general Jewish organizations, synagogues, fraternal groups and others, both on national and local levels.

In all, through our thirteen national membership organizations, we have a Zionist membership of some 700,000 as established in the census taken this May. In addition, the immediate response of the leading communities and rabbinical groups to the establishment of the American Zionist Federation is an indication that there was a deep and abiding demand and need for it, a spectacular demonstration that the Zionist Movement is very much alive in America.

What are we doing? We are voicing on local levels to American political leadership the solid support of Israel that exists among American Jewry. We are sponsoring Aliyah meetings in the communities in cooperation with the Israel Aliyah Center, 35 communities to be exact. We are sponsoring Leadership Tours of American laymen to Israel. We have taken 85 newspapermen and radio and TV commentators to see Israel for themselves, a project that has been a spectacular success.

We have launched a new program designed to promote greater use of Israeli products in the United States through the sponsorship of Israel Fairs by communities, organizations and congregations throughout the United States. With intensified interest in Israel that has developed in the American-Jewish community during the past four years, there is a great desire by many American Jews to encourage fairs and exhibits that would highlight and further the economic, and cultural progress of Israel, as well as encourage tourism. Israel is now exporting many items of clothing, food and other products that are seeking American markets and it is the proper function of the American Zionist Federation to do everything possible to aid in their promotion and acceptance by the American public. This is a new program just barely launched, but it has already won considerable approbation and we feel that it will make a substantial contribution to Israel's economic needs.

What has happened in the little over a year since the Federation came into being?

Nine of the largest rabbinical organizations in the United States - Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Essex County, Buffalo and Rochester, with a membership of well over a thousand members, have joined the American Zionist Federation as organizations. Others are in the process of doing so. This is a major affirmative expression of the solidarity of Zionism as enunciated in the Jerusalem Program.

Twenty major communities have organized local AZF groups. In the New York metropolitan area, four local groups have been organized - in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. Throughout the country almost all of the major communities have created operating organizations - Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Washington, D.C.,

Baltimore, Cincinnati, San Francisco, Essex County (Greater Newark) Pittsburgh, Atlanta, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Rochester and South Florida. Another ten are in the advanced planning stages.

The Federation, and before it, the American Zionist Council has over the past decade taken the leadership in the sponsorship of annual Yom HaAtzmaut Celebrations in the various communities throughout the United States. In effect, we have established the celebration of Israel Independence Day as a new American Jewish holiday. In a country where even the Fourth of July celebrations are accepted and celebrated in a very matter of fact manner, this is an outstanding accomplishment of the American Zionist Movement. Practically every major community celebrates Yom HaAtzmaut as an event worthy of celebration, where the Governor and Mayor issue proclamations to celebrate the event. Under the leadership of the American Zionist Federation, we hope to make the celebration of Israel's 25th Anniversary in 1973 an event of major significance.

In short we are well on our way to the achievement of the "success" that Prime Minister Golda Meir wished us in a cabled message in which she said: "Do not underestimate the present force and future potential of the Zionist Movement."

By our development of the Federation, we affirm our agreement with the Prime Minister: Zionism didn't end its usefulness with the achievement of the State of Israel. It is a philosophy, a way of life, that is very much a part of the American Jewish Community. Israel needs a strong Zionism just as a strong American Zionism requires the inspiration of Israel. Together, we can look forward to a renaissance of Judaism, a new golden era for our people and faith.

LONDON (WNS)--At a two-hour meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, Britain's Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas Home indicated that he did not favor further "discussion or reinterpretation" of Security Council Resolution 242 at the UN General Assembly debate which opened Dec. 3.



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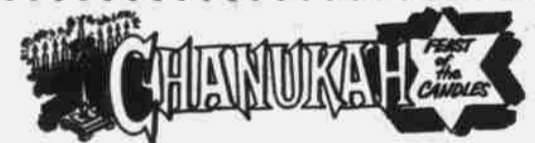
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