

The Irresponsible Revisionists

by Hayim Greenberg

IN A recent political advertisement in the *New York Times*, the Revisionists, under the name of "The American Resettlement Committee for Up-rooted European Jewry," made the proposal that the Palestinian Arabs be transferred to Iraq, leaving Palestine for the Jews.

The Revisionists have become our specialists in "strong language", intransigent slogans, and phrasological extremism. They scorn merely to demand that the basis for a Jewish state be officially established in Palestine; for has not this demand already been made not only by the Zionist Organization but by the American Jewish Conference? It is also a small matter in their eyes merely to lay down the boundaries of Jewish Palestine; they have been doing this for some time now, and the demand for Palestine on both sides of the Jordan no longer sounds as extreme to certain people as it once did. Consequently as a result of much thinking they have arrived at a sensational new demand; not only Pales-

tine and not only a greater Palestine within its historic frontiers, but Palestine without any Arabs. If we are to have a Jewish State then let us go all the way and have one without non-Jewish citizens, without minority problems, and without all those headaches which come from inconvenient neighbors.

But how are we to get rid of over a million Arabs living in the country? The Revisionists are, of course, no Nazis, and they would hardly propose to destroy them as Hitler might in such a situation; but they suggest a painless and moral method of eliminating inconvenient residents: that the Palestinian Arabs be transferred to Iraq so that there will be no future conflict between them and us. Instead of hating each other from close at hand, we might then, presumably, love each other at a distance.

Of course, Iraq may not be prepared economically to absorb so large a number of Arab immigrants, but this too can be remedied. It is suggested that a plan be worked out and financed in America for irrigating

the fertile soil of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys, so that Iraq may again become capable of feeding a large population as it was in the past. This is fundamentally a problem of technology and long-term-credit which no doubt could be solved easily, thus eliminating all the difficulties and complexities of trying to harmonize the interests of two nations. Really a very simple matter.

Least the authors of this announcement be accused of cruelty, they took pains to describe their project of population transfer as being "organized" and "voluntary". These phrases, apparently, were meant to imply that no one would force the Arabs to pack their baggage and go off to Mesopotamia; but the idea was to give them inducements, so that, of their own free will, all Arabs, man, woman, and child would shake the dust of Palestine from their feet. However, it is no accident that when the sponsors of this scheme needed a historical example of transfer to point to, they had to resort to the well-known population exchange between Turkey and Greece, which, as everyone knows, and as they themselves must admit in their advertisement, was a forced exchange. Never, neither in our own time nor at any other time, has so drastic a social operation as a large-scale population transfer been carried out without the use of force.

Today, quite a few years after 1,300,000 Greeks were transferred from Turkey to Greece and 400,000 Turks were brought back from Greece to Turkey, we may have some reason to say that the experiment was a success and brought advantages to both sides; *but it was not a voluntary exchange of population*. The polite wording of the diplomatic treaties between Turkey and Greece cannot erase from the pages of history the brutal acts which occurred before those treaties were signed. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the history of the events and not only the diplomatic texts of that successful transfer, can very easily see that the exchange of population—especially the repatriation of the Greeks—took place for the most part in advance of the official treaties. When the Turks destroyed the Greek army and when 100,000 Greek soldiers were slain in the Smyrna catastrophe of 1922, the greater part of the Greek population in Asia Minor, almost 1,000,000 people, fled in wild panic to Greece. Those refugees knew very well the reason for their flight: any civilian who did not save himself by fleeing either was murdered on the spot or, if fortunate, was transferred to an internment camp.

The fact is that this was a panic, not an agreed transfer. The Turkish government was determined at that time to get rid of its Greek minority once and for all, regardless of the cost and consequences; and exhausted and discredited Greece had to yield to this decision. If it had been no more than a friendly agreement between the two governments for a voluntary exchange of population, most of the Greeks,

who had lived in Asia Minor and in the Constantinople region for centuries before the Turks gained mastery of those lands, would probably have remained in Turkey. Nor did the Turks and other Mohammedans in Greece show any spontaneous desire to leave their homes and settle in Turkey. The Greeks had a clear-cut choice; they might have remained and shared the fate of the Armenians (whom the Turks slaughtered so mercilessly during the First World War that only those who fled survived and no remnant was left in Turkish-Armenia) or they could flee for safety. Greece was forced to let them in; having done so, she insisted that the Turks in Greece be deported to Turkey. The agreement between Turkey and Greece was essentially a post-factum diplomatic act sanctioning something which had taken place already in circumstances of force and terror.

There is no reason to believe that large numbers of Palestinian Arabs will desire to migrate to Iraq in the near future. To be sure, Iraq is an Arab country. Furthermore, its economic prospects are excellent, if only the Iraq government shows the ability and the will to utilize its rich natural resources. At the moment, however, its standard of living is much lower than in Palestine; and the citizens of this independent monarchy enjoy much less political freedom than in mandated Palestine under the rule of the British Empire; and, we may add, if the political regime in Iraq is not changed there will also be much more freedom for Arabs in a Jewish dominated Palestine than in overwhelmingly Arab Iraq. Furthermore, although there may be a great economic future in store for Iraq, a country which in antiquity supported a much greater population than at present and at a higher standard of living, during the next twenty or twenty-five years there will still be greater immediate opportunities for Palestine Arabs in their present homes, especially if there should be a large-scale Jewish emigration to the country and if the land is developed by Jews. Consequently anyone who speaks of transferring Palestinian Arabs to Iraq in the near future, even though he may describe such transfer as merely voluntary migration, is really proposing something which can only be done by use of force.

Accordingly, the Revisionist proposal, announced to the public in America's most influential political newspaper, is a very dangerous one. We do not need to resort to the transfer of Arabs from Palestine in order to reach our goal of a Jewish Commonwealth. It is not necessary to "get rid of" the Arabs in order to make room for the Jews in Palestine. If Palestine were so densely settled today and if its natural resources were so thoroughly exploited that there was no room for new settlers, justice would demand that we give up our claims to our historic homeland and seek a home in an underpopulated and undeveloped region elsewhere. Our historic claim has validity and

force because Palestine is still underpopulated, because conservatively estimated, it has only one-third of the population which can be settled there, and because without the present Jewish community the country would be even more thinly settled and poorer. The whole question of transfer was raised in 1937 by some English political circles only in connection with the Partition Plan. That section of Palestine which the Peel Commission set aside for the proposed Jewish State was so small and so thickly settled that one might reasonably assume that Jewish immigration could be brought there only by transferring the Arabs or part of the Arabs to the proposed Arab State. The present situation is entirely different. Palestine is not about to be partitioned, and both we and the Arabs know that there is enough room within its borders for the Arabs and the present Jewish community, as well as for the large number of Jews who must still come there. The possibility that at some future time large numbers of Arabs may desire to emigrate from Palestine to Iraq is a question which it is quite senseless to argue at this moment. It depends upon many factors of which we know nothing today.

Certainly Iraq must be economically developed; above all for its own sake, for the sake of its over 3,000,000 present inhabitants who live on the verge of starvation. Since we regard Palestine as our National Home, it is in our interest too that the neighboring countries shall have a well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed population so that we are not surrounded by impoverished hordes; that their production shall be increased so that we may maintain normal trade relations with them, for our and their benefit alike. As Americans, and if we may use the expression here, as world citizens, it is in our interest that all backward and neglected countries shall be brought into the mainstream of progressive economic development. The better fed, the healthier, the richer, and the more educated are the peoples of Iraq, Syria, the Arabian peninsula, Persia, Afghanistan, India, and China, the better for America and the whole world. A technological and financial plan for the economic revival of Iraq is part of that broad-gauge reconstruction program which we in America and England, having in mind a better post-war world, are under obligation to concern ourselves with.

Jews will wholeheartedly support such a plan, but not necessarily as a condition for the solution of the Jewish problem, and not with the special purpose that the Arabs in Palestine shall have a place to immigrate. If only we are given a chance to establish ourselves as a free and independent people in Palestine, conditions may be created for the prosperity and well-being of both Jews and Arabs. If in later years Iraq should reach such a stage of economic development as to attract immigrants from abroad, and if it should invite Arabs from Palestine to settle

there, and if they, because of better economic prospects or urged by national or religious sentiments, should wish to emigrate there, we shall prevent no one and shall wish them well in their new home. But our immediate calculations cannot be based upon "surplus population" concepts, and we have no grounds to make transfer plans the basis and condition of Jewish policy. Jews should be the last in the world to propose expulsion or any plans tantamount to expulsion.

We should like to believe that the Revisionists are thoroughly honest with themselves when they speak of voluntary transfer; but we shall not be surprised to find out that Arabs, non-Arabs, and even some enemies in the United States will deliberately interpret such a transfer plan as a proposal for forced deportation and begin an uproar in the Near, and also perhaps in the Far East, charging that Jews with American help are preparing to drive the Arabs out of their Fatherland.

The Revisionist political advertisement, particularly under the present circumstances, is loaded with dynamite. It is difficult to understand how any group could have such morbid desires to play with fire, at the expense of their own people's most vital interests.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

OF JEWISH FRONTIER, published monthly at New York, N. Y. for Oct. 1, 1943. State of New York, N. Y., County of New York.

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Pinchas Cruso, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the JEWISH FRONTIER and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, JEWISH FRONTIER, ASS'N INC., 275 Seventh Ave., New York City; *Editor*, Hayim Greenberg and Hayim Fineman, 275 Seventh Ave., New York City; *Managing Editor*, Ben Halpern, 115 Payson Ave., New York City; *Business Managers*, Pinchas Cruso, 275 Seventh Ave., New York City.

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PINCHAS CRUSO

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6 day of October, 1943

DOROTHY KAPLAN, Notary Public

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