

Simon and Gershon Scholem. For these men, Zionism was a moral crusade or it was nothing.

Brit Shalom's leader, Arthur Ruppin, was saddened by the growing disparity between universal moral values and narrow Jewish nationalism. "What continually worries me, he wrote, is the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine . . . the two peoples have become more estranged in their thinking. Neither has any understanding of the other, and yet I have no doubt that Zionism will end in a catastrophe if we do not succeed in finding a common platform." What Zionists were doing, he argued, "has no equal in history. The aim is to bring the Jews as a second nation into a country which already is settled as a nation — and fulfill this through peaceful means. History has seen such penetration by one nation into a strange land only by conquest, but it has never occurred that a nation will fully agree that another nation should come and demand full equality of rights and national autonomy at its side."

Later, as world War II proceeded, the traditional opposition to Zionism on the part of America's Reform Jews found expression in the creation of the American Council for Judaism in 1942. In his keynote address to the June, 1942 meeting in Atlantic City, Rabbi David Philipson declared that Reform Judaism and Zionism were incompatible: "Reform Judaism is spiritual, Zionism is political. The outlook of Reform Judaism is the world. The outlook of Zionism is a corner of eastern Asia." Rabbi Louis Wolsey declared that the group opposed "a Jewish state, a Jewish flag or a Jewish army" and represented "the views of the vast majority of Jews in the United States."

Emancipation Rediscovered

At its first annual conference in Philadelphia in January 1945, Council members heard an address by Rabbi Elmer Berger entitled "Emancipation — A Rediscovered Ideal." According to Berger, then executive director of the Council, the program of Jewish nationalism had never expressed the real aspirations of Jews in America or elsewhere: "Spurious nationhood," he argued, had been imposed on Jews by reactionary societies in the Middle Ages and this could not provide a solution to reaction in the mod-

ern world. The Jewish nationalists wanted to maintain a medieval type of control over a so-called worldwide Jewish people and to prevent emancipation of individual Jews. This process, he claimed, reached alarming proportions in 1897 at the first Zionist congress, where 197 men "arrogated to themselves the title 'the Jewish nation.' Proceeding to create a worldwide political machine, they proclaimed that the medieval collectivism of the 'Jewish people' wanted to realize its political destiny by creating a sovereign state in Palestine."

Berger noted that Jewish emancipation had frequently been attacked during the preceding century and a half by the "official Jews" who controlled the community while it was imprisoned behind ghetto walls. With the collapse of the ghetto, the functionaries of the Jewish community were weakened. Threatened by the process of integration and emancipation, they condemned it as "assimilation" and "did their best to impede it."

After the partition of Palestine by the U.N., the Council adopted a new statement of principles on January 19, 1948. It stated, in part, that, "Nationality and religion are separate and distinct. Our nationality is American. Our religion is Judaism. Our homeland is the United States of America. We reject any concept that Jews are at home only in Palestine." To American Jews, the Council declared, Israel was neither the state nor the homeland of "the Jewish people." The Council publicly objected to Zionist calls on American Jewish youth to migrate to Israel, to displays of Israeli national symbols in American synagogues, to the reference to the U.S. as a "diaspora" or "exile," to the sale of Israeli bonds in synagogues and to the suggestion that any group of Jews, including the representatives of Israel, could speak for all Jews. The destiny of American Jews, the Council maintained, was bound exclusively with the U.S.

Predictions Came True

In the book *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1948-49*, historian Thomas A. Kolsky points out that many of the Council's warnings about Zionism had been prophetic: ". . . many of its predictions about the consequences of the establishment of a Jewish state did come true. As the American Council for

Judaism had foreseen, the birth of the state created numerous problems — problems the Zionists had minimized. For example, Israel became highly, if not unusually, dependent on support from American Jews. Moreover, the formation of the state directly contributed to undermining Jewish communities in Arab countries and to precipitating a protracted conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Indeed, as the Council had often warned and contrary to Zionist expectations, Israel did not become a truly normal state. Nor did it become a light unto the nations. Ironically, created presumably to free Jews from anti-Semitism and ghetto-like existence as well as to provide them with abiding peace, Israel became, in effect, a garrison state, a nation resembling a large territorial ghetto besieged by hostile neighbors . . . The ominous predictions of the ACJ are still haunting the Zionists."

Throughout the world, Jewish criticism of Zionism has continued long after Israel's creation. When Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion called for "complete solidarity with the State of Israel" on the part of all Jews, Denmark's chief rabbi, Marcus Melchior, responded: "We Danish Jews do not usually air our patriotism. Why on earth should we shout 'hurrah' more loudly than all the other Danes? But we take an opportunity like this to state that no one, however big he may be or from wherever he may come, has the right or is able to change even one jot of what for 150 years has been the status of Danish Jews under which there has been established a relationship in Denmark of which we are all just as happy on the Christian side as on the Jewish side. If Premier Ben-Gurion really claimed that in order to be a Jew every minute of one's life, one has to live in Israel, then according to my view two questions arise. The first is whether to be a Jew every minute is of imperative necessity and whether Jewishness and being a general human being did not equate each other so completely that one at the same time could be Jewish and a human being in other places than in the few square kilometers which form the territory of Israel."

Majority Reject Zionism

Now, in 1997, one hundred years after the first Zionist Congress, it is clear that the vast majority of Jews in the United States, Western Europe and other