

JEWISH SELF-SEGREGATION IS REACTIONARY, SAYS MORRIS ERNST

*Excerpts from an Address by Morris L. Ernst
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My thesis is very simple. I don't like bigots. Period. I think Jews are people. Period. I don't think Jews or Catholics or Protestants or anybody else have a right to be liked. I think they have just one right—that there be no rule laid down against them. That's all there is to this fundamental religion of mine. In addition, I don't like terrorism. I'm convinced that the Grand Mufti never terrorized a Jew but he probably terrorized a lot of moderate Arabs. And the American Zionist terrorists never terrorized an Arab but they terrorized a lot of moderate American Jews.

I've never been connected—and this is not to my credit—nor do I think to my discredit—with any sectarian movement. Because I don't see how as against my religion—and it is a religion—of civil liberties, I can start to separate the rights of one person as against another on the basis of race, creed or color.

I want to set down four or five stories to see if they add up into a bundle of either guides, tips or prejudices—and I'm not going to make up the bundle. The bundles that are made from the pulpits or at the dining room tables, for an audience, are really not much good. Each audience has got to make its own bundles.

Worldwide Political Asylum

Roosevelt had an idea that what we ought to do with the people pushed around in Europe was to get up what he called a World Budget and let all the free nations of the world agree as to how many people they would take in as immigrants irrespective of race, creed, color or political belief. The President told me that he was sure that he could get so many into Canada, so many into Australia, so many in each South American country—and then he said, "You know, we in the United States will be the last to open our doors because we are going back on our historic position of political asylum." This was before the Labor Unions had taken their shift on the Immigration Bill. This was before the manufacturers had gotten a little wisdom on the subject.

I went over to England on Roosevelt's hunch that I should speak to the British, the officials, to see if they would agree to take in 100,000 or 200,000 of the people pushed around by the Nazis. It was Roosevelt's hunch that if we could get England for a hundred or two hundred thousand and pick up a couple of hundred thousand elsewhere in the world, nation by nation, we could then educate the Congress of the United States to go back to our traditional position of asylum: a position that is not only good from the point of view of compassion but is essential for the enrichment of our own culture.

I went to England and I sat with officials and came back one day to the White House and I said, "We're at home plate. That little island of Great Britain"—and mind you, it was during the blitz that I was there—"that little Island I am convinced, on a properly representative program of a World Immigration Budget (or what we now call Displaced Persons) will take in 150,000—or in any event will match the great United States, up to 150,000." The boss turned to me—I thought I had done a good job—and he said, "A hundred and fifty thousand to England; 150,000 to match them in the United States; pick up 200,000 or 300,000 elsewhere; we can start with a half million of the oppressed."

I came back in about a week. My wife was with me. Roosevelt turned to her and said, "Margaret, can't you get me a Jewish Pope?" He said, "I can't stand it any more. I've got to be careful that when Stevie Wise leaves the White House, he doesn't see Joe Proskauer on the way in." He turned to me adding: "Nothing doing on the program." I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We can't put it over because the dominant vocal Jewish leadership of America won't stand for it." And I said, "It's impossible. Why?" He said, "Well, they're right from their point of view. The Zionist movement knows that Palestine is, and will be for some time, a remittance society. They know that they can raise vast sums for Palestine by saying to donors 'there is no other place this poor Jew can go.' "But," said Roosevelt, "if there's a

World Political asylum for all people irrespective of race, creed or color, they can't raise their money. Because the people who don't want to give the money will have an excuse and say, 'what do you mean there's no place they can go but Palestine?' They are the preferred wards of the world."

I could scarcely believe it. I didn't want to believe it. That a bit of chauvinism and nationalism among a few leaders of the Jewish organizations of America could defeat an over-all haven for the oppressed of Europe. I said, "Let me test it out." I went to friends of mine, without mentioning the British people I had spoken to, without mentioning Roosevelt—I laid down this grand dream, this great plan—of the world joining together to give relief to the people pushed around by Hitler.

I assure you that I was thrown out of parlors of friends of mine. And they said very frankly, and they were right from their point of view. "Morris," they would say, "this is treason—you're undermining the Zionist movement." I'd say, "Yes, maybe I am. But I'm much more interested in a haven for a half a million or a million people—oppressed throughout the world."

Isn't the Roosevelt concept still worth working for? I know the gorgeous job that Lessing Rosenwald did in Washington. For my part, the contribution he made does not relate to the lives that will be bettered or saved. It relates to something much more fundamental. It relates to the reintroduction into the mores of the laws of America—of the Roosevelt concept: that we take in people without picking them by race, creed, color or nationality. I don't think it's an improbable thing for an organization to get this going on a worldwide basis, starting in the Western hemisphere. I should imagine you'd even find some aid and comfort in Washington, in the Administration, for the development of such a plan for the future.

In my judgment, because we're at present at war—a good war—a war for the minds of men, we will increasingly need political asylum for additional people.