

## American Zionist

The Zionist movement has been my driving force throughout my youth and adult life. It gave me hope when there was despair and gave me courage when I needed that most. Growing up in Lida, I constantly heard the Poles say “Jews go to Palestine.” Palestine then was only a dream but that dream was branded in me like a fire. Even in those days we had people who thought that other beliefs and dreams would make the Poles’ taunts go away. History has proven otherwise, through the loss of six million of our people.

In writing the above, I am hoping that you, my children and grandchildren, won’t become part of the world that harbors the illusion of dreams that do not pertain to us as a people. What has been taught for thousands of years won’t be erased in your generation. Perhaps some day it will be corrected. Until that time, remember that the only friend we have is ourselves as a people. You and I can disagree on the methods of achieving our goals but we should be united in our desire to survive as a people.

### The Z.O.A

At my first opportunity after arriving in Boston, I learned that the Jewish National Fund and the Zionist Organization of America had offices at 600 Washington Street. This was a few minutes away from the Prime Restaurant, where my father worked. I decided to visit and inquire whether there was a General Zionist youth group I could join. The “General Zionist” ideology was based on the principle that our people as a whole come first and party ideology second. We never thought in terms of class; we were midstream, in the center of

the political spectrum. We leaned neither to the left nor right. To this day, I maintain the same beliefs.

I remember walking into the office; as I recall it was operated jointly by the Z.O.A. and J.N.F. There I met two ladies, Sybil Soroker and Tilly Thorner, who were professional workers for these organizations. When they asked why I was there, I replied that I was looking for a General Zionist youth group. I shall never forget their initial reaction, which was that I must be looking for a group where I could meet young girls. When I made it clear that my primary interest was not young girls but an organization that I could relate to ideologically, they recommended the Herzl Zionist District affiliated with the Z.O.A.

The Herzl District membership was a group of young married and unmarried people around my age. They met at Temple Beth El on Bradshaw Street in Dorchester. Dr. Frances Burns was their mentor; as I understand, she organized the group. Some of the members had formerly belonged to Hashomer Hatzier and the others were Zionists with no special affiliation. The group consisted mostly of Hebrew-speaking and professional people.

I was told to contact Morris Entis. When I called him, he invited me to attend a meeting. I'll never forget that meeting. Not being able to speak English, I participated in Yiddish and Hebrew. I took issue with the leftist views of Zionist life expressed by the group members with former Hashomer ties. This was the very beginning of my Zionist activity in the United States. I have ever since kept up a friendship with Barbara and Morry Entis, who were already married. I used to babysit for them when their oldest son Alan, who now resides in Israel, was only a few months old. It was Morry that introduced me to your mother and grandmother.

As the years went by, I became editor of the Herzl Zionist bulletin and represented the group on the regional Zionist level. After five or six years, however, I left Herzl to join the Mattapan-Dorchester-Roxbury Zionist District. The Herzl

District had become mostly a social, non-developing district and did not offer me a way to become active on the regional and national scene. MDR, on the other hand, was the largest district in the area; when I joined there were close to two thousand members.

In my years of MDR membership, I held many different positions. I was active in the youth commission where I supervised Young Judea activities and led a young girls' club named the Kochavoth. I became President of the MDR District and was elected to the Executive Committee of the New England Zionist Region. In 1950, I was elected to the administrative committee of the Z.O.A. I have since held various national offices, including Vice-President.

### A Zionist Arrives in Israel

In December 1959 I was elected by the Z.O.A. to be a delegate to the 25th Zionist Congress, to be held in Jerusalem. Jerusalem at that time was a divided city. I will never forget that, returning to my hotel after a meeting one night, I almost crossed into the Jordanian side. An Israeli guard spotted me and showed me the right direction. The fact that I was a delegate to the Congress was my greatest honor. I was thrilled to have achieved such a status. I was there among many great people who had worked and were responsible for the creation of the State, including Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Sharrett, Rabbi Hillel Silver, Rabbi Weiss, and many more.

Sad to say, this trip was also a big disappointment to me. This was my first trip to Israel, a culmination of a long-held dream. I was beside myself with excitement to finally stand on the free land of the Jewish State. On my disembarkment from the KLM airplane, I found red flags greeting me at the airport. The flags were from some Labor Federation celebration but to me they symbolized what I had fled from in Europe. To find red flags as my first sight of Israel was a terrible shock. It took a little of the excitement away from me.

In later years, I became a deputy member of the World Zionist Actions Committee. There are no other great honors to which I aspire. From the days of Hanoar Hatzioni in Lida to the present I have given my all to the cause of Zion and our people. I have visited Israel at least twelve times. In 1982, during the Israeli presence in Lebanon, I was one of a small group of Z.O.A. people sent to view the situation in Lebanon. Your mother and I had the great privilege of meeting with Menachim Begin, at that time Prime Minister, in his office. It was a thrill to both of us.

Through all these years, I have come in contact with many great people on the American and Israeli scene, such as former Senator Saltonstall, Speaker of the House John McCormack, House minority leader Joseph W. Martin, Jr., and Massachusetts Governor John A. Volpe. I have met Presidents of Israel Ben Zvi and Herzog, Prime Minister Shamir, and others too numerous to mention.

I am sure it must come to mind that I did not settle in Israel. When we left Europe, I had no choice as my papers were for the U.S., I was young, and my father was here. Later on, after we were married, Estelle would not leave her family and her country of birth. As our family grew, we became more involved with our daily life and responsibilities. I did not have a profession that would be of use to the growth of Israel. I did what I felt was second best by visiting as often as I could and by instilling in my children the love of Zion.