



## On Adventure

*First appeared in Yiddish in Heint, 26.2.1932*

*English translation: The Jewish Herald, 30.7.1948*

Today's article is a discourse on "Adventure" a theme alien to serious-minded people, but one on which young men build their dreams. The true poignancy of this concept must be sought in the novels of Jules Verne, or the older Alexander Dumas: in earlier days it was to be found in the cinemas, but since the innovation of the talking film this is unfortunately no longer true.

I shall, therefore, attempt to describe to the modern reader the characteristics of this subject. Firstly, adventure is the achievement of individuals acting on their own initiative and responsibility; it can rarely be organised en mass. Secondly, it is a hazardous undertaking which is more prone to fail than succeed, and for this reason all serious individuals look askance at it. But I want to defend it!

**Earnest people believe that their calculated, calm and "statesmanlike" approach to life has a "chance" of success. But what does an analysis of the facts demonstrate? It shows everything to be dependent on the whims of Fate – and Fate is a cheat, a "*shaigetz*" and an arrogant fellow who mocks no less at the "statemanlike" calculations than at the foolhardiness of adventure.**

We have an illustration in the history of the last few years of Zionism which was "statesmanlike," without risks, without any trace of adventure – and the outcome is known as the Passfield White Paper! On the other hand, however, we remember the time when all serious-minded people called Herzl



an "adventurer," and even before Herzl others, too, had been honoured with the same title – Garibaldi, for example, Washington and Columbus.

There is little doubt that the Jew who threatened to report Moses for the murder of the police commissioner in Egypt reviled him with some Egyptian synonym of "you adventurer!" It is very, very difficult to determine where adventure begins and where "statesmanlike" calculations end.

A foreign philosopher – a cynic, but certainly not a fool! – expressed the same thoughts when he said "Every effort appears like an adventure-until the moment of its success".

I cannot undertake to defend this conception **at all times**. I must reserve the right when the occasion demands it, to scold a person (just as the Egyptian assimilationist reprimanded Moses) with the words, "You adventurer!" I have already done this on a number of instances, and will probably continue to do so. For to form an opinion on an adventure one must take into consideration many factors – the atmosphere, the time, the risks involved and the type of "adventure". Some times the results of it may be bad-and sometimes it may be good.

#### Now Unavoidable

To-day, in the present circumstances, I maintain that adventure has to be defended, primarily because it is now unavoidable. Its clamor is so loud that even if we all shout "Silence" it will not be muffled .Every Jew realises inwardly that a state of "silence" cannot exist for us, simply because we Jews are not a dead nation, but a living one. Zionism, too, far from disappearing, has become more vigorous, thank God! and more obstinate than in earlier days. We must therefore investigate and consider well whether it is perhaps not healthier



to sanction the application of adventure to our political situation as a totally normal reaction for abnormal condition.

Lets us consider the question of immigration (*aliyah*) to Eretz Israel. It has been forbidden by the authorities. The repercussions on our national hygiene have been understood by many, and those who have not yet gauged its full import will soon discover it to their chagrin. I say "national hygiene" because we are truly concerned with the spiritual health of our youth, tens of thousands of the best of a generation have for years "set their minds" psychologically on *aliyah*: thousands of the best have actually prepared themselves for it, have altered their way of life, left schools and chosen "career," which have caused quarrels and broken ties with their parents. As long as it was possible to have aliyah of even a few thousand per year it was possible to comfort and claim these people as it offered them some glimmerings of hope.

But what will happen now? It is no longer possible to "comfort" these youths even if a thousand certificates are granted this year or next – because now it is already clear that the rulers of Eretz Israel will never condone a large *aliyah*. Therefore, 90 per cent of those who for years had prepared themselves for participation in the task of "upbuilding," are deprived of personal contribution as long as the same rulers remain in Eretz Israel. One must be blind not to realise whither such a situation of broken hopes, of suppressed mass energy, must lead.

The political solution to this situation is a different problem with which I shall not deal now (though I have already spoken on this subject, and not only I, but everybody today speaks of this question in the same strain). At this juncture I am interested in another side of the problem.



Let us say that before you sits a young man or girl, perhaps your own son or daughter, and he or she asks: "What shall I do?" (notice that the question does not concern "we" – all of us-but only "I"). "Should I submit to the British restrictions, bow my head and say, Good, I will be obedient. So long as I do not receive legal permission I will be a good child and sit at home and possibly help you, my father, sell potatoes from your stall. There is a danger, however, father, that I will not endure it, will wander along different paths that do not lead to Zion, but lead to no good. On the other hand, I might attempt a totally different method-that of adventure. Where is it written that one may enter a land only with a visa? Did you yourself not tell me of the olden days when you 'stole across' a frontier?"

#### Greatest Danger

Let us be very careful before giving an answer to this. It is easy to explain to the young man, as easy as two times two, that it is much more difficult to "steal across the border" in this case, than it was in Old Russia. Eretz Israel has dangerous frontiers – the sea on one side, the Suez Canal on the other, plus a hostile Arab population as we well know – and as even the young man himself knows. Let us, however, be careful with this two times two calculation. The greatest danger is that this calculation might perhaps really convince him, when the last vision, that personal dream of entering Eretz Israel, disappears, of accepting the alternative which he himself had indicated – "the other ways which do not lead to Zion, but lead to no good"...

Do not exaggerate the logic of this calculation. I know the borders of Erez Israel well – and not all that is difficult is impossible. I do not wish to enter into details, but this adventure is not worse than many other adventures. It possesses both the chances of failure and of success.



**One thing, however, must be clearly understood: a nation, particularly its youth, should not bow its head and say with a sigh, "In view of the fact that the police had forbidden our redemption, we should all resign ourselves and remain seated at home obediently." We must continue to fight for our freedom...**

Where is it written, where is it said, that adventure may not be used as one of the methods of our struggle? Consider the lessons of history and you will discover that often even adventure that had failed proved to be the means of struggle, particularly if it was not an individual adventure but a collective one. It would not really be a very bad thing if Englishmen were compelled every morning to seize Jewish youths, throw them into prison and deport them from Eretz Israel. If it were to happen tomorrow, the next day and daily afterwards, it would not be a calamity. Neither would it be dangerous if the English were suddenly to discover and bring to trial a whole organisation of "contrabandists" transporting illegal Jews into the Jewish National Home...Who knows, perhaps this would lead to some kind of world-trial against England?

#### Whistle At Their Laws

Many years have passed since I was young, and therefore I dare not give advice on this matter. If, however, I were young I would laugh at their visas and their restrictions. Impossible? Tell that to your grandmother, not to me, I would say. It is difficult; in fact, very difficult. But is it precisely this which climbs mountains and not merely hillocks... If I were young I would launch a new phase in propaganda betokened by a new symbol – a whistle, an ordinary tin whistle costing a few pence. And the slogan for this propaganda campaign would be – whistle at their laws and restrictions!



England has lost the right to demand that any of her regulations in Eretz Israel be treated with the minimum of moral respect. Her whole action in Eretz Israel is a travesty on justice and honesty. We all ignored the Tsarist regulation; so must it be with the English regime in our land. England does possess the physical power to do in Palestine what she pleases, but her actions are devoid of all codes of morality. Gone are the days when we regarded it as a duty to support the English regime morally, even when this was uncomfortable and unpleasant. That has gone! The English regime in Eretz Israel is to-day bereft of all justice. God forbid that we should allow any opportunity to pass to break, or obstruct, this regime.

Lets us consider Eretz Israel itself, and the Yishuv. The Yishuv is dissatisfied. The *Yishuv* expects no good from the Government, but rather the very contrary. And in its "expecting" – how will it act? By continuing to cooperate with the Government? Continuing to help Mr. French prepare his "reports?" Or possibly participate in the "Parliament" soon to be created, there to sit as a powerless minority with the same smug faces as worn in the Jerusalem Municipality? Yes, there will be Jews who will agree to this, too. But what should we advise those who will not be prepared to tolerate such iniquities any longer? If, say, it should come to pass that the Government should create a "Parliament" and the larger majority of Jews who are against participation in the elections should be flouted by the few who wish to vote and so create the impression that the *Yishuv* cooperates, what then should be done?

The remedy entails adventure, a frank, exuberant and stormy adventure so that the whole world should know how farcical the new "democratic" instrument for anti-Semitic law – making really is.



### Few Ready

There are as yet few in Eretz Israel who are ready for "adventure".

**But their numbers will grow, and their achievements, too, will increase in volume and significance because it is impossible that the whole *Yishuv*, which is actually the essence of three generations of national enthusiasm, should always nod an approving head to the efforts of a pack of interlopers whose only expedient in ruling Eretz Israel is their lack of a sense of honour.**

They make our lives in Eretz Israel most uncomfortable. But it is mathematically certain that Jews will be found in Eretz Israel who will seek the means for making their lives uncomfortable, too, and possibly more so than are our own.

**In the beginning it will be only a handful of people, and mostly the very young, and the *Yishuv* itself will call them "*schkotzim*" and adventurers. But do not fear my friends, people of the *Yishuv* – you will be forced into the same path, one by one. You yourselves will experience the prisons of Acre and Moskovia for refusing to pay your taxes, or for not tolerating a foreign police in Tel Aviv, or for mocking a visitor – a pogromist really who pays you a so-called friendly visit whilst carrying a White Paper in his pocket – or maybe, because you will attack your own traitors at the "election" to an anti-Zionist Parliament.**

Prison is not a tragedy – for those who sit in prison. I read a most enjoyable description in one of the Tel Aviv newspapers, "*Masuot*", a cheerful portrayal of how the young men of Rosh Pina who were sent to Acre for



agitating a boycott against the national census, were arrested. It was a real pleasure to read these lines in these days of bowed heads and obedient protests.

A knock at the door: " Will you submit to the national census?" "No! – with a capital N!"

"Are you then the gentlemen who had proclaimed against the census?"  
"Yes, and how!"

### Vibrant Pulse of Youth

The vibrant pulse of youth, like a breath of youth, like a breath of wind, is felt in this sort of description. When they and their friends were forced to clean the steps of the prison, they dressed in their best clothes and wore white collars in order to carry out this menial job. Each piece of dirt which they unearthed was a stain on the uniforms of their guards and judges. Two girls, Shoshana Simonowitz and Raya Berman, refused to work, since that might have been interpreted as cooperation. They were deported to Bethlehem. How noble they are, these gentle adventurers!

Prison is really not a tragedy – for those who sit in prison. It is a tragedy for those who send honest men to prison. England has now reached this stage. She rules her possessions because honest folk sit in prison. She has created a situation in India whereby every decent patriot is ashamed to remain at home: "What am I?" he asks – "a traitor, that I am not yet in prison?" And the dull, *goyishe kep* who write the leading articles of the "*Times*" and "*Near East*" lick their fingers and proclaim with pleasure, "See how strong we are!".



### Sign of Weakness

Wait a year, you blind colleagues and see whether all this really means strength! In the present world it is not a sign of power, but on the contrary, it is a sign of weakness and indecision when a civilised nation cannot maintain itself in its colonies other than by the incarceration of the finest and most cultured elements of the nation over which it rules. Every child in England knows -though not every grown-up newspaper prattler admits it – that Gandhi's influence is stronger today than it was a month ago. That each day that he spends in prison is a newly-won battle for his ideals.

**And so will it be in Eretz Israel if it is true that we are still a living nation!**