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# WZO: 'A time for drastic reforms'

IT'S QUITE an admission for a man to say that the organization that elected him its first leader is unrepresentative, impotent, short on commitment and virtually irrelevant.

But that's what Arye Dulzin, elected chairman of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization in 1978, seems to be saying in his pleas for drastic changes in the Zionist movement.

"I began to realize that something was wrong after the last Zionist Congress in the spring of 1982," Dulzin told *The Jerusalem Post* recently.

During that memorable gathering – the 30th since the first congress was convened by Theodor Herzl – Labour Zionist and Herut delegates brawled, with some of them bloodied and sent to hospital, during a speech by Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

A few days later, Herut and Tami activists scuffled over the issue of help for disadvantaged Sephardim. The closing extended into the wee hours of the morning in a nasty struggle over who gets the portfolios in the Zionist Executive.

In the view of this reporter, who witnessed the 29th Zionist Congress in 1978 as well, that one was just as repulsive, with Orthodox, Conservative and Reform delegates becoming involved in a fracas on the stage. Dulzin, however, feels "sentimental" about the 1978 Congress – "that was the one that elected me."

EXPRESSING HIS DOUBTS about the present make-up of the Zionist movement and the WZO was regarded as close to "blasphemous" by Dulzin only a few years ago.

A long article I wrote calling for the abolition of the Zionist Congress after the 1978 spectacle aroused the ire of the usually good-natured Dul-

zin. Either the chairman has since mellowed or he has realized that changes must be effected.

After the last congress, Dulzin invited Israeli and Diaspora Jews connected with the WZO to spend a few days isolated in the Hasharon Hotel in Herzliya to discuss ways of rejuvenating the Zionist movement. This set in motion the so-called Herzliya Process which, if implemented, would mean a virtual revolution in the way the movement operates and who is a member.

Today, the only way to become a member of the Zionist movement is to join one of the numerous Zionist organizations, pay nominal dues (or none at all) and thereby offer passive

support to the "Jerusalem Programme," a declaration recognizing the "centrality of Israel in Jewish life" and the "importance" of aliya (although not necessarily to be taken personally).

Most of the 1.5 million members in 45 countries claimed by the Zionist movement would no doubt accept this lukewarm declaration, but undoubtedly quite a few are unaware of its existence.

As a result, the WZO is controlled by Israeli parties, and the various Zionist federations abroad are run largely by middle-aged *apparatchiks* who have no intention of settling in Israel. Congress and Zionist General Council delegates fly to Jerusalem on a regular and fully paid basis, deliberate on the issues and then fly home.

THE IDEOLOGICAL vacuum in the Zionist movement has been quickly filled by the aggressiveness of the "non-Zionist" fund-raisers in

the Diaspora, who are no longer content merely to raise and contribute money but who want a say in how the funds are spent and who serves in WZO and Agency posts.

Dulzin asserts that "they can't hijack the Jewish Agency; there is no Jewish Agency without the WZO."

During the last Agency board of governors meeting, Dulzin gave the fund-raisers a stern sermon about the need to hang together and cooperate. Most of the Diaspora fund-raisers agreed, but rebels like Mendel Kaplan and Ray Epstein

continue to insist that the moneymen should have the deciding vote.

Dulzin insists that the fund-raising organizations are not democratic in that "at least in the U.S., the executive director controls operations and he is appointed."

In the Zionist federations, on the other hand, the leaders were elected: "They have to appear in a party list to be chosen, and then they are approved by the congress and then by the Agency board of governors."

He concedes that many delegates elected to congresses were chosen in

"dubious" arrangements. Some of the Zionist members who "voted" were deceased; there were duplicate ballots. In some countries, elections were viewed as "too expensive" to hold, and delegates were sent to Jerusalem on the basis of elections that had been held years before or on the basis of compromises reached among the parties.

"Through the Herzliya Process," Dulzin declares, "I want to activate Zionists in all the countries. I want elections in every country, even if it is expensive."

By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH  
Jerusalem Post Reporter



Arye Dulzin

(Zoom 77)

IF DULZIN has his way, a "majority" of those who were congress delegates in 1982 will not return to the next congress in early 1987. They just won't meet the criteria of "Zionist."

He wants all card-carrying Zionists to be required to observe a number of "Zionist commandments" – they must themselves study Hebrew, offer a Jewish education to their children, ensure that at least one member of their family comes on aliya; spend time (or send children) in Israel for either study or long-term volunteering programme; observe a "Zionist-Jewish" calendar

studded with days commemorating Jewish or Zionist events.

"Very few of the Zionist Congress delegates of the past would meet these criteria, so if it is approved, it would be a resolution," asserts Dulzin.

During consultations, some in the Zionist movement have voiced their approval of the new criteria. Others, including leaders of Herut and the Zionist Confederation (largely Hadassah), as well as part of the Zionist Organization of America, have voiced their opposition. "But even in Hadassah there is some willingness. It is a process, and it won't happen overnight."

Dulzin's proposals also include the establishment of a movement of "Zionist realizers" – Jews who

would commit themselves to come on aliya within three to five years – an elite inner circle in the general movement.

Committees have been meeting this month on the various proposals, and the next step is to send recommendations to the annual Zionist General Council meeting next year. If they are approved by that body, the criteria could be in effect in time for elections of delegates to the 31st Zionist Congress.

Dulzin, who will be 73 in a few months, views these changes, if implemented, as the principal achievement of his tenure at the WZO, "which will launch the Zionist movement into the 21st century."

Dulzin says he has no doubt that there will be a Zionist movement in the next century: "There may be a day when there is no need any longer for the Jewish Agency, but there will not come a time when there is no need for the WZO."