

by Ahmad Halaweh

Forty-two years have passed since the creation of the State of Israel, the dismembering of Palestine, and the uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland. The reasons why Israel exists today, and why the majority of the Arab people of Palestine are refugees, date back a century ago. The crucial factor, no doubt, was the unholy alliance between British imperialism and the Zionists, aimed at opening Palestine to successive waves of Jewish immigrants. Describing the time of the British mandate, historian Arnold Toynbee wrote in 1968: «All through those 30 years (1918-48), Britain admitted into Palestine, year by year, a quota of Jewish immigrants that varied according to the strength of the respective pressures of the Arabs and the Jews at the time. These immigrants could not have come in, if they had not been shielded by a British *cheveux-de-frise*. If Palestine had remained under Ottoman rule or if it had become an independent Arab state in 1918, Jewish immigrants would never have been admitted into Palestine in large enough numbers to enable them to overwhelm the Palestinian Arabs in this Arab people's own country»(quoted by Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, *Palestine and the United Nations*, 1982, p.18).

After these 30 years of massive Jewish immigration, Israel was established in 1948, and the Palestinian people were driven into exile. The result was the tragedy of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict and its essence, the Palestinian question.

Understanding Israel's current policy of settling new immigrants in the occupied territories cannot be separated from its historical background. With the advent of the 1990's, the Zionist challenge has assumed a new aggressive dimension, as evidenced by Shamir's recent statements, clearly indicating Israel's determination to continue to challenge the international community and proceed with plans aimed at annexation of all the occupied Palestinian land. This study will look into the past to analyze Zionist immigration historically. One finds that the Israeli leaders of today have not given up the dream of «Greater Israel.» Israel is still guided by the thinking of the original leaders of the World Zionist Organization(WZO), and it is still Zionist ideology that governs Israeli policy.

The immigration drive

Originally, Jewish immigration to Palestine was based on individual efforts, and did not produce decisive results. The foundation of the WZO at the first Zionist Congress in 1897 was a turning point in terms of immigration policy. From that time, immigration was intensified by the WZO to create a new status quo in Palestine. In 1914, Chaim Weizmann, Zionism's foremost diplomat, said in a speech in London, «Before transforming Palestine into a Jewish state, we are in great need of finding the Jews who should settle there»(quoted by Georgi Kanaan, *The Collapse of the Israeli Empire*, 1982, [Arabic], p.112). The obsession with immigration became a Zionist doctrine. From its very inception, the Zionist movement, as a settler-colonial movement, mounted a large-scale propaganda campaign to convince as many Jews as possible to settle in Palestine. Aiming to

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encourage the sentiment for immigration among the Jewish masses, Weizmann told Rumanian Jews in 1928 that if they were «convinced of our rights in the land of Israel, you have to come to Palestine» (quoted by Kanaan, p.112).

Despite all their efforts, the Zionists might not have succeeded if not for the fascist terror which arose in Europe, and the decision of most Western countries to close their doors to Jewish refugees. As explained by Ghassan Kana-fani in his study of the 1936-39 revolt in Palestine: «From 1926 to 1932 the average number of immigrants per year was 7,201. It rose to 42,985 between 1933 and 1936, as a direct result of Nazi persecution in Germany...If Nazism was responsible for terrorising the Jews and forcing them out of Germany, it was 'democratic' capitalism in collaboration with the Zionist movement, that was responsible for directing comparatively large numbers of Jewish immigrants to Palestine...»

When Israel was declared in May 1948, the new state, along with the WZO, proceeded to pursue their main goal of importing Jews from all over the world. Based on the idea that Jews had been forcibly exiled from their land, Israel demanded the liquidation of the diaspora, through the immigration of all Jews to the «Promised Land.» To attain «Jewish national rebirth,» the Israeli founding declaration pointed out: «The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of the exiles...» and appealed to «the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally around the Jews of Eretz Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding, and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel»(T.G. Fraser, *The Middle East, 1914-1979*, 1980, pp.66-68).

According to Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, «The existence of Israel and its final victory depend on. guaranteeing one important factor which is extensive Jewish immigration to Israel... A fateful question... because military force alone is unable to secure the future of Israel. Therefore, bringing hundreds of thousands of Jews to Israel

