

focused on Soviet Jews. At the same time, a significant number of Israelis began to emigrate. This terrified Israeli leaders. Official statements show the extent of the Zionists' fear of this phenomenon, while also revealing some of the reasons behind the problem. As was written in *Davar*, August 10th, 1973: «We are facing a very dangerous matter. The number of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel is declining. And that of those emigrating from Israel is increasing. It is happening in a disturbing way.»

It appeared that most Jews had lost interest in immigrating to Israel. At the same time, for many of those who did settle there, the so-called land of milk and honey no longer satisfied their aspirations, and many new immigrants discovered that the promise of a better life was nothing but a lie. Minister of Immigrant Absorption Shleomo Razon noted: «The decline in immigration resulted from the possibility of new wars erupting, the lack of a feeling of security and economic difficulties... 4,000 Soviet Jews have obtained permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union in the last year(1974), but they went to the US, not to Israel»(quoted by Kanaan, p.133). With the lessened interest in immigration, the preference for other relocation places and accumulating problems in Israel, the emigration of Jews from Israel began to exceed immigration by the late seventies and early eighties.

If many Zionist leaders cited economic difficulties and insecurity as reasons for tipping the immigration-emigration ratio, World Jewish Congress and WZO President Nahum Goldman viewed that the main reason was to be found within Zionism and its concepts. He proposed a renewal of Zionism: «If we add human meanings to the national concept, and if we have the ability to convince a Jew that here we are establishing a civilization and new society with deep meaning and values for the human being at large, then it is possible to have this Jew in Israel»(Kanaan, p.151).

Goldman's words indirectly confirmed that Jews were becoming less fervent in their belief in the Zionist cause, at least in terms of deciding to settle in Israel. As the American author Roberta Feuerlicht wrote: «If Zionism is a national liberation movement, many Jews do not wish to be liberated; 75 per cent of the world Jewish population do not live in Israel... The Jewish population of Israel is actually shrinking»(Yuri Andreyev, *Zionism: Preaching and Practice*, 1988, p.17).

An article in *Maariv*, December 1st, 1978, cited another factor which is connected to both the concern of Goldman about lacking conviction in Zionism, and the economic factor: «The majority of Soviet Jews who are leaving the Soviet Union are not Zionist idealists. They are only concerned with improving their living standard... To them, Israel is a theocratic state... They believe that Israel cannot exist without the US, so it is better for them to go directly there(the US).»

All these statements challenge the Zionist myths of the «unity of the Jewish people» and «return to the fatherland.» The majority of Jews in the world have actually assimilated into the society of their own country; thus they lack the common characteristics of a people or nation. This fact of assimilation has often been noted in Israeli leaders' statements, and they consider it as one of the greatest dangers

facing Israel and Zionism, due to the role it plays in hindering immigration. «Assimilation is the greatest danger facing Jews of the diaspora,» said Levi Eshkol, Israeli prime minister in the sixties. «In the Western countries, the Jewish identity is going to disappear through assimilation»(quoted by Kanaan, p.156).

A basic fact which Zionist leaders try to gloss over is the lack of homogeneity in Israeli society itself. Being immigrants from different parts of the world, each group has its own traditions, language, cultural background and beliefs. This has caused many contradictions among Jews in Israel, as social and ethnic differences overlap with class divisions, as is most apparent in the differences between Ashkenazi and Oriental(or Arab) Jews. Ilan Halevi cites a telling incident in his book: «In 1972, a group of new immigrants from the USSR demonstrated at Nevi Sharett, in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, to protest against being housed right next to a Yemenite Jewish quarter. 'We did not come from the USSR,' they said, 'to live with Blacks!'»(p.225).

Immigration and expansion

It is necessary to understand the dangers Zionist immigration poses, as it is an undisputed fact that the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East stems from Zionist expansionism which is only fueled by immigration. This expansionism has been practiced since the emergence of the Zionist movement and current developments show that today's Israeli leaders have not and will not give up their expansionist plans. The State of Israel as recognized by the UN is not enough for the Zionists. Their ultimate objective is «Greater Israel» - optimally with frontiers extending from the Nile to the Euphrates. Any modifications of this goal are due to limitations imposed by concrete realities, not lack of ambition.

The dialectics between immigration and expansion have been continuously reiterated by Zionist leaders. Herzl was the first to express this dialectical relation; when asked by the imperial counsellor of Germany about the borders of the land needed for a Jewish state, he said: «Whenever the number of immigrants increases, our need for land increases»(quoted by Kanaan, p.127). Herzl was fully aware that the 'ingathering' of Jews from all over the world was a prerequisite for establishing the Zionist state. His colleague, the French Zionist Max Nordau, called for immediate practical steps to ensure a Jewish majority in Palestine, and proposed a solution to the «Jewish problem» via «large-scale immigration of Jewish youth to Palestine aiming at colonizing the fatherland»(quoted by Kanaan, p.112). In 1899, the German Zionist Davis Trich, wrote to Theodor Herzl saying: «Since it is beyond your ability to gather 10 million Jews in a piece of land not more than 25,000 square kilometers, I suggest you to take interest in the program of 'Greater Palestine' or 'Palestine and the neighboring countries'.» Since the Zionist movement was seeking to establish a «national home for all the Jewish people,» Trich called for amending the Zionist program whereby its aim would be specified as the «colonization of Palestine and the neighboring countries»(quoted by Kanaan, p.16).

Most recently, Prime Minister Shamir made the link between a big immigration and the need for more land for