

took the name Ahad Haam, meaning «one of the people,» said: «We are accustomed to believe, outside Israel, that the land of Israel is today almost entirely desert, bare and uncultivated, and that anyone who wants to buy land there can do so without hindrance. But the truth is quite different... We are accustomed to believing, outside Israel, that the Arabs are all desert savages, a people like donkeys, and that they neither see nor understand what is happening around them. But that is a great mistake»(quoted by Halevi, pp.168-9).

In 1914, in a lecture delivered in Paris, Chaim Weizmann declared: «In its initial stages, Zionism was conceived by the pioneers as a movement completely dependent on mechanical factors: there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people who have no country...»(quoted by Halevi, p.170).

Based on this myth, the Zionist movement worked to enforce a Jewish majority in Palestine, enabling them to establish their state. However, the Arab people of Palestine proved to be the greatest obstacle facing the Zionist project. The main question faced by the Zionists was how to deal with the Palestinians. Their answer was expelling the native inhabitants of Palestine, to be replaced by Jewish immigrants, laying the basis for the «transfer» policy which gained renewed currency in the 1980's. As Theodor Herzl put it in 1897: «We shall encourage the poverty-stricken population to cross the border by securing work for it in the countries it passes through, while denying it any work in our own country. The twin process of expropriation and displacement of the poor must be carried out prudently and discreetly. Let the landowners imagine that they are cheating us, and sell us their land at exorbitant prices. We shall sell nothing back to them»(quoted by Halevi, p.186). Faced with the Palestinians' refusal to sell their land, the violent nature of the «transfer» idea was to become obvious.

Soon after the Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917, the demographic transformation of Palestine began with large-scale Jewish immigration organized by the Zionist movement. As a result, the Jewish population in Palestine increased from 11 per cent in 1922, to 28 per cent in 1936. Yet Palestinians continued to be the majority, despite some of them being deprived of their land by the colonization drive. Expulsion became a main concern of the Zionist movement. In the 1937 Zurich Congress of the Mapai Party and its supporters, «transfer» occupied the first basic priority in the programs of the Zionist movement. Israel Shahak, president of the Israeli League for Human Rights, says: «It was then that the 'transfer' became policy, planned and supported by most of the highest-ranking leaders and opposed on moral grounds by none»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71, Spring 1989).

Despite unanimity on the morality of «transfer,» the participants in the congress responded in different ways to questions about the future of the Palestinians. Commenting on the Peel Commission's partition proposal, Ben Gurion said, «Despite the smallness of the territory offered to the Jewish state, there exists in the commission's proposals the possibility of transferring the Arab population, with their consent, if not by force, and thus extending Jewish coloni-

zation... until now, we have only been able to settle by transferring populations from place to place... There are only very few places where we have been able to colonize without being forced to transfer the inhabitants»(quoted by Halevi, p.186).

A. Cizling, leader of Mapam and a government minister in 1948, viewed «transfer» as «an exchange of population between a united Jewish Land of Israel, sometime in the future, and Iraq and other distant Arab countries, including the transfer of their Jews to the Land of Israel»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71).

In the opinion of Berl Katznelson, transfer was «the best of all solutions,» but he opposed what he feared Ben Gurion meant, i.e., that transfer was to be within Palestine. Katznelson who was called «the conscience of Labor Zionism,» believed that the Palestinians «were destined to be transferred to Syria and Iraq,» because «a remote neighbor is better than a close enemy»(op. cit.).

For all of them, «transfer» was a moral act and not unjust. One delegate to the Zurich conference, Abraham Lulu, described it as «a logical and just program, moral and humane in every sense... If we deny ourselves this right to transfer, we condemn all that we have so far accomplished»(quoted by Halevi, p.188).

Yossef Weitz who was appointed head of the Jewish National Fund's colonization department in 1932, was obsessed by the idea of «transfer.» Hoping to see an Israel devoid of Palestinians, he wrote in his diary, December 19th, 1940: «There is no room for both peoples in this small country. If the Arabs leave the country, it will be wide open for us. And if the Arabs stay, the country will remain narrow and miserable... There is no compromise on this point!... That must come all at once, in the manner of Redemption, and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer them all... We must not leave a single village, not a single tribe... And only with such a transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers, and the Jewish question will be solved once and for all. There is no other way out»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71).

Transfer in practice

With the creation of Israel, 800,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homeland. Only a small number of them remained under Israeli rule. In the aftermath, the Israeli leadership encouraged the exodus of more Palestinians under a variety of pretexts. Most important, however, they had attained the power and authority to adopt «transfer» as an official policy. An IDF Intelligence Branch report from June 30th, 1948, which came to light in the mid-eighties, surmises that «more than 70% of the Arab exodus from Palestine by June 1948 was caused by Jewish military attacks»(*Jerusalem Post*, March 2nd, 1986). One of the many examples of how the Zionists implemented the transfer policy was the destruction of Haifa. After viewing the ruins of the Palestinian city, emptied of its inhabitants, Ben Gurion commented, «What happened in Haifa can happen in other parts of the country if we will hold out... there will be great changes in the country, and great changes in the composition of the population of the country.» Ben Gurion