

## From Eastern Europe to the Middle East: The Reversal in Zionist Policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic Countries

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein

It was during World War II that the Zionist movement in Palestine first developed a significant commitment to the Jews in Islamic countries. Until then Zionist activity had focused on Europe, chiefly the large Jewish population centers in Eastern Europe. The Zionist movement had its sources of strength there, and it was from there that most of the immigrants to Palestine came. In contrast, in the 1950s Jews from Islamic countries accounted for more than half of all immigrants to Israel. By the end of the first decade of the State of Israel, the demographic balance had been tipped, and they accounted for slightly more than half the population.<sup>1</sup>

Mass immigration in general, and immigration from Islamic countries in particular, constituted a revolution in Zionist policy. Even on the universal level, this policy can be viewed as extraordinary, especially since the Zionist leadership was aware that mass immigration from the East would fundamentally alter the demographic composition of Jewish society in Palestine. The factors that motivated the establishment to bring over the Jews of Islamic countries and the connection between these factors and the position of the *Mizrahim*<sup>2</sup> in the geographical, economic, social, and cultural periphery of Israeli society have been mentioned or discussed in many studies. The standard explanation given for the question why the Israeli authorities encouraged the huge wave of immigration is that Israel needed people to work in industry and agriculture, to contribute to the war effort, and to settle territories that it had captured.<sup>3</sup> This explanation does not answer the question whether the Zionist establishment intended to distribute resources, and especially work, to the Jewish immigrants on a cultural or ethnic basis. In studies conducted in the first decades of the state, it was customary to link the low socioeconomic status of the *Mizrahim* in Israel with their pre-immigration demographic traits and educational statistics and to explain their condition in terms of their difficulty in adjusting to a modern society.<sup>4</sup>

A much more radical explanation, which was first elaborated in the works of critical Israeli sociologists and then adopted by several post- and anti-Zionist scholars, is that the *Mizrahim* were brought over not just because of the

need for more people but chiefly because Israel, or the Ashkenazi veterans, needed cheap labor. For example, according to the cultural scholar Ella Shohat:

Realization of the Zionist project in Palestine, along with the concomitant aggressive attitude toward all local peoples, brought with it the possibility of exploiting Sephardic Jews as part of the economic and political base. ... As a cheap, mobile, and easily manipulated labor force, the Sephardim were vital to the economic development of the State of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, she has claimed: "If the Palestinians can be seen as the aboriginal 'Indians' of the dominant discourse, the Sephardim constitute its 'Blacks'."<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that all these explanations are based not on empirical research into immigration policy but on hypotheses proposed in the course of research studies on the absorption of immigrants from Islamic countries in Israel. Based on extrapolations from the absorption policy to Israeli immigration policy, these hypotheses generally reflect the scholar's academic orientation or political conviction.

In this article I seek to focus on two main issues: What factors were behind the change in the Zionist establishment's policy regarding the immigration of the Jews from Islamic countries? What was the significance of the change, what areas of activity did it encompass, and to what extent and in what areas of activity was the change likely to affect the policy governing the absorption of Jews from Islamic countries in the 1950s and 1960s? The discussion of these issues will focus on the "One Million Plan" presented by Ben-Gurion in 1943-44, which explicitly proclaimed the immigration of one million Jews from Europe and Islamic countries to be a central Zionist objective. This declaration was a manifestation of the reversal in Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries: for the first time, they were considered potential candidates for immediate immigration and for Zionist activity that would prepare, encourage and train them to immigrate. Based on the Zionist establishment's discussions of the "One Million Plan," I will attempt to discern how the Zionist leaders perceived the Jews of Islamic countries and to understand the plans that they drew up for their immigration and absorption a few years before events made it possible for these plans to have an effect on actual absorption.

To examine the issue, I will look at Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries during the period preceding the plan and at various aspects of the implementation of the policy after the plan was drawn up. In this article the issue will be explored as it was perceived at the time, based on archive sources that document discussions in leadership institutions, public statements and remarks in international forums, and the operative policy that

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stemmed from the plan. Although a detailed research study on the "One Million Plan" has been done by Dvora Hacoohen, she focuses on the overall Zionist policy, and especially on the personality of David Ben-Gurion; the Jews of Islamic countries are mentioned briefly as an aside.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, I will examine the elements of Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries before World War II, the effect of the annihilation of European Jewry and the undermining of the Jews' physical safety in Arab countries on Zionist policy, and the operative manifestations of this policy in 1944-48.

#### *Background: The Jews of Islamic Countries and Zionist Policy until 1941*

Although the status of Middle Eastern and North African Jewry in the overall Zionist policy came up explicitly only during World War II, the existence of these Jews was not foreign to the *Yishuv* leadership. The socialist Zionists had been in contact with *Mizrahi* Jews since the Second *Aliyah*. The Labor movement's leaders were aware of *Mizrahi* communities in the old neighborhoods of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other cities, but most of these *Mizrahim* were not part of the organized *Yishuv* institutions; some of them were even part of the Old *Yishuv*.<sup>8</sup> In the new Zionist settlements, they were most familiar with Yemenites, who had settled in the agricultural villages of the coastal plain. The *Mizrahim*, however, were generally not perceived as a part of *Yishuv* society. As Eliyahu Dobkin, head of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department, explained in 1943: "Despite the fact that they are so close to us geographically, they are foreign and distant, and the foreignness is mutual. In the past twenty years, these Jews have been cut off from us much more than any other Jewish collective."<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, some Zionist activity, with an emphasis on Hebrew-Zionist education, took place in the 1920s and 1930s in most Islamic countries. In Iraq it encompassed a few dozen members, most of them in Baghdad. They conducted cultural and educational activities, collected donations for Keren Hayesod and the Jewish National Fund, and handled the immigration of several hundred people to Palestine. Similar activity took place in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco.

For demographic, political, ideological, and cultural reasons, however, the Zionist establishment did not perceive the Jews of Islamic countries as having significant Zionist potential. In the late 1930s, they numbered approximately 750,000 and constituted less than four percent of the world Jewish population. Iraqi Jewry, for example, accounted for only 0.7 percent of the Jewish people. Furthermore, the 1920s and 1930s were a time of political progress and economic prosperity for the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa. For

most of them it was an era of emancipation, modern education, and an improved standard of living, and few were interested in Zionism and immigration to Palestine.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, millions of Jews in Eastern and Central Europe were suffering from economic strangulation, social discrimination, and political persecution, and these troubles increased in scope and intensity in the mid-1930s after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The plight of European Jewry commanded the interest and commitment of the Zionist movement. Zionism drew its strength and its human reserve from European Jewry. It was in Europe that the movement had been founded and its ideology had taken shape. Zionist societies, organizations, political parties, and youth movements had been functioning there for decades. At their initiative, and as a result of their activity, money and people poured in to build up the land, and the leaders of the movement emerged from their ranks. Under these circumstances, it was only natural that the World Zionist Organization would focus on the wellsprings from which it obtained its material and human resources. Most of the immigration certificates held by the Zionist Executive were distributed in Europe.

Moreover, in the early 1920s the Mandatory government had imposed quotas for single, healthy but destitute immigrants, aged 18–35, affiliated with the Labor movement. The quotas were set by the British in accordance with the economic absorption capacity of the country, and the Zionist Executive was empowered to distribute the immigration certificates. But because the number of applications for immigration certificates far exceeded the quota, the Zionist Executive had to set criteria for selecting immigrants. Its criteria were ideological; it gave preference to members of Zionist youth movements who had undergone vocational and ideological training through the pioneering movements. These movements held the ethos of physical labor sacrosanct as the foundation and necessary condition for rectification of the Jewish individual and Jewish society and for achieving national renewal. They also repudiated Jewish history in the diaspora and the occupations that were perceived as typical of diaspora Jewish life: shopkeeping, peddling, acting as middlemen, and trade. Their members spent time on training farms, learned Hebrew, and prepared themselves to perform arduous physical labor and to carry out all the missions on which the Zionist establishment might send them.<sup>11</sup>

The selective immigration criteria meant that all Jewish collectives that did not conduct pioneering Zionist activity were disqualified from immigrating. These Jews were defined as inappropriate "human material" for immigration. Because Zionist activity was on a small scale in Islamic countries, the pioneering movements were not active there at all. As there were no training farms, there was little chance of obtaining a significant number of immigration certificates.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the demographic, political, and ideological factors, there was also a cultural hierarchy. Zionism, as a modern national movement, was founded in Europe in the late nineteenth century, and along with the ideas of the Enlightenment and nationalism, it absorbed the notion of a cultural hierarchy derived from the colonialist world of values as it was shaped in the encounter between Western culture and other cultures. According to this conception, the natural differences between nations produce a hierarchy with European cultures at the top and the cultures of all other nations below them. As Yaron Tsur argues, Zionism has been the only ethno-nationalist movement that appealed to populations both from Europe and from Asia and Africa. It therefore had to deal with a "built-in" conflict between the unifying and egalitarian nationalist ethos and the opposite effects of the colonialist and orientalist heritages.<sup>15</sup> The Zionist pioneers sought to erase their diaspora past, but they did not want to give up their European culture.<sup>16</sup> As a result, underneath and alongside the ethnic-national ethos of Zionism, which promised to treat all Jews in all diaspora communities equally, was a latent ethos that regarded the culture of Islamic countries as "Levantine," that is to say characterized by superficial education, merely external manners, no real cultural foundation, and intellectual instability.<sup>17</sup>

Implicit in this conception is concern for the fate of the exemplary society that socialist Zionism sought to establish. Not all Jews were deemed worthy of immigrating to Palestine during the formative stages of the national home. Anyone who failed to satisfy the ideological and cultural criteria of socialist Zionism was perceived as liable to damage or even bound to destroy the exemplary Zionist society. Thus, the Jews of Islamic countries could be included in *Yishuv* society only if they accepted both Zionist ideology and its cultural features. As Oz Almog puts it in *The Sabra: A Profile*: "This step up included, from the standpoint of the veteran *Yishuv*, a rise from the Eastern culture, which it considered backwards, to the developed Western culture," or more precisely, Ashkenazi culture.<sup>18</sup>

Despite receiving few immigration certificates, thousands of Jews from Arab countries — Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and Yemen — arrived in Palestine between the two world wars. The November 1948 census counted approximately 4,300 natives of Syria and Lebanon, 5,000 natives of Iraq, 2,000 natives of Egypt, and 9,000 natives of Yemen and Aden in Israel; these people had immigrated between 1919–39, before the outbreak of World War II.<sup>19</sup> These immigrants came for religious/messianic, economic, family, and other reasons. The vast majority sneaked across the border and lived in Palestine illegally. They settled in the *Mizrahi* areas on the outskirts of the major cities, many of them in Jerusalem and a smaller number in Tel Aviv, and they worked in crafts, in commerce, as peddlers and as middlemen of various sorts as they had done in their native lands. Their connection with the *Yishuv*

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establishment was limited because they objected to the secularism of the Zionist movement and the strange mentality and culture that they encountered in contacts with the Zionist bureaucracy. The Zionist establishment perceived the immigrants from Islamic countries as an unproductive element who did not contribute the desired labor and did not integrate into the organized *Yishuv*.<sup>18</sup>

The exception was the attitude towards the Yemenite and Kurdish communities. The few immigration certificates allotted to Iraq were given to Kurdish Jews, even though they were a small minority (about 10 percent) of Iraqi Jewry, had no Zionist education whatsoever, and had little general or Jewish education. Most of the immigrants, however, arrived without immigration certificates. Approximately 2,000 Kurdish Jews arrived in the 1920s (out of 3,300 immigrants from Iraq during that period). They reached Syria on passports, crossed to Sidon, and were smuggled into Safed on donkeys. Most of them settled in Jerusalem and worked in arduous occupations: as porters, donkey drivers, quarriers, construction workers, and masons. Some of them worked in agriculture in the old farming villages.<sup>19</sup> Because of their simplicity, industriousness, and reputation for doing manual labor, the Kurds were preferred over the other Iraqi Jews who worked in commerce and as middlemen.<sup>20</sup>

Immigrants also came from Yemen, most of them with immigration certificates. On the eve of independence, the Yemenite community in Palestine numbered approximately 28,000. The vast majority were concentrated in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and the agricultural villages on the coastal plain, from Zikhron Ya'akov to Rehovot.<sup>21</sup> In all these places, most of the Yemenites lived in ethnic communities in poor neighborhoods. They were prominent in low-paying, labor-intensive occupations, such as agriculture and construction work of various sorts, including building, carpentry and plumbing. The Yemenite women worked almost exclusively as housekeepers.<sup>22</sup>

The Yemenites and Kurds were perceived as satisfying the operative criteria in the Labor movement's ideology. Although, as Ratzabi notes about the Yemenites in Kinneret in the 1920s, they did not share its ideology and they essentially "bore ... all the markers of the Jew against which the young pioneers had rebelled in shaping the new Jewish utopia."<sup>23</sup> Although they meticulously observed the religious precepts and maintained the traditional way of life that the pioneers had challenged, and although their motivation for immigrating was not the national ideology but first and foremost religious consciousness and messianic impulses, the Zionist establishment perceived them as workers, and they thus fulfilled the principle of labor in practice. Presumably, the Kurds and Yemenites took low-paying, low-prestige jobs entailing arduous manual labor because these were the only jobs available, and they accepted their low socioeconomic status simply because they had no

choice. Thus they were "natural laborers" and never part of the Zionist vanguard. Nevertheless, unlike the other *Mizrahim*, they were perceived as contributing to the development of the national home, or at least not detracting from it.

To sum up, by the late 1930s the images that the Zionist establishment in Palestine and the Jews of Islamic countries had of each other, as well as their patterns of action towards each other, were already framed. Although the latter were perceived as part of the Jewish people, they were regarded as the less important, less advanced, culturally Levantine part that, due to its cultural inferiority, had only a limited contribution to make to the revival of the nation; until they adopted Western culture and resembled Europeans, it was believed, they could not contribute to establishing Zionist society in Palestine. Alongside the cultural rejection, the ideological features of socialist Zionism also played a part. The Jews of Islamic countries were portrayed as having human potential unsuited to settlement, to the Labor movement and to *Yishuv* society. Consequently, the *Yishuv* was not interested in them, and the local Zionist movements that operated in those countries in the 1920s and 1930s were not given any substantial assistance.

It should be noted that the pioneers' perception was a particularistic one that ran counter to Herzlian Zionist principles. It was particularly prevalent among the young pioneers, although even among them it was not universal. The most prominent dissenting voice was that of Ben-Gurion, who wondered — in the context of discrimination by the Zionist institutions against the Yemenites with respect to settlement and employment — about the contradiction between the pioneers' particularistic value system and the national, inclusive value system of the Zionist movement.<sup>24</sup>

The Jews in Islamic countries were not aware of the ideological principles and criteria behind the World Zionist Organization's immigration policy, nor of the vacillations that accompanied them. They did not understand them and, of course, could not agree with them, because these criteria left them outside the Zionist circle. Nevertheless, as a result of the East-West dichotomy and exposure to the cultural hierarchy introduced by European colonialism, the *Mizrahi* immigrants interpreted the Zionist establishment's attitude towards them as ethnic discrimination by the Ashkenazi establishment against *Mizrahim*. If these attitudes became entrenched, they could have made all future activity in these countries difficult. Hence, any initiative would be dependent on a change in the condition and status of the Jews of Islamic countries, of the *Yishuv*, and of the Jewish people and the Zionist movement. Only if these paradigms developed a crack or were shattered could there be a turnabout in the *Yishuv's* relations with the Jews of Islamic countries.

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Syria, Egypt and the Maghreb, and in countries where Zionist activity resumed after a break, such as Iraq and Iran. In all these countries occurred a qualitative and quantitative change in the intensity and scope of the activity, in the quantity of emissaries from Palestine and in the assessment of potential activity and its chances. From the emissaries' reports, the Yishuv leaders learned that there was significant human potential in the Islamic countries, but also that very few Jews would come to Palestine unless they were exposed to socialist-Zionist education, and even those few would not join the labor settlements. The conclusion was that the national institutions in Palestine and the Zionist movements in the countries in question had to make special preparations so that the Zionist activity would meet the specific needs of the Jewish communities and connect them to the needs of Palestine.

However, the increased scope, budgets, weight and importance of Zionist activity in Islamic countries in those years were not a departure from the routine Zionist policy of bringing over young pioneers loyal to Zionist ideology and to the settlement system. Because activity in Europe was impossible, the Yishuv emissaries focused on Middle Eastern and North African countries and worked on bringing over young members of the Zionist movements. Their attitude in this respect was similar to the Zionist attitude towards the Yemenites: so long as "positive" immigrants arrived in limited numbers and did not detract from the regular influx of pioneers from Europe, the Zionist institutions were not averse to giving them immigration certificates. Presumably, after the war they would again focus on European Jewry.

World War II then brought about a new encounter between the Zionist establishment and the Jews of the Islamic countries. This encounter was not marked by an overall change in the establishment's attitude towards these Jews, but it contained a potential change. The Yishuv leadership became aware of the presence of Jews in Islamic countries, of their worsening political status and security situation, of the correlation between their fate and that of the Yishuv, as well as the acceleration of Zionist activity in those countries.

### *The "One Million Plan"*

In November 1942, the Yishuv leadership began to absorb the full significance of the Holocaust.<sup>21</sup> As time passed, word spread of the scope of the catastrophe. The Jews in Palestine realized that by the end of the war, a substantial portion of European Jewry — perhaps the vast majority — would be dead.

Remarks by Zionist leaders in 1943 already indicated a reversal in Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries. One of these leaders was Eliyahu Dobkin, the head of the Immigration Department, who spoke of the ramifications of the immigration situation and about the Yishuv's attitude

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towards the 774,000 Jews in Islamic countries (North Africa, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Turkey):

These exiles have become more valuable in the present era from several standpoints: (a) We do not know how many Jews will be left in Europe after the campaign to exterminate them and how many of them we will be able to be in touch with, because millions will quite likely remain under Soviet Russian rule and will be torn from us for a long time. Therefore the quantitative value of these three-quarters of a million Jews has risen to the level of a valuable political factor among world Jewry. (b) We all know the simple truth that the entire secret of our policy today is to augment our strength by increasing the Jewish population in Palestine, and these Jews will clearly be the first to join us, preceding Jewish collectives from Europe. (c) It is easier to reach them — we are not separated by seas and war fronts — and it is easier for them to reach Palestine, too.<sup>32</sup>

Dobkin went on to express an overarching objective: "We can sum up our job vis-à-vis these Jews in one phrase: Zionist conquest of these exiles in order to liquidate them and transfer them to Palestine."<sup>33</sup> Remarks by Ben-Gurion in 1943, too, allude to a new political plan taking shape:

The matter of activity among these large Jewish collectives [the Jews of Islamic countries], which history has placed in one of the most dangerous locations of all, is now becoming a political issue ... and Zionist policy — not only immigration policy and not only our pioneering policy, but political Zionism, too — requires work among these Jews.<sup>34</sup>

This political Zionism was articulated in detail in the "One Million Plan," which originated in plans expressed by Ben-Gurion in the mid-1930s and fleshed out in late 1942, after the adoption of the Biltmore Resolution. Ben-Gurion spoke of two million European Jews immigrating at the end of the war.<sup>35</sup> When the demographic significance of the Holocaust became clear and it was realized that the Jews whose distress Zionism was supposed to relieve would no longer be alive at the end of the war, the Zionist movement faced what its leadership perceived as the thorniest dilemma in its history, casting doubt on the justification for its continued existence. Ben-Gurion explained the problem: "This fact, the annihilation of six million Jews ... is liable to destroy the very foundations of Zionism and the Zionist claim, too."<sup>36</sup> Comments that Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary at the time indicate how closely he followed the data on the dimensions of the destruction in Europe and the significance of these numbers for Zionism.<sup>37</sup> At a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive on 28 September 1944, Ben-Gurion explained:

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We are now on the verge of the end of the war, and most Jews have been annihilated. There is now the most important, most practical justification for a non-Zionist solution, because there are no Jews. There has never been such an anti-Zionist weapon. Everyone is asking himself: where will we get Jews for Palestine? We are facing what may be the last decisive hour: yes to Palestine or no to Palestine for the Jews!<sup>39</sup>

However, neither Ben-Gurion nor any of the other leaders was willing to give up on Zionism and on the establishment of a Jewish state. On the contrary, the Holocaust reinforced their belief in the Zionist idea, underscored the political weakness of Zionism, and made it clear that a Jewish state was essential. Consequently, Ben-Gurion's only question was arithmetic: would enough Jews be found in the world who were willing and able to emigrate to Palestine to make possible the establishment of the Jewish state? His answer related to the Biltmore Program: "My minimum used to be two million; now that we have been annihilated I say one million."<sup>40</sup>

To examine ways of implementing the "One Million Plan," Ben-Gurion appointed the Planning Committee, a committee of experts that was to look into how the economy of Palestine could support a million Jews.<sup>41</sup> Only on 24 June 1944, however, was the plan presented to the Jewish Agency Executive. It was presented not as an operative plan, since the White Paper policy was in effect in Palestine at the time, but in the political context, in an effort to formulate the demands that the Zionist movement would submit to the Allies at the end of the war: "The real content of our demand is to bring one million Jews to Palestine immediately." Ben-Gurion's demand had three parts to it: legal immigration, Jewish control of immigration, and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish state within a short period of time. The plan would be financed by a grant or loan from Britain and the United States, as well as financial reparations from Germany to the Jewish people for the purpose of building up the land. The arrival of the immigrants would be rapid and independent of the pace of their absorption, which would take much longer. The initial candidates for immigration under Ben-Gurion's plan were the 500,000 Jewish refugees in Europe, who would be dependent on the victors anyway. He insisted that they should be brought to Palestine and supported until they were absorbed, or, as he put it, "a soup kitchen [should be] opened for them in Palestine." Next, all the Jews in Arab and North African countries — those 800,000 people who were at "risk of annihilation and of *human and cultural degeneration* as well" [my emphasis] should be brought to Palestine. "In my opinion," Ben-Gurion summed up,

the Zionist program today requires the bringing over of a million Jews, the political right to this, and financial aid. To accomplish this, we need a plan for transporting them, for housing them temporarily, for bringing



independence. In this respect, including the Jews of Islamic countries in the "One Million Plan" might block American support and jeopardize the realization of the Zionist program.

Ben-Gurion was aware of these arguments, but he believed that a demand for the immigration of the European refugees only would not ensure a Jewish majority, would not allow for the formation of a sustainable political entity, and would ultimately even exacerbate the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. It is doubtful whether the United States would agree to lend its hand to such a development. For this reason, Ben-Gurion believed, the *Yishuv* could not pass up the opportunity to call for immigration from Islamic countries. These Jews were to play a central role in creating a critical mass of population in Palestine so as to ensure the establishment of a sustainable Jewish state. Thus Ben-Gurion used both the distress of the Jewish refugees in Europe and the political distress of the Jews of Islamic countries for the Zionist cause, ignoring the internal contradiction between the two in favor of the establishment of a Jewish state. He also set priorities for immigration, however, reflecting the human and political centrality of the problem of the Holocaust refugees: "The remnants of the Jews in Europe take precedence," Ben-Gurion said in concluding a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive.<sup>44</sup>

Inherent in the "One Million Plan" was a radical paradigm shift in the practical and ideological spheres, involving a change in attitudes that had occurred in the 1920s and 1930s and had molded the social and ideological image of *Yishuv* society. The concept of "selective immigration," which, both for ideological reasons and because only a few of the many applicants for immigration could be chosen, preferred young pioneers over other Jews, gave way to the exact opposite: mass immigration by every Jew who wanted to come, irrespective of age, sex, occupation, health, and so on. It was clear that the immigrants from Europe would arrive destitute, ill and broken, whereas the Jews from Islamic countries would come with large families, including children and the elderly, a substantial percentage of sick, poor people with no Western education and even without any education at all, and a culture and values that were different from and foreign to the *Yishuv*. The population that had until then been rejected entirely by the Zionists now formed the basis for the establishment of a sustainable state. In 1944, however, the notion of selective immigration seemed inhumane and antinational in view of the annihilation of a third of the Jewish people and Zionism's desperate need for immigrants. In 1951, at the height of the wave of mass immigration to Israel, when the demographic problem was perceived as less severe than it had been a few years before, Israel re-adopted a policy of selective immigration, which it applied chiefly to the Jews of North Africa. By then, however, Israel already had close to 1.5 million Jews.

Hence the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in Zionist activity stemmed from historical circumstances that were not specifically related to

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these Jews. The situation was well put by Eliyahu Lulu (Hacarmeli); who represented the *Mizrahim* on the executive committee of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labor): "We forgot the eastern lands, and we cannot brag of having discovered them. Cruel life compelled us to discover them." <sup>(19)</sup> Anyway, from now on the Jews of Islamic countries became an integral part of the nationalist project of Zionism. It should be kept in mind, however, that those same historical circumstances affected the Jewish communities in Islamic countries, too. The travails that they experienced as a result of occupation by Axis troops or their supporters, the rise of pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic forces, extensive anti-Semitic propaganda, pogroms and fears of more pogroms, and the threatening shadow of the Holocaust as a precedent for the annihilation of Jews all shocked the Jewish communities and magnified their fears for the future, while also reinforcing a sense of Jewish solidarity and interest in the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.

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Danger

One of the issues that came up in the discussions of the "One Million Plan" was that of the security of the Jews in Islamic countries. This issue had been on the Zionist agenda since the pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad and reports of anti-Semitic manifestations in Arab countries. The *Yishuv* leadership warned repeatedly that the Jews in Arab countries could expect to be wiped out and should be rescued at any cost. Dobkin referred to this in a speech to the Mapai Central Committee in July 1943:

I don't know whether these Jews have any sense of what awaits them, but we have to look at it with open eyes. The very same day that brings redemption and salvation to European Jewry will be the most dangerous day of all for the exiles in Arab lands. When Zionism enters the stage of fulfillment and we are engaged in our campaign for the Zionist solution in Palestine, these Jews will face great danger, danger of terrible slaughter, which will make the slaughter in Europe look less terrible than it looks today. Our first task is therefore to save these Jews."

This graphic description gives an indication of the impact of the Holocaust on Zionist interpretations. At the same time, because Dobkin made his remarks as an introduction to his efforts to persuade the Mapai Central Committee to support the "Uniform Pioneer Plan" (to be discussed below), it seems that these remarks may be regarded as one of the first cases of the use of the Holocaust to achieve a political objective. Ben-Gurion, too, was worried about the security situation, as we see from his remarks in 1943:

In many respects the issue of the Jews of eastern lands has now appeared on the Zionist agenda: (a) because of the catastrophe that took place in Europe — and we do not know what will become of European Jewry; (b) because of the catastrophe that the Jews in eastern lands are expected to face as a result of Zionism. This is the only segment of Jewry in the world that is liable to be a victim of Zionism; therefore we have a special responsibility towards them ...<sup>47</sup>

The danger foreseen for the Jews of Islamic countries due to Zionism is mentioned in reports and assessments by *Yishuv* emissaries to these countries and in the remarks of leaders such as Moshe Shertok (Sharett), Yitzhak Tabenkin, Berl Katznelson, Ben-Gurion, Dobkin, and Ben-Zvi.<sup>48</sup>

In retrospect, it should be noted that these gloomy forecasts proved false. Although the status and security of the Jews in Arab countries worsened significantly, and they suffered political and economic persecution — especially in the tense period of the War of Independence — there were no massacres, and there was no danger to Jewish survival. Although the Jews experienced bloody incidents in Cairo (November 1945 and June–November 1948), Tripoli (4–7 November 1945), Aden (1947) and the Moroccan border with Algeria (1948), and although local army and police forces took part in these incidents, overall the attacks were limited in scope and were not the result of a government policy or initiative. Why, then, the gloomy forecast?

It should be kept in mind that the assessment of the *Yishuv* leadership was informed first and foremost by the impressions of the emissaries to Arab countries, and these impressions were negative, perhaps due to the catastrophic Zionist world view and perhaps because they were trying to rouse the *Yishuv* establishment and spur it to increase its activity in Islamic countries. Moreover, the acts of brutality committed by Arabs against helpless Jews in the *farhud* and, even earlier, in massacres in Hebron and elsewhere, gave rise in Palestine to the assumption that increased tension over the Palestine problem would result in large-scale slaughter of the Jews of Islamic countries. And if such brutality seemed to the Zionist leaders from Europe as something to be expected of Arabs but not of "civilized" nations such as the Germans, after the Holocaust it was clear that the worst should be expected, especially given the view that the national conflict over Palestine provided a stronger motivation for hatred of Jews than European anti-Semitism. The situation in Europe, where the war had given free rein to the murderers, now seemed likely to recur given the hostility in Arab countries towards the helpless Jews, the mounting tension in Palestine and in Arab countries and the apathy of the West. These were the first conclusions that Zionism drew from the Holocaust, and they evoked pessimism and gloomy predictions.

The predictions turned out to be dooeful exaggerations. The analogy drawn between the Arabs and the Nazis was unquestionably unfair to the Arabs and their governments. However, deterioration of the situation may have been prevented by the news of the annihilation of European Jewry; after this shock, Western public opinion would no longer be tolerant of similar manifestations in Arab countries, which were still within the British sphere of influence. The revelation of the political power of American Jewry after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel may have also acted as deterrents and kept the situation from deteriorating.

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Moreover, for our purposes, it is totally irrelevant whether and to what extent the danger was real; what matters is its impact on the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the "One Million Plan". This impact is illustrated by a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, during which the members of the Executive addressed the issue in view of the troubling information and pessimistic assessments that they had heard. Ben-Gurion described the situation as follows:

The Arab residents of Baghdad are openly making preparations for massacre. In Egypt, too, the condition of the Jews is getting worse. The plight of Yemenite Jewry is among the best known; now Turkish Jewry is also being destroyed. ... There is also political danger in Arab countries. If we do not do away with Iraqi Jewry in the Zionist manner, there is a danger that it will be done away with in the Hitlerian manner."

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The Zionist perception of the security situation of the Jews of Islamic countries elicited objections to the plan from some of the participants in the discussion. Although they did not cast doubt on the need and national obligation to include the Jews of these countries in the plan, they objected to Ben-Gurion's proposal to proclaim this officially. Such a declaration, they maintained, might put these Jews at risk, and anyway, the "One Million Plan" was not about to be carried out any time soon, so long as the White Paper policy was in effect and the governments of neighboring Arab countries barred Jewish emigration. Even from a Zionist perspective, they were not candidates for immediate immigration; they were preceded by European Jewry. So why endanger them?

Shertok's answer was one of principle: he spoke of the "reckoning of the hour" versus the "reckoning of the generations" and of a "universal Jewish" approach that demanded the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the political plan. Ben-Gurion seconded this principle and noted that the dilemma had begun in the days of Herzl. He acknowledged that a public announcement could exacerbate the condition of the Jews, but he insisted that their situation was bad anyway. He explained his decision as follows:

If we are afraid to take responsibility for this, we have to take responsibility for the slaughter of Iraqi Jewry. Perhaps not the Jews of Turkey, perhaps not the Jews of Egypt — the Egyptians are not used to this — but the Iraqis are used to it and will slaughter the Jews in a single day. I am not afraid that it will aggravate the condition of the Jews: if a Jew gets angry at us, let him get angry. Regarding responsibility, I reached my final conclusion when I was in Sejera and saw my two comrades killed before my very eyes; it was then that I concluded that Zionism is something responsible. When I call on a Jew to come here I am taking responsibility for his life, and I will not be deterred. I foresee a greater catastrophe for Iraqi Jewry than if I talk about bringing them to Palestine and their plight is worsened.<sup>50</sup>

An analysis of Ben-Gurion's answer points up an internal contradiction. He claimed that the Jews of Islamic countries were in danger and recognized that declaring them candidates to link up with the Zionists could exacerbate their situation. He was also aware that such a declaration would be made unilaterally, without consulting the Jews of Islamic countries themselves, and might anger these Jews. Nevertheless, he was not willing to forgo the declaration. He explained this by saying that "Zionism is something responsible," by which he meant that the fulfillment of Zionism had its inevitable price, which was required of Zionists and non-Zionists alike. Because the "One Million Plan" relied on a numerical element, Ben-Gurion could not forgo the *Mizrahim*. Without them there was no chance of establishing a state.

Consequently, in the name of Jewish nationalism, he appropriated the Jews of Islamic countries for Zionism, on the assumption that Zionism knew the needs and interests of these Jews best. These interests, as he saw them, coincided with those of Zionism. Ben-Gurion explained this appropriation by stating that the Jews in Islamic countries could expect catastrophe anyway and the decisive issue was whether Zionism would eventually be able to lead these collectives to Palestine. This viewpoint expresses not only the primacy of Zionism in relation to the diaspora, but also a sober basic assumption that the Jews of Islamic countries would need the State of Israel no less and perhaps more urgently than it needed them.

Another way of describing this appropriation was pointed out by the historian Dalia Ofer: "To [Ben-Gurion], there was an absolute unity of fate between the Jewish people in Palestine and the nation in the diaspora, which required a set of shared action guidelines to ensure Jewish survival by means of Zionist fulfillment in Palestine."<sup>51</sup> The question is whether diaspora Jewry shared this perception of the unity of fate, and how much weight was ascribed to the diaspora and its needs in setting Zionist policy. As for the Jews of Islamic countries, it is doubtful whether they shared this view.

It is ironic that when the Zionist movement, for the first time, came to regard the Jews of Islamic countries as an integral part of the Zionist enterprise and even decided to declare this publicly, it did so in the knowledge that it was liable to harm these Jews and accelerate an exacerbation of their status. Ben-Gurion was willing to take both the risk and the responsibility for this, just as the Zionist movement took other risks to achieve its political goals. Hence, the Holocaust only reinforced the Zionist awareness of the centrality and priority of Palestine, with one difference — instead of having its needs served by the diaspora, Palestine would be built up by the elimination of central parts of the diaspora. This is how both the Holocaust survivors in Europe and the Jews in Islamic countries were perceived. In any case, the discussion in the Jewish Agency Executive shows that the "One Million Plan" was the product of Zionist needs and interests and that the issue of the danger to the Jews of Islamic countries, which at the time conflicted with the "One Million Plan," was considered to be of secondary importance. Apparently, the *Yishuv* leaders themselves did not believe that the danger was immediate or substantial, but they were more than ready, at this stage, to integrate masses of *Mizrahim* in the Zionist project. For sure, the demographic needs of the national movement came first, but nationalist ideology and sentiments too played their part in contrasting cultural prejudices and fears that could bar the way to such a change.

#### *The "One Million Plan" and the Operative Policy of Zionism*

From both a political and an operative perspective, the "One Million Plan" had no immediate significance; its importance was on the level of principle, because it reflected the attitude of the Zionist institutions towards the Jews of Islamic countries as potential citizens of the Jewish state, a commitment to their welfare and safety, and acknowledgment of the importance of Zionist activity among them. This message — that Palestine wanted Jewish immigrants from Islamic countries — came through loud and clear, and its echoes could be heard in all the Jewish communities in these countries.

After it was presented to the Jewish Agency Executive, the "One Million Plan" became the official policy of the Zionist leadership. The immigration of the Jews of Islamic countries was explicit or implicit in all the declarations, testimonies, memoranda and demands issued by the Jewish Agency from World War II until the establishment of the state.<sup>22</sup> For example, a memorandum submitted to the High Commissioner on 18 June 1945 calls for permission for the immediate immigration of 100,000 European Jewish refugees and of Jewish refugees from Islamic countries, "from Morocco to Iran and from Istanbul to Aden."<sup>23</sup> Throughout the memoranda and proclamations, the immigration of the *Mizrahim* appears as a secondary issue,

in a sentence appended to demands focusing on the problem of the Holocaust survivors and the issue of Palestine. The demand to bring over the Jews of Islamic countries was not successful in the international arena, but it had an impact in the intra-Zionist realm: a revision of priorities, allocation of resources and the formation of new circumstances for Zionism. The main task in the first stage, prior to the establishment of the state, was organizational, ideological, and cultural.

Making mass immigration from Islamic countries a political objective required preparations to ensure that the immigrants would actually come. In the course of Zionist activity during World War II, the *Yishuv* leaders had discovered that the Jews in these countries were not clamoring to immigrate, that there was no comprehensive Zionist activity and that the Zionist cadre active there was extremely limited in scope and in its ability to have an impact. Moreover, as the cultural differences between Jewish society in Islamic countries and in the *Yishuv* became clear, the *Yishuv* leadership realized that Zionism had to deal with one of the most complex tasks in its history — creating a nation out of a variety of Jewish population groups with different histories and different cultures. This task was assigned to the pioneering movements, which were called upon to sow the seeds of Zionist culture among these Jewish collectives, in order to create a basis for a single nation with shared basic values.

The first organizational measure was the Jewish Agency's decision to offer a course for emissaries who would then be posted to Islamic countries.<sup>34</sup> In the second half of 1943, a general plan of action was drawn up. Entitled "The Uniform Pioneer to the Eastern Lands," the plan proclaimed the concept of an ingathering of exiles and the revival of the Jewish people in Palestine as its central theme. It called for education towards immigration, the study of Hebrew, and "a life of labor," that is to say physical labor, especially agriculture. The idea was to standardize the activity of the various pioneering movements in Islamic countries by demarcating the subject matter that they would teach, and especially by eliminating the unique subject matter, or "hues," of each of the pioneering movements. To ensure implementation of the plan, it was decided that the emissaries would be sent out by the Jewish Agency Immigration Department. The latter, not the Histadrut — as had been the case until then — would be responsible for the enterprise. Similarly, it was decided that after arriving in Palestine, the immigrants would be divided up among the various forms of settlement by a party or movement key to be determined in advance.

Basically, this plan was intended to help Mapai, which was beset by conflict and on the brink of an internal split, to ensure its hegemony in and outside the Labor movement. The transfer of the Uniform Pioneer Plan from the Histadrut to the Jewish Agency, where Mapai had a majority, was one measure

in the party's struggle against its political rivals within the Labor movement and was even intended to de-legitimize activity by political parties and organizations outside the World Zionist Organization, such as the Revisionists, Etzel and Lehi. But aside from reflecting the struggles within the *Yishuv*, the plan indicates how the Zionist establishment perceived the Jews of Islamic countries. When the plan was accused of being too "general," its sponsors replied that this "generality" was appropriate to the characteristics and needs of Jewish life in Islamic countries: the low level of education of the members of the Zionist movement, the short period of time socialist-Zionist education had been available in these countries and, finally, the clandestine or semi-clandestine nature of activity in some of the countries. "To introduce a religious quarrel or a political quarrel or an ideological quarrel there is a crime," argued Berl Katznelson.<sup>3</sup>

The Uniform Pioneer Plan set a precedent for the Zionist movement's patronizing attitude towards its adherents in the Islamic countries and later in Israel.<sup>4</sup> In all the countries in which Zionism had operated until then, prospective members could choose from a range of competing Zionist youth movements, and they were aware of the variations among them from the start. They could even "wander" from movement to movement before selecting the one that best suited them. In contrast, the Uniform Pioneer Plan offered Jewish youngsters in Islamic countries a single model of Zionism and sought to prevent not only choice but even awareness of the existence of different, competing Zionist organizations. The struggle for the souls of the prospective immigrants and their ideological and political identity had just begun.

It should be kept in mind that in some Arab countries (Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia) there had been vibrant Zionist activity for some time already, and the Labor movement was not always dominant. In Tunisia, for example, the main Zionist player on the Jewish street was the Revisionist movement, and in Egypt several of the Zionist movements were active, including Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir. So long as the Islamic countries were a remote, marginal district of Zionist activity, no one in the Zionist leadership cast doubt on the intellectual capacity of *Mizrachi* youngsters to choose among the movements, and it was never argued that the multiplicity of political hues could be detrimental to them. The Uniform Pioneer Plan, in contrast, was part of the intra-Zionist political struggle between Mapai and the Zionist movements and parties for hegemony in *Yishuv* society as it stood at the time, and as it would become as a result of additional Jewish immigration. Mapai sought to shape the ideological and political identity of the immigrants even before they arrived, thereby not only preserving its power but increasing it.

Nevertheless, the justifications given for the Uniform Pioneer Plan were based not on the conflicting interests of Zionist movements and parties but on the standard stereotypes regarding people from Islamic countries: they were

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poorly educated, were deficient in their ability to make choices and judgments and needed the central Zionist institutions to decide for them.<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that during the political debate over the Uniform Pioneer Plan, passions flared over the division of labor among the parties, but there was no discussion whatsoever about the "traits" of the *Mizrahim*. These were perceived as axiomatic and consequently became axioms.

This perception was also manifested in the immigrant-absorption plans drawn up by the Planning Committee. The committee prepared separate plans for the absorption of immigrants from Europe and from Islamic countries; these plans had little in common. For the Europeans, transit camps were to be established in the coastal plain, from Haifa to Gaza, where they would stay for three months. The immigrants from Islamic countries were to be placed in transit camps in the Negev, where they would stay for a year or two to be trained under the guidance of old-timers; they were then expected to settle in the Negev. After the transitional stage, the immigrants were supposed to be employed in the various sectors of the economy, in proportion to the economic division within the *Yishuv*; this would mean that 20 percent of immigrants were to work in agriculture. The *Mizrahim*, however, were designated for agriculture, and they were assigned the pioneering job of settling the southern periphery.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, the immigrant-absorption plan had little real operative significance. Without a doubt, however, it serves as an indication of the role designated for the *Mizrahim* in Israeli society: they were expected to be like the Yemenites — manual laborers who were used to a hot climate and hard work and who would be satisfied with very little. It should be kept in mind that the members of the Planning Committee were all Ashkenazim; their knowledge of the *Mizrahim* was based on the stereotypes prominent in the *Yishuv*, and they themselves were not free of the orientalist perception that prevailed in European cultures. Even if they had no explicit intention to exploit the *Mizrahim* "as a cheap, mobile, and easily maneuverable labor force," as Ella Shohat argues,<sup>39</sup> the effects of the policy that they proposed were likely to produce a socioeconomic dichotomy on ethnic grounds.

These perceptions also influenced activity in the Islamic countries. The new priorities set in the "One Million Plan" were supposed to be manifested in the allocation of financial and human resources, that is to say larger budgets for Zionist activity and an increase in the number of emissaries. A comparison of Zionist activity during World War II and in the postwar years, overall and proportionally, indicates that there was no significant change in the allocation of resources; on the contrary, the bulk of Zionist activity was in Europe. Hundreds of emissaries were sent there to organize the *brifah* (transport of Jewish refugees from Eastern to Southern and Central Europe) and clandestine immigration to Palestine, and to establish a Jewish defense

organization. Huge budgets in Zionist terms were allocated to this activity, some by the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency but most by the Joint Distribution Committee. The activity in Jewish communities in Islamic countries, which had received a boost during the war, lost its urgency and attraction. The threat to the Jews, which, as stated, had been brought up repeatedly by the *Yishuv* leadership, was no longer perceived as immediate, even though the dispute over Palestine was escalating, warnings by emissaries in Arab countries were becoming more serious, and the underground or semi-underground activity now entailed greater risk, extreme tension and exhausting work on a daily basis. The number of activists in these countries was minuscule in comparison with their counterparts in Europe. There were not even enough of them to maintain what had already been established.<sup>60</sup>

### Conclusion

As we have seen, the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the "One Million Plan" was the start of a reversal in immigration policy and in the overall attitude of the Zionist leadership towards these Jews. The reversal was manifested both in the conceptual switch from an ideal of selective immigration to the reality of bringing masses of people to Palestine, whoever they might be, and bringing over a population group with a culture that was perceived as inferior. Although Jews from Islamic countries had moved to Palestine even before World War II, some of them with immigration certificates, due to their small number they did not pose a threat to the dominant *Yishuv* culture. In contrast, the "One Million Plan" augured a demographic reversal with ramifications for all areas of life, including a change in the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi demographic balance in the country.

The reversal itself, however, does not answer the question of whether the Zionist leadership intended to perpetuate a low status for the *Mizrahim* in Jewish society and to bring them over in order to exploit them as a cheap source of labor, turning them into hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Ashkenazi old-timers. The discussions by the Jewish Agency Executive indicate that on the level of ideology and principle the *Yishuv* leadership intended the *Mizrahim* to be fully integrated citizens with equal rights and obligations — full-fledged members of *Yishuv* society in all respects. The motivation for bringing them over was demographic and national, not economic or class-based. Nevertheless, the absorption process suggested in the plan would have produced a concentration of *Mizrahim* in the peripheral regions and in the lower socioeconomic classes. The conflicting messages of the plan clearly indicate that the innate conflict in Zionism between the unifying and egalitarian ethos of ethno-nationalism and the effect of the European-non-European dichotomy was far from being resolved. The reversal

did not stem from deep cultural change either in the Zionist Ashkenazi leadership or among the Asian and North African Jewish populations, but was the pure outcome of the new political reevaluation of Zionist needs.

## NOTES

I would like to thank Dr. Yaron Tsur for his invaluable comments.

- 1 For immigration statistics, see Jewish Agency, *Ahat etrei shnot klitah* (Eleven Years of Absorption) (Tel Aviv, 1959), December 1959, table 5.
- 2 The term *Mizrahim* ("eastern") in this article refers to Jews who emigrated from the Middle East and North Africa to Israel. This term replaces "Eidot ha-Mizrah" (eastern communities) which was used until the 1980s.
- 3 Tom Segev writes: "Ben-Gurion considered the immigration as the most important component among the national security and the military strength component of the Israeli state." 1949 — *Ha-yisraelim ha-rishonim* (1949: The first Israelis) (Jerusalem, 1986), p. 106. A similar interpretation from a different angle is presented by Dvora Hacohen in her book *Olim be-se'arah: Ha-aliyah ha-gdolah ve-klitah be-Yisrael, 1948-1953* (Immigrants in a Storm: The Great Immigration and its Absorption in Israel, 1948-1953) (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 106: "Immigration was not perceived by [Ben-Gurion] only as a means of rescuing Jewish communities in distress, nor even as a way of meeting the immediate need to strengthen the security and settlement system of the state. ... Ben-Gurion wanted to see a majority of the Jewish people gathered within the borders of the state and becoming the main element in the life of the Jewish people around the world. He believed that the social and cultural result that would be achieved in Israeli society would change the course of Jewish history."
- 4 Deborah Bernstein, "Ha-sotsiologiyah koleter et ha-aliyah: Diyut bikorti be-askolah dominantit shel ha-sotsiologiyah ha-yisraelit" (Sociology Absorbing Immigration: A Critical Discussion of the Dominant School of Israeli Sociology), *Mahbarot le-mekhar uli-vikores*, Vol. 1 (1978), pp. 5-19; Uri Ram, *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology: Theory, Ideology and Identity* (New York, 1995), pp. 38-46.
- 5 Ella Shohat, "Mizrahim be-Yisrael: Ha-tziyonut mi-nekudat mabaram shel korbanoteha ha-yehudim" (*Mizrahim in Israel: Zionism as seen by its Jewish Victims*), in Inbal Petson (ed.), *Ha-mahapekha ha-mizrahit* (The *Mizrahi* revolution) (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 32-37.
- 6 Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin, TX, 1987), p. 117.
- 7 Dvora Hacohen, *Yekhnit ha-miyon* (The One Million Plan) (Tel Aviv, 1994).
- 8 The term "Old Yishuv" refers to religious Jews who lived in Palestine before the arrival of the Zionists (the "New Yishuv").
- 9 Minutes of Mapai Central Committee meeting, 2 July 1943, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl.
- 10 See Hayyim J. Cohen, *Ha-yehudim be-artzot ha-mizrah ha-tikhon be-yamenu* (The Jews in the Middle Eastern Countries Today) (Tel Aviv, 1972).
- 11 On the ideological and political significance of the pioneering movement, see Shmuel Almog, "He-halutz ha-merafoni mi' ha-ziknah ha-galudit" (The metaphorical pioneer vs. the age-old diaspora), in Anita Shapira, Jehuda Reinharz and Jay Harris (eds.), *Idan ha-tziyonut* (The Age of Zionism) (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 91-108.
- 12 On the policy of distributing certificates to Islamic countries in the 1930s, see Aviva Halamish, "Medinyut ha-aliyah veka-kitah shel ha-histadrut ha-tziyonit, 1931-1937" (Immigration and Absorption Policy of the Zionist Organization, 1931-1937) (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1995), pp. 261-6.
- 13 Yaron Tsur, "Ha-be'ayah ha-edatit" (The Ethnic Problem) in Zvi Tzameret and Hanna Yablonka (eds.), *Ha-asor ha-sheni* (The Second Decade) (Jerusalem, 2001); Yaron Tsur, "Carnival Fears: Moroccan Immigrants and the Ethnic Problem in the Young State of Israel,"

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- Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 74-6.
- 14 Oz Almog, *Ha-tzabar — dyukan* (The Sabra: A Profile) (Tel Aviv, 1997), p. 157.
  - 15 This is how the term "levantini" is defined in Avraham Even-Shoshan, *Milon hadash* (The New Dictionary) (Jerusalem, 1990).
  - 16 Almog, *Ha-Tzabar*, p. 153.
  - 17 Binyamin Gil and Moshe Sieron, *Rishon ha-yishuvim* (6 Heshvan 5709) (Population Record, November 1948), Pt. 2 (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 20-3.
  - 18 For example, Benzion Israeli, in reference to the immigrants from Iraq in the 1930s, commented: "The Baghdadi immigration, which increased in the past year, did not add much in terms of value and capacity to building up the land. The quest for an easy livelihood, all sorts of positions and offices, and the small number who took jobs in general and jobs working the land in particular should elicit serious anxiety on our part and call for bold, urgent action. I will not say anything about the Baghdadi Jews with deep pockets, who, as knowledgeable people have told me, are supported in Israel by usury and exorbitant interest. Saddest of all is that quite a few of the young people in this group of immigrants are a burden on our economy in Palestine instead of being a blessing and additional force." "On the Jews of Aram Naharayim and Their Immigration to Palestine," in Shmuel Yavnieli (ed.), *Benzion Israeli: Ktavim u-dvarim* (Benzion Israeli: Writings and Remarks) (Tel Aviv, 1955/56), p. 38. It should be noted that this ideological attitude was also adopted towards other immigrants who came to Palestine during that period. See Anita Shapira, *Ha-ma'avak ha-nekhdav: Avodah imit, 1929-1939* (Futile Struggle: The Jewish Labor Controversy, 1929-1939) (Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 183-92.
  - 19 Avraham Ben-Yaakov, *Kehilot yehudei Kurdistan* (The Jewish Communities of Kurdistan) (Jerusalem, 1960/61), p. 24.
  - 20 On the preference for the Kurds over the other Iraqi Jews, see Esther Meir, *Ha-tru'ah ha-tziyonit ve-yehudei Irak, 1941-1950* (The Zionist Movement and Iraqi Jewry, 1941-1950) (Tel Aviv, 1993), pp. 7-8.
  - 21 Razi'el Mamat, "Mapat ha-hityashvut shel yehudei Teiman be-Yisrael" (The Settlement Map of Yemenite Jews in Israel), in Shalom Seri (ed.), *Se'i yonah: Yehudei Teiman be-Yisrael* (Go, Dove: The Yemenite Jews in Israel) (Tel Aviv, n.d.), pp. 163-94.
  - 22 On women as housekeepers, see Israel Yeshayahu, "Be'ayot ha-bhah me-edot ha-mizrah" (The Problems of Women from the Oriental Communities), in idem, *Lehud ve-yahad* (Alone and Together) (Tel Aviv, 1990), pp. 228-37.
  - 23 Shalom Ratzabi, "Galut be-Eretz Yisrael: Ha-shiyot me-Teiman ba-historiografiyah shel ha-yishuv vaha-tziyonut" (Diaspora in the Land of Israel: Immigration from Yemen in the historiography of the Yishuv and Zionism), *Zmanim*, No. 63 (1998), pp. 61-5. 57 - 67
  - 24 On Ben-Gurion's reaction, see *ibid.*, p. 68.
  - 25 See Ellis Kedourie, "The Sack of Basra and the Farhud in Baghdad," in *Arabic Political Memoirs* (London, 1974), pp. 283-314; Esther Meir-Glitzstein, "Ha-pra'ot be-yehudei Bagdad, hag ha-shavuot 5701 (1-2 be-yunit 1941)" (The Baghdad Pogrom, 1-2 June 1941), *Pe'amim*, Vol. 8 (1981), pp. 21-37; Shmuel Moreh and Zvi Yehuda (eds.), *Sinat yehudim u-fru'ot be-Bagdad* (Hatred of Jews and the Farhud) (Or Yehuda, 1992).
  - 26 See Esther Meir, "Hanhagar ha-yishuv ha-yehudi be-Eretz Yisrael vaha-pa'ot be-yehudei Bagdad (The Leadership of the Yishuv and the Pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad), in Moreh and Yehuda (eds.), *Sinat yehudim*, pp. 139-47.
  - 27 Yoav Gelber, *Nosei ha-degel: Toldot ha-hitnadvut* (English title: *Jewish Palestinian Volunteerism in the British Army during the Second World War*), Vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 3-16.
  - 28 These included Yosef Bankover and Benzion Israeli. For further information, see *ibid.*, pp. 95-103, 123-4.
  - 29 These included Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, Shlomo Lipsky and Gideon Baratz.
  - 30 On the impact of Enzo Sereni, the emissary to Iraq, see Ruth Bondy, *The Emissary: A Life of Enzo Sereni*, transl. Shlomo Katz (Boston, 1977).
  - 31 Tuvia Friling, *Heiz ba-arafel: David Ben Gurion, hanhagar ha-yishuv ve-nisyonot hatzalah ba-shoah* (Arrow in the Mist: Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust) (Jerusalem, 1998); pp. 94-110.

- 32 Minutes of Mapai Central Committee Meeting, 12 July 1943, Labor Party Archives.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 David Ben-Gurion, *Ba-ma'arakha' (In the Struggle)*, Vol. 2 (Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 234.
- 35 Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, pp. 32, 87-8.
- 36 Minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, 24 June 1944, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA).
- 37 Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, pp. 216-8 (Diary, 30 July 1945).
- 38 Minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, 28 September 1944, CZA.
- 39 On the Baltimore Program, see Yehuda Bauer, *Diplomacy and Underground in Zionist Policy* (Merhavia, 1966), pp. 201-2.
- 40 Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, p. 103.
- 41 Minutes of the Jewish Agency Executive, 24 June 1944, CZA.
- 42 Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, pp. 121, 209-12.
- 43 Ben-Gurion's Diary, 30 July 1945, Ben-Gurion Archives, Midreshet Sde Boker.
- 44 Minutes of the Jewish Agency Executive, 24 June 1944, CZA.
- 45 Minutes of a meeting of the Histadrut executive committee, 29-30 December 1943, Labor Party Archives.
- 46 Minutes of Mapai Central Committee meeting, 12 July 1943, Labor Party Archives.
- 47 Ben-Gurion, *Ba-ma'arakha'*, p. 234.
- 48 See Meir, *Ha-tnu'ah ha-tziyonit*, pp. 274-5, n. 13.
- 49 Quoted in Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, p. 212.
- 50 Minutes of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 24 June 1944, CZA.
- 51 Dalia Ofer, "Ha-aliyah, ha-golah veba-yishuv" (Immigration, diaspora and the Yishuv), *Cathedra*, Vol. 43 (1987), p. 70.
- 52 A memorandum submitted by the Jewish Agency to the British Prime Minister towards the end of the war (16 October 1944) speaks of mass immigration and not just a solution for the distress of the European refugees. Another memorandum submitted after the end of the war, on 22 May 1945, calls for Palestine to become a Jewish state and demands the rapid immigration of the first million Jews from Europe, the eastern lands and other countries. The declaration of the 22nd Zionist Congress in December 1946 contains similar demands. See Jewish Agency, *Documents Relating to the Palestinian Problem* (London, 1945), p. 87.
- 53 *Ibid.* p. 92.
- 54 Minutes of consultation meeting in the Immigration Department, 7 December 1942, CZA, S6/1985.
- 55 Berl Katznelson, *Kivun (Writings)*, Vol. 12 (Tel Aviv, 1949/50), pp. 331-2.
- 56 On the patronizing attitude of Yishuv emissaries, see Esther Meir, "Mifgash ve-hitmagshut: Ha-mifgash bein ha-shlihitim ha-tziyonim ve-yehudei Irak be-shnot ha-arba'im uve-reshit shnot ha-hamishim" (Encounter and Clash: The Encounter between Zionist Emissaries and Iraqi Jews in the Forties and Early Fifties), in Dalia Ofer (ed.), *Bein olim le-va'atikim* (English title: *Israeli in the Great Wave of Immigration, 1948-1953*) (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 52-72.
- 57 On the belief that the Mizrahim were hot-blooded and that consequently, in contrast to the debating culture of the Jews of Palestine, every argument among Mizrahim degenerated into violence, see Meir, *Ha-tnu'ah ha-tziyonit*, p. 78. It should be noted that this argument was brought up in the rivalry between the pioneering movements over influence on the Jews of Baghdad.
- 58 Hacoheh, *Tokhnit ha-mifyon*, pp. 136, 125-8.
- 59 See above, note 5.
- 60 Shlomo Barad, "Shlihit ve-shlihitim be-artzot ha-mizrah" (Mission and Emissaries to the Eastern Lands), *Shorashim ba-Mizrah*, Vol. 1 (1986), pp. 145-90.

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### From Eastern Europe to the Middle East: The reversal in Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein <sup>a b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Research Fellow at the Ben-Gurion Research Center ,

<sup>b</sup> Lecturer at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev ,

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