

Caracolos Camps, 5th September, 1947.

After spending one month among the refugees of "Yehudah Halevy" and "Shivath Zion", I wish to give you in the following some information regarding these Aliyoth. I shall not speak about the general conditions in the camps, but shall confine myself to the special problems of the North African group of refugees.

The refugees of these two boats are all detained in the Caracolos camps. Those of "Yehudah Halevy" and part of "Shivath Zion" are living in Camp 55 and the rest - about 300 - in the 60, 61 and 62 camps. The latter are not concentrated in one place, but are scattered all over the camps, which makes the work among them all the more difficult.

Division according to movements:

The refugees joined the various movements accidentally, without having any idea of their political or other character. With the exception of two groups belonging to the Kibbutz Hameuchad, most of the refugees belong to the "Mizrachi", which can easily be understood. There is also a small number of refugees in other movements. For your information, hereunder some figures re the division in the various movements:

"Yehudah Halevy": Dror - 48; Hakibbutz Hameuchad - 42; Mizrachi - 170; Bethar - 25; Hashomer Hazair - 17; Nocham - 15; Hanoar Hazioni - 12; Gordonia - 13; unorganized - about 40.

"Shivath Zion": Those detained in Camp 55 are all in the Mizrachi, mostly families. In Camps 61 and 62: Mizrachi - 160; Dror - 26; Bethar - 30; Agudath Israel - 50; The rest are unorganized.

Camp life and its effect on the refugees:

The conditions in which the refugees of "Yehudah Halevy" and "Shivath Zion" live are terrible, and this has a very bad effect on their spirit and depresses them. The reasons are:

(a) Camp Life: It is not easy for them to get used to camp life. The fact that these people came straight - and not compulsory - from free and comfortable life into camp life, to share a tent with a large number of other people (there are cases of three or four families in a tent), is a great burden on them. It is true that these conditions are general common to all the refugees, but they are specially hard on the "Yehudah Halevy" and "Shivath Zion" refugees, who have never known camp life, and who have not been properly educated towards it. They have come to this life without any preparation. They also have no possibility of improving their conditions. They arrived bare and naked. Even the 2 kg. parcels which they had been allowed to take along with them, had to be foregone at the last moment; and it goes without saying that they have no money.

(b) Immigration: They cannot get used to the idea that they will have to stay in Cyprus two years until their turn comes to immigrate to Palestine. This causes great tension among them and pessimism. Most of them are desperate. Many claim that they ought to be given priority, since they came on their own free will and not by compulsion.

(c) Movements: The competition between the various movements shocked them and broke their spirits. Each movement "fell on them" trying to gain on its side as many of them as possible. "We never imagined our Land to be like this", they claim, "we expected to find a nation united and firm, but found the contrary". This is also a result of their ignorance and non-preparation towards life in Palestine.

(d) Relations with the Europeans: A most pressing problem is the relationship between the North African and European refugees. Together with the "Yehudah Halevy" and "Shivath Zion" refugees are detained in Camp 55 the immigrants of "Mordei Hagetaoth". The relations between the refugees of these boats are not ~~uniform~~ ^{all of one character}; they can be divided into the following categories:

(1) Youth organized in movements: There is a small group of youth organized in movements, as mentioned above. These youths have attended schools, and the relations between them and the Europeans are more or less satisfactory. By the way, it may be mentioned here that some of these entered the camp institutions as the representatives of the two boats in the Mazkiruth (Camp Committee), the law-courts, the Post Office, etc. I must remark that there is a readiness on the part of the "others" to ~~participate~~ cooperate with them.

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(2) Youth that has not received any education. This youth came straight from the streets. Some of them are illiterate, or if they have a ~~scanty~~ knowledge of reading and writing, they learned it accidentally in the streets. It is very difficult to control such youth, with these the relations are not as strong; they suffer from an inferiority complex, and have always the feeling that they are being taken advantage of. In order to receive what they want, they react in a very primitive way. There is only one means of controlling them; and that is force. These youths need long and systematic education.

(3) The third category comprises the immigrants of South Morocco, Algiers and Tunis. These families are very primitive and backward. They speak only Arabic, a large number of illiterates among them, and it goes without saying that there can be no close relationship between them and the others, not even the North Africans. They are like two contradictory poles, completely different from each other in their mentality.

I wish to add here another point which, although regarding the whole group, is of special hardship to this group: lack of common language. With the first two categories, there might be some good relations, or even, in some cases, personal sympathies; ~~with~~ The Africans and the Europeans manage to converse, somehow, either in Hebrew or in English or French, but with the last group, whose only language is Arabic, there is no way of conversing. This fact depresses them. They specially feel it whenever they have to refer to the Mazkiruth, the doctor etc.

Resume:

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It is difficult in a few words to define the character of these Aliyoth. It might be said that these Aliyoth do not ~~transpire~~ reflect the North-African Jewry. Since these are the first Aliyoth from that part of the world, and are a trial, I think that a more careful selection should have been made. There is much better youth in North Africa who is mentally and physically prepared to undergo all this in order to reach Palestine.

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~~which~~ ^{This} is not the case with these Aliyoth. with the exception of a few "organized" youths, some of them set on their way ~~for~~ out of sheer curiosity; for others, it was a trip to the Promised Land, that had a metaphysical form in their minds, and they came only out of religious enthusiasm, but that enthusiasm disappeared with the first obstacles. In my opinion, nothing can justify such immigration from North Africa. The first Aliyoth, that will prepare the way for many others, should have been merely of Chalutzim. But these Aliyoth will only bring curses instead of blessing. Many of them ~~became~~ have become desperate and are sending bitter letters to their families. The result of such letters can well be imagined.

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The problem of mass immigration under the worst conditions is still far from North Africa. This is not a most pressing problem for them. The masses can still wait and if many political or other calculations demanded immigration from North Africa, it is obvious that a stricter selection should have been made. It is not a life-or-death problem for them to justify unselected immigration. These people have not been in camps and would still carry on with their way of living. The ~~quarantine~~ question also arises what way will they go when they arrive in Palestine?

They will constitute an economic problem too. Some of them have professions, but a great many will fall a burden on the Yishuv. And socially, if these people are not taken care of and educated like in Cyprus, they are apt to serve tomorrow against the interests of the Yishuv. They need broad systematic education and also personal attention. In the last few days the condition has somewhat improved, also as regards relationship, ~~with the~~ This may be attributed to the various improvements and aid granted by the A.J.D.C.

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