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Yemenites,' intimating that the sick would die en route. He then added that 'there is no need to fear the chronically sick, for they have to walk about two weeks [to get to the camp]. Those who are dangerously ill do not even start out on the trip.' On 28 September 1949 Ben Gurion wrote in his diary that 'the [Yemenite] children are dropping like flies. We must save them. It is true that the death rate is high here too, but we also have more efficacious medicine.' A few weeks later he wrote 'if it is written that they have to die, then it is better for them to die here.'⁸⁴

It appears that the harsh conditions the Yemenites had to undergo to get to Aden, as well as the health and food situation in 'Salvation Camp' only served to get rid of the weak, sick and aged. This way only the hale and hearty had to be absorbed in Israel, that is those who could serve the Israeli economy or in the armed forces. One could pose the question here as to how Great Britain could allow such inhumane acts to be carried out in Aden. Between 1948-1975, Israel brought over 719,000 Ashkenazim from Europe, but it did not treat them the same way. Surely this difference in treatment constitutes a heavy indictment of Israel's practice of racial discrimination.

NOTES

- 1 A long Arab cloak.
- 2 Landau.
- 3 Bat Ye'or in *Les Temps Modernes*, 85.
- 4 Schechtman, 1961, 190.
- 5 See also Iskandarani, *Khamsin*, No. 5, 30-34; cf Shiblak.
- 6 A. Chouraqui, 1968, and Schechtman, 1961.
- 7 Shiblak, 28 and 'Alam al-Yahud fi 'l-'Iraq, Jerusalem, 1983, by M. Basri.
- 8 (CO-730/2/34955).
- 9 'Abd al-Muhsin, 1983, 253-340.
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Shiblak, 42-43.
- 12 Nissim Rejwan, 207-209.
- 13 Kimchi, 1976, 60-62 and Cohen, 1969, 109-112.
- 14 Cohen, 1969, 159.
- 15 Ibid, 156.
- 16 Woolfson, 146-147.
- 17 Ibid, 143.
- 18 Ibid, 144.
- 19 Ibid, 148-149.
- 20 See editions of *Al-Yaqza*, 12, 13, 16, and 17 February and 7 and 28 March 1948
- 21 1969, 178.
- 22 2 November 1949. From Washington to the British Foreign Minister. Telegram number 5182, Foreign Office 371/75187
- 23 Berger, 1955, 30
- 24 On the Jews of Iraq, see the valuable study written in English by the Palestinian 'Abbas Shiblak.
- 25 H.J. Cohen, 1969, 38-47.

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- 26 Landshut, 1950.
- 27 Smooha, 281.
- 28 Twenty Third Zionist Congress, 178 ff.
- 29 Y.N. Shay, Shevet Va'am, 1954.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Shevet Va'am, 1958.
- 32 Batafu, 1978, 311.
- 33 I still remember the rabble who used to threaten us with 'Just wait a bit, Hitler'll do you in!'
- 34 The Palestine Liberation Organisation was the first Arab/Islamic organisation to correct this error, demanding that the Arab and Islamic states take back Sephardim from Israel. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, the PLO succeeded in stopping Jews leaving Iran for Israel, and discussions in Teheran led to many Jews being encouraged to leave Israel and return to Iran.
- 35 See The Jewish Chronicle of 29 October, 1949.
- 36 FO 371/75152 E9114/ 1105/ 93.
- 37 Jerusalem - British Foreign Office 24/3/51, FO 371/91690, EQ 1571/45.
- 38 Jerusalem - to the British Foreign office on 14 February, 1949 - FO 371/75182/ 024566.
- 39 Segev, p. 110 of Arabic translation.
- 40 Ibid, 176.
- 41 See letter from Kobovitsky to the Jewish Congress dated April 24, 1949, in the files of the Ministry of Immigration, Israel Army Archive 14/49.
- 42 Ibid. See letter from Tuviah to the Ministry dated 14 May, 1949.
- 43 Ha'aretz, 29 May 1987.
- 44 Pro/FO E 4209/1/93.
- 45 Pro/FO E 4154/1/93.
- 46 Voice of the Arab World, January, 1983.
- 47 See FO 371 23202, Confidential, No 251, British Consulate, Damascus to FO, London 14.4.1939, and FO 624/24/448, Nazi Propaganda in Iraq, undated, and FO 37/2302, No. 150, British Embassy to FO 11.4.39.
- 48 See Nissim Rejwan's book.
- 49 Chouraqui, 181 and 182, and Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol 12, 344.
- 50 British Royal Commission of Enquiry, 22 September, 1948. Published in The Economist on 9 October, 1948 and The New York Times of 6 December, 1947.
- 51 Wolfson, 174-176.
- 52 The 'Young Egypt' Party, also known as the Green Shirts.
- 53 Julie Flint, The Guardian, 2 August 1989.
- 54 Ben Menahem, 179.
- 55 Committee Minutes, 22 April, 1949.
- 56 Rafael to Locker, 22 January, 1951, Central Zionist Archive.
- 57 See Foreign Office correspondence with the its embassy in Baghdad on 29 September, 1952 - FO 371/98767, Eq 1571/24.
- 58 See the magazine, Ha'olam Hazeh, 20 April 1966 and 1 June 1966, Kedourie, 1970, pp. 313-315 and Marion Woolfson, Prophets in Babylon, 1980.
- 59 Segev, 109-110.
- 60 State Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2451/11.
- 61 Segev, 115 and 176.
- 62 Tsadok to the Zionist Office in Aden, 20 December, 1949. Central Zionist Archive, L27, 4th file. See also Tsadok's memoirs and letters.
- 63 Rafael to the Zionist Executive Council, 9 September 1949. Central Zionist Archive, Immigration - S41/256/11.
- 64 See Shlomo Hillel's book, Operation Babylon, 1989.
- 65 Minutes of the Zionist Executive, 21 March 1949 and 29 April 1949.
- 66 Ben Tsvi's Report, 18 December, 1949 - Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People: Archive of Nahum Levin.
- 67 Menahem Ben Yosef to Ephraim Hadar, 9 October, 1949 - Central Zionist Archives, Office of Middle Eastern Jews S/20/600, also S/20/109 and S/20/547 II.
- 68 See Ha'aretz, 11 January 1985.
- 69 Central Zionist Archive in Aden, L27.

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- 70 Israeli Army Archives - 14/5/A.
- 71 31 December, 1949, Central Zionist Archive, L27.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Central Zionist Archive, S20/5501.
- 74 Files of the Immigration Department, Bundle 61, File 393 - Original numbering 2421/73, undated.
- 75 9 August 1949, Central Zionist Archive, S20/555.
- 76 Dr Goldman to Dr Kornblitt, 31 December 1948, Central Zionist Archive, S20/ 550 I.
- 77 Zionist Executive Council, 18.7.49.
- 78 Central Zionist Archives, S20/562.
- 79 Files of the Immigration Department, Bundle 61, File 393, original numbering 2421/73.
- 80 Zionist Executive Council, 24 October 1948
- 81 Segev, 180 and 181, Arabic translation.
- 82 Ministry of Health, September 1949, State Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2397/15 - quoted by Segev.
- 83 Yosef Tsadoq to Menahem, 21 July 1949, Central Zionist Archive, S20/457 II.
- 84 Knesset Minutes, Volume 3, 128, 21 November 1949.

CHAPTER FIVE

Absorption Or Destruction Since 1948?

This chapter deals with the absorption of the immigrants in Israel, although 'absorption' is too kind a word to describe what we believe actually happened. 'Destruction' better reflects what actually happened in the Zionist camps which were set up for the immigrants and where they lost their human rights. The proletarianisation of the Sephardim began in the transit camps abroad, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. It then continued in the 'Immigrant' and 'Transit Camps' inside Israel, and then in their final destination which was either the development towns, the 'cooperatives' or the 'Black Belt' of the large towns.

THE IMMIGRANT CAMPS

Widad told me about her emigration from Baghdad. 'We were wearing our Sabbath clothing. We thought as the plane landed that Israel would welcome us warmly. But, goodness, how wrong we were! When the plane had landed at Lod airport, a worker approached us and sprayed us all over with DDT, as if we were lice-infested. What sort of welcome was that? We felt that they were spitting in our faces. When we disembarked from the plane, they herded us into a train, which was so crowded that we were stepping on each other and our fine clothes were dirtied. My husband was crying and so was I. Then the children started crying and our sobs went up to heaven and cast a pall over the train. Since it was a freight carriage it had no electric light, but as it sped along we thought of the death trains which had taken European Jews to

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the Nazi camps. Finally we reached the "Sha'ar Ha'aliya" camp and we were taken in with other families, then they wrote down our names and "gave" us new Hebrew names. "Said" became "Hayyim", "Su'ad" became "Tamar" and I was renamed "Ahuva" and so on. Then we had to wait in long food queues, as if we were beggars. We had no idea what was to become of us.' She looked towards me with wet eyes and asked 'Is this the Israel they told us about?'

'Sha'ar Ha'aliya Camp had been a British army detention centre before it became an immigration camp. The Israeli security authorities had reinforced the camp's security by doubling the height of barbed wire around it and installing a direct telephone link to the Israeli police in Haifa port. There was a police force of sixty constables, four sergeants and an officer to supervise the immigrants, who were housed in tents or tin-roofed barracks, which had previously been ammunition warehouses and which did not have tiled floors. As I wandered amongst these tents an elderly Iraqi waylaid me. "I have just got one question," he said. "Are we immigrants or prisoners of war?" My tongue was tied and I could not reply. The old man spat on the ground and cursed Israel and everything to do with Israel. I also observed that the sanitary conditions in the camp were very primitive. The toilets were overflowing. There was almost no separation of the sexes, and due to the lack of washing facilities people started to smell.'

The immigrants were taken from this 'Gate of Immigration' Camp to other camps where the accommodation was no different. In 1948 there were 90,000 immigrants, that is a third of the total, in camps. Ashkenazi immigrants, on the other hand, were allotted the good homes of Palestinians who had been driven out. Yehuda Burginsky, an official of the Department of Absorption, warned that food supplies were running low, and that 10 percent of camp dwellers would suffer hunger.¹ The following month the camp-dwellers received bread and milk for their children only, and vegetable rations were reduced by two-thirds. The immigrants in Pardes Hanna Camp organised an angry demonstration.² The sanitary conditions together with a shortage of doctors, medicine and food, caused a deterioration in the health of the immigrants, the spread of contagious diseases and a rise in the death rate. Dr Moshe Sneh, a Mapam member of the Knesset, reported that out of the 370 children in Ra'anana Camp 200 were sick, and that the hospitals would only take 25 percent of the cases which local doctors sent.³ Yakov Gil, MP, reported that he had seen new camps with

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hundreds of immigrant families where there was no permanent doctor or suitable clinic.⁴ He also saw hundreds of people with contagious diseases who were still living amongst their families, since the hospitals would not accept them. In the village of Brandeis, near Hadera, he saw a child with tuberculosis sleeping in a bed used by two other families.⁵ Tsvi Hermon, an official from the Department of Absorption, said that 'conditions in the immigrant camps are intolerable. It is no exaggeration to say that conditions were better in the Nazi camps after the Second World War.'⁶

In September 1949 Ruth Cleager, an official of the Immigration Mosad, wrote in her report, 'In the camps Jews keep other Jews down. It seems that they have not learnt anything from the tragedy of the past.'⁷ She added that 'these immigrants feel as if they are second class people.' There was absolutely no education in the camps. There were no schools, nor activities for the children and most of the adults were without work. We should mention that the person directly responsible for these conditions, Geora Yosephtal, was a Jew who had fled Nazi Germany before the war and then become director of the absorption department of the Jewish Agency. Files in the Prime Minister's office include a number of reports about the hardships faced by the immigrants. In the Central Zionist Archives there are reports of corruption in food distribution.⁸ Yehuda Burginsky told members of the Zionist Executive Council that 'we have prepared for them [the Yemenite immigrants] neither camps nor accommodation. What should I do now? I am having wire pens built and keeping them there like animals in a state of optical illusion.'⁹ Even hardhearted Ben Gurion declared when he visited the Yemenite children in Tel Hashomer hospital 'This is the worst thing I have ever seen in my life.' In his speech to the Knesset he added that those children 'looked more like skeletons than living creatures . . . they were too weak even to cry, and some of them were too weak to be able to swallow food.'¹⁰

In April 1949 the secretary of the ruling Mapai (Labour) Party declared that 'the bureaucracy is almost criminal' with regard to the absorption of immigrants. Yosephtal informed his party that the camps under his supervision were supposed to process 40,000 immigrants, but they in fact held between 50,000 and 60,000, half of whom were living in tents. Pinhas Lavon, Secretary of the Histadrut, expected a 'great explosion'. Ben Gurion, the Prime Minister and party leader, opposed that thesis, saying that the state was spoiling the immigrants. 'I cannot accept this pampering . . .

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these people can quite well live in tents for a number of years. Whoever does not want to live in one should not come here.'¹¹ A year later, I went to Saqiya Camp to visit my relatives. The camp consisted of tents packed close together. Ben Gurion gave a speech there in which he stated 'Moses kept you in tents for forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. I shall only keep you in tents for a few years.'

Golda Meir was responsible for the construction of immigrant accommodation in her position as Minister of Labour. She first ordered huts to be built of tin or wood and then of cement. The hut was no more than a single room and was constructed by a machine with horizontal pipes, nicknamed 'Golda's Cannon'. 27,000 of these huts were built in 1948, of which 18,000 were built of wood and were to house those living in tents.¹² Hermon, the official in charge of absorption, said on 29 March, 1949, at a session of the Zionist Executive Council, that 'we are moving towards erecting slums and chronic overcrowding.' That is exactly what happened with regard to these camps, the development towns and the 'cooperatives'. They have all become slum districts just like the 'Black Belts' in the large towns. An American journalist, Ruth Gruber, wrote to Ben Gurion that 'the mass apathy is shocking. Zionist society fought throughout the British Mandate for the right to immigrate and won it, but now no one pays any attention to the camp dwellers, and the few who feel guilty say: It was hard for us when we first came, so let them suffer too.'¹³ The military authorities, who immediately enlisted the young immigrants and sent them to the front, refused to shelter the aged and the young during the serious floods in Lod. Yehuda Burginsky demanded that the army put the airport at Kfar Sirkin at the disposal of the Department of Absorption. The army refused, but did offer the Tel Nof Camp which was next to a parachutists' camp which informed Burginsky that they would plant mines to prevent the tent-dwellers living near them.¹⁴ Kibbutz Misgav Am refused to shelter immigrants smuggled in from Lebanon and they had to continue another two hours by foot. When they reached Kibbutz Manara they were told that if their upkeep was not paid for the Kibbutz would not accept any more immigrants in the future.¹⁵

Na'im related 'the way the Sephardim were treated by the Zionists who smuggled them in is not new. I remember how they treated me and my Iraqi friends at the beginning of the Second World War. Zionist agents smuggled us to Beirut, then they sent us down toward the Palestine border with a Lebanese guide - a Muslim as

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far as I remember. The car stopped in a mountainous region and we started walking behind the guide for some hours. When torrential rain started falling the guide said "Keep on toward that electric light - that's the kibbutz." Then he left us and went back to Beirut. We walked through the night through sheets of rain and biting cold. The electric light was absolutely miles away. By the time we reached the kibbutz our clothing was drenched and filthy. Some of us had lost our shoes in the mud. The guard took us to the dining room and they gave us cups of tea and bread and margarine. Then they took us to the library, and sat us down there even though we were shivering with the cold and our clothing was still wet. In the morning they took us to the hay-loft and we slept there as if we were cattle. It was an illuminating lesson in Ashkenazi hospitality. This was kibbutz Kfar Giladi. Then we were split up and I was sent to Kibbutz Hulata near Lake Hula. There they shoved me into a small wooden hut, infested with lice and bedbugs, which lay right at the edge of the settlement and which was specifically for Sephardim. It was just like a cowshed. Even though I was a boy, slight of build and pallid, I was made to do physical work from morning to night. At night one of the kibbutz members would teach me Hebrew for half an hour. The work was very hard. I thought that my back was going to break from the pain and fatigue. The head of the labour gang was a German girl called Gerda who kept on yelling at me and who humiliated me the whole day long. I didn't know why, because at that time I tried my best, but Gerda would still oppress me throughout the day and my dreams would oppress me through the night. Add to that the fact that I was attacked constantly by the bugs and lice in the hut. In my sleep I could see my father looking for me in the mountains and valleys, with hatred in his eyes because the Zionists took me without my parents' knowledge. I would think about Hitler and Gerda without knowing what was going on around me. Hitler oppressed Gerda, then Gerda came to Palestine, and now Gerda oppresses me! In the end I ran away from vegetables and agriculture, and from Gerda . . . I didn't care about anything. I started running towards the mountains, crying as I ran away from the settlement. Suddenly I came across Musa, who was brown-skinned, had sparkling blackish eyes and spoke Arabic. He and the other Musa, the cobbler, were the only Sephardi members on the kibbutz. The first Musa was a native Palestinian Jew, I believe of Yemenite origin, and the second was from Syria. He asked me, "What's the matter, Na'im? Why are you crying?" When I told him the way Gerda had been treating

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me he became angry and rebuked her harshly. "Stay with me," he said, "and we'll work together with this wheelbarrow." This Musa was the first person to treat me humanely in the Zionist community. I would often go to the workshop of Musa the cobbler from Damascus, and I would feel an indescribable delight as we spoke in Arabic. I now know the reason - it is the language of conversation, the language of my parents and grandparents. I could not understand why Gerda treated me the way she did until an incident occurred which clarified to me my position in Ashkenazi society. In Kibbutz Hulata there was a member called Yisrael, as far as I recall, but the people on the kibbutz used to call him "Stalin". I didn't know why. This Stalin made use of a group of Arab fisherman on Lake Hula. One day I saw him standing on the bank of the lake with his Arab labourers. He was shouting at them and cursing them, then he grabbed hold of one of them and started beating and kicking him ferociously. The Arab did not defend himself. His mates remained silent and did not move. I was very surprised since, in my whole life, I had never seen a Jew treat a Muslim like that. Here was a German or Polish Jew, a foreigner, beating a human being, who happened to be a native Arab. Here was Gerda too, treating me harshly. From that moment on I was aware of my debased position, as well as those of my Palestinian Arab brethren. I was not surprised when my father and my family were brought over in the early fifties and crammed into Pardes Hanna and then Saqia and Petah Tikvah Camps where my father died after surviving for ten years in a wooden hut where the camp doctor refused to come and treat him. The doctor had said to my mother "Have him come and see me", but my father was too ill to walk. He stayed in his bed until he died a few weeks later. They then took him to Abu Kebir Hospital to ascertain the cause of his death. My mother said, "That's what the Nazis did to them." That was all Na'im could say.

In spite of the tragic conditions in these camps, Ben Gurion, the Prime Minister and leader of the Mapai (Labour) Party, begrudged the Sephardim every morsel of bread they ate. At the Eighth Conference of Moshavim, the leader said that '100,000 Jews are living in immigrant camps and the food they eat is provided as charity.'¹⁶ Just a few weeks later Ben Gurion demanded that the immigrants be organised into 'work battalions' along military or semi-military lines and used as forced labour in construction and road building, for the public welfare with no special remuneration. Ben Gurion thought that these work parties should include men between 18 and 45 years of age who would receive enough for their

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own and their family's needs, as well as the same amount of money as a military conscript. A committee was formed to look into the suggestion. Its members included Yehuda Almog, Hayyim Gevati, Hillel Dan, Gershon Zak, Geora Yosephthal and Shalom Hacohen. The committee suggested setting up the first camp for 3,000 conscripted immigrants in the vicinity of Beer Sheba. However, the programme failed due to opposition from the Ministry of Labour which did not have enough financial resources to back the programme, nor could it relinquish jobs that it had already promised for other immigrants.¹⁷ The idea of 'work battalions' cropped up later in the form of emergency work and emergency wages, which we shall examine later.

When the Jewish population of Palestine reached the one million mark, the Executive Council of the Jewish Agency organised a celebration in Tel Aviv, but only 15 people accepted the invitation.¹⁸ This shows that mass immigration was rejected by the immigrants, and also by the Zionist Yishuv which was now a demographic minority and which started grumbling about the 'composition of society'. The Foreign Ministry prepared a communique which it distributed to Israel's representatives abroad and in which it drew attention to the fact that most immigrants were now arriving from Arab Islamic countries, and that the proportion of Sephardim would continue to rise. The Ministry warned that this fact 'would make an impression on all fields of life in the state', which meant that in order to preserve the 'cultural standards' of the Yishuv they would need abundant numbers of Western immigrants and not just 'Orientals.'¹⁹ Shoshana Persitz, MP, said of the Sephardim that 'we have no common language with them, just as our stage of development does not match theirs. They are still living in the Middle Ages.'²⁰ Simultaneously the Israeli media, all of which were under Ashkenazi control, carried out a racist campaign against these native Jews and their 'inferior' Arab culture to justify discrimination against them (see chapter eight).

The Yemenite member of the Knesset, Zekharia Gluska, protested about discrimination directed against members of his poor community in the field of housing, religious services, the civil service, child benefit and even radio programmes. He said that even Yemeni radio programmes were prepared by 'Ashkenazi experts'.

Though the Yemenites were fastidious about cleanliness to a greater extent than any other community I have seen, a representative of the Jewish Agency claimed that 'there is a type of resident whom it is very difficult to instruct in sanitary matters.'

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The Agency promised that it would 'persevere in building toilets near the dwellings in order to house-train 'these people' (i.e. the Yemenites) to use them.'²¹ Moreover, Ashkenazi party workers actively tried to change the life-style of the Yemenites to destroy the influence of the father and the teacher.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF YEMENITE CHILDREN

Since April 1950 the Yemenite Organisation has been sending letters to the Minister of Police about the disappearance of hundreds of Yemenite children after they were transferred to hospitals.²² The Minister has not replied to any of these letters. 18 years later the military authorities sent out orders for the conscription of these lost children, and this appalling problem came out into the open. Sephardi sources in Palestine say that Ashkenazim who were 'taking care' of Yemenite affairs stole the children and sold them to adoptive parents both inside and outside the country. The government committee of enquiry which was formed in 1968 put the disappearances down to the state of disorder in the camps but admitted that the problem had been shocking. The committee looked into 342 complaints, mostly from Yemenites with the remainder being from other Sephardim from Arab countries. It only found four children and came up with no results about the others. It did, however, indicate that its information warranted a police investigation at home and abroad, and sent a report to this effect to the Ministers of Police and Justice, but the authorities shelved it.²³ In July 1986 Sephardi Jews staged a mass meeting at Yad Eliahu near Tel Aviv and called upon the authorities to carry out the necessary investigations to find the 559 children who were stolen in the early fifties.²⁴

Oppression directed against the Yemenites was undeniably worse than that suffered by any of the other Sephardim. Perhaps it was because the Yemenites were completely Arabised and until very recently had been untouched by European culture. I shall never forget the winter of 1944 when the Jewish Agency brought over hundreds of Yemenites and settled them in a camp near Kiryat Shmuel in the district of Haifa. They were sent by the labour union of the Histadrut to Motzkin Camp and it was there that I saw them walking around in bare feet wearing rags, and shivering from the cold. Their tents overlooked the sea and were exposed to cold winds

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and torrential rains. The Mapai Party and the religious Hapo'el Hamizrahi Party were only worried about getting these wretches' votes. In summer the Yemenite camp turned into a hell because of the overcrowding and piles of filth. Eventually they rose up and occupied the uncompleted houses the authorities had been building. Ashkenazi municipal leaders responded by not putting in doors or windows and turning off the water supply in the hope of evicting the Yemenites. At the same time Ashkenazi immigrants were being housed in finished dwellings in Kiryat Hayyim. When Yemenites complained they were asked sarcastically 'Were you better off in Yemen?' and they answered 'Yes, by God.'

After the state of Israel was founded, discrimination became an overt policy. Ashkenazi immigrants were granted the best houses of the Palestinian refugees, or were given new houses free of charge. After 1950, when it was declared that immigrants had to pay for their housing, the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut and the local municipalities started building houses for the Ashkenazim and giving them 30-year mortgages. Simultaneously, the Zionist establishment was cramming hundreds of thousands of Sephardim into the camps which were not finally closed down until 1980.

The following Minutes of the Zionist Executive Council show how all the Zionist parties, from the extreme right to the extreme left, decided to favour Ashkenazim from Poland at the expense of the Sephardim.

Date: 9 October 1949

Eliahu Dobkin (Mapai-Labour): We must grant these immigrants privileges, and I am not afraid of that word.

Levi Eshkol (Mapai): ... if we set up camps with a hundred thousand people in them and then suddenly give the Ashkenazim privileges, it is not hard to imagine the outcry . . . 'nothing is spared for the Ashkenazim!'

Tsvi Hermon (Mapam-Zionist far left): ... if it is a question of granting privileges during absorption, I am afraid that we won't get through this alive . . . can't you see what it would mean if twenty thousand people got special measures?

It was unanimously decided to form a committee to study the matter.

Date: 26 December 1949

Y. Greenbaum (Independent): . . . There will be a need to prepare a hotel for approximately 800 people who will be the first arrivals

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from Poland at the end of November. We have got to hurry so that we won't be taken by surprise, and so that respectable people will not be forced to go to the camps. There are people of rank amongst the immigrants and it will be a disaster if we are forced to send them to the camps.

E. Dobkin (Mapai): We need to make an extraordinary effort to ease the absorption of these people. I see no harm in the committee hiring a hotel to put them up . . . Immigration from Poland depends upon how these first immigrants are absorbed. If we fail, the others will not come... and that will be a blow to the whole Zionist movement.

M. Grossman (Revisionist-Right): I believe that we must do everything that is within our capability to help absorb the Polish immigrants, but I object to the undertaking being officially in the hands of the Executive Committee [of the Agency]. With all due respect to the Jews of Poland, the affair will not be understood. Why should these Jews suddenly be treated cared for differently from others? The matter is published and a special member of the Executive Committee is being appointed. What about the Jews of Germany, Marrakesh, Tunis, Tripoli and the rest of the Jews? I am with opinion that says that we should decide here in the committee whatever we decide, but the Executive Committee must not co-opt Mr Greenbaum. He is an important personality and accepted by the Polish Jews and will accomplish whatever he is charged to do, and we will all help him. I do not want the whole world to know that we have taken on the responsibility of taking care of this matter ... A public committee could be set up for the Jews from Poland, provided Mr Greenbaum is in it, but not as a appointee of the Executive Council. I can already imagine the newspaper headlines. I am ready to earmark funds for this project, but without any publicity - for publicity will be detrimental and I see no need for it.

B. Locker (Mapai): Truly we all support this project, but the question is 'Do we need a formal mandate from the Executive Council or not?'

Y. Greenbaum (Independent and Home Secretary): With regard to publicity, you can depend on me . . .

The Council then resolved to set up a public committee to deal with the absorption of Jews from Poland with the participation of Mr. Greenbaum. It will be shown that he was not representing the Executive Committee but was acting as one of the leaders of Polish Jewry.

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A week later (2 January 1950), the Council met to discuss setting up a special camp for the immigrants from Poland where each family would have its own room, as opposed to the multi-family dormitories elsewhere. The Department of Absorption undertook to accommodate 2,000 Polish immigrants under these conditions. Y. Greenbaum (who was Polish) requested that these facilities be extended to cover all the Polish immigrants, but this was turned down.

Y. Greenbaum: That means that from February there will be a need to put Polish immigrants into huts with 20 to 30 beds close to each other and that whole families will sleep together . . . if news of this gets around it will cause a very bad impression. Y. Rafael (Hapoel Hamizrahi - a religious Labour party): The Polish immigrants are not like immigrants from other countries. Immigrants from other countries are here because we demanded. For a long time they did not want to immigrate and put it off. For that reason we have no obligation toward them whereas Polish Jews could not immigrate - they did not have the opportunity to do so. If we exempt them from the camps and give them priority in housing, they will settle down much more quickly than the Orientals in the camps for there are amongst them professionals who are much in need in the country. It will be beneficial for the economy as a whole and therefore I suggest giving them priority in housing. The Jews of Poland come from a comfortable background and thus camp life would be more difficult for them than for the Yemenite Jews who consider the camps a rescue operation. So I think that there are sufficient grounds for favouring the Jews of Poland, and this must happen in two ways. First, they must be granted priority in housing and second, if that is impossible - then I support the suggestion of Mr Greenbaum that we provide them with better conditions in the camps . . . We can set up a special mortgage fund, financed with help from their relatives and the money they bring with them. This group of immigrants is not like the Yemenite immigrants. When a Polish Jew gets a loan, he knows he has to pay it back. Y. Burginsky (Mapam-Zionist/Marxist): There is a possibility that we will only have one camp, which is Atlit Camp where there are at present Yemenites. We'll shove them somewhere else and then we'll be able to cram in between three to four thousand (even though it will not be as luxurious as Greenbaum is demanding), like in the other camps ... as a precautionary measure we have rented between

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two and three hundred flats at 200 Israeli pounds each. We shall take the houses that have been allotted to the North Africans and Yemenites and hand them over to the Polish Jews. For this we shall need not two hundred but three hundred pounds. The problem is whether we can collect such a sum?

E. Dobkin (Mapai, or Labour): We have resolved correctly to give preferential treatment to the Jews of Poland. [But] priority should be given to those who arrive first. This does not have to continue throughout, but our aim is that the first to come should communicate to the others in Poland that the situation is not too bad here. We don't have to treat all the ten thousand like this. There is no harm in letting those who follow on later live like the rest of the refugees.

Y. Greenbaum: Instead of cramming the Polish Jews together like this, I believe it would be preferable to treat the Turkish and Libyan Jews that way. That would not be unfair. You ought to know that those [Polish] Jews are the elite. Every family had three or four rooms - a German house with German furniture and the latest German conveniences. There will be doctors from Poland. You just put one of them in Beit Leed or Pardes Hanna camps and see what he'll think then and how he'll feel.

Levi Eshkol, Yitzhak Greenbaum and an appointee from the Department of Immigration were delegated to look into ways of housing the Polish Jews 'in the spirit of the suggestions raised at the session'.²⁵

Most of the decisions which were inhumane or against international law were not taken officially. The decision to expel the Arabs from Lydda and Ramleh is an example of that. Yitzhak Rabin, says that when he, as an army officer, went to Ben Gurion, the Minister of Defence and Prime Minister, to ask about the fate of the inhabitants of those two towns, Ben Gurion did not reply but made a gesture which meant 'Get rid of them'. It was later denied Ben Gurion had ordered the expulsion of the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramleh. In 1956 when an officer asked what would happen when peasants who did not know about the curfew which had been imposed after they had gone out to the fields, came home in the evening to their village of Kafr Qasem, the ranking officer replied with the Arabic phrase 'God have mercy upon them', which in army jargon means 'slaughter them', and this they did. In Lebanon the Christian Phalanges were ordered to enter Sabra and Shatila, which order could only mean a massacre of the Palestinian

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refugees. When David Levi, an Israeli minister of Moroccan origin, warned that this entry of the 'Keta'ib' meant a massacre, he was completely ignored.

THE TRANSIT CAMPS (MA'BAROT)

In the previous section we mentioned how Ben Gurion begrudged the meagre rations which were given to the immigrants and how he wanted to draft them into special unpaid work groups. The plan was then dropped due to various difficulties, but the principle was applied starting in 1950 in a different way. Either the immigrants' camps were transformed into transit camps, or the immigrants were forcibly removed to new camps, and thus most Sephardim ended up in transit camps. The Zionist establishment stopped providing the immigrants with food and they were told that they had to find work and earn a living. The aim of the establishment was to reduce the cost of the vastly increased immigration and to force Sephardim to do physical labour for much reduced wages. When some of the immigrants refused to go to the new camps, the establishment pressurised them by stopping all social services.²⁶

These transit camps were erected next to the comfortable Ashkenazi settlements or the large cities, to provide them with cheap labour. The living conditions in the camps were uniform: tents and huts of wood and tin. Perhaps conditions in these camps were worse than before, for the ruling establishment was not responsible for ensuring food supplies to the inhabitants. There was no 'welfare state', and if a person was without a job, he received no financial help from the government. Whereas some of the inhabitants of the older camps received free houses or flats, the inhabitants of the transit camps had to buy their dwellings from a government company. The authorities, particularly the ruling Mapai party, used unemployment to debilitate the Sephardim and the search for work, any work (and it was usually unskilled labour), became a matter of life or death for someone with a large family. The Sephardim were used to develop the Israeli economy and to increase the profitability of businesses without gaining any benefit. They were paid low wages, could lose their jobs at any moment and were victims of every economic crisis the country underwent. In 1952 the unemployment rate in the camps oscillated between 40-50 percent, whereas the general unemployment rate in the country was only 6-10 percent. Even when unemployment went down

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throughout the country, the rate in the camps stayed high although some camps were not troubled by unemployment - where the inhabitants worked in construction, road building, afforestation, or in the settlements of the Jordan Valley and Ginossar. Everyone with a job worked a four-day week and earned two Israeli pounds a day.

After the residents of Kiryat Shemona camp had finished draining Lake Hula, Ashkenazi kibbutzim received 40,000 dunums²⁷ and four large new plantations were set for cotton and other products to be used in industry. The workers from Kiryat Shemona camp were not even allotted the smallest piece of reclaimed land. The army also used many of the residents for engineering works. Others worked on the 'Malha' project which was run by the Mekorot [Water] Company. A large proportion of the camp inhabitants did seasonal agricultural work such as fruit picking. A resolution of the local council in Migdal on 8 June 1951 stated that 80 percent of the residents of Migdal and the camp were unemployed at the end of the vegetable season.

The bosses were not content just to pay niggardly wages, they also received financial support from the authorities to encourage them to employ the immigrants. In chapter nine we shall see in detail how their profits helped the Israeli economy to develop. The government, moreover, invented a new way to reduce wages, which was to employ the immigrants in 'emergency work', whereby they would receive 'emergency wages' which were much less than the previously mentioned wages. The government claimed that 'emergency work' was not vital, and that its purpose was to prevent the spread of unemployment. Research has shown that this work was indeed included in the development budget. Emergency work in 1953-1954 consisted of the following examples: landscaping, increasing productivity of vegetable plots, nature preservation, afforestation, government land and forest reclamation, cultivation of National Fund lands, citrus cultivation, landscaping of school and hospital gardens, rubble clearing, development projects and public works, irrigation projects and road-surfacing. The development budget covered similar projects and the government in fact had no right to call this 'emergency work'. The average daily wage at the time in the large cities was five or six Israeli pounds a day (about one pound sterling). The camp inhabitants were paid only one Israeli pound or at most a pound and a half. One must also bear in mind that this was hard labour for the Sephardi immigrants who had previously been merchants, writers or artisans. Widad's family, whom I met in the

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Sha'ar Ha'aliya Camp, were sent to the Megiddo transit camp, then to Tel Mond and then on to Salama C. Her husband, a small businessman called Abu Salih, had owned buses in Baghdad and had worked as a coach driver in his own enterprise. Though he had done this for thirty years, he was refused a driving licence in Israel and as a middle-aged man he was forced to do heavy physical labour. After ten years of this he developed a heart disease. His doctor at the time told him he could not work anymore. The author told Widad 'If he keeps on doing the same work it will kill him.' She replied 'What is worse? That we should die of hunger? We have seven children! The government did not help them.' Abu Salih carried on working and a few weeks later he died. Widad took up sewing and doing housework to raise her seven children.

In addition to low wages, recognised workers' rights were not granted to these immigrants. Wages were paid late. While some immigrants worked five-day weeks, some had just four- or even two-day weeks, and lines would stretch outside labour offices from midnight until the end of the day. Community or party patronage played a part in getting a job, but as often as not the immigrants would go back home jobless. Quarrels and fights would break out as the immigrants shouted at the labour exchange office 'You have tricked us into coming here, to these camps. May God take His revenge upon you! Go and rot in Hell!' The officials would then shout back 'Go back to Iraq!' There was a very popular song in the camps in those days:

Look what you've done to us, Ben Gurion,
You smuggled us out,
because of the past,
we have renounced our (Iraqi) citizenship
and come to Israel.
If only we had come by donkey
we never would have made it!
What a wretched time!
What a wretched plane that brought us here!

The Iraqi immigrants believed that their emigration had taken place after a secret agreement had been signed by Nuri Said and Ben Gurion. They composed a folk song about that:

They sold us there! They bought us there! Then they brought us here!

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On some occasions, labour offices were stormed. The police would arrive quickly, clear them out and close them down. On other occasions wages were not paid for weeks or months. The Histadrut actually allowed emergency wages to be reduced by one third and in 1954 the Histadrut Council refused to listen to camp representatives. The camp-dwellers then demonstrated noisily outside the Histadrut building and again the police had to rush in to defend Council members.

The ruling party (Mapai-Labour) exploited the immigrants' ordeal to cement its authority. Mapai headed the government, the Histadrut, the Jewish Agency, the Ashkenazi agricultural settlement, and Histadrut plants, banks, marketing companies and other things. In the camps jobs were often handed out exclusively to members of Mapai and the small religious parties who were in the government coalition. The job hierarchy in the camps was as follows: camp director, head of the labour office, party secretary, sanitation workers, intelligence officer (the Shin Bet) and his spies. All these positions, except for those in sanitation, were held by Ashkenazim. The ruling party used bribes, usually in the form of jobs, intimidation and violence, and cultivated gangs to terrorize anyone who criticised the government. Progressive democratic circles which had participated in the struggle for national and social liberation in Arab countries were destroyed. The secret police used hysteria to cover up its tyranny and to keep Mapai in power. Anyone who dared open his mouth to stand up for his people's rights was called a communist, and terror was sown with threats of dismissal from work. This state of affairs lasted until the right-wing Likud party came to power in the election of 1977. Previously the ruling Labour party had an overwhelming majority of the votes in the camps in Parliamentary elections due to economic pressure, whereas it only won a third in the large towns.

The camp dwellers were unrepresented on the local councils to which their camps belonged because 'the election had already taken place before the camps joined the councils.' The Ministry of the Interior issued a decree limiting the authority of the local councils which the camps set up themselves, and in some of the camps the Jewish Agency appointed a committee which could intermediate between the camp residents and the administration. The Ministry of the Interior had not recognized any appointed or elected committee in the camps.

Quite often the party secretary's clique and that of the intelligence officer were the same. The party and the secret police (Shin Bet)

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relied upon criminal elements to frighten the camp residents. The official role of the secret police was to guard state security against spying by Arab countries, but in fact there was none and no one was ever accused of doing so. The Shin Bet was simply a political secret police force which worked to shore up the ruling party. S.M. told me that he had been given a small post in return for supplying information to the Shin Bet about people who were criticizing the state or the system. He added that he felt guilty because his information had destroyed those peoples' families, since they were fired from their jobs and had no means of sustenance. He pointed out that most of those people had not been enemies of the ruling party at all, but his Shin Bet had pressured him into supplying more names of 'suspects' and he had been obliged to give them the names of people who were apolitical, or even supporters of the ruling party. On one occasion I met Zekharia, one of my friends from school days, and he started complaining about the Mapai Party. 'They used me to control the Yemenite camp and then they threw me out.' Zekharia (who was Yemenite) carried on, 'I was appointed as an agricultural trainer on that camp, but my real job was to help Mapai. On the day of the parliamentary elections representatives of other parties came to the camp to lobby the residents. We decided to impose a curfew on the camp, "for security reasons" - we told the residents, and we kept them in their tents until the politicians had left. By these methods Mapai managed to win 90 percent of the Yemenite camp vote.'

The government and the Jewish Agency decided not to supply any social services to the camps. The local councils in whose jurisdiction the camps lay were supposed to supply them, but being Ashkenazi councils they had little contact with the camps. They also opposed the construction of new camps in their neighbourhood since camp dwellers could not pay local taxes. There were other racist reasons too, for example, when the Herzeliya municipality refused to have any camps in the area because of the large tourist hotels, and visible masses of dark-skinned poor would be detrimental both to the hotels and to Israel, which had spread far and wide the myth of its social justice and true democracy. Thus in 1953 in spite of the law, there were twenty-six camps (with 30 percent of the total camp inhabitants) outside any municipality and the rest were part of poor municipalities. Twelve camps were forced to set up local councils and to supply their residents with services, but due to the overwhelming poverty of the camps, the necessary services could not be provided and the government decided to place

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them under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior - which then did nothing. The municipalities which did accept the camps did not provide them with services, because again the camp dwellers could not pay local taxes. When the local councils requested more government help they received nothing. In 1952/3 and 1953/4 government help to local councils actually went down, causing a reduction in the level of whatever services existed. In some cases the number of camp inhabitants was much greater than the number of residents in the neighbouring municipality. In Nahalat Yehuda it was four times more. Tel Aviv, with 254,000 inhabitants, accepted 2,700 immigrants from the neighbouring camps and then only after intense pressure. Camps in the countryside actually belonged to the Ashkenazi Kibbutz and Moshav councils, who would accept no representatives from them. However, the Ashkenazi settlements did make use of the camp dwellers as cheap labour and consequently their profitability doubled and their standard of living rose dramatically compared to the period before the mass immigration. Between twenty and thirty percent of the camps were set up in remote and border districts. They suffered from the following economic hardships:

1. Unemployment. Private and Histadrut bosses who received financial support to absorb the immigrants, preferred to use these funds in the central regions where the profits were greater.
2. The Histadrut preferred to build dwellings in the central regions, since profits were greater than in the border areas. The government then agreed to build dwellings in the outlying areas, but these flats were much smaller. Building work proceeded very slowly causing the inhabitants to live in tents for a number of years.
3. Scarcity of supplies. The Histadrut allowed its marketing company (Hamashbir Hamerkazi) to open many shops to sell food and clothing in the central regions, causing a shortage of supplies and higher prices in the remote camps. In short, the government decided to distribute the population around the country without forcing the authorities which had received government funding to use it in all regions of the country.

The Histadrut's neglect of its duties toward the Sephardim in the camps will be seen in sharper relief when it is realised that the camps had in fact enhanced the Histadrut. 76 percent of the camp inhabitants were forced to belong to it (in order to obtain work and medical treatment), whereas the average membership throughout the country was between 40 to 50 percent of the

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population (1950-1954). 78 percent of camp children went to Histadrut 'Socialist' schools, as opposed to the national average of 43 percent. The ruling party obtained between 40 and 50 percent, or in some camps between 80 and 90 percent, of the vote, as opposed to 32 percent of the general vote. If we add to the camps the development towns, the cooperatives and the people who lived in the 'Black Belt', we see that it was Sephardi immigration, in addition to economic exploitation, which kept the Mapai (Labour) Party in power for 29 years. Israel's spokesmen abroad claimed that the Israeli system was the most firmly established democracy in the region, but anyone who has lived in Israel knows that government control over the individual is unbelievably tight.

Sephardi Jews suffered from harsh health conditions in the camps with each family, usually with many children, living in one tent whose area was smaller than a normal room. In 1950/1 the winter was unusually harsh, with snow falls everywhere. The tents and the huts had no heat, and since there were only a few standpipes in every camp people had to stand in long queues for their water ration. In rural areas, priority was given to the Ashkenazi farmers and the camps had their water cut off. Often the water was muddy and unfit for drinking which led to an increase in complaints and violent demonstrations against the authorities which were put down with a steel hand. There was one shower, with cold water naturally, for every 16 people, but it was rare to find a shower which worked regularly. The toilets consisted of a small pit measuring one metre square, and there was one of these for every four families. The queues to use them were long and sometime there was only one per hundred people. After heavy rainfall, the contents of the pits would overflow and in summer they gave off a foul stink and nourished armies of stinging insects. The government did not bother about rubbish removal, and, since the camps had no gutters, mounds of rubbish piled up. Since some of the camps lay on the Lod-Tel Aviv highway, Ashkenazi journalists wrote that these camps were jeopardizing Israel's image since they could be seen by foreign tourists and it would be better to move them away from the highway. The establishment thus started building cement huts a few kilometres away and demanded that the camp inhabitants buy them and move into them. The Sephardim, however, spurned the offer because there was no asphalt road from the new location to the highway, but the Ashkenazi newspapers picked this up and reported 'these Sephardim refuse to live in buildings because they are used to living in tents like the Bedouin.'

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The government did not link the camps to the regional electricity grid and the residents had to use paraffin lamps. Outside the tents it was pitch-black. There was no surfaced road inside the camps and the ground was so full of puddles and mud that it was difficult to get from tent to tent. Frequently communications between the camps and the neighbouring towns were very difficult due to the bad roads and the scarcity of transport, as a result of which the geographic and social isolation of the camps was heightened.

The only relations between Sephardim and Ashkenazi settler society was that of ruler and ruled. Contacts between the recent Sephardi immigrants and the native Palestinian Jews were difficult, since the latter lived in the large towns, but this isolation had one advantage in that the Sephardi camp dwellers kept their traditions alive. They continued to speak Arabic, to listen to Arabic music and to preserve their identity. This was of great use in the seventies and the eighties when there was a revival of Arabic culture amongst Sephardim. On the other hand the establishment split their families up amongst a number of camps, which weakened their struggle against the authorities. In spite of all this, Sephardi Jews did fuse into one society, mainly Arabic-speaking and united by their common cultural heritage. Simultaneously the Russian, Polish, Hungarian and other Ashkenazi Jews intermingled to form a single Ashkenazi society, united in their arrogance toward Jews from the Arab world and the Arabs living in it.

The geographical isolation of the camps led to goods being scarce and expensive. The government imposed austerity measures and issued ration cards. A black market thus grew up and Ashkenazi families in the cities could buy their provisions on the black market, which caused shortages. Most of the camp inhabitants, however, could not even afford to pay for the rations they were allowed to buy. The unemployed and heads of large families would sell their food rations to the Ashkenazim. Moreover, the food shops in the remote camps were also short of basics.

Health services were provided by the Sick Fund which belonged to the Histadrut, as well as by the Ministry of Health and the army. The health services suffered from a shortage of doctors and clinics. The government tried to conscript doctors to work in the camps, but it failed and had to appoint doctors from amongst the immigrants themselves. During visits to Saqiya, Pardes Hanna, Petah Tikvah and Tel-Mond camps, amongst others, it became clear there were deaths, mainly of the aged, which people were unaware of until the dead bodies started to smell. The child mortality

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rate was very high in comparison to that in the large cities and the Ashkenazi settlements. Indisputably the high death rate was due to the food shortage and the health and living conditions in the camps. Sephardim in the camps took part in a number of demonstrations, and they sent numerous petitions to the authorities complaining about their living conditions. This is one of them:

March 28 1954

To the Prime Minister Jerusalem

We the undersigned, residents of Camp Bet and Camp Gimmel near the town of Ramleh, respectfully present to you our vital requests as follows:

We are living in shocking economic, cultural and material circumstances - to which we are unaccustomed. The overwhelming majority of residents are unemployed or partially employed and receive emergency wages, that is three and a half Israeli pounds per day for a maximum of twelve days a month. We have lived in these dreadful conditions for more than three years with no interest or help from government or municipal establishments. There are 8-10 people per hut and we are living amidst mounds of filth, which are causing diseases and epidemics since the germs and bacteria have the most conducive of situations for their growth. A large percentage of our children is not sent to school due to a shortage of financial resources. We have one doctor and one nurse for 5,000 people. We have no paved road connecting the camp to the town, which causes transport difficulties and forces our women, including the pregnant and the old, to go to town and back on foot. This is also the situation for the men who work in the town and who have to walk long distances after a long day's work. Most of the inhabitants of the camp have been unable to pay their rent and municipal taxes for the last two years or more, and the Amidar company and the Ramleh municipality have taken people to court over this. Recently municipal taxes have gone up 20 percent and income tax has gone up 7.5 percent in an attempt to pay off our debts to the municipality. The Social Welfare Office gives the needy £4-8 Israeli a month, but this small sum is not enough to solve the problem since it is nowhere near enough to support a family

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of 6-8 members [then the petition demands the supply of electricity and telephones to the camps as well as the provision of an ambulance] . . .

This situation was a violent psychological shock for the Sephardim, since most of them had lived in the finest districts of Baghdad, Cairo, Alexandria and Beirut. Their despair deepened together with their sense of indifference, but sometimes acts of violence were carried out against the Zionist establishment.

Deborah Burnstein wrote in her detailed study, *The Transit Camps in the Fifties*, that official documents do not mention anything about the psychological problems in the camps. However, some of the residents did write about these problems in short stories such as the Iraqi Shimon Balas who wrote the best novel in Hebrew about the transit camps - *Hama'bara*. Sami Mikhael, another Iraqi author, wrote the well-known novel *Equal and More Equal*. The hero of this story, David, who is sixteen years old, and who lives in one of the transit camps (Ma'barat Khairiya, near Tel Aviv), says:

My father wept! I listened, stunned, to sounds I couldn't believe. Abu-Shaul was crying! After a moment, Mother shook him by the shoulders. 'Ya'qub,' she whispered. 'Enough! Ya'qub. Let's not dwell over what has happened. But I knew that father would never stop dwelling over his shattered dream. Was he not standing at the door of his new love affair? He had entered quite happily and shut the door behind him only to find that he was in the company of an indifferent monster . . . Perhaps Mother couldn't understand, but I did. Father's body was still alive but his spirit was dying inside him. He was a new immigrant from Iraq, this old man, burdened with a family, short of money and transplanted amongst a group of people with no hope of supporting his family honourably. All of this formed the base of another revelation which was many times worse: it transpired that he belonged to an inferior race . . . and he could not get over this burning humiliation.²⁸

One half of Khairiya Camp has turned into a huge rubbish dump which daily absorbed all Tel Aviv's rubbish. As far as I'm concerned it is a living memorial to what was going on there. As far back as I can remember, I knew that all of us residents had been thrown into that human rubbish dump by those anonymous pale-faced men from the big city.²⁹

We thought that our arrival in Israel would be like a

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homecoming. Jews among Jews. One nation. But it wasn't like that. Someone has split us up into two nations. I remember the troubles we went through in Iraq - but we were never inferior! They don't persecute Jews here, thank God, but before we arrived they had decided to make us second class people.³⁰

Tsiporah, the Ashkenazi official responsible for sanitation in the camp, believed it was not just the toilets and showers that needed to be cleaned out, but the inhabitants as well.³¹

When David was late for work washing bottles, Goldenburg, his boss, told him 'Laziness is a despicable Arab characteristic . . . ' When David tried to explain that all the buses had been full, Mr Goldenberg sighed. 'Ah, David, David! You've got to leave all that Arab stuff behind you for ever. You cannot get by here on lies and excuses.'³²

David feels that the solidarity between the Ashkenazi soldiers and the Sephardim is purely transient and that when they come back from the Six Day War they will have to return to their former place in society, that of the 'dark' community. The Ashkenazi will return to his white bedsheets and the Sephardi to his slums. Then he adds that he was forced to go to war and that he will defend himself. He dislikes Israel. . . but he does not know a single Egyptian. Then he wonders how he can hate a person he has never seen.³³

During the Parliamentary elections, Ashkenazi landlords offered the camp residents ten Israeli pounds cash for every vote.³⁴

'It's the same there (on the kibbutz) also. The 'blacks'³⁵ are second-class citizens. They watched over me all the time, as if I were a time-bomb - or a stink-bomb.'³⁶

Tzipora (the Ashkenazi) said to David, the Iraqi, 'Keep away from my daughter, do you hear? Margalit is not for a dirty black like you . . . '³⁷

David said, 'Look at the schools and particularly the universities. How many "Orientals" do you find there, even though we are the majority. There is discrimination at every level. North Tel Aviv versus Ma'abarat Khairiya and the Hatikva slum district, Ashkenazim versus Sephardim. Even at the window of the labour office, there is Tzipora on the one hand and me on the other.'³⁸

In the armoured car, the soldier David thinks about the Ashkenazi soldiers around him, but cannot see any link between himself and them. There is no friendship, no empathy, no brotherhood of arms ' . . . I am a foreign body amongst them.

Then the author describes the biggest gangster in the camp - Abu

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Halawa: 'He feared no one. All the political parties tried to please him. The camp secretary licked his arse and the police were blind to his deeds.

A favourite joke of the Ashkenazim was:⁴¹ 'There are two things which I hate with all my might, and they are firstly sectarian discrimination, and secondly Franks.'⁴²

The story has a happy ending with the hero receiving a medal for bravery in the 1967 war and with it a sense of arrival and acceptance in Israeli society. This conclusion is so far at odds with the central themes of the book that it is evident that it was tacked on to make it publishable.

The policy of de-education in the camps was reaching its zenith. A large part of the children received no education whatsoever, in spite of the law stipulating that elementary education was obligatory. The only educational establishments in the camps were primary schools and kindergartens, which suffered from a shortage of building, qualified teachers, books and equipment. Children between 6 and 12 represented 75 percent of the pupil body in the country, but in the camps they were only 50 percent and the remainder received no education. The standard of education was much lower than that in schools in the rest of the country. A Sephardi of Syrian origin who was a member of the Zionist left-wing Ahdut Ha'avodah party, Abraham 'Abbas, wrote that 50 percent of camp pupils in the Beer Sheva region could not read or write. The educational level of these primary schools did not go beyond that of the third grade of regular schools (elementary schools in Israel have eight grades). He added that a third of all children between the age of 6 and 13 did not go to school in spite of the compulsory education law, and that 90 percent left school at the end of the fourth grade. 'Abbas observed the breakdown of values and emphasises that the real reason for this phenomenon was the atrocious educational situation, not just in the area of Beer Sheba but in all the camps, Sephardi cooperative villages and the 'Black Belt'. 'Abbas stated that school fees effectively prevented children from getting a primary education, which is the reason why there are so few Sephardim at university. The World Organization of Sephardi Jewry had put immense pressure on the government and the Jewish Agency which resulted in the appropriation of 145,000 Israeli pounds to help students from this community. 90 percent of Sephardi immigrants were unaccustomed to doing physical labour, having been involved in commerce and the civil service. 90 percent of the unemployed were Sephardim, in addition to those

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employed in emergency work and receiving emergency wages. Abbas added, quoting Dr Smilansky, that forty thousand children between the ages of 14 and 18 were not in any educational establishment, one third of those who were not at school were unemployed, another third did casual jobs, and the other third lived by dubious means. The proportion of Sephardim in secondary schools was almost zero - out of 1,300 secondary school pupils in Tel Aviv, for example, there were just 13 Sephardi children (see chapter seven).

By 1954 the number of camp dwellers had reached 200,000, with 80 percent being Sephardim, (although according to Central Zionist Archive S84/77 they were more than 90 percent in 1953). However, the few Ashkenazim in the camps only stayed for a few days or weeks, whereas the Sephardim were there for years. In 1954 Yitzhak Rafael, head of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, suggested to the Knesset that they look into anti-Sephardi discrimination, but he was defeated by an overwhelming majority.⁴⁴

In his speech in 1954 to the World Conference of Sephardi Jews which was convened in Jerusalem, Avraham al-Maliah, a community leader, described the tragic conditions in the camps, the diminished educational level of the new generation, and the inability of the fathers to pay secondary school and university fees. He mentioned how students had to leave school to help their families out, and spoke of unemployment, the bitterness of their lives, hunger and discrimination. Al-Maliah also observed that many Sephardim wanted to go back home. He accused Ashkenazi officials of tyranny and of not understanding the psychology of their victims due to the cultural divide between them and the Sephardim. Instead of solving their problems, these officials keep putting the immigrants off, behaving arrogantly with them and sending them from one official to another until the immigrant is driven mad with frustration. Even though they brought them to Palestine, they scream at them 'Who asked you to come to this country? Who asked you to have so many children?' and so forth. Al-Maliah criticised the Zionist emissaries who wasted the money they collected from contributions on luxurious living instead of spending it on the poor immigrants. He accused them of disseminating a spirit of hatred amongst family members and of snatching children from their parents, and of dividing them out amongst the parties, as if they were sharing out cattle.⁴⁵

Owing to the fact that welfare aid for the unemployed, and widows and orphans was almost non-existent, I have seen mothers

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abandon their children in the offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and run off. The police would then track down the mothers and arrest them, to make them take back their children. One can just imagine the trauma these children underwent. Doubtless most of the women involved in vice or in prison today (1990) were born and brought up in those terrible camps. I asked an employee of the Ministry of Social Affairs 'Do you not feel guilty when you see those children screaming and crying hysterically?' 'No,' he replied. 'For Israel needs street sweepers and workers to do the menial jobs, and these children will do that . . .

In her study, Deborah Bernstein says that by the end of 1951 there were 127 transit camps containing 250,000 inhabitants.⁴⁶ She adds that usually the immigrants could not choose which camp they would live in.

I saw the hardships which befell the family of the Abu Salih when they moved from Megiddo Camp to Tel Mond Camp, without permission, since Abu Salih's brother and sister were there.

After several years, the dwellers of the transit camps were moved into ugly cement huts nearby and the camp name was changed. This is what happened to the Saqiya and Khairiya camps which were merged and renamed Or Yehuda ('The Light of Judah!'). Others were transferred to 'cooperative work villages' and 'development towns'. A portion moved to the slum areas of the large towns and the 'Black Belt' sprawled further. In spite of the fact that these camps were called 'transit camps', there were 30,000 people still living in them in 1980⁴⁷ - in the camps of Jesse Cohen, Nof-Yam, Holon and Bat-Yam. Israeli newspapers have published much material about the living conditions in the camps and the violence and stormy demonstrations against the establishment staged in them. The demonstrators called upon the United Nations to intervene on their behalf and to look after them as they looked after refugees in other places in the world. These wretches stayed in the camps for more than 30 years. Nahum Goldman, the head of the World Jewish Congress in 1959, admitted that the flats which had been built to house the Sephardim were, at the eleventh hour, handed over to Ashkenazim - which caused the uprising of Wadi al-Salib in Haifa.⁴⁹ Prof. Kedourie (1970) sums up the tragedy of the Iraqi Jews: 'In Israeli immigrant camps, tricked and dissatisfied, their livelihood and homes taken away from them, their coherent community destroyed and themselves forcibly brought to the service of an ideal which they neither understand nor share' (p. 313); he goes on to accuse the Zionist and Arab rulers for the fact

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that 'the Jews of Iraq were uprooted, dispossessed and scattered in the space of a year' (pp. 314-315). (For further illustrative material, see Appendix I.)

THE DEVELOPMENT TOWNS, OR CHEAP LABOUR CAMPS

In 1952 the Zionist establishment changed its policy on the absorption of Sephardi immigrants, particularly the Moroccans. Instead of sending them to the afore-mentioned transit camps, it started to erect what were called 'development towns' and also stopped bringing over to Israel the aged and infirm or indeed anyone who could not do heavy physical labour. This wave of immigration was termed 'select immigration' and did not apply to Ashkenazim. The immigrants were forcibly taken from the ship straight to the Negev desert, the Lebanese border or other remote districts. When they saw the arid desert and the lack of housing, and refused to disembark from the trucks, they were unceremoniously tipped out. They were then forced to put up their tents and to work for the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlements or on other capital projects. This was a much cheaper method of absorption than transit camps since it was direct and permanent. Between 1954-1956 42 percent of immigrants were taken to the Negev, 42 percent to the Galilee, 8 percent to the Jerusalem area and 8 percent to the coastal district.⁵⁰

Hayya Zuckerman-Brali wrote in her article, 'Reasons for Leaving a Development Town', that according to official government pronouncements, these towns were set up for 'economic, security and settlement reasons'.⁵¹ This can be interpreted to refer to the supply to Ashkenazi settlements and private capital of cheap seasonal labour, the settlement of empty districts to prevent the return of the Arab inhabitants and the construction of a human wall to protect Ashkenazi settlements from Palestinian guerilla activity.

By 1984 there were twenty-nine such towns, and by 1985 there were half a million people living in them - constituting 15 percent of the total Jewish population of Israel within the 'green line'.⁵² There are twelve towns which resemble development towns in their poverty and economic under-development, but which the government refuses to classify as development towns. If they were included, the number of inhabitants of 'the third Israel' would be 750,000,⁵³ or 25 percent of the Jewish population. If we take into

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account economic, cultural and living conditions, we will find no difference between the development towns and the slum districts of the large cities and the cooperative villages where the Sephardi immigrants live, both recent arrivals and long-time inhabitants.

By the seventies, the number of workers in the development towns had reached 150,000, 45 percent of whom worked in industry, 12 percent in construction, and the remainder in agriculture and the service industries. The industries which receive the greatest government support were textiles, clothing and food, which do not require huge amounts of capital but which need cheap unskilled labour. In Dimona the two textile mills employ 96 percent of the industrial work-force, or 50 percent of the total work-force of the town. In Kiryat Shemona 71 percent of the work-force is also employed in textiles. In Yeroham 92 percent are employed in the chemical works and the quarries. If the town factory closes, most of the town's inhabitants are left unemployed. Due to this economic structure, the blue collar workers in the development towns constitute 78 percent of the total work force, as opposed to 51 percent in the large towns. White collar workers are only 22 percent, as opposed to 46 percent nationwide. The white collar workers are Ashkenazim whereas the blue collar workers are Sephardim. Class and racial discrimination is thus twofold.⁵⁴ The class of business owners in the development towns is made up of two subdivisions, Ashkenazi capitalists and 'Socialist' kibbutz members - also Ashkenazim. Government support to business owners has included grants of nearly free land, loans and other government funds.

Swirski and Shushan write that wages and conditions on the shop floor in these factories are much worse than those in the same industries in the large towns, and, moreover, the differential between wages in the development towns and in the large towns grows larger from year to year.⁵⁵

The census of 1983 proves that there is a huge gulf between the development towns and other regions of the country in the areas of unemployment, housing and the standard of living. In development towns 30 percent of families need government benefits, whereas the nationwide average is 20 percent. Based on data from government employment offices in 1985, unemployment in development towns is 28 percent of total unemployment, whereas the residents of development towns only make up 15 percent of the population, and this percentage rises from year to year.⁵⁶ If we examine each town individually we will find that unemployment

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is worse than that. In Shderot, for example, there were 1080 unemployed out of a population of 2700, meaning that the unemployment rate was 40 percent whereas the national rate was just 7 percent.⁵⁷ If we examine unemployment conditions nationwide, we find that almost all the unemployed are Sephardim. In the Ashkenazi settlements the unemployment rate is zero, and this cannot be sheer luck.⁵⁸ There are Ashkenazi settlers in the lands occupied after 1967 who have two jobs - one on the settlement and the other in Jerusalem or one of the Jewish cities in Israel. They have two homes, one in Israel and one in the occupied territories, at the expense of the state.

All the social services in the development towns are second-rate compared to the rest of the country, and third-rate when compared to the social services provided to the Ashkenazi settlers. Most of the development towns are far from the large hospitals and the clinics in the towns lack specialists and new equipment. The proportion of clinics in the large towns is 2.35 times greater than in the development towns, and there are three times as many doctors in the large towns even though there are only twice as many inhabitants. This is one of the reasons for the infant mortality rate in the development towns being two and a half times greater than in the Ashkenazi settlements.

This gulf carries through into the field of education also. Sephardi children receive a third-rate education due to the lower quality of schools, equipment, books, teaching qualifications and teaching itself. The drop-out rate is therefore greatest in the development towns. The following table shows up the difference between the achievements of Sephardi school children in the development towns and the achievements of Ashkenazi schoolchildren in the wealthy Ashkenazi settlements:⁵⁹

Town	no. of inhabitants (15 yrs +)	Percentage gaining Secondary Certificate	Percentage gaining University Degree
Sephardi Development Towns			
Ofakim	8,185	33.4%	1.2%
Beit She'an	8,145	30.0%	1.9%
Hatzor (Galilee)	3,605	32.4%	1.1%
Yeroham	3,845	33.5%	2.1%
Shderot	5,715	30.8%	1.9%
Shlomi	1,400	30.1%	1.1%

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Ashkenazi Settlements

Giv' atayim	36,575	58.3%	10.9%
Herzeliya	43,550	57.6%	13.2%
Savvon	1,820	74.5%	25.8%
Omer	2,780	76.3%	36.0%
Kiryat Uno	15,320	61.1%	15.4%
Kiryat Tivon	7,835	56.0%	13.1%

The reality was in fact worse than these figures show, for two reasons: most of the students from the development towns who gained either secondary school certificates or university degrees were members of those towns' Ashkenazi business or administrative elite; and secondly, the exclusion of many Sephardi workers and servants who lived on Ashkenazi settlements distorted the percentages. (See chapter seven.)

The wretched economic and educational conditions, and particularly unemployment, helped to drive more people out of the development towns than were moving to them, as the following figures for the period 1978-1984 show:⁶⁰

Town	Shderot	Bet She'an	Migdal Ha'emek	Netivot	Neroham	Average (all Development Towns)
Departure Rate	32%	26%	28%	36%	41%	37%
Arrival Rate	13%	2%	13%	13%	0.5%	13%

The departure of the elite is weakening these communities and subjecting them to further exploitation and domination.

At the end of 1985, the leaders of Histadrut workers' councils in the development towns of Shderot, Kiryat Shemoneh, Yeroham and Bet She'an, convened a press conference with members of the Histadrut. They declared that the development towns were quickly heading towards decline, with 90 percent of their youth leaving because of unemployment, having lost 25 percent of their inhabitants between 1979 and 1984.⁶¹

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF THE DEVELOPMENT TOWNS, UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE DEPARTURE OF RESIDENTS

1. These towns lack an economic base. They need funding to be able to carry out their economic programmes. From their very

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inception, these towns were not planned with their residents in mind, but rather for the interests of Ashkenazi settlers and the expansionist policy and security needs of the ruling establishment. It must be observed that the construction of one factory employing the locals, does not constitute an economic base upon which a town can grow up.

2. The residents were not allowed to participate in administration of projects or technical matters, but simply provided menial labour. They were provided no means of vocational advancement and were subordinate to the Ashkenazim who received development funds from the government.

3. The policy of belligerency against Arab states swallowed most of the state's resources at the expense of the development towns, the 'Black Belt' and other Sephardi villages.

4. Since 1967 the government has granted priority to the Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories and has left the development towns to lurch towards economic and social disintegration. This cannot be explained simply by the expansionist policy, since the government would not have ignored the development towns had they been populated by Polish or American Jews. By 1984 the amounts spent on Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories were 7.2 times those spent on development towns.⁶² On 23 November 1979, Ha'aretz wrote that the government intended to spend \$4.7 billion on building new settlements, which represented 40 percent of the state budget or four times as much as would be needed to rehouse slum dwellers in the large towns. The Times of London wrote on 4 March 1980 that the state was going to spend £100 million sterling on settlement during that year. Ezer Weizmann, a moderate Zionist, believes that the settlements do not enhance Israel's security as the rulers claim.⁶³ Charlie Biton, the leader of the Black Panthers, declared in the Knesset on 19 November 1980 that settlements in the occupied territories were classed as Grade A or A+ development areas, whereas the Sephardi development towns were classed as Grade B, which is why 80 percent of the construction budget was spent on rural Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories. This discrimination, he continued, extended into education also, with gross overcrowding in the schools, whereas Ashkenazi schools in the settlements had only a small number of pupils per class. The government budgeted 413 million Israeli pounds for school construction nationwide, of which 76 millions were spent to build one school in the West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim.

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The government paid enormous reparations to the 350 families who had settled in the Sinai. Each family received £190,000 sterling, even though the lands that they were vacating did not belong to them but were Egyptian property and that most of the money invested in the settlements had come from the state. On 21 November 1980, Ha'aretz called these settlers 'peace-brokers'. In addition to these sums paid out by the state, similar amounts were paid to residents of Yamit in Sinai. As a result of these hand-outs the government had to reduce the education budget by 7.5 percent, and the social support budget by 3.3 percent, after the education budget had already been reduced 23 percent the previous year, and school construction by 50 percent. Ezer Weizmann said that he was afraid to meet the development town residents who had voted for Likud in 1977, since Likud was doing nothing to improve their conditions.⁶⁵

On 5 February 1982 Ha'aretz published a statement issued by the Congress of Development Town Mayors in Hertzeliya. The mayors attacked the government policy which favoured the settlements in the occupied territories. The mayor of Netivot said that the government was only constructing thirty-six flats that year in his town which had 9,000 inhabitants, and that two thirds of the newly-weds were homeless and forced to live with their families. The mayor of Bet Shemesh added that housing was provided for almost nothing in the settlements on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. On 26 November 1979, the newspaper Yedi'ot Aharonot reported that 85 percent of Ashkenazi settlers owned two homes - one in Israel and one in the occupied territories. The Conference proved to the mayors that there was a clash of interests between the Sephardi residents of development towns and the Ashkenazi settlers. The state spends 75 percent of its budget on security, which includes Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories and the consolidation of the occupation at the expense of social services in Israel. On 17 January 1986 Ha'aretz reported that the mayors were camped out in the Prime Minister's office to emphasise their demands.

On 7 March 1986 Ha'aretz published a table which demonstrated how Ashkenazi settlements were favoured over development towns. The table was based on official government figures, and can be split up into four schedules.

The first table deals with government encouragement of trade and industry. The government divided the development towns into three categories - A + , A and B, but the settlements in the occupied

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territories were only divided into A+ and A.

1. Poor development towns like Bet Shemesh and Kiryat Malachi amongst others were placed in the third category, whereas all the affluent settlements, such as Ariel, were placed in the first or second preferential categories.

2. Development towns such as Dimona, Shderot, Netivot, Ofakim and others, which suffer from unemployment and hunger are classed in the second category.⁶⁶

Development Towns and 'Growth Areas' (mainly Sephardim)			Settlers in the Occupied Territories (mainly Ashkenazim)	
A+	A	B	A+	A
Kiryat	Karmiel	Yokna'am	Ma'aleh	Other existing and future settlements
Shemonah	(Ashkenazim)		Efraim	
Shlomi	Safad	'Akko	Ofra	
Ma'alot	Tiberias	Bet Shemesh	Kdummim	
Hatsor	Rosh Pinah	Kiryat	Bet El	
(Galilee)		Malachai		
Bet She'an	Afula	Kiryat Gad	Ariel	
Katsirin	Gush Segev	Beer Sheba	Snor	
Metulla	Nahariya	Ashkelon	Tekoa	
Migdal	Migdal	Ha'emek	Neveh Tsof	
Yavni'el	Ofakim		Shiloh	
Benei Yehuda	Netivot		Karnei Shomron	
Merkaz	Shderot		Elon Morehi	
Hasbit				
Yeroham	Dimonah		Ma'aleh Shomron	
Mitzpeh	Arad		Dotan	
Ramon	(Ashkenazi)			
Elat	Ramat Hovev		Rimmonim	

The second table shows the racial discrimination in the way house mortgages are granted.

1. Much larger mortgages are granted to Ashkenazi settlers in the occupied territories than to poor residents of the development towns.

2. The percentage of loans, not linked to the dollar, which are granted to the Ashkenazim is greater than in the Sephardi development towns. This means that inflation will gradually lessen the amount of Ashkenazi borrowings. This is an important point which has caused the bankruptcy of many poor families who have received dollar-linked loans to buy houses. As inflation goes up, mortgage repayments increase, but many borrowers fall into arrears and their debts pile up to the point where the whole family's income is spent on servicing their debts. Sephardi Jews have thus become hostages to the greed of both the private and public sector banks

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which are run by Ashkenazim.

Loan Distribution	House Mortgages in Development Towns to families with:			House Mortgages in Settlements in the Territories to families with:		
	3 children	4-5 children	6 children and more	3 children	4-5 children	6 children and more
New Shekel	26,000	23,700	40,400	38,900	43,200	48,300
Non-dollar linked	15%	27%	34%	15%	31%	38%
Dollar linked	85%	73%	66%	85%	69%	62%

(2.5 New Shekels = £1 sterling)⁶⁷

The third table published explains the reason for the relative expense of housing in development towns compared to settlements in the occupied territories. On the West Bank, for example, the cost of land plots for housing is only 5 percent of the official cost in order to encourage the settlers. Plots in development towns vary between 12 and 60 percent of the official cost.⁶⁸

The fourth table in the newspaper shows that residents of the settlements on the West Bank enjoy another privilege, that of a reduction of 7 percent in the income tax they pay, whereas the poorest Israelis in the development towns get a rebate of between 3-10 percent.⁶⁹

We can thus sum up the privileges which Ashkenazim in the settlements in the occupied territories enjoy as follows:

1. Grants to encourage industry and trade.
2. Long-term mortgages
3. Cut-price land for housing
4. A reduction in income tax
5. High-quality schools with small classes

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE OLD KIBBUTZIM

These privileges have not just been granted since 1967, but since the start of Zionist colonisation, as we have mentioned in chapters two and three. We shall in the following pages discuss discrimination against development towns compared to the Ashkenazi settlements in pre-1967 Israel.

Whereas the Ashkenazi kibbutzim and moshavim are built on a firm economic foundation by reason of their geographical location, the amount and quality of the land attached to them, and their funding, development towns own neither land, nor factories nor

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working funds. They merely provide labour for the Zionist establishment and for private capital, or the 'socialist' kibbutzim. They are located far from the economic centres, in the Negev desert or on the borders, for security purposes, with no regard to the interests of their inhabitants, apart from the fact that funding for jobs was much less than that available in Ashkenazi settlements. Health and education services in the development towns are much inferior to those in neighbouring kibbutzim. Consequently, the gap in the standard of living is very wide.

This has caused the destruction of the socialist foundation of the kibbutzim which have exploited the cheap labour pool and made such inordinate profits that they have now started to speculate on the stock exchange. On 18 March 1983 Ha'aretz reported that the Amalgamated Kibbutz Movement had decided to invest fifty million dollars abroad. Its current investments are as follows: \$72 million in the financial markets, \$8 million in property and \$60 million in stocks. The kibbutz organisation also bought 25 percent of the shares of KayMed in the United States.

The establishment of industries in kibbutzim was the turning point for their economies. Their income went up 39 percent, and the proportion of members working in industry and services went up to 50 percent.⁷⁰

On 10 January 1986 Ha'aretz stated that the sixth formers (17-18 years old) from Kibbutz Yiftah had published an open letter to the kibbutz members demanding a return to the principle of equality. They protested that some of the members had bought private cars, video machines and flats in the towns, and opened private bank accounts etc.

We should point out that until 1948 all kibbutzim refused to hire non-member workers, whether they were Jews or Arabs, since they were opposed to making profits from other people's labour. Profits signified 'capitalist exploitation' and that went against the most important ideological precept of the kibbutz movement. During the Mandate, the kibbutzim would not allow their members to have private radios or electric kettles, since it was in the nature of consumer durables to arouse 'capitalist impulses, greed and individualism'. After 1948, when the kibbutzim received grants to open factories with the aim of employing Sephardim, for the 'nationalist' reasons supported by David Ben Gurion himself, profits started to accumulate and people started to succumb to materialist greed. The socialist foundation of the kibbutz movement was destroyed, and as far as the hired workers' were concerned they

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were capitalist establishments. Their standard of living rose and the ideals of socialist austerity and equality fell by the wayside. The members who worked with the labourers always got the 'clean' jobs. Alcoholism and drug abuse spread and more often than not the exploitation of Sephardim was worse than that of the regular private factories. The Sephardim who worked for the kibbutzim concluded that their enemies were the kibbutz members and not the capitalists in the Likud block under Menahem Begin. This phenomenon (together with the Labour government's policies toward Sephardi immigrants) was one of the most important reasons why the Sephardim started voting for Likud and Begin in 1977.

The kibbutz can fire a worker when he reaches the age of forty or fifty. Workers are not allowed to eat in the settlement cafeteria, or to use the swimming pool or library. Kibbutz members treat the Sephardi workers badly and scorn them for their ethnic background and their dark skin. Sephardi workers do the menial jobs with no hope of advancement or vocational training. Gadi Elat, a member of Kibbutz Beit Alfa, tried to improve relations between the kibbutz and the workers but he failed and resigned from his position. His successor, Dan Sa'ar also failed, and told Ha'aretz on 22 October 1982 that the leadership of the Labour Party and the kibbutzim had not given the reconciliation process any support.

Yitzhak Navon, a native Palestinian Jew and former President of the State, said that 'when a worker from Migdal Ha'emek [a development town] who works for Kibbutz Alonim is not allowed to use its olympic-size swimming pool this reflects the disappearance of basic pioneer aspirations.'⁷¹ The director of the Ministry of Employment said that in 1984 40 percent of the unemployed nationwide were in the development towns, even though they only contained 15 percent of the total population. Thus unemployment in the developments is almost 3.3 times greater than anywhere else. In 1984 the nationwide unemployment rate was 7 percent but it was 30 percent in the development towns.⁷² The mayors spend most of their time dealing with the problem of unemployment, and because of economic weakness 75 percent of municipalities' income comes from the government.⁷³

In a letter to Ha'aretz on 25 September 1981, Professor Ezra Zohar pointed out that Sephardim who grow up in development towns and slum areas are not offered any educational opportunities. It was in practice forbidden to leave the development towns, since one

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lost one's place on the housing list. Professor Zohar confirmed that Sephardi intellectuals in Israel do not have the same social standing they had in the Arab countries. He claimed that the state had destroyed the Middle-Eastern family unit but had not replaced it with anything, and that Sephardim could not integrate into Ashkenazi settler society due to bureaucracy and favouritism.

The journalist, Ze'ev Yefet, made a comparison between government policy in development towns and its policy in the occupied territories, and came to the following conclusion:

1. The government deems the Ashkenazi settlements in the occupied territories 'development regions' to justify pouring funds into them.
2. Land for construction in the development towns is ten times more expensive than that in the occupied territories. An Ashkenazi settler pays only 5 percent of the price of the land, or receives it free. The price of a half dunum in the occupied territories is only 3,000 shekels, whereas it varies between 120,000 and 246,000 shekels in the development towns in the pre-1967 areas.
3. The government is constructing new factories in the settlements in the occupied territories, whereas residents of the development towns suffer from unemployment due to lack of investment in their economy.⁷⁴

As for cultural life - arts, music, drama, etc. - the central government imposes Ashkenazi culture on these communities through its company 'Metnasim'. The mayors, too, have not been residents of the towns but imposed by the Ashkenazi parties. Now they are local people but controlled by those parties. Thus the Zionist establishment controls every aspect of life in these communities.

Kiryat Shemonah

The journalist Amos Elon estimated the population of this town on the Lebanese border to be almost 14,000 and compared it to the neighbouring kibbutzim, such as Kibbutz Dan, Kibbutz Dafna, Kibbutz Kfar Gil'adi and Kibbutz Manarah. Elon stated that young people were leaving the town due to unemployment and the lack of skilled jobs. 50 percent of the children are classified as 'remedial'. People live in box-like apartments like those in the shanty-towns in South Africa. The neighbouring kibbutzim are classed as border settlements and thus receive government reparations for the losses

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they suffer as a result of guerilla operations. Kiryat Shemonah does not, however, receive any reparations. For the same reasons, the Ashkenazi kibbutzim do not pay state taxes, but Kiryat Shemonah has to pay in full. There are doctors living on the kibbutzim, but none live in Kiryat Shemonah. The town started off as a transit camp, but has lately turned into a slum neighbourhood surrounded by rich Ashkenazi kibbutzim which draw their cheap labour needs from it.

The journalist then compared the town to Ashkenazi Kiryat Arba, near Hebron. He wrote that in Kiryat Arba 'every house has a telephone. A flat in Kiryat Shemonah costs £20,000 more than a comparable one in Kiryat Arba'. There are 400 empty apartments in Kiryat Shemonah awaiting new settlers, whereas there are 90 young families who are homeless. Prices are higher than in the large cities by 3-10 percent, and building materials are 25 percent more expensive. He writes that the same conditions prevail in other development towns such as Bet She'an, Karmiel and Ma'alot.⁷⁵

To make matters worse, the ruling establishment sends Ashkenazi volunteers to the development towns, to 'help the residents and propagate the settler spirit'. Tsvi Tsameret, the headmaster of the town's school, criticises these youngsters for their racial arrogance and ignorance. David Oren describes the prevailing conditions in the development town of Yeroham in the Negev and wonders 'why does the government not spend its money on helping these towns rather than spending it on these arrogant volunteers?'⁷⁶

During the election campaign of 1981, Likud workers published a popular cartoon with the heading 'The Kibbutz Mafia'. It had a picture of a monster on whose chest was written 'The Kibbutz Movement', on his belly 'The Labour Alliance', his forearms were inscribed with 'incitement' and 'intimidation', while he brandished a hammer labelled 'threats'. The monster led a great pack of savage animals, representing the various kibbutzim surrounding the town. The cartoon had a subtitle which read 'Hush! They are coming'. In the foreground are the buildings of Kiryat Shemonah.

Israel Shahak, head of the League of Human Rights, wrote that the reason for intercommunal hatred is the exploitation and gulf between their respective standards of living. He continued that the kibbutzim have threatened to impose the communal punishment of an economic boycott on Kiryat Shemonah because of its resistance. In addition to economic tyranny, kibbutz members also dominate the town politically.⁷⁷

According to reports in Ha'aretz on 24 July 1981, most of the

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17,000 residents of the town fled from the guerilla bombardments, leaving behind only 3,000 to 4,000, because the authorities had not provided the town with properly equipped shelters, as they had in the kibbutzim. The few shelters in the town are in a lamentable state, full of rubbish, filthy water and foul smells. These shelters have neither drinking water, electricity nor telephones.

Shimon Peres, the leader of the Labour Party, acknowledged that the town has just 0.4 sq. metres of shelter space per person.⁷⁸ Zu Haderekh reported on 29 July 1981 that 95 percent of the inhabitants had fled the town because of guerilla bombardments and the local authorities refused to hold open their jobs for them, which aroused much resentment amongst the population. There were no occurrences of this type on the Ashkenazi kibbutzim since the government had supplied them with comfortable and well-equipped shelters.

Rafi Peretz, who worked in the quarries of Kibbutz Kfar Gil'adi, stated that kibbutz members did not work in the quarries and that the kibbutz objected to the establishment of a joint school for its children and children from Kiryat Shemonah. He added that kibbutz members 'screw us', and that they 'are only friendly to us during election periods. They are amassing riches at our expense. They buy colour televisions and come into town in their private cars.'⁷⁹

Amnon Shamush⁸⁰ attacked the arrogance of the kibbutzim. He contrasted the situation of Moroccan Jews in Israel with that of their brethren in France and emphasised that France treats its Moroccan Jewish immigrants with respect. They lived in dignity.⁸¹

Another journalist, Yoram Hamizrahi, wrote in an article in Ha'aretz on 25 December 1981, that the poor of Kiryat Shemonah lived on bread, margarine and jam. One of the older residents told him, 'Tell them that we are suffering from hypothermia and that we have no money to buy paraffin.' A grocer told him, 'People only buy bread, milk and margarine and my business cannot survive on that.' Hamizrahi ascertained that residents had abandoned the town, and that some of them had emigrated. Unemployment was widespread. The director of the 'Ramim' factory, Shmuel Ohna, told him that he needed at least 70 million shekels in investment, but that the government had only come up with 13 million. Correspondents of Ha'aretz added that all the Sephardi towns in Galilee were in a recession. The village of Margalioth cut back its peach trees fearing the income tax they would have to pay, and Yardenah was threatening to go on a general strike and shut down the schools. The police and courts were swamped with cases of

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unpaid debts. The monthly wage of a worker in Kiryat Shemonah was 11,000 Israeli pounds, whereas the wage of a youth working in a garage in Tel Aviv was 18,000 Israeli pounds. The residents of the town had been the ones who had drained Lake Hula but it was the Ashkenazi kibbutzim who had snatched up the 40,000 dunums which had been reclaimed and who used the town residents to grow their cotton and industrial crops. The kibbutz members controlled all aspects of life in the town since they were the bosses, factory owners and union leaders and held all the official posts in the Jewish Agency, the local government through the ruling Labour Party.⁸²

The writer, Dan Shavit, of Kibbutz Kfar Sold in Galilee, loathed the tyranny of the kibbutzim over the Sephardim in the development towns. In an article in Ha'aretz on 20 May 1983 he characterised the stance of the kibbutzim toward Sephardi Jews as 'paternalistic, authoritarian and elitist'. Shavit wondered 'How could I be happy when someone from another community comes to me and interferes in my life, saying "I know what is good for you and I'll help you on."' He added that he could understand the resentment of the Sephardim, for no one wants to live with an official stamp that says 'inferior - he knows less than others, understands less and is less skilled.' The author then expressed his support for Menahem Begin who had censured the kibbutzniks and called them 'arrogant millionaires'. Shavit concluded by condemning the greed and egotism of the kibbutzim.

For further material on Kiryat Shemonah, see Appendix II. A detailed examination of other development towns reveals similar patterns. See Appendix III.

THE MOSHAVIM (COOPERATIVE VILLAGES)

The fourth way of absorbing the immigrants from the Arab world was to settle them in the moshavim which were set up in remote areas, particularly the hilly regions of Galilee, Jerusalem and the Negev. Aryeh Nehemkin, the Minister of Agriculture in 1986, ascribes the founding of these moshavim to security and political reasons. The problem of earning a living was of less importance.⁸³ The Israeli military leadership desired moshavim (and development towns) in the border areas to fortify the rich Ashkenazi settlements by using Sephardi settlements as a buffer against Palestinian guerilla attacks. The aim of the political establishment was to distribute the population evenly, but particularly in the areas which had been

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inhabited by Palestinians before they were driven out in 1948, in order to force the Arabs to accept a demographic fait accompli and to make it impossible for the Palestinian refugees to return to their villages. The Minister of Agriculture admitted that the common denominator among the moshavim was the lack of any economic base. He added that no one in the beginning thought of making these villages into moshavim, which is why they were first called 'afforestation villages' since the ruling establishment wanted to employ their inhabitants in their afforestation programme for the Jewish National Fund. This work was part of the afore-mentioned 'emergency jobs', and when they came to an end it was decided to transform these villages into moshavim.

The minister did not mention the establishment's economic aim, which was to use the residents as a cheap work-force for the Ashkenazi settlements. What actually happened was that the majority of the inhabitants worked as hired labourers outside their villages. Due to a lack of any economic infrastructure, the cooperative base of the villages broke down and two hundred and fifty of them went bankrupt.

In 1983 there were 402 moshavim, of which 65 were Ashkenazi moshavim founded during the Mandate. These rich settlements have the original classical characteristics of the cooperative village known as 'Moshav', in which each member has the same amount of land, livestock etc., but they share machinery, marketing, cooperatives stores, etc. Most of the moshavim founded after 1948 were for Sephardim and, as we have mentioned, they lacked any economic base. By 1983 their debts had reached 7 billion shekels (70 shekels = £1 sterling).⁸⁴ Pinhas Moscow, deputy director of the Jewish Agency in the Negev district, added that the moshavim in the Negev owed the purchasing organisation \$130-150 million in addition to the sums they owed the banks and financial institutions in the both the free market and the black market. Out of the 3,360 families in the Negev moshavim, 1,400 (a third of the families) have no hope of ever paying off their debts and are dependent upon their moshavim. Yitzhak Nehemiah, director of the purchasing organization, said that the debts of an average family had reached \$50,000-100,000, but that there were families who owed more than \$200,000.⁸⁵

Representatives of the moshavim in Galilee informed the then Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, that each family owed \$100,000 (at an interest rate of 60 percent, thus making an economic revival impossible). The head of the local council in Ma'aleh Yosef declared

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that there were 1,200 children of moshav members who were not entitled to inherit from their fathers (only one child can inherit from his father) who were now homeless and landless⁸⁶ The police arrested 12 out of the 80 members of Kiryat Noga and the court ordered them to pay its debts, which had reached 2,000,000 shekels, to sell off the moshav's holdings or go to prison.⁸⁷

There was also a political reason for making these moshavim members of the moshav organization. As the Labour party (Mapai) was in complete control of this organization, it could place the residents of these villages under its hegemony and win most of their votes in the elections (as happened in the transit camps and the development towns). The Sephardi inhabitants were not allowed to choose the political affiliation of their moshav and were not allowed to move to a moshav of a different political colour.

In the previous section we have mentioned the 'lack of any economic base' in purely economic terms, but this also included a string of discriminatory steps against the Sephardi inhabitants of these moshavim which can be summed up as follows:

1. When the Zionist establishment sets up a new Ashkenazi settlement, it immediately provides it with enough land for agricultural production, and with the necessary means of production such as livestock and machinery, together with annual allowances for subsistence and development. The Sephardim, however, were trucked straight from the ships to arid regions where they were tipped out like gravel and ordered to pitch tents for themselves. They were employed in the most menial jobs, and received the lowest wages - 'emergency wages'. They did not even receive the small plots of stony land which was set aside for them, for their rich neighbours, the Ashkenazi settlers, snatched up all the land on the pretext that the Sephardim did not know how to farm. The Ashkenazim are still holding on to some of these plots.
2. Discrimination in the distribution of agricultural lands. Every family in the Ashkenazi settlements received between 80 and 150 dunums, but in the Sephardim moshavim, even though the families were much larger, each was allocated only 18 dunums.
3. The quantity of water for irrigation, financial credits, and means of production given to the Ashkenazi settlements were much greater than those set aside for the Sephardi moshavim. 54 percent of all monies invested in agriculture went to the Ashkenazi kibbutzim and 37 percent to the moshavim, in spite of the fact that the kibbutzim constitute just 12 percent of nation-wide agricultural settlement, whereas the moshavim constitute 66 percent. In 1960

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there were 229 kibbutzim and 366 moshavim. In addition to this discrimination in favour of the kibbutzim, there was a marked partiality in the ranks of the moshavim for the old Ashkenazi moshavim which were founded during the Mandate. A member of an old Ashkenazi moshav owned 2.3 cows and 300 chickens, whereas a member of a post-1948 moshav owned 1.2 cows and 50 chickens. An Ashkenazi moshav owned 2.5 tractors whereas a post-1948 moshav owned 0.7 tractors. In addition, Ashkenazi moshavim set up after 1948 were favoured at the expense of Sephardi moshavim.

4. Quality of the land. The lands which the Ashkenazi settlements received were much more fertile than those upon which the Sephardi moshavim were set up, which were, as we have previously stated, tracts of the Negev desert, or stony lands in Galilee and the Jerusalem area, which the Sephardim generally had to reclaim before they could farm.

5. The Ashkenazi settlements were built in the centre of the country, which helped them to market their agricultural production more easily and to increase their profits. The Sephardi moshavim were located in the remoter areas, thus making it more difficult to market their crops and reducing their profits, as well as raising the cost of communications and essential goods.

6. Government support. Even though the Ashkenazi settlements were prospering, the amount of government financial support to them was greater than that given to the inhabitants of the poorer Sephardi moshavim. Between 1948 and 1977 the moshavim were relatively well off due to financial support by the Labour government. However, when Likud came into power in 1977 it cut off all financial support and encouraged them to grow flowers promising the moshav residents that necessary loans would be provided and then failed to follow this through. In the meantime, the villages had taken out massive loans and were paying 300 percent interest, and thus their debts piled ever higher.⁸⁸ These debts are commonly greater than the whole moshav's income, which generally puts them in default and pushes the moshav into marketing its agricultural produce outside the Zionist marketing organization. These practices constitute one of the causes of the breakdown of the fundamentals of cooperativism.

7. The development of industry on the kibbutzim. Prior to 1948 the standard of living on the Ashkenazi kibbutzim was not at all high. However, after 1948 the government invested huge amounts in the kibbutzim to develop industries which would employ

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Sephardim and increase their income and standard of living. This did not occur on the moshavim. The government did not invest any funds to develop industry in the moshavim, nor did their narrow agricultural base furnish them with enough to support a Sephardi family. Moshav residents thus started to earn their living as hired workers outside the moshavim (61 percent of them work as hired labour for kibbutzim. In Kiryat Elyakim, for example, only 5 percent of the inhabitants work in agriculture, 30 percent are unemployed and 65 percent work as hired labour on Ashkenazi kibbutzim).

8. Ashkenazi kibbutzim and central government. As agricultural settlement was one of the most important Zionist aims from the very start, Ashkenazi settlers were the most important group in the world Zionist hierarchy and the local leadership, that is in the government, the Jewish Agency and the agricultural settlement organizations. Ha'aretz wrote on 5 August 1983 that the Labour Party government included four ministers from settler communities and that they, and their top civil servants, were therefore in a position to give economic, political and commercial advice to the settlements. They defended the interests of the settlements and kept them up to date on the government's future plans. This 'inside information' enabled the settlements to plan more successfully. The Sephardi moshavim were not so 'efficient' since they had no members at the top of the hierarchy, and no one to represent their interests to the various authorities. Moreover, economic planning for moshavim was in the hands of Ashkenazi 'leaders' from the neighbouring settlements who tailored it to their own interests. In addition, the Ashkenazi settlements, and particularly the neighbouring kibbutzim, have complete control over the moshavim (and the development towns) via the Labour Party, the Histadrut and the local councils. Ashkenazi settlers, members of the rich pre-1948 moshavim, such as Nahalal (Moshe Dayan's home), also control the Organization of Moshavim, which in turn controls the Sephardi moshavim.⁸⁹ Whereas kibbutz children can stay with their families on the kibbutzim, the lack of any means of earning a livelihood on the moshavim forces the children to leave, splitting up families.

Against this background one can understand why some Sephardim wrote the following slogan on the walls of the agricultural union building in Tel Aviv: 'The kibbutzim suck the blood of the moshavim. Long live the Sephardi revolution!' It was signed by 'Ma'atz',⁹⁰ which was the most violent of the secret

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organizations founded by Sephardim. It carried out many acts of arson (see chapter ten).

An aide to the director of settlement, Aryeh Eliav, MP, said of the granting of the fertile lands to the Ashkenazi settlements, that 'this was not the result of an Ashkenazi plot... or of bad intentions. It was just that the leaders of the settlement movement took those who were around them, and who had a similar mentality, background and outlook on life. They had nothing in common with the others. They also took into consideration that the settlers would vote for the Labour Party.'⁹¹ Yosef Weitz of the Jewish National Fund said 'the hill areas could be reclaimed and settled with the "simple" Jews,' noting also that 'these stony lands are no good for Ashkenazi kibbutzim.'⁹²

One of the obstacles of this policy was the unsuitability of agricultural work for Sephardi Jews, since in their countries of origin they had followed urban professions. The establishment imposed agricultural work on more than 70 percent of the Yemenites, and between 1948-1953 they were crammed into 57 cooperative villages of which only 39 survived. Often these villages were called 'work villages', i.e., labour camps, and the inhabitants worked at clearing stony land. A journalist wrote, 'the Yemenites work at land-clearing and planting tomatoes, for the kibbutz member has more useful work to do.' Another newspaper reported, 'the new immigrants from the Yemen work [on the kibbutz] even though they get Arab and not Jewish wages.'⁹³

The Yemenite member of the Knesset, Zekharia Gluska, protested about a string of discriminatory acts in the field of housing, religious services and support for families with many children. Benefits were only paid for up to three children and one wife. The Torah does not forbid polygamy, and Sephardi Rabbis did not recognise the ban issued by the Ashkenazi rabbis in this regard.⁹⁴ One of the reports sent to the Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, stated that most of the residents in twenty-eight cooperative villages were unemployed and that there was widespread hunger. The report, written by Ami Assaf of the Agricultural Settlement Organization, continued that people could not even afford the basic subsidized food rations. Neither could they afford to buy the clothing which was sold to them for almost nothing. The writer expressed his fear that acts of despair might be committed by these people when they see hunger on the faces of their children.⁹⁵

Most of these villages were not tied into the electricity grid, or a water or sewage system. Their shacks were far from a surfaced

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road. They had marketing problems - Tnuva, a Histadrut company, bought their produce at a very meagre price. They suffered a lack of health and education services.⁹⁶ Aryeh Eliav, an aide to Levi Eshkol who was head of the Department of Settlement, stated that 'these immigrants too refused to get out of the trucks. They had to be tipped out.'⁹⁷

In 1953 Ben Gurion commissioned Zalman Aran, Yisrael Yesha'yahu and Kadish Luz to study the situation in the Yemenite villages. In their report they wrote that poverty and neglect had reached the point of disintegration due to a lack of any help from the authorities. There was a lack of work since the office of settlement, which was part of the Jewish Agency, thought this was one of the duties of the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Labour believed the contrary. Houses developed cracks within two years and the agricultural 'experts' were incompetent. Residents were too poor to pay taxes and so health services were cut off. The villages were devoid of any educational activity. Most young people had departed leaving only the old behind. The residents had to work by day, and be watchmen by night, which left them exhausted.⁹⁸ In 1963 the Ministry of Social Affairs described these Yemenites as 'retarded and primitive, completely powerless'. Ashkenazi 'experts' pressured the Yemenites into changing their customs, then they destroyed the authority of the father in the family. Most of the 'experts' were party emissaries.⁹⁹ When I visited the Yemenites in Rosh Haayin during the fifties, I found that tuberculosis was rampant.

A few years later the authorities forced the mountain villages to raise chickens, even though this work only took up two hours a day. When productivity rose, they were forced to decrease it. This work, however, only created half of the necessary family income and most of the residents of these villages had to continue as hired labourers which covered 60 percent of their living expenses. The villages in the hill areas near Jerusalem have ceased to be productive at all and became just residential areas which empty first thing in the morning as the inhabitants rush off to earn a living elsewhere.¹⁰⁰

In the area of Lakhish in the south, thirteen of the fourteen cooperative villages have lost their cooperative base. The head of the local council described this breakdown, 'They stuffed us into an Ashkenazi frame.' Pinhas Moscow, regional deputy chairman of the Jewish Agency, commented that most of the cooperative villages would disintegrate into residential villages with nothing to do with farming. He added that in the region between Elat and

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Qastina there were 76 cooperative villages (with 29,000 residents). 48 percent of them live from farming, 19 percent earn most of their livelihood outside the villages, but they work part-time in agriculture. 21 percent work outside their villages, and 12 percent live off welfare payments.¹⁰¹

We shall describe the conditions in some of these moshavim using as a basis the Zionist press, and particularly the independent newspaper Ha'aretz. (See Appendix IV.)

THE BLACK BELT: URBAN SLUMS

These slum areas started to arise towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the Ashkenazi Zionist establishment started channelling all Jewish resources and contributions into the Zionist plan of setting up Ashkenazi settlements, the Zionist administration, secret military preparations and the secret services. Accordingly they ignored the interests of Sephardi communities who lived in large towns. Poverty spread through the neighbourhoods of the Sephardi Jews.¹⁰²

After the foundation of the state of Israel, hundreds of thousands of Sephardim were brought to Israel, crammed into immigration camps, transit camps, development towns and moshavim. But because of the harsh conditions described in this chapter, many thousands fled to the poor districts of the towns in search of a living. In this manner the slums spread out, and poverty deepened. When Menahem Begin came to power in 1977 and started his programme of reviving these areas, there were 169 of them including whole development towns.

The only basic economic difference between the development towns and the slum areas is geographic. The development towns lie in the country and supply the Ashkenazi settlements with cheap labour whereas the slum areas form a belt around the large towns and supply Ashkenazi capital with cheap labour. They also provide servants for Ashkenazi women. It must be mentioned that these servants and their daughters face the worst form of oppression. They are deprived of education, and usually have none of the social guarantees which are granted to union workers. The following are the most important problems in the slum areas: 1. Housing. There is abysmal overcrowding. Children have grown up and married, but they cannot afford to buy their own dwelling, and thus most of them stay at home with their parents and in turn

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their children are born there. Hence, one can find three generations living in the same small flat. The municipalities run by Ashkenazim are trying to gentrify these slum districts by razing them and building shopping centres and expensive apartment blocks. Thus the residents are not granted planning permission to enlarge their homes. Quite often Sephardi Jews build an extra room without planning permission, but the police then come along and knock them down - as happens in the Palestinian villages. This has caused bloody clashes between the Sephardim and the police, but Zionist influence over the Western news media has meant that this is rarely reported.

2. Education. There is a deep gulf between schools in the slum districts (generally Sephardi) and Ashkenazi schools. This can be seen in the quality of the buildings, the standard of education, the aptitude of the teachers, educational equipment such as laboratories and books, and also the number of children per class. Owing to these awful conditions there are problems of discipline. In order to conceal this situation, the government decided to send a number of Sephardi pupils to Ashkenazi schools in the richer areas and named them 'Comprehensive Schools'. However the two groups do not mix, since the Sephardi pupils are segregated in lower streams. The administration, the teachers and the Ashkenazi pupils all patronize 'retarded Sephardim'. At the end of the day the Sephardi pupils are bused back to their slum neighbourhoods whereas the Ashkenazi pupils stay on to take part in extra curricula activities. Sephardi pupils are also prevented from participating in school parties in the evenings. Some of these ostracized pupils try to challenge the ban and gate-crash, and this has resulted in violent clashes (see chapter seven).

3. Unemployment and the disaffection of youth. Unemployment is one of the biggest causes of poverty. In Kiryat Ata, for example, eight people who were laid off committed suicide.¹⁰³ Those with work are very badly paid, since they are generally in unskilled jobs. If we add the size of the family, which is usually double that of an Ashkenazi family or greater, the housing conditions, the lack of qualifications as a result of costly yet bad education, the difference between the standards of living of the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim are apparent. Ben Gurion's government encouraged population growth and gave a prize of 50 Israeli pounds to a mother who bore ten or more children. Poor women fell into the trap of providing the government with more children to be workers and soldiers.

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There are many thousands of young people who neither work nor study and who also refuse to do military service. There are whole 'no-go' areas where the military authorities find it impossible to impose conscription. They know that if they were to try, bloody clashes would sully the reputation of the army which 'is not an offensive army'. Those who pay attention to this law of conscription are the small minority who expose themselves to the derision of their friends. The most common question posed to them is 'Why should you serve the state? What has the state done for you?' The army has started to overlook these fugitives and the state has enacted laws curtailing the rights of those who do not fulfil army service which means ostensibly Muslims, Christians and Sephardim who refuse to go into the army. Members of the Ashkenazi employer class have started to treat these fugitives as untouchables and refuse to employ them. This boycott has exacerbated the situation and there have been popular uprisings to protest against it. These groups have also cooperated with the Palestinians (see chapter ten) on the basis of a common fate and culture.

Poverty and ignorance have fostered alienation, delinquency, crime, drug abuse and prostitution amongst young people, these phenomena were unheard of in Jewish society in the Arab world.

4. Old Age: Dr Yuli Nudelman of the Rambam Hospital in Haifa stated that people in homes for the elderly in Israel look as if they came out of Nazi concentration camps at the end of the Second World War.¹⁰⁴ By 1986 there were 430,000 aged people (out of a Jewish population of 3.5 million). Over half of them had no pension and were living below the poverty level. 12,600 were in special establishments and most of the remainder were living without care in lamentable conditions.¹⁰⁵ Since it considers those who were brought up in Arab countries 'the desert generation', Israel is just waiting for them to die off.

5. Women and children in the Black Belt. A majority of the women and girls in Sephardi society have been transformed into a great army of under-paid household servants for Ashkenazi women whose relative emancipation is built on the exploitation of an ethnically differentiated underclass. Generally they stand on street corners waiting to be looked over and hired. Most of the pupils who leave primary school are girls, who do so in order to help their families. There is also a substantial number of women and girls who work in factories and in the fields as cheap seasonal labour.

Owing to poverty and ignorance as well as the destruction of the traditional family, a lamentable number of women have fallen

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into prostitution. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published a study on prostitution¹⁰⁶ which stated that 97 percent of prostitutes are of Sephardi origin. Another study published by Dinah Gil¹⁰⁷ stated that unmarried mothers suffer from undernourishment and that 50 percent of them are of Moroccan origin. Most of the remainder are of various Sephardi origins. This phenomenon was never a part of Jewish life in the Arab world, but is a product of Israel. The governmental Bureau of Social Affairs reported¹⁰⁸ that 38 percent of widows live below the poverty line. 43 percent of them work as maids and 25 percent have had no schooling whatsoever. Professor Shevah Wise confirmed¹⁰⁹ that the position of women in Israel is much worse than that of women in the West. There are 60,000 battered wives - and the police generally do not intervene in domestic matters. Due to the cut-backs in social services, women's' shelters have been closed down. Women's' wages are 60 percent of men's', but in agriculture this goes down to 50 percent. Israel has 352 job categories, but 50 percent of women work in only 20 of these categories. Only 6 percent of higher civil servants are women while the proportion of women in local government has gone down from 4 percent in 1950 to 2 percent in 1983.

These figures include all ethnic groups and therefore may mislead the reader who does not live in Israel, for the deep gulf is not between Ashkenazi and Western women, but between Eastern (Jewish, Muslim and Christian) woman and western women. We must point out that Sephardi women represent 70 percent of all Jewish women in Israel, and we must add the Palestinian women, who represent 17 percent of all women in the country. In spite of the afore-mentioned facts, Zionist propaganda abroad still tells how liberated Israeli women are. The truth is that Sephardi women were better off and had more dignity in the Arab world.

See Appendix V.

As we have shown, the Zionist establishment succeeded in absorbing hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the Middle East and transforming them into a cheap work force. This success can be shown more clearly by reference to a study written by Nuzha Katzav about the fate of Iraqi Jews, for example, in Israel.¹¹⁰ Even though this community fought to preserve its culture and skills more heroically than any other community which immigrated to Israel from the Middle East, it was doomed to failure. The following breaks down the community into the different vocations followed by Iraqi Jews prior to their departure from Iraq in 1950/51:

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16 percent in the administration and office work
6 percent in the professions and engineering
27 percent in domestic trade; they also controlled external trade and a large part of the banking system.
51 percent craftsmen, goldsmiths, carpenters, etc.

After ten years under Zionist oppression, the break-down was as follows: 28 percent worked in trade, the bureaucracy and the liberal professions (generally with lower ranks than the Ashkenazim) and 72 percent had become labourers.

This shows that the proportion of merchants went down from 27 percent to 7 percent (as well as occupying a qualitatively lower status, which was more significant than the percentages). White collar workers fell from approximately 50 percent to 28 percent. Craftsmen and petty shopkeepers lost their economic independence and became hired workers, subject to unemployment and economic exploitation. There had been 490 doctors, 224 engineers and 716 teachers (these figures probably do not include those Jews who stayed on in Iraq and who later emigrated to the West). Their children and grandchildren who were born and educated in Israel did not do nearly so well. What happened to the children of these doctors, writers, engineers, lawyers, teachers and poets? That is a well-known 'security' secret. The transit camps, the development towns, the moshavim and the slum neighbourhoods did not produce what Baghdad and its Jewish community had produced. Conditions in Israel produced unskilled workers, juvenile delinquents, drug users and prostitutes inter alia. The very few who have reached the apex of the military and political hierarchy mouth the words of their Ashkenazi masters who appoint them. The fate of the Yemenites and the Moroccans and other North Africans was much, much worse, and they constitute a majority of the Sephardim in Israel. They generally faced much harsher discrimination than that directed against the Iraqis who had a more advanced political awareness and who had participated in Iraqi and Arab liberation movements before Nuri Said sold them to Ben Gurion.

NOTES

- 1 Minutes of the Zionist Executive, 12 August, 1949.
- 2 Central Zionist Archives, S 41/2471 - Yosephthal to Locker, June 9 1949.
- 3 Knesset Minutes, 7 June, 1949.
- 4 Knesset Minutes, 10 August, 1949.
- 5 Ibid.

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- 6 Minutes of the Zionist Executive, 29 March, 1949.
- 7 State Archives, Prime Minister's Office, Section 333/0/43.
- 8 Absorption, S41/2471.
- 9 4 September, 1949.
- 10 Knesset Minutes, 21 November, 1949.
- 11 Labour Party Archives, 22 April 1949, 24/49, Second Series.
- 12 Office of the Prime Minister, State Archives, Immigrant Housing, 7135/5559 C.
- 13 Gruber, 12 August, 1949, State Archives, Office of the Prime Minister, Refugee Camps, 5588 C.
- 14 Zionist Executive Council, 12 October 1948, 21 March 1949 and 2 January 1950.
- 15 Central Zionist Archives, Middle Eastern Jews, S20/538
- 16 Yitzhak Koren, 56.
- 17 State Archives, 1/160.
- 18 Zionist Executive Council, 18 December 1949.
- 19 2 October 1949, Files of the Mosad of Immigration and Army Archives, 14/372.
- 20 Knesset Minutes, 6 March 1950.
- 21 Ha'aretz, 18 December 1950.
- 22 State Archives, Prime Minister's Office, Immigrant Camps 5558C: 11 April 1950, 18 April 1950 and 8 May 1950; see also Ma'ariv of 1 April 1966.
- 23 March 1968, State Archives, 1/968/1.
- 24 Zu Haderekh, 9 July 1986.
- 25 Segev (Hebrew, pp 171-174). Arabic translation, pp 184-188.
- 26 Minutes of the Zionist Executive Council, 2 January 1950.
- 27 Dunum = approximately 900 square metres.
- 28 Samy Mikhael, Shavim ve-shauim yoter, 21-22.
- 29 Ibid, 10.
- 30 P. 25.
- 31 P. 30.
- 32 Pp. 52-53.
- 33 Pp. 54 and 55.
- 34 P. 78.
- 35 That is, Sephardim. Ironically, Ashkenazi Jews in Israel tend to describe all the peoples to the south of Russia proper as 'blacks' or 'shvartses'.
- 36 P. 81.
- 37 P. 94.
- 38 P. 112.
- 39 P. 121.
- 40 P. 127.
- 41 P. 216.
- 42 A derogatory name for Sephardim.
- 43 Shevet va'am, 1958, 1954.
- 44 Shevet va'am, 1954.
- 45 Ibid, 30-32.
- 46 P. 6.
- 47 Ha'aretz, 19 December 1980.
- 48 Cf the Palestinian refugees. See Ha'aretz, 23 May 1980, and Zu Haderekh, 13 February 1980 and 8 September 1980.
- 49 See chapter ten.
- 50 Swirski and Bernstein, Mahbarot lemehkar ulevikoret. No. 4.
- 51 Riv'on le-kalkala, September 1978.
- 52 I.e. pre-1967 Israel.
- 53 'Third Israel' is the name the Ashkenazi settlers give to these poor towns.
- 54 Albaz, Les Temps Modernes.
- 55 Swirski and Shushan, 1985.
- 56 For example, in 1984 it was 26.8 percent, in 1983 it was 24 percent.
- 57 Secretary of the Workers' Council in the town. Zu Haderekh, July 9 1986.

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- 58 Viz. the amount of money spent per capita on the Ashkenazim, or the projects which employ them, compared to the amount spent per capita on Sephardim in the development towns or cooperative villages, or the Palestinian Arab villages.
- 59 Source: Official Census, Zu Haderekh, 16 July 1986, 6.
- 60 Source: Official Census, Zu Haderekh, 9 July 1986.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Zu Haderekh, 4 April 1984.
- 63 Ha'aretz, 7 March 1980.
- 64 Ha'aretz, 22 January 1982.
- 65 The Times, 20 November 1980.
- 66 Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry.
- 67 Source: Ministry of Housing.
- 68 Israel Land Administration.
- 69 Income Tax Bureau.
- 70 Ha'aretz, 8 January 1982
- 71 New Outlook, July-August (Special issue on Sephardim), 36.
- 72 Zu Haderekh, 14 November 1984 and 24 October 1984.
- 73 Swirski and Shushan, 1985.
- 74 Ha'aretz, 12 March 1982.
- 75 Ha'aretz, 23 February 1979.
- 76 Ha'aretz, 16 May 1980.
- 77 Zu Haderekh, 22 July 1981, and Ha'aretz 5 July 1981.
- 88 Ha'aretz, 31 July 1981.
- 79 Ha'aretz, 18 September 1981.
- 80 Amnon Shamush is the brother of Yitzhak Shamush, a Syrian Jew and lecturer of Modern Arabic literature at the Hebrew University, under whom I studied. I witnessed the hardships he underwent and which caused his death from a heart-attack. Even though he had close connections with the ruling establishment, Dr Shamush' sympathies lay with the Palestinian refugees, and he expected them to come marching back over the borders to challenge the Israeli military. He was also fiercely opposed to anti-Sephardi racial discrimination.
- 81 Ha'aretz, 18 September 1981.
- 82 See Ha'aretz of 3 April 1981, 5 July 1981, 24 July 1981, 23 February 1979, 28 September 1981 and 29 October 1982.
- 83 Ha'aretz, 29 August 1986.
- 84 Ha'aretz, 5 August 1983.
- 85 Ha'aretz, 5 July 1985.
- 86 Zu Haderekh, 20 August 1986.
- 87 Ha'aretz, 5 August 1983.
- 88 Ha'aretz, 5 August 1983.
- 89 Mahbarot lemehkar ulevikoret, No. 4.
- 90 An acronym for the Hebrew words 'Committee of Army Deserters'.
- 91 Interview on 20 May 1983, quoted in Segev, 182 and 183, Arabic translation.
- 92 His Diary, 7 July 1950, quoted by Segev, 183, Arabic translation.
- 93 Ha'aretz, 13 October 1950. Letter from the Yemenite Organisation about their exploitation, and letter from the same organisation to the work bureaus on May 8 1950. State Archives. Prime Minister's office. Immigrant Camps, 5558/C.
- 94 Knesset minutes, 18 July 1949, 27 April 1949, 16 November 1949 and 5 September 1949.
- 95 State Archives, Prime Minister's Office, Immigrants' Absorption in Agriculture, 23 January 1951. 7133/5559/C.
- 96 Segev, 135, Hebrew text.
- 97 Ibid, 134.
- 98 State Archives. Prime Minister's Office. 5581/224/9012.
- 99 Central Committee of Mapai, 4 January 1949, Labour Party Archives.
- 100 Ha'aretz, 29 August 1986.

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- 101 Ha'aretz, 22 August 1986.
- 102 See chapters two and three.
- 103 Zu Haderekh, 25 June 1987.
- 104 Ha'aretz, 1 March 1980.
- 105 Findings of the American Joint Distribution Committee -Knesset Minutes, June 1987.
- 106 Ha'aretz, 18 September 1981.
- 107 Ha'aretz, 30 January 1981.
- 108 Ha'aretz, 20 March 1980.
- 109 Zu Haderekh, 24 August 1983.
- 110 Shevet va'am, 1978.

CHAPTER SIX

The Problem Of Representation

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

In spite of the fact that they constitute an overwhelming majority of the Jewish population, Sephardim are in fact under-represented in the state's institutions. This stems from three factors:

1. the method of party elections.
2. funding of the Ashkenazi parties by the Zionist establishment and the state (i.e. by taxation on the general public, including the Palestinians).
3. suppression of any political organization which fights for Sephardi interests. All national and international Sephardi organizations have been enfeebled and taken over, and their independence destroyed by a series of dubious means.

Even the tiny minority of Sephardim who have entered parliament and assumed posts in the government, the Histadrut or the army, are not representative. They stand for selfish and personal interests, and particularly for those stipulated by the Ashkenazi Zionist parties which nominate them. (This also applies to the Palestinian 'minority' in the state of Israel, particularly those on the Arab electoral lists linked to the Zionist parties.)

Thus the only form of intercommunal participation that Israel has created in its system of government and its economy is that of the division of labour between the Ashkenazi employer and ruler and the Sephardi (and Palestinian) worker.

We saw in chapter three how the British helped the Zionist establishment to gain control over the Jews of Palestine, whether

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they were Ashkenazi settlers, native Jews or Middle Eastern Jews who had recently immigrated to Palestine. The only democratic step which the British Mandate supported at the beginning was the system of elections to a Jewish Assembly which had been known from Roman times as 'Choria', and under which Jewish deputies were to be elected proportionately from both communities. Sephardim were thus allotted 24.7 percent of the seats.

In 1945 the Zionist establishment decided to substitute the party proportional method. Under this, the voters cannot elect a candidate whose character, qualifications and political tendencies are known to them - but only vote for a party. Since all the political parties were, and still are, Ashkenazi and funded by the Zionist establishment, they succeeded in having their leaders elected as deputies, proportionate to their share of the vote. Leaderships tried to cover up discrimination by having a tiny number of their sympathisers in the Sephardi community appointed as deputies. Generally they would choose people who had no local or national popular base so that they could be removed from office when they showed signs of independence (lately the right-wing Herut has helped some Sephardi party-members to rise in the party on account of their popular local support, which has increased Sephardi power in the party: and here we refer to the group of David Levi, the Moroccan). However, under this electoral system the MP has no local constituency, no 'surgery', no correspondence with the voters. In theory all the country is 'one constituency' and voters can write to any MP. In practice it is a waste of time. Not one of my letters has ever been acknowledged by an MP.

The Sephardim realised that this ruse was intended to reduce their numbers in the 'council of deputies' and they therefore opposed it. They suggested constituency elections as in Britain so that the voters could elect the candidate of their choice directly, to represent their interests and those of the slum districts. It is no wonder that the Ashkenazi Zionist leadership rejected that proposal and made party elections the rule. The elections were boycotted by Sephardim, as they were by the Zionist right for other reasons, and only 30 percent of the electorate voted. The British government almost declared the elections invalid, but the Zionist right decided to return to the Council of Deputies and the National Committee after it was given a large number of seats and high positions.

This boycott turned out badly for Sephardi Jews in the state of Israel, for these newly elected national bodies which only represented 30 percent of the Jews of Palestine, decided to establish

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the state of Israel in 1948 claiming to act on behalf of all the Jews of Palestine. Ben Gurion cynically observed, 'We must appoint one Sephardi minister and one woman,' to give the appearance of democracy. Accordingly the cabinet of Ben Gurion consisted of 13 ministers, all Ashkenazi except for Bekhor Shitrit, the Minister of Police. The State Council (quasi-parliament) was made up of 37 members, all of whom were Ashkenazim, except for Bekhor Shitrit, a member of the ruling Mapai (Labour) party.

Eliahu Eliachar, the Sephardi leader, met the Foreign Minister, Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), to discuss the situation of Sephardim in the Israeli government. Eliachar wrote of the meeting that 'Shertok is definitely not a friend of ours. He does not understand and nor does he try to understand our views. Moreover, since he holds the Sephardi members of his party in contempt, he rejects any solution we have reached with the leaders of his party about narrowing the economic, educational and political gap between Sephardim and Ashkenazim.'¹ The Sephardi leadership, headed by Eliachar, made desperate attempts to broaden its representation in the Cabinet and State Council, but to no avail.

Zalman Aran (Mapai-Labour) believed that the interests of the state demanded an increase in Sephardi representation in the cabinet, but his view was not accepted by the rest of the party leadership. A Mapai official said, 'If we have a Sephardi minister in the government, that will encourage this sectarian gang for decades to come. We do not need that at all.'² Aran warned that Sephardim would vote for Herat to avenge themselves on the ruling Mapai party and the mistakes it committed against their rights. Indeed, from 1949 Sephardi Jews in the suburbs of Tel Aviv started voting for the right-wing Herut party.³

In addition to positions in the cabinet and the parliament, civil service positions, particularly those with great executive power in the upper ranks, were awarded to Ashkenazi settlers. This meant the removal of all the Palestinian and Sephardi civil servants who had decent positions during the British Mandate. Even judges are appointed on a party basis, which is why a Sephardi judge was not appointed to the high court.

The sectarian Ashkenazi system thus had only token representation for Sephardim, who at that time represented 30 percent of the Jewish population of the country (they are now 70 percent of the Jewish population). In the Parliamentary Defence Committee there was only one Sephardi Jew out of 13 members. In the Administrative Council of West Jerusalem which consists of

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27 members, there were two Sephardim even though they were in the majority in the city. After a fierce dispute this number was increased to three. The government has not appointed a single Sephardi to the Foreign Affairs Committee notwithstanding that the aim of this committee is to heal political relations between Israel and the Arab world. The Zionist establishment has always tried to keep Sephardim out of Arab affairs, since they would endeavour to find a peaceful solution to the dispute with the Palestinians and have opposed the imperious stance taken by Ashkenazi settlers toward Palestinians (see chapter ten).

In 1949 the government held general elections for the founding of the first parliament, using the afore-mentioned party system. The Council of the Sephardi Community had to plunge into the elections campaign even though it was not a party, had no party workers or any of the funding which was supplied to the others by the world Zionist establishment. Its electoral list comprised the Sephardi Committee in Jerusalem under Eliahu Eliachar, and the Sephardi Committee in Tel Aviv under Bekhor Shitrit who cooperated with Mapai and was Minister of Police and Minorities (i.e. the Palestinians who had remained in Israel). This list won only four seats and Mapai appointed two other Sephardi deputies, whereas the Herut party appointed another two deputies and the Yemenite list won one seat. Thus the Sephardim got 9 seats out of a total of 120, that is 7.5 percent when they constituted more than 35 percent of the Jewish population. If we bear in mind that most of these Sephardi deputies did not represent the Sephardim but their Ashkenazi masters, we can conclude that the native Jews were almost completely devoid of parliamentary representation. The Sephardi deputies in the first parliament were as follows: Sephardi List: Eliahu Eliachar, Bekhor Shitrit, Avraham Al-Maliah, Moshe Ben Ammi Yemenite List: Zekharia Gluska Mapai: Eliahu Hacarmeli-lulu, Avraham Tabib Herut: Avraham Rakanti, Hayyim Magori-Cohen

Discrimination was not restricted to parliament alone, as we have mentioned, but extended to all government and state institutions, religious establishments, Zionist settler establishments, central and local government offices, the Trade Unions and the judiciary.

At the opening session of the Knesset on 9 March 1949, Eliachar warned of the danger of poverty, de-education, disaffection, appalling living and sanitary conditions and delinquency and vowed

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that his list would fight for Jewish-Arab reconciliation. Forty years later Eliachar stated that not only had these matters not been treated appropriately but they had worsened.⁴

At the beginning of the fifties, the Ashkenazi parties tried so hard to break up the Sephardi electoral list by a policy of 'divide and rule' that the Sephardim later attached themselves to the General Zionist list which represented the Ashkenazi conservatives. Thus they managed to cleave the Sephardi leadership from the poor Sephardi masses in the camps who were in the hands of Mapai which controlled their every move. Thus the number of seats which the Sephardi list won in the second Knesset went down to just two. In the parliamentary elections of 1954, the Sephardi list failed altogether and the Ashkenazi parties appointed eleven of their own nominees from the Sephardi community. In the fourth parliament in 1959, the Ashkenazi parties appointed fourteen of their own 'supporters' from within the Sephardi community as deputies. Their party affiliations were as follows:

Mapai: eight deputies as opposed to thirty-nine Ashkenazi deputies.

Mapam: one deputy Herut: two deputies Ahdut Ha'avodah: one deputy

Religious parties: one deputy General Zionists (= Conservative): one

deputy Progressives (liberals): none

Agudat Yisrael (non-Zionist religious party): none Communist: none

As we have previously stated, there were in total 14 out of 120 deputies in the Knesset, and we must point out that the proportion of Sephardim had increased as a result of immigration to 65 percent of the total Jewish population. All the Sephardi lists in this election failed.⁵

In this manner the Ashkenazi Zionist establishment, which deemed itself 'the only democracy in the Middle East' managed to efface all Sephardi endeavours to achieve independent democratic parliamentary representation and to defend their own interests as a Middle Eastern community with chronic economic problems. In a letter to Bernstein, the Chairman of the General Zionists, Eliachar described the difficulties of the struggle against discrimination. 'Even though discrimination does not exist de jure, it exists de facto, and constitutes the most dangerous internal problem for the people

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and the state.⁶ Eliachar concluded that Sephardim were incapable of fighting the apparatus of the Ashkenazi parties which controlled all financial resources, and subsequently accused the Zionist tools within his community of selfishness.⁷

WHO FINANCES THE ZIONIST PARTIES?

Owing to their poverty Sephardim could not fund a political party able to compete with those of the Ashkenazim which receive financial support not only from world Zionism, but from the state of Israel. At the expense of the taxpayers, the government started to grant the parties annual sums proportionate to their number of deputies in the Knesset. The large parties therefore receive large amounts of financial support, which helps them to beat the smaller parties or the new parties which receive no grants. In July 1969 the Knesset decided to pay the sum of I£120,000 to each deputy to cover his party's election campaign to the seventh Knesset.

In the elections to the ninth Knesset in May 1977 every MP received I£580,300, making a total of I£69,636,000. Since 1973 the government has paid the parties in the Knesset additional sums for party expenses and to cover their activities. By 17 September 1978 each MP was receiving almost I£37,995 per month.⁸

In 1983 the government decided to pay the expenses of the Ashkenazi parties in the local election campaign as well. Since Sephardim do not have any representative parties in parliament or in the local authorities, they did not receive any financial support to take part in the campaign. Indeed, along with their Palestinian brethren, they paid for most of the expenses of the Ashkenazi parties through government taxation. It is a case of the hanged-man paying for his own rope.

Usually political parties in other countries are funded by their own members and supporters and their costs are not imposed upon the general public through government taxation. In its issue of 29 July 1983 Ha'aretz estimated that the amount of government support given to the parties to cover their local election expenses was almost £11,500,000 sterling.

CONTAINMENT OF THE WORLD SEPHARDI ORGANIZATION

Before we set out the data on racial discrimination in the rest of the state apparatus, the Histadrut and the international Zionist establishment, we ought to view the way the World Sephardi Organization has been contained by world Zionism.

Sephardim in Palestine sought help from their brethren who had emigrated to the West, and they founded the 'World Council of Sephardim'. In 1960 this Council consisted of 30 members, of whom 10 were from Israel and represented the Israeli administration of the organization. The leadership of the council consisted of three members: the administrative chief in London, Mr Denzil Sabbagh Montefiore, the administrative head in New York, Dr Shim'on Nissim, and the administrative head in Israel, the Minister of Police and Minorities, Bekhor Shitrit and his deputy Eliahu Eliachar.

Members of the council in Israel represent the Ashkenazi parties as follows:

Mapai: Shitrit, Avraham Khalfon, Shlomo Hillel, Ya'acov Nitzani

Mapam: Avraham 'Abbas

General Zionists: Eliahu Eliachar, David Sitton, Yitzhak Ganon,

Binyamin Sasson Herut: B. Ardit⁹

On 4 November 1951 the Sephardi World Conference was convened in Paris. The Zionist establishment with the help of its placemen in the Sephardi community tried to prevent it taking place, but they failed. The delegation from Palestine was headed by Eliahu Eliachar, Rabbi Uzziel and Bekhor Shitrit. Agents of the Zionist establishment tried to foment discord in the sessions of the conference by claiming that there was no 'Sephardi problem' in Israel, that there was no discrimination and that Eliachar and his associates were trying to stir up sectarianism amongst the ranks of 'a united people'. They opposed the setting up of any social or political organization to defend the rights of Sephardim. They succeeded in preventing the passing of a motion criticising racial discrimination in Israel, and then managed to transform the conference into an instrument of world Zionism and the state of Israel. The following are the resolutions of the conference.

1. Regardless of their ethnic origin, Jews form one nation.
2. It is a duty to help Israel carry out its lofty aims.
3. Jewish culture is to be fostered within the-various communities.

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4. There is to be close cooperation with Jewish organizations throughout the world.
5. A World Sephardi Organization is to be founded, provided it is not political.
6. The administration of the World Organization in Israel is to consist of 50 percent Histadrut representatives and 50 percent Sephardim from the Ashkenazi parties which are not in the Histadrut, and representatives of the committees of the various 'Sephardi' communities, - which meant total domination by the Zionist establishment.

After great effort this establishment agreed to hand over 25 percent of Sephardi donations from Britain to the World Sephardi Organization. The Zionist establishment opposed the setting up of a special fund to accept Sephardi donations from all over the world. The afore-mentioned 25 percent was not worth the paper it was written on. Eliahu Lulu-hakarmeli, who had the post of Head of the Bureau of Sephardim in the Histadrut and was a representative of Mapai, was known to be acting as a hireling during the conference, along with a number of other Histadrut workers.

There were also Ashkenazi participants at the conference, who were representatives of the state, the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut. Bekhor Shitrit, a Mapai representative, wrote that 'one of the problems which worried the delegations to the Conference was the rumour about anti-Sephardi discrimination in Israel, but delegates from outside Israel were greatly relieved when this was proved to be untrue.' On the evening of the opening of the conference, Shitrit called upon the Sephardi masses: 'uproot from your hearts any belief in or thought of intentional and malicious discrimination in the state of Israel.'¹⁰

At the third World Jewish Conference which was held in Geneva in 1953, Eliahu Eliachar tried to convene a special meeting for Sephardim to discuss their affairs. Asher Ben Roy, the head of the World Sephardi Organization, came from London and demanded an end to the meeting. He requested that discussion of Sephardi affairs take place in Israel and not abroad. It was clear who stood behind this intervention since the officials of the World Sephardi Organization in London had been appointed by the World Zionist Organization and received their wages from it. One of their duties was to send two thirds of the funds they received from the Jewish Agency to Jerusalem to cover the expenses of the Sephardi Organization inside Israel. However they did not send a penny.

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In May 1954 the Sephardi World Conference was convened in Jerusalem. Representatives from most of the Jewish communities in the world and Israel took part. The delegations were split into two groups; one defended the rights of Sephardim in Israel against Zionist racial discrimination and another defended discrimination, that is, those who would not acknowledge its existence. These latter accused the first group of sectarianism. A Sephardi delegation met representatives of the Jewish Agency, which controlled Jewish contributions from throughout the world, and discussed the question of funding for the World Sephardi Congress. The two parties agreed as follows:

1. all Sephardi communities throughout the world will pay 25 percent of their donations to the World Sephardi Organization and the Zionist Organization will receive the remainder of the contributions.
2. the World Sephardi Organization must get the approval of the Jewish Agency for any special operations which require its participation, both in Israel and abroad.
3. the centre of the World Sephardi Organization will remain in London (and not in Israel, where the poor Sephardim live), and the Ashkenazi secretary would also keep his position in the administration of the Sephardi community in London and the administration of the World Sephardi Organization.

During this conference, all the political material and leaflets which the Sephardim had had printed, and which they had intended to distribute to the media and the conference delegations, disappeared. A few years later, Charles Khalfon, one of the members of the conference, admitted in a letter to Eliahu Eliachar that he had arranged the disappearance of these materials and also that his party, Mapai, had ordered him to do so.¹¹ Moshe Shertok, the former Israel Foreign Minister and Prime Minister wrote in his diary¹² that 'I am greatly relieved by the results of the conference and by the failure of Eliahu Eliachar's intrigues.'¹³ Retshavi in Hapo'el Hatsa'ir commented on this that 'the Zionist establishment abroad and inside Israel was prepared to foil any constructive or practical steps taken by the Sephardi community, and to crush any independent action undertaken by any non-Ashkenazi community for its members.'¹⁴

THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS 1959

In 1959 the leadership of the Fourth World Jewish Congress, which was being convened in Stockholm, decided to discuss the problem of Sephardim in Israel in the aftermath of the bloody clashes with the police in Wadi al-Salib in Haifa. It did not, however, allow any Sephardi participation in the conference, which caused Eliahu Eliachar and his comrades in the World Sephardi Organization in Israel to protest in a letter published by Ha'aretz on 27 July 1959. They claimed that the conference was neither Jewish nor 'World', but 'Ashkenazi'. Then they formed a delegation and sent it to the conference uninvited to set forward the problem of Sephardim in Israel. The Israeli Ashkenazi delegation refused to discuss this topic, claiming that it was an Israeli internal affair. They also refused to accept the Sephardim as part of their delegation. The Sephardi delegation was thus not allowed to participate in the political and cultural debates. At the last moment, the Zionists produced sympathisers from within the Sephardi community who declared to the world that the government and the Zionist establishment in Israel were expending every effort to improve the lot of the Sephardim and that the problem was not urgent.

The Sephardi delegation convened special meetings attended by members of Jewish communities abroad, journalists and foreigners and before the end of the conference the leaders of the conference were forced to let the Sephardi delegation join in. Nahum Goldman, head of the World Jewish Conference and head of the Jewish Agency, expressed his animosity to the Sephardi delegation, and then made some resounding but empty promises. Eliahu Eliachar's presence and his speech had an enormous impact on world media and there was fear amongst the ranks of the Ashkenazi Zionists. Moshe Sharett sent a telegram to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem which read 'Kill Eliachar.' He later claimed that he had meant simply to shut him up and stop him from publishing his views.¹⁵

Eliachar, the head of the World Organization of Sephardim in Israel, concluded that the only way to solve this matter was to get rid of Ashkenazi tutelage . . . 'otherwise there is no alternative to what we saw in the uprising of Wadi al-Salib in Haifa, the bloody clashes with the Black Panthers and the emergence of the Ohalim movement which is a mass revolution in the making' . . . 'only the blind cannot see the dangers facing Israel as a result of these developments.'¹⁶

ZIONIST ASHKENAZI 'DEMOCRACY'

Ashkenazi Zionists claim that the Arab and Islamic states are 'dictatorships' and 'backward', which explains why the Jews who came from these states do not know how to found political and social organizations. This is untrue since the Jews enjoyed autonomy in Dar al-Islam and set up their own extensive social, education and religious apparatus.¹⁷ The Zionists also claim that they learnt their democratic skills and party organization in democratic Europe, but in fact 95 percent of Ashkenazim in Israel did not come from Western countries, but from Eastern Europe, particularly Czarist Russia, Poland, Nazi Germany and other right-wing regimes. Thus, while their 'democracy' takes on the outward appearance of western parliamentary rule, its content is authoritarian.

Ashkenazim in Israel have formed 164 organizations, compared with 12 Sephardi organizations. Mati Ronen explains that Sephardim have failed to organize politically owing to hostility from the ruling establishment, and he concludes that the rulers were not really worried about the question of unity of the nation but about the real danger that they might lose power.¹⁸

Aryeh Eliav, the moderate Ashkenazi Knesset member, criticizes the Zionist doctrine which says that 'the Sephardim were of the lowest class when they arrived in Israel, having had no education, or leadership experience . . . ' Eliav says, 'What a shocking lie about communities which in their countries of origin produced ministers, counsellors, financiers and members of the liberal professions.' He attacks the meagre numbers of Sephardi ministers in Israel, adding, 'I am convinced that the orientals are as capable as Ashkenazim of providing any number of ministers in the government, for any of the ministries.' Of the Sephardi MPs he says, 'they flatter their party bosses hoping to see their names appear in the lists for the next elections.' Only one tenth of the ministries are given to Sephardim, which are second and third rank ministries. 'The head of the police (a Sephardi minister) and his men (most of whom are orientals) must be prepared to disperse demonstrations, which are mostly organized by orientals . . . don't some people want to see the blacks beating blacks?'¹⁹ Then Eliav wonders, 'Why must the second oriental minister be responsible for communications? Is it not because this post is considered "junior", and those who fill it only have to lick stamps and carry post bags?'²⁰ Of discrimination in union affairs, Eliav says, 'the situation does not differ one iota from the Histadrut leadership to the government, except that the

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former is supposed to represent the workers. Eliav is certain that the class of managers who run the public economy and the Histadrut economy (e.g. the Histadrut factories) is completely closed to orientals.²² Then he adds, 'I am convinced that we can find Sephardim of sufficient aptitude to fill any administrative position in the public or private sector as well as in the political parties. Let any man who dares doubt my words say so in public.'²³

In an article in the magazine *Shevet va'am* in 1954 B.Arditi (of Bulgarian origin and a right-winger) enumerated cases of racial discrimination against Sephardim, including mistreatment and the lack of representation in the government, as follows: 'They have one minister out of 16, 11 MPs out of 120, no representation in the Jewish Agency, and only one Sephardi on the Executive Council of the Zionist Organization. The proportion of Sephardim in the diplomatic service is negligible, as it is in the leadership of the Ashkenazi parties. There are no Sephardi mayors of municipalities and in the development towns there are two Sephardim who occupy the post of head of the local council. There are just two out of the 300 officials in the Ministry of Religion, and none in the administration of the national bank (in spite of their experience in Middle Eastern banking before they emigrated to Israel). There are only three or four Sephardi judges, and in the High Court, moreover, there are none.'

The author blames the Ashkenazi Zionist media. 'When they broadcast news on crime, the perpetrator's origin is only mentioned if he is Sephardi.' He also blames Ha'aretz for publishing the racist articles of Aryeh Gelblum (see chapter eight). Arditi criticizes Ashkenazi intellectuals such as Shalom Ben Horin who declared, 'Herzl said that we are one nation, but he was wrong. He did not know about the Jews of Marrakesh and Iraq. One Ashkenazi is worth 1,000 Sephardim.'

Whenever the Israeli system wanted to undertake an act of suppression against the Sephardim, it appointed one of its servants inside the community to carry out this work. In the fifties, they appointed the Minister of Police, Bekhor Shitrit, to suppress the unruly demonstrations which Sephardim were staging in the camps. In 1971 it was the Iraqi Shlomo Hillel, as Minister of Police, who crushed the protest movement known as the 'Black Panthers'. In 1987 they appointed Yitzhak Navon as Minister of Education to reduce educational facilities and to impose school fees, just as they employed Nissim as Finance Minister to reduce social services and to put masses of Sephardim out of work. In the Palestinian and

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Lebanese arena, they appointed Sa'd Haddad and Anton Lahad commanders of the South Lebanese Army and used the so-called Village Leagues and some Druze to carry out brutalities against the Palestinians.

However, it is important to review the ethnic composition of the state apparatus of Israel to show that most of the doors to advancement are shut to Sephardi intellectuals. The following are the data to support this claim:²⁴

The Ethnic Composition of the Cabinet

Year	1952	1958	1973	1977
Sephardim	1	1	2	3
Ashkenazim	15	15	16	16
Total	16	16	18	19
% Sephardim	6.3%	6.3%	11.1%	15.7%

It is apparent from the above table that between 1949-1959, the Sephardim had only one minister, the Minister of Police. Between 1959-1977 the number of Sephardi ministers doubled, and in 1977 when Menahem Begin came to power with the help of the Sephardi vote, he added a third minister! By 1987 there were four Sephardi ministers out of a total of 23. However the Sephardi proportion of the population had risen from 30 percent in 1948 to 70 percent currently.

One of these Sephardi ministers is David Levi, a Moroccan, about whom the Ashkenazi press used to print racist jokes. His children would come home from school every day in tears.²⁵ The Ashkenazim made him Minister of Housing, hoping thereby to cover up the official policy of spending millions on settling Ashkenazim in the occupied territories while not rehousing the Sephardim from the slum districts.

Yitzhak Navon, a native Palestinian Jew, who was appointed honorary president of the state and then the minister of education, came in for criticism in the Ashkenazi press and was taken to task by Moshe Dayan himself. When Navon stated that his mother liked the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, Moshe Dayan accused him of crawling to the Arabs. Following this, the Ashkenazi media attacked the president over his peaceful overtures to the Arabs by claiming that it did not behove the president to make any political statements.²⁶ When Navon became Minister of Education in 1985, he called a press conference during which he and the journalists

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were informed that his ministry had decided to reduce the education budget by 20 percent with neither his knowledge nor consent. Navon became angry and walked out of the conference in protest at the behaviour of his Ashkenazi aides. Clearly even if a Sephardi reaches the rank of minister, he must still dance to the tune of the Ashkenazim.

Aharon Abu Hatsera, the Moroccan, tried to preserve his independence, and for this it was decided to destroy him completely. He was tried for financial irregularities of a type which are committed all the time by most Ashkenazi politicians. He formed the Tami party and won three seats in the 1981 parliament but immediately the policy of 'divide and rule' began, with all the Ashkenazi parties trying to attract members of this party away. They succeeded in winning over most of its seats by 1984.

Proportion of Sephardi Jews amongst Ministers and Front Bench Knesset Members by rank, 1971²⁷

First	Senior cabinet ministers	0%
Second	Other ministers	18.2%
Third	Speaker of the Knesset	0%
Fourth	Deputy ministers	11.1% 0%
	Chairmen of top Knesset committees	10.5%
	Members of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee	10.5%
	Members of Constitution, Law and Justice Committees	
Fifth	Deputy speakers	33.3% 33.3%
	Chairmen of other committees	

Proportion of Sephardim in the Knesset²⁸

Knesset	1st 1949	2nd 1951	3rd 1955	4th 1959	5th 1961	6th 1965	7th 1969	8th 1973	9th 1977
	6.8%	6.3%	8.8%	12.4%	12.3%	18.6%	15%	16.7%	17.6%

Representation of Sephardim became wider in 1965 owing to the split in the ruling party and the formation of an opposition front -Gahal. Representation then weakened again after 1967 following improvements in employment and the channelling of anger against the Arabs in the Six Day War. It rose again in 1971 following the uprising of the 'Black Panthers'. We can conclude that the aim is

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not equality but the anaesthetizing of the community.

Ethnic and party composition of the Third Knesset (1955-1959)
(excluding non-communist Arab deputies)²⁹

Party	Ashkenazim	Sephardim
Mapai (Labour)	35	5
Herut	13	2
General Zionists (Conservative)	12	1
Religious	10	1
Ahdut Ha'avodah (Left-Nationalist)	9	1
Mapam (Zionist-Marxist)	8	1
Agudat Yisra'el	6	0
Progressives (= Liberal)	5	0
Communist	6	0
Total	103	11

Proportion of Sephardim in the Jewish population at the time = 55%
The six communist deputies were Ashkenazim and Palestinian Arabs.

Sephardim in the top ranks of the civil service³⁰

Year	1961	1969
Ashkenazim	77	76
Sephardim	3	3
Percentage of Sephardim	3.7%	3.9%

There were fewer Sephardim in the upper ranks of the civil service than in parliament because it was precisely these positions that wielded more power than the deputies in parliament.

Amongst the ranks of the of the top managers, judges, ambassadors and generals in 1955, there were a total of 1,966 Ashkenazim as against just 77 Sephardim, or 8.2 percent.³¹

Ethnic composition of the Judiciary, 1954³²

Court	Ashkenazim	Sephardim	Total
High Court	9	0	9
Jerusalem District	5	2	7
Tel Aviv District	13	2	15
Haifa District	7	2	9
Magistrate Courts-Jerusalem	6	0	6
Magistrate Courts-Tel Aviv	20	2	22
Magistrate Courts-Haifa	13	0	13

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Ethnic Composition of the High Court³³

Year	1950	1955	1960	1965	1969	1973
Ashkenazim	7	9	8	9	8	9
Sephardim	0	0	0	1	1	1
Proportion of Sephardim	0%	0%	0%	10%	11.1%	10%

Proportion of Sephardim in the Civil Service, 1961³⁴

Ministry	Proportion of Sephardim
Industry and Commerce	9.5%
Foreign Affairs	10.3%
Defence	10.1%
Education	10.9%
Agriculture	10.2%
Health	24.0%
Communications	23.6%
Justice	26.4%
Post	27.3%
Police	29.3%
Railways	35.4%

It will be noted that the reality was worse than these statistics, since they do not show which civil service rank Sephardim held. These were generally lower than those held by Ashkenazim: 40.1 percent of the lower grades, 20.6 percent of middle ranks and 6.6 percent of the higher ranks (in 1967 this was 3 percent).³⁵

Number and proportion of Sephardi Mayors³⁶

Year	1955	1972
Ashkenazim	85	65 (in the large towns)
Sephardim	11	33 (in poor development towns)
Proportion of Sephardim	11.5%	33.7%

Between 1955-1972 all the mayors of the large and medium-size 'veteran' towns were Ashkenazim. In the remaining 'veteran' small towns and villages, the proportion of Sephardi council chairmen vacillated between 4.4 percent, 27.3 percent and 19.4 percent.³⁷

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Ethnic composition of the Higher Executive Committees of Israeli parties, 1958³⁸

Party	Number of Ashkenazim	Number of Sephardim
Mapai (Labour)	15	1
Ahdut Ha'avodah (nationalist left)	10	3
Mapam (Marxist Zionist)	11	0
Herut (right wing)	12	0
General Zionists (Conservative)	16	0
Religious Party	15	0
Liberal progressives	15	0

In 1973 the proportion of Sephardim in the leaderships of the five main parties was 10.8 percent. In the fifties it had been 7.7 percent.³⁹

Ethnic composition of the party leaderships, 1973⁴⁰

Party	Number of Ashkenazim	Number of Sephardim
Mapai (Labour)	16	2
Ahdut Ha'avodah	5	0
Mapam	9	0
Herut	27	4
Mafdal (Religious- Nationalist)	12	4
Liberal Party	5	0

These statistics explain why we have claimed that Israeli political parties are intrinsically Ashkenazi colonist parties.

Discrimination in the police

The Israeli government vaunts what it claims to be 'equality' amongst the various racial groups in the police and has stated that by 1961 the proportion of Sephardim had reached 42.1 percent.⁴¹ This high figure is then mixed in with the low proportions of Sephardim in the government apparatus to increase the average.

One thing though is certain: Sephardim never had a fondness for police work, and have only joined the force due to unemployment. This has also been to the advantage of the government which uses them to suppress Sephardi demonstrations, as we have mentioned. In any case, the police are under the authority of the officers, the majority of whom are Ashkenazim. Amongst the 497 officers, there are only 35 Sephardim or 7 percent.⁴²

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Discrimination in the armed forces

Israel did not start building its armed forces in 1948 when it emerged as a state, but during the British Mandate when it founded the semiofficial 'Haganah'. Most of the infrastructure of the Haganah, particularly the Palmach commando force, came from the kibbutzim and various Ashkenazi settlements, where most of the military men lived and the arms depots and training camps were located. Thus, since the time of the British Mandate, the Zionist military establishment has been overwhelmingly Ashkenazi. In 1948, when the state of Israel was declared, the name of the Haganah, which means 'defence' in Hebrew, was changed to the Israel Defence Force, and its Ashkenazi leadership remained intact.

One of the reasons for bringing over the Sephardi Jews was to furnish this military machine with manpower. Moreover, Sephardim in the army hold menial jobs such as kitchen workers, chauffeurs, military maintenance workers, cleaners, sappers, quartermasters, etc. In the combatant units they are infantrymen and in the armoured units they serve as back-up forces to the tanks. The Ashkenazim are the generals, officers and pilots, the men of military history, the missile and tank operators, or military intelligence officers and other technological experts in the military leadership. Consequently, military service greatly enhances the employability of many Ashkenazim after their discharge.

Aryeh Eliav, the moderate Ashkenazi deputy, witnessed this discrimination. "They claim - and this is an old cliché - that Tsahal [the army] is a melting pot for all Jewish groups from the diaspora. But how surprised we are when we see that the military driving schools are full of orientals while the Navy's schools are completely "white" - which is a true reflection of society. I don't want to be told about the few colonels (Sephardi) and senior officers. They are the exceptions who prove the rule."⁴³

Ethnic Origin of Major Generals in the Israel Army (1951-1973)

Year	1951	1955	1960	1965	1970	1973
Ashkenazim	12	6	6	12	17	21
Sephardim	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Discrimination in the Histadrut (Trade Union Federation)

Avraham 'Abbas, of Syrian origin, and a member of Ahdut Ha'avodah, claimed that 'seven years ago the Histadrut decided to abolish its Sephardi Bureau, in the hope of absorbing Sephardi activists in the union. However, the number of Sephardi union officials over the last seven years has been fewer than ten despite the Histadrut's expansion due to mass immigration [of Sephardim].' Then Abbas wonders, 'What is the lot of Sephardim in the Secretariat of the Workers Councils, in the Histadrut apparatus and its commercial enterprises such as the Solel Boneh Company, the Kur Company, Tnuvah and Hamashbir Hamerkazi.' He adds that 'a year and a half ago, a Histadrut conference was convened to elect the Executive and the Administrative Committees, but has the composition of these organs changed along with the general makeup of the Histadrut membership? Mapai has nine members on the Administrative Committee, all Ashkenazim. You will not find a single Sephardi in any of the delegations which go abroad, not even to Islamic countries (such as Iran and Indonesia).' The Executive Committee of the Histadrut consists of ninety members, divided according to their party affiliation as follows: Mapai (Labour): 55 of whom 5 are Sephardim Ahdut Ha'avodah: 12 members, of whom 3 are Sephardim Mapam: 12 members - all Ashkenazim. This applies to the rest of the parties.

'Abbas discounts the Ashkenazi Zionist claims that Sephardim are not qualified to hold high office. He reiterates that Sephardim are perfectly capable of carrying out any job, provided they do not come up against the policy of 'divide and rule'.⁴⁵

Proportion of Sephardim in the Central Committee of the Histadrut (1949-1973)⁴⁶

Year	1949	1955-59	1960-65	1966-69	1970	1973
Percentage	0%	0%	8.7%	27.8%	27.8%	25%

Proportion of Sephardim in the Executive Committee of the Histadrut (1949-1969) not including Palestinians⁴⁷

Year	1949	1956	1960	1966	1969
Percentage	5.9%	8.8%	11.2%	16.9%	20.9%

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The proportion of Sephardi Jews in the upper ranks of the Histadrut, excluding Palestinians, was 15.8 percent in 1971, or 37 Sephardim by contrast with 197 Ashkenazim).⁴⁸ Their proportion in the nationwide Histadrut trade union leadership was nil in 1973, at a time when there were 42 Ashkenazim in these positions.⁴⁹ The proportion of Sephardim Jews in management positions in the large industrial projects owned by the Histadrut was 3.6 percent in 1970 (that is five Sephardim to 134 Ashkenazi managers).⁵⁰ In the Steering Committee and the Industrial Project Secretariat of the Histadrut, the situation was as follows:

Proportion of Sephardim in the Steering Committee and Secretariat of the Histadrut Industrial Complex (Hevrat Ha'ovdim), 1973⁵¹

Number	Steering Committee	Secretariat
Ashkenazim	11	32
Sephardim	0	1
Percentage of Sephardim	0%	3%

Discrimination in the Jewish Agency and the Executive Committee of the Zionist movement

Avraham Abbas writes that these two establishments conspired with the Ashkenazi parties to keep Sephardim out of the higher institutions of the Zionist movement. The Executive Committee consisted of almost eighty members and had scores of delegates, almost all Ashkenazi.⁵²

Ethnic composition of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency (1951-1973)⁵³

Year	1951	1955	1960	1965	1970	1973
Ashkenazim	12	12	12	11	11	12
Sephardim	0	0	0	1	1	1
Percentage of Sephardim	0%	0%	0%	8.3%	8.3%	7.7%

Ethnic background of departmental directors in the Jewish Agency (1951-1973)⁵⁴

Year	1951	1955	1960	1965	1970	1973
Ashkenazim	28	20	21	21	13	16
Sephardim	1	1	0	1	0	1
Percentage of Sephardim	3.4%	4.8%	0%	4.5%	0%	5.9%

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It is my belief that Avraham Abbas' stance on this problem is naive and that the Zionist movement was, and still is, Ashkenazi and exploits the Sephardi's emotions, finances and religiosity.

In *Society*⁵⁵, Prof. Sammy Smootha sums up discrimination in representation as follows: resources such as income, education and work are divided amongst the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim in a ratio of approximately 2 to 1. The disparity of power is even greater. The Ashkenazim have complete control over the three power centres in the country, that is the government, the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency, in addition to the public and the private sectors of the economy. In the intermediate power echelons the gap is even wider, with an Ashkenazi/Sephardi ratio of 5 to 1. Only in local government is there proportional representation for almost all the communities, but not equality. Ashkenazim also control cultural life and the Ashkenazi elite runs society. The history books studied in schools have almost no mention of Sephardim over the last five centuries. Hebrew literature is confined to Ashkenazi works, and the music taught is European. The correct way to behave in Israel is the Ashkenazi way, and the Sephardi feels out of place there. He adds, 'Even the few who have been allowed to participate in government make many complaints about discriminatory practices.'⁵⁶

The state of Israel is not the state of the Sephardim, which is why they have started to demand self-determination and an end of Ashkenazi Zionist domination.

NOTES

- 1 Eliachar, 1980, 291 and 292.
- 2 M. Grokhovsky, Mapai Office, 21 February 1949, Labour Party Archives.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Eliachar, 1980, 310.
- 5 Shevet va'am, 1960.
- 6 Eliachar, 1980, 340.
- 7 Ibid, 340 and 341.
- 8 Eliachar, 1980, 388.
- 9 Abu Shlomo, Shevet va'am, 1960.
- 10 Shevet va'am, 1954 and 1958.
- 11 Eliachar, 1980, 459-475.
- 12 17 May 1954.
- 13 Personal diary, part one, 489.
- 14 Eliachar, 1980, 471.
- 15 Eliachar, 1980, 469.
- 16 Ibid, 475.
- 17 Shevet va'am, 1973.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Les temps modernes, 22 and 23.
- 20 Ibid, 24.

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- 21 Ibid, 24.
- 22 Ibid, 25.
- 23 Ibid, 26.
- 24 Smootha, 1978,310.
- 25 Ha'aretz, 24 October 1980 and 13 April 1980.
- 26 Ha'aretz, 7 November 1980.
- 27 Smootha 1978, 310.
- 28 Smootha, 1978, 311 and the Israeli press.
- 29 Abraham Abbas, Shevet va'am, 1958.
- 30 Peres, 1977, 126.
- 31 Avraham Abbas, Shevet va'am, 1958.
- 32 Eliachar, 1980, 332 and 333.
- 33 Smootha, 1978, 313.
- 34 Prime Minister's Office, 1961.
- 35 Smootha, 1978, 167.
- 36 Smootha, 1978, 309.
- 37 Ibid, 314.
- 38 Avraham Abbas, Shevet va'am, 1958.
- 39 Smootha, 309.
- 40 Smootha, 1978, 321-329.
- 41 Israeli Police, 1962.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Les temps modernes, 29 and 30.
- 44 Smootha, 1978, 313.
- 45 Shevet va'am, 1958.
- 46 Histadrut Archives.
- 47 Histadrut Archives.
- 48 Smootha, 317.
- 49 Ibid, 318.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Smootha, 320.
- 52 Shevet va'am, 1958.
- 53 Israel Government Yearbook.
- 54 Israel Government Yearbook.
- 55 Society, 'Black Panthers: the Ethnic Dilemma', vol. 9, no. 7, May 1972, 34 and 35.
- 56 Smootha, 1978, 194.

CHAPTER SEVEN

De-Education And Cultural Oppression

During the last century, fierce debate broke out between conservative and liberal circles in British society over the education of working-class children. The reactionaries opposed the opening of state schools to teach the workers' children lest education keep them away from manual labour. The liberals stressed that education for the workers had been vital for the development of industry, trade and agriculture during the Industrial Revolution, and that school education had been a way of influencing and controlling society. The liberals won, and compulsory primary education was introduced in Britain in 1870.

During the British Mandate in Palestine, the 'socialist' Zionist leadership supported the stance of the afore-mentioned conservatives, with regard to education for Sephardim. However, this was not translated into action through legislation enshrining discrimination, but by imposing such high school fees as to make it difficult for poor Sephardim to send their children to school. Thus the proportion of Sephardim who managed to finish primary school in this period was just 11 percent, their percentage in secondary school was below 5 percent, and the proportion at the Hebrew University and the Technion in Haifa was almost zero (see chapter three). This came about because the Zionists' 'socialism' was, and still is, limited, that is, 'not for export' to the Sephardim or Palestinian people. In this regard the Zionist leadership, of the right and left, has remained influenced by the opinions of its birthplace and original environment - Czarist Russia/Poland.

After the founding of the state of Israel, labour leaders began to be influenced by the views of Western intellectuals, and eventually

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in the early fifties the Knesset decided to make elementary education compulsory and free (we should point out that the Arab states which are regarded by Israel as 'reactionary' and 'feudal', had been providing free education since the twenties for their citizens). The level of education of the Sephardim who emigrated to Israel after 1948 was much higher than that of the Sephardim who had lived in Israel during the British Mandate.

Though the Knesset's legislation with regard to elementary education was a step forward, it was in fact neither 'compulsory' nor 'free' - worse, the ruling establishment used the schools as a vehicle for conditioning and cultural oppression.

At the kindergarten level, that is up to six years old, school fees have remained high, except for 5-6 year-olds. In 1980 it cost £28 sterling per child per month,¹ which meant that most Sephardi children in this age group went without any education. At the same time the parents of these children were paying taxes to the government which used them to support university education where 90 percent of the students and 100 percent of the professors were Ashkenazim. When an Ashkenazi and a Sephardi child enter the first primary grade, at the age of six, the difference in school readiness is immediately apparent. The Ashkenazi child has already had years of kindergarten schooling, whereas the Sephardi child has spent that time in the home or been left to play in the street while his mother goes out to work cleaning the houses of Ashkenazi socialists and businessmen. If we take into account the economic differences, living and social conditions, and the nutritional intake of the children, we will see that the gulf between them is created long before they start school. Thereafter it only widens from year to year, making fair competition impossible. The gap between the generations born in Israel is greater than between the generations which came from abroad. In Israel two peoples have developed who avoid each other, not only on a class level, but also culturally. The authorities claim that elementary education (from 6-14 years of age) is free, but the parents of the pupils have to pay for the following:

1. registration fees
2. school building expenses
3. parent teachers association dues
4. music, drama, dance and other special subjects.
5. government education tax
6. life insurance for the child
7. materials for vocational subjects

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8. school trips
9. school dentist fees
10. other health and general services
11. textbooks and exercise books, pens and school uniform.
12. local authority education tax.²

At secondary school, that is between 9th and 12th grades, in addition to the above expenses, or most of them, parents had to pay steep fees from the time of the British Mandate until 1978. Though these fees are levied proportionately on the income of the parents, most Sephardim could not afford them. Shlomo ben Ya'kov estimated that the proportion of Sephardi pupils in secondary schools (excluding vocational schools) was never more than 2-3 percent as a result.³ Dr Smilansky observed that out of 1,300 secondary school students in Tel Aviv there were only 13 Sephardim, and that a third of all students between the ages of 6-13 do not go to school, even though attendance is compulsory, and that 95 percent of pupils leave school at the end of the fourth grade (i.e. at the age of 10). This situation prevails in Beer Sheba, in most of the camps, the slum districts and the development towns inhabited by Sephardim.

In 1978 secondary school fees were abolished in favour of a secondary school tax being levied on all citizens. Most of this tax was paid by employees and not by businessmen and industrialists. The workers paid 0.3 percent of their wages, the employers paid 0.1 percent of their income and the industrialists paid 0.4 percent of theirs. The liberal paper Ha'aretz, which published these figures on 21 May 1982, added that the burden of these taxes was greater for the poor than for the middle- or upper-classes and called for them to be lifted. In addition to this tax, parents also had to foot the above-mentioned expenses.

In the 1986/1987 budget, free secondary education was abolished and a tax equivalent to \$60 was imposed on each and every family with one child at school, or \$120 for families with more than one child at school. And thus 'free' education officially met its demise.⁵

Since the Mandate period, university students have had to pay fees as well as pay for their accommodation and books etc. In Israel university fees rose in the following manner:

1949	minimum £40 sterling
1979/1980	£225 sterling ⁶
1980/1981	£500 sterling
1983	£700 sterling ⁷

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The newspaper explained that the residents of the development towns and the children of large families only had to pay one half to two-thirds of these fees.

1985/1986	\$1,100 ⁸
1987	\$1,250, and so forth.

In 1987 the Ministry of Finance was demanding fees of \$1,650 per year, whereas the students are calling for fees of \$800. (On 17 May 1987 the government decreed that Jewish students had to pay \$1,350, and Palestinian students \$1,550 per year. Subsequently the universities decided to impose a fee of \$2,000 on all students.⁹) There were, for this reason, violent demonstrations and clashes amongst the students and the security forces.¹⁰

In spite of receiving government support, the expense of studying at university has managed to exclude the overwhelming majority of able Sephardim and Palestinians. According to Avraham Abbas, the proportion of Sephardi students at the Hebrew University was not even 5 percent in 1957 and at the Technion it was just 3 percent, whereas they were then 55 percent of the population.¹¹ The leaders of Sephardi Jewry had requested donations from Sephardi Jews abroad to help the poor obtain secondary and higher education, but the Jewish Agency feared that such a step would lessen the donations collected abroad by the Zionist establishment. It therefore took over the initiative and set up a system of study grants, funded by the government and the Jewish Agency. In 1954 1,500 grants were given to students, with a total value of I£145,000.¹² Between 1954-1958 15,000 grants were given and the government and Jewish Agency appointed an executive committee to run the programme, whose members were naturally almost all Ashkenazim. An executive council was set up for the programme, but no Sephardim were allowed to participate in it; they were only allowed to take part in the advisory council which wielded no influence. In 1957 the total amount of the grants reached I£612,000, with preference being given to pupils at industrial or agricultural schools - which served to channel Sephardim away from academic and towards vocational training. The small size of the grants meant that secondary school fees were only reduced by about one third. Those without grants still had to pay the school fees in full, which forced significant numbers to drop out. The programme was intended to help Sephardim, but in reality over a quarter of the students were of Ashkenazi origin, with a total of 1,336 Ashkenazi students in the programme compared with 4,005 Sephardim. Only 5 percent

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of students involved in the programme received grants for university, so it is apparent that the policy was not to help Sephardim get higher education. Thus in spite of all the drum-beating about grants for secondary education, only a tiny proportion of the Sephardim were included, and Sephardi students represented just 6 percent of the student body at academic secondary schools in 1957, that is a 3 percent increase over the previous five years. If we take into account natural increase and mass immigration - that is, the increase in the Sephardi proportion of the population - we can conclude that the increased proportion of Sephardim at secondary schools was negligible. The amount of the grant would differ according to the economic situation of the student, and the major part of the grant only covered a part of the tuition fees.¹³ It was a drop in the ocean.

The following figures show how the percentage of Sephardim in Israeli education -Jewish section - diminishes as the grades go up.

Elementary	52%
9th Grade Secondary (15 yrs)	15.8%
10th Grade	13.5%
11th Grade	9.8%
12th Grade	7.8%
Hebrew University	5%
Haifa Technion	3%

Avraham 'Abbas, who published these figures in 1958, wondered how the Jewish communities could be integrated to form one people at a time when the gulf between the two communities was getting deeper from year to year.¹⁴ Even in the vocational schools, the proportion of Sephardim did not exceed 17 percent, and this figure did not include all the students at kibbutz or ulpan¹⁵ schools. We should also point out that the total ratio of secondary school pupils in the large cities, where the Ashkenazim form the largest proportion of the population, was 14.1 percent. In the Sephardi camps the ratio was only 1 percent. Ben Gurion admitted that secondary education, whether academic or vocational, was the privilege of a tiny number. Shoshana Arbeli MP asserted that the Sephardim who reach 12th grade in secondary school (17 years of age) came mostly from the wealthy families who had been resident in Palestine before the establishment of Israel.¹⁶

The following tables will show the ethnic composition of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Technion in Haifa:

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Hebrew University students according to country of origin and ethnic background, 1957¹⁷

Country of Origin	Group	Number	Percentage
Israel	Mainly Ashkenazim	1,888	56.6
Eastern Europe	Ashkenazim	837	25.1
Western Europe	Ashkenazim	350	10.5
America	Ashkenazim	83	2.5
Syria and Lebanon	Sephardim	12	0.4
Iraq	Sephardim	96	2.8
Turkey	Sephardim	13	0.4
Yemen and Aden	Sephardim	6	0.2
Egypt	Sephardim	24	0.7
North Africa	Sephardim	9	0.3
Other Asian lands	Sephardim	16	0.5

Total percentage of Sephardim at the Hebrew University = 5.3% Total percentage of Ashkenazim at the Hebrew University = 94.7%

Haifa Technion students according to country of origin, 1957¹⁸

Country of Origin	Group	Number
Israel	mainly Ashkenazim	277
Eastern Europe	Ashkenazim	110
Western Europe	Ashkenazim	29
America and South Africa	Ashkenazim	6
Syria	Sephardim	0
Turkey	Sephardim	2
Yemen and Aden	Sephardim	0
Egypt	Sephardim	2
North Africa	Sephardim	3
Iraq	Sephardim	6
Other Asian Countries	Sephardim	1

Percentage of Ashkenazim = 97% Percentage of Sephardim = 3%

Yitzhak Moshe Immanuel pointed out that the government directs Sephardi students toward a technical rather than an academic education, as befits the role set aside for them in the state of Israel. In each successive grade in school, the proportion of Sephardi students goes down, as the following figures, for the Jewish section, prove:

Elementary schools	53.2%
Final 3 grades of primary school	41 %
First grade secondary (ages 14-15)	22%
Fourth grade secondary (age 18)	8.8%
Academic secondary schools	7.8%
Hebrew University	5.2%
Haifa Technion	4.5%

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These figures show the conditions prevailing in 1959, but it is important to compare the proportion of Sephardim in academic secondary schools with those at vocational secondary schools at the same time:

Academic secondary schools	7.8%
Vocational secondary schools	42%
Agricultural secondary schools	48%

Immanuel says that 'the proportion of boys and girls at secondary school is rising quickly. In 1960 this group constituted 25 percent, by 1964 it will be 64 percent, but if the employment situation does not improve and free education is not made available then we will just see a rise in the numbers who neither study nor find employment.'¹⁹

In an earlier edition of *Shevet va'atn* Immanuel had written that the overwhelming majority of pupils at school in the northern districts of Tel Aviv were Ashkenazim, whereas the overwhelming majority in the southern districts were Sephardim, alluding to the ethnic separation and the disparity between the quality of schools in the two districts. He goes on to speak of racial discrimination in the employment of teachers and the imposition of Ashkenazi teachers on Sephardi pupils. In Tel Aviv-Jaffa, for example, there are 106 headmasters, of whom just 5 are Sephardim. He uses official Israeli statistics for 1955 to show that the proportion of teachers of Sephardi origin was only 9.8 percent.²⁰

The school population increased from 140,000 in 1948 to 540,000 in 1958.²¹ Clearly, mass immigration provided Ashkenazim many positions in the field of education. By 1972 the number of people working in this area was 8 percent of the working population.²² The proportion of Sephardi teachers at the secondary school level was 3 or 5 percent, and their proportion among teachers in Colleges of Education was 2 percent.²³ At the university level there were almost none, but Sephardim were allowed to constitute 20 percent of the teaching staff at workers' evening schools.²⁴ In 1953 there were 2 Sephardim out of 67 secondary school headmasters. At vocational schools and Colleges of Education there were none, but they were 14 percent at primary schools.²⁵ In the rural schools in the development towns and moshavim etc., which were of a lower level and where conditions were difficult, the percentage of Sephardi teachers was higher.

The Ministry of Education used arbitrary dismissal to keep Sephardim out of the teaching professions. It created constant

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difficulties, employing Sephardi teachers on a temporary basis and making them sign an agreement every year which stipulated that they sought temporary work, otherwise they were not reemployed. In addition it used various methods to destroy the self-confidence of these teachers and humiliate them.

This fact does not just constitute discrimination against Sephardim, but is also one of the reasons for the drop out rate amongst Sephardi pupils, for in Israel there are many Ashkenazi teachers who treat these pupils despicably. The Ashkenazi teachers know nothing about the culture of their Sephardi pupils, often they are neither interested in the fate of these pupils nor in their distress. A psychological and cultural gulf thus arises between the pupils and their teachers and problems of discipline and alienation arise which end with their dropping out of school.

Immanuel confirms that, in spite of the fact that Dr Handel - a secondary school inspector - admitted that Sephardim constituted the most important section of Jewry up until the sixteenth century, only Ashkenazi history and literature are studied. School syllabuses ignore the history and culture of the Sephardim and concentrate on the history and literature of the Ashkenazim and their life in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. Naturally Sephardi pupils find these topics dull which accounts for the increased drop-out rate in each successive grade. Immanuel draws on the study of Moshe Smilansky for the ethnic composition of education in Israel,²⁶ which is the same study used by Avraham Abbas.

In its 1973 edition, the Sephardi magazine *Shevet va'am* reiterates that Zionist school syllabuses are not appropriate for Sephardi pupils, and furthermore Sephardi parents cannot help their children with homework in these subjects. These Ashkenazi syllabuses are intended to eradicate any Sephardi identity and to make it easier for the ruling class to impose its authority and influence. Professor Betzalel Rot claims that Sephardi Judaism has disappeared from written history - by which he means the history written for Israel school syllabuses.

Matti Ronen considers that 'the poverty of the Sephardi Jew does not allow him to acquire any education, and this does not allow him to raise his standard of living. The foundation of this gulf between the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi will by necessity go on growing ever wider, making it impossible to break out of the closed circle of poverty. The Sephardi thus deems Ashkenazi society unjust and attempts to resist it by means which are deemed uncultivated and criminal.'²⁷

REASONS FOR EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

The drastic failure of Sephardi Jews in the area of education was not a result of their 'uncivilized and primitive Middle Eastern origin', as the Zionist rulers claim, but came about due to the colonialist policy of de-education and cultural oppression directed against them and the Palestinian people. The following sums up the reasons for this failure in various levels of education.

1. School Fees. From kindergarten through university, these represent a heavy burden.

2. Poverty. Conditions of poverty and hunger and overcrowding in dilapidated housing or small flats do not encourage the child at school or enable him to do his homework. Families often need their children to leave school and go out to work to help economically. Yitzhak Yativ claimed²⁸ that the monthly income for an oriental family averaged I£10-20 (at the time, £1 sterling equalled I£8), whereas Ashkenazi income was ten times greater. One result of this poverty may be to create two peoples vying with each in Israel, with all the incumbent dangers. There would be no point in reproducing official government income tables since they only deal with the 'average', and the average always misleads (see chapter nine on social polarisation). The policy of Sephardi impoverishment and proletarianisation cannot be separated from that of de-education and cultural oppression.

3. The standard of education in Sephardi schools in the Black Belt, the development towns, the moshavim and the camps, is very low compared to that of the Ashkenazi schools, due to the quality of the school buildings, the number of class-rooms, the quality of educational equipment, the number of children per class and the quality of the teachers themselves. The number of primary school teachers who lacked the necessary qualifications was 40 percent in 1958 and these teachers, some of whom were soldiers, taught at Sephardi schools.²⁹ In Bnei Brak, for example, a class of 100 pupils had to study in an air raid shelter due to a lack of class-rooms. A few years ago the Ministry of Education started bussing Sephardi pupils to Ashkenazi schools from the slum districts, hoping to 'integrate' them. They were crammed into 'special' classes and mistreated, resulting in ethnic violence.

On 7 March 1979, Ha'aretz wrote about such battles at the Ramat Hasharon school. The newspaper described School Number 14 in Shikun Dan near Tel Aviv. It pointed out that racial integration was unsuccessful in most cases and that pupils from both

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communities neither mixed nor visited each other. Since pupils from the slum district had not previously been at an academic school, they faced many difficulties with traditional academic methods. Thus they failed their studies and were prone to despair and anger, particularly toward the arrogance and condescension of Ashkenazi pupils. The teachers would try to jettison the weak pupils and concentrate on the promotion of Ashkenazi pupils. The school counsellor, Naomi Nawi, commented on these matters that 'racial integration is vital if we want to head off a social explosion. But the schools cannot go it alone. Integration must begin in the kindergartens and in society in general . . . the main obstacle is the racism which Ashkenazi pupils learn from their families.'³¹

L. Ram, a student, wrote a detailed report which appeared in *Zu Haderekh* of 5 October 1983, in which she described the tragic state of the Sephardi pupils at the comprehensive school in Qatamon in Jerusalem. She spoke of the humiliation and contempt they were exposed to from Ashkenazi teachers and pupils and wrote that some of her friends had started to affect Ashkenazi accents and to be ashamed of their families and their 'primitive' background. The pupils who stuck to their identity were not popular with the management. She described how the school administration insisted on putting the Sephardim in the non-academic classes and keeping them away from mathematics and science. Only six out of the forty pupils were allowed to take the final secondary school examinations, the *Bagrut*.

4. School syllabuses. We have already mentioned that school syllabuses in Israel ignore Sephardi history and culture and set about to destroy their cultural identity. When this history is touched upon, it is couched in untruths about 'Islamic society's racial oppression' of Jews - with the intention of instilling hatred of the Palestinians and the Arabs. The Ashkenazi teacher tends to dwell on the 'primitive and uncultured' Arabs and Muslims and indirectly destroy the status of Sephardi pupils in the class and alienate them from their parents and background. In spite of the fact that the Sephardi lingua franca has been Arabic since the Islamic conquests, there are few Arabic classes. Arabic is just another foreign language after English and French. As a result, Sephardi pupils leave the Israeli school system illiterate in Arabic, though it is the language they speak at home. The Ashkenazi Zionist, Aryeh Eliav MP, one of the leaders of the Labour Party, admits that 'first, we snatched from them the valuable treasure that they brought with them -Arabic. We, the Ashkenazim, have been carried away by a wave

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of condescension and arrogance toward the Arab world . . . we have made Arabic and Arab culture into something hateful and despicable.³² Notwithstanding this illiteracy, there are good Arabic classes in some secondary school final grades. These classes are made up of a very small number of Ashkenazim who are not studying it for peaceful aims, but to use it in the army and the intelligence agencies and they fall under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office and not of the Ministry of Education. The studies are carried out under the slogan 'Know Your Enemy'.

The tragedy of the Sephardim is that they no longer know the language of their grandparents, or about the Jewish poets and writers from Iraq, Syria and Egypt. They can neither read nor write the language of their fathers, and are unaware that most of the Jewish heritage, or that most of the works of Maimonides and Saadya Gaon, were written in Arabic. They have been pressurised into believing that they, along with the Arabs, are backward and uncivilized in comparison to the Ashkenazim. The policies of cultural nihilism and imperialism respectively have made great inroads amongst the Sephardim and the Palestinians. Even the prayers in religious schools are taught according to the Ashkenazi ritual. In my final oral examination I was forced to recite a Hebrew poem using Ashkenazi-Yiddish intonation and accent.

'Secondary and university education is not for me, it's for the Ashkenazim' - is what many second-generation Sephardi immigrants say, even though their parents were members of the educated classes in Iraq and Syria and Iran etc. Aryeh Eliav admitted that 'we have torn the oriental Jews, particularly the younger generation, from their past, their roots and their pride and we have inculcated in them, as we did with their fathers, that everything started in Eastern Europe - Jewish thought, Zionism, the pioneer concept and the settlement of Palestine. We have told them that beauty, poetry and culture all came from Europe which means that their fathers had nothing of the sort. Thence we quickly arrive at the myth of "illiteracy" and the backwardness of the "oriental" Jews.³³ 'In fact, we condemned to death the culture and past of tens of thousands of Jews.'³⁴ Zionist schools thus destroyed the Sephardim's culture and convinced them that they were not suited for more education.

5. IQ testing. At the end of elementary school (age 14), the pupil who wants to get a grant to go to a secondary school must sit a special IQ examination. Since the questions of this test have to do with the life and culture of the Ashkenazim, many Sephardim fail

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it - not because their IQ is low but because the questions are outside their field of reference.³⁵ Sometimes Sephardim fail because the level of education in their schools is so low, something which rules out any competition with Ashkenazi pupils. Accordingly the Sephardi pupils do not get grants which means that they have to pay school fees in full, and since this is beyond their means it often leads to their leaving school.

6. Ashkenazi teachers' condescension and contempt. Most of the Sephardi pupils who attempt to continue their secondary and university studies have to work day and night in factories and restaurants during their vacation in order to fund their studies, but they still come up against condescension and hostility from some Ashkenazi teachers. Some leave school or university but others persevere and find after gaining their degree that the doors are still shut to them because of their ethnic origin. These disheartening experiences reinforce the downward spiral of educational motivation in the Sephardi community.

7. The breakdown of society. Owing to the upheaval of immigration, the tragic life in the camps and slum districts, unemployment, housing conditions and Ashkenazi cultural oppression, the Sephardi family system has all but collapsed and along with it Sephardi traditions and values. Drug addiction, prostitution and crime have appeared. None of this encourages Sephardi children to strive for an education.

8. Foreign vocabulary. The language of tuition in Jewish schools is Hebrew, which, as it has been developed by the Ashkenazi settlers, contains a huge number of Latin and European loan-words. Whereas an Ashkenazi pupil can ask his parents for help with these foreign words, the Arabic-speaking parent is at a loss. Moreover, most Sephardi children still speak Arabic at home, and, more importantly, they still think in Arabic and hence face a linguistic obstacle at school.

9. Cutbacks in educational and social services. This has come about because Israel, as a part of the Western world, is suffering from the same economic crisis faced by the West. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, all trade relations with Iran were broken and factories which had exported to Iran also shut down. In addition, there were the expenses of the war in Lebanon and funding for the mercenaries there, and the cost of settlements in the Egyptian, Palestinian and Syrian territories. The victims of Israel's policy of reducing educational and social services were naturally the poor, i.e. the Sephardim and the Palestinians. To prove this point, we

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should mention that the student body in Israel had risen from 800,000 in 1969/1970 to 1,200,000 in 1980/1981, but the education budget went down from 10.5 percent of the state budget in 1972 to 5.8 percent in 1980. In 1980/1981 alone 35,000 school hours were cancelled in primary and middle schools; 1,300 teachers were dismissed and school dinner budgets were reduced by 70 percent. In 1981/1982 three agricultural training villages for poor students were closed and the special mothers' training centres in the development towns were closed down. In 1982 the budget was trimmed by a further 7.5 percent which in its turn meant the dismissal of yet more thousands of teachers and workers. The result is that out of every 1,000 pupils who entered the first grade at primary school in 1969/1970 only 26 will finish school, and most of them Ashkenazim. The drop-out rate in the Palestinian sector is even greater.³⁶

This policy has gone on year after year. In the 1986/1987 budget, the reduction in the Ministry of Education's budget was \$47.5 million, which entailed the cancellation of 170,000 school hours, the dismissal of 7-10,000 teachers and the imposition of the aforementioned education tax.³⁷ In 1969/1970 compulsory education was extended to fifteen years, but it was not applied and some schools encourage 'weak' pupils to leave.

The worsening drop-out rate amongst the younger generations

When the figures for the Sephardi drop-out rate were published in the fifties, Israel accused the Arab and Islamic countries of being the reason for this 'backwardness' and for the appearance of the educational gulf between the two communities.

If we take into account that the proportion of Sephardim in Israeli Jewish society rose from 50 percent in the fifties to 65 percent in the seventies and then 70 percent in the eighties, we can conclude from the following figures that the drop-rate continued to worsen. Then another gulf appeared between those Sephardim who had been educated in Middle Eastern countries on the one hand, and those who were born and studied in Israeli schools on the other -to the advantage of the former. This is completely in accordance with the Israeli policy of de-education and shows Israeli claims to be false.

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Proportion of Sephardim in schools and universities³⁸

Year	69/70	75/76
First grade primary	63%	59.6%
Eighth grade elementary	57.4%	53.9%
Ninth grade academic secondary	35%	36.2% (average)
12th grade academic secondary	24.7%	
success rate final		
secondary examinations	18.7%	23.8%
B.A. Students	14.2%	16.4%
M.A. and Ph.D. Students	9%	10.1%

All other students = Ashkenazim and Palestinians
Proportion of Sephardim in the Jewish population = 65%

At the end of the sixties, 6 percent of Sephardi pupils received a secondary school certificate as against 35 percent of Ashkenazi pupils.³⁹ In 1972/1973 the data became 7.4 percent against 31.7 percent, and for higher education they were as follows: 2.8 percent of Sephardi Jews born in Palestine versus 13.8 percent of Ashkenazim. Of those born abroad the figures were 2 percent and 9.3 percent respectively.⁴⁰

The moderate Zionist deputy, Aryeh Eliav, said of the Sephardim at university, 'it seems to me that this dishearteningly low proportion . . . will not reach 10 percent. To reach that figure we have to count students at religious colleges [yeshivot] and other non-official establishments.'⁴¹ What Eliav was implying is that the proportion of Sephardim at universities has been boosted artificially to show 'what progress Sephardim have made in Israel.' Then he adds that 'Israel cannot blame the Middle Eastern countries for the underdevelopment of the Sephardim, since this second generation was born and raised in Israel.' He concludes that 'it is our society's greatest deficiency. We have managed to transfer the educational gulf from generation to generation.' The author cautioned Israel against creating two different societies over the course of a few generations.

Eliav enumerates the reasons for this failure, as follows: 'inequality of opportunity, large families living in very cramped housing, loss of confidence and cultural heritage, imbalance in political, social and economic representation and preferential treatment for the armed forces.' Eliav then commented on the 'backwardness' of the Middle Eastern countries by saying that 'the young people who have come to Israel from the Arab world twenty years on [i.e. after the founding of Israel], have much better intellectual and vocational resources than their Israeli-born

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contemporaries. This phenomenon can be clearly discerned if we examine the standard of higher education of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who have emigrated from Middle Eastern countries to France, Spain, Canada and the United States over the last thirty years.' Finally Eliav warns that discrimination in education threatens the security of the state.⁴²

Hierarchy of Education:

We shall now examine the summit of the educational pyramid in Israel thirty years after its founding:

Division of Doctoral (Ph.D.) Students by Origin 1977/1978⁴³

Born in Israel to a Sephardi father	2.5%
Born in Dar al-Islam	7.4%
Total proportion of Sephardim	9.9%
Born in Israel to an Israeli-born father (generally Ashkenazim)	4.3%
Born in Israel to a father born in Europe or America (Ashkenazim)	44.5%
Born in Europe and America (Ashkenazim)	41.3%
Total proportion of Ashkenazim	90.1 %

The following should be noted with reference to the above figures:

1. The wide gap between the proportions of Sephardim and Ashkenazim: 9.9 percent against 90.1 percent.
2. The gap between Sephardim and foreign-born Ashkenazim: 7.4 percent against 41.3 percent.
3. The deep gap between Israeli-born Sephardim and Ashkenazim: 2.5 percent against 48.8 percent. All these students grew up within the framework of the Israeli Zionist establishment, and the great disparity can only indicate the worsening of the ethnic and class divisions and the polarisation of the two communities as they head toward social conflagration.
4. The gap between the Israeli-born Sephardim and those born in Dar al-Islam: 2.5 percent against 7.4 percent. This indicates that educational and economic conditions for Jews were better in the Arab countries than they are in Israel, which is why the Israeli-raised generation has shown such a deterioration. In fact the gap is wider if we take into account Sephardi doctors and PhDs who emigrated to the West instead of Israel.

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5. We have mentioned that those born in Israel to a father born in Palestine were usually Ashkenazim, being the descendants of the early Ashkenazi settlers who immigrated from Czarist Russia and Poland. Their Sephardi contemporaries hardly manage to enter higher educational facilities (except for a tiny number of children from rich families). We have also already mentioned that the overwhelming majority of Sephardim in Palestine at the time of the British Mandate did not even finish their primary education.

6. Based on what Aryeh Eliav, MP, said, it is highly plausible that the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics made the figures look more favourable for the Sephardim, and that the real proportions are worse than we have mentioned.

We should add that in 1984 a census was taken of graduates from universities or other higher education institutions in Israel who totalled 205,700 (the Palestinians make up 4.3 percent of this number, whereas they are 17 percent of the population).

Now we shall examine Jewish graduates in Israel (1984) by origin:

Graduates in Israel by origin and degree, 1984⁴⁴

Origin	Total	1st degree	2nd degree	3rd degree or higher
Israeli-born to an Israeli-born father (mainly Ashkenazim)	6.4%	8.2%	3.5%	2.8%
Asia and Africa -Sephardim (Total)	14.6%	18.7%	7.8%	7.2%
Israeli-born	5.4%	7.6%	2%	0.5%
Born in Dar al-Islam	9.2%	11.1%	5.8%	6.7%
Europe and America - Ashkenazim (Total)	79%	73.1%	88.7%	90%
Israeli-born	32.2%	38.3%	20.6%	30.1%
Born outside Israel	46.8%	34.8%	68.1%	59.9%

With reference to the above figures the following should be noted:

1. The Ashkenazi totals are: 85.4 percent, 81.3 percent, 92.2 percent, 92.8 percent, whereas the Sephardi totals are 14.6 percent, 18.7 percent, 7.8 percent and 7.2 percent.

2. The Central Bureau of Statistics has mixed chalk with cheese, that is, it has mixed those with university degrees and those with degrees from non-academic institutions such as colleges of nursery and primary school teachers, and Yeshivot etc., in order to narrow the gap between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. If the figures were to pick out those with university degrees, the gap would appear much wider.

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3. The Bureau classifies Ashkenazim born in Israel to a father born in Palestine in a special category in order to mislead the foreign reader and to even out the high proportion of Ashkenazim.
4. The wide gulf between Sephardim born in Middle Eastern countries and Israeli-born Sephardim who have grown up and studied in Zionist schools, subject to its colonialist de-education policy.
5. The proportion of Israeli-born Sephardim who receive a PhD is 0.5 percent whereas amongst Ashkenazim of the same generation it is 30.1 percent. The number gaining a MA is 2 percent against 20.6 percent, and for the BA the proportions are 7.6 percent against 38.3 percent, making totals of 5.4 percent against 32.2 percent. These figures yet again prove that the gap does not result from the 'backwardness' of Middle Eastern countries, since both of these strata were born in Israel and have studied in Israeli schools and even so the gap is greater between them and their contemporaries than that between their parents and the Israelis who came from Europe and America, which indicates that polarisation is worsening from generation to generation.
6. Polarization seems even worse if we take into account the increase in the number of Israeli universities and the number of students studying at them. In 1948 the only institutions of higher education were the Hebrew University and the Haifa Technion. The universities of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Beer Sheba and Bar Ilan were then founded and the student body went up from 1,635 in 1948 to 52,780 in 1976, but the proportion of Sephardim remained negligible, as we have already mentioned⁴⁵ (add to this variable the increase in the number of Sephardim in the general population).
7. The above proportions are nation-wide, but if we focus on the places which have been specifically set up to supply Ashkenazi settlers with cheap labour, such as the development towns, the policy of de-education will appear in all its repulsiveness. In the development town of Shlomi, for example, the proportion of university graduates is just 1 percent (this figure includes the Ashkenazi managers' children). However, in the Ashkenazi settlement of Savyon it is 25.8 percent and in the Ashkenazi settlement of Omer it is 36 percent.⁴⁶ Statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics for 1961 and 1976 indicate that the gap between the two groups has doubled in the academic section, and the gap in subjects such as mathematics, science and medicine has deepened greatly.⁴⁷ At the Arts and Science Institute, which is the highest educational establishment in the country, there is almost no non-

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Ashkenazi to be found - and the same applies to academic posts in the universities.

THE ERADICATION OF MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

The Israeli authorities practise a policy of cultural oppression toward Sephardim, not just in school syllabuses but in all areas of life, such as the radio and television, literature, the theatre, etc. The media portray Sephardim as 'primitives' who have no culture of any value, and they try to crush their Middle Eastern identity. There is only one hour per week of Sephardi culture on the radio. The second channel devotes 11 percent of its broadcast time to the heritage of the various Israeli communities.⁴⁸

The Jews of the Arab world were renowned for their musical skills, and they formed a large part of the Iraqi musical scene. They were some of the best singers of local styles. In his book, *The Baghdadi Singers and the Iraqi Maqam* (1964), al-Hanafi mentioned 188 singers of whom 21 were Jewish, such as Yusuf Horesh, Sasson Za'rur and Moshe Suleyman amongst others. Iraqi Jews formed bands, and Ezra Haroun became particularly famous, having played the 'ud for King Faisal. The king said to him on one occasion, 'You have made me happier than I have ever been before, my son.' Then the King's chief of protocol, 'You light up the whole of Iraq with your music.' On another occasion he was given a bowl filled with golden 'Abbasid dinars from the reign of Harun al-Rashid. Each dinar had the name of God stamped on it and a gold chain attached to it - but Ezra Haroun was satisfied with just one golden dinar. Ezra sang the compositions of two Jewish composers, Ibrahim and Ishaq al-Mawsili. He also played a prominent role in the musical conference which was convened in Egypt under aegis of King Fuad in 1932. After he emigrated to Israel his life filled with misery, drudgery and hunger.⁴⁹ The Moroccan Jewish poet, Erez Biton, said that the Moroccan Jewish singer, Zahra al-Fasia, sang for King Muhammad V in Rabat. He related how soldiers used to fight with knives to get to hear her whenever she was singing. He said she is currently in a transit camp in Ashkelon, near the welfare office, and in a state poverty and humiliation.⁵⁰

That was the fate of most of the Jewish performers from the Islamic world. Their art died with them in the Zionist camps. This state continued into the seventies when the Sephardi community

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started looking at its own cultural heritage as a challenge to the Ashkenazi cultural establishment. The search for their roots was instigated by the appearance of the Black Panther movement.

Cultural suppression continues under the guise of 'racial integration'. David Ben Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister, said that 'the aim of the government is to inculcate the Yemeni immigrant with Israeli values to the point that he forgets where he came from . . .'.⁵¹

Shmuel Rakanti, one of the first Sephardi MPs, criticised the concept of 'integration' in an article. 'Its real meaning is the eradication of Sephardi culture and traditions and the imposition of Ashkenazi culture ... I am disgusted by the humility and spiritual and social nihilism. It enrages me. We must reject these corrupting opinions and criticise those who humiliate us while imposing upon us generals and patrons.' Rakanti believes that the only way to solve this problem is 'not through integration but by fostering both cultures. Sephardi culture must have an exalted position amongst the people.'⁵² The Yemenite MP, Zekhariah Gluska, demanded more air time on the radio for Yemenite music, and stated that Ashkenazi 'experts' prepared the Yemenite programmes on the radio and added that they were ludicrous.⁵³

In July 1979, Zevulun Hammer, the Minister of Education, convened a special meeting of the Public Council for Education and Culture to look into the cultural and social gap in Israel. Hayyim Shiran, of the educational television service, admitted that Sephardim were culturally oppressed, and as a result, over the last thirty years, Sephardim had been losing their self-respect. Dr Gabriel ben Simhon, who is of Moroccan origin, reported that 'the media do not broadcast music for Sephardim. Their music is passed around by cassette tapes. Owing to this, they feel frustrated.' The painter, Ziva Leblach, stated that Israel does not draw upon the latent musical treasures of the Sephardim. Nissim Yehoshua', who is in charge of Sephardi Culture at the Ministry of Education, said that there were many people who believed that the Sephardim had no culture but folklore, (this is the most common view among Ashkenazi 'intellectuals') and he called for Sephardi and Ashkenazi culture to intermix.

Professor David Elazar stressed that Ashkenazim wanted Sephardim to adopt their culture, but there was no justification for this claim.⁵⁴ In an article in Ha'aretz,⁵⁵ Professor Shimon Shamir explained that Israeli (i.e. Ashkenazi) society did not allow Sephardim to be part of the ruling elite. The professor said of Israeli-

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Egyptian relations that, 'Ashkenazi society doubts the loyalty of Sephardim when the borders to the Arab world are open.' He added that the Ashkenazim, being prejudiced against the Middle East and its culture, fear Sephardi progress and quotes the views of Ben Gurion and Jabotinsky (see chapter eight). Shamir's views can be paraphrased by stating that were Middle Eastern culture fostered among the Sephardim, they would turn against the Ashkenazim if there was peace and open borders.

In a discussion with Leah 'Inbal, a correspondent of Ha'aretz,⁵⁶ Ben Simhon stated that in order to be able to finish his studies he had to shed his Sephardi culture and integrate into Ashkenazi life. Ben Simhon was born in Morocco and emigrated to Israel with his family when he was 9 years old. He was one of the few Moroccans who beat all the obstacles and graduated in Jerusalem. He then studied theatre and cinema at the Sorbonne. He is a teacher in the Department of Arts at Tel Aviv University. Ben Simhon affirmed that his family emigrated for religious reasons. His father had believed that angels would be hovering around him as he arrived in the Holy Land. Accordingly he dressed his children in their Sabbath best. He suddenly found that he and his family were suffering from poverty and subsisting amongst the mud and overcrowding of Sha'ar Ha'aliya Camp. Though the family's situation has improved over the last thirty years, Ben Simhon's father says, 'We were rich over there in Morocco, because we felt rich. Here we feel poor because we are insulted.' Ben Simhon admitted that for much of his life he had been forced to ape Ashkenazim and deny his identity. He recounted a joke that was common amongst the Ashkenazim, that upon being asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, a Sephardi child would say 'an Ashkenazi'. Ben Simhon added that in Morocco Jewish women believed that each and every one of their ten children could be the Messiah. In Israel, however, these children have ended up in prison. He added that he and his brother were born in Morocco which is why they were able to complete their university studies. The rest of his siblings, were born in Israel had not managed as much. They became labourers. Ben Simhon recounted that when he and thirty-nine other Moroccan academics met Yigal Allon to discuss the sectarian issue, Allon said, 'the mere presence of forty Moroccan graduates sitting here with me in my office points to some accomplishment - we have made progress in this country.' Ben Simhon replied to this, 'It is surely significant that out of the forty academics, only one went to school in Israel. The rest went to

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school abroad.' In spite of having received his degree in Israel, Ben Simhon says that he is not typical of the Moroccan community -rather an exception or even a miracle. He grew up struggling and he stressed that 'this country did not give me anything.' When he did his compulsory army service, he joined a parachute brigade made up of kibbutzniks in order to be 'included' but they isolated him. He added that the kibbutzniks are the symbol of racism, in various ways. They are completely shut off from anyone who is different. When he went to the Hebrew University he started to work as a labourer to pay the fees and lived in an abandoned army camp which had been given to the university. Ben Simhon, however, was the only student housed this way. He believes that Sephardim now realise that they must organize to oppose the forces which do not represent them. He stressed the following, 'You must set up an organized opposition, ready to fight - a force which by rights is yours.' Ben Simhon described anti-Sephardi cultural oppression as 'cultural annihilation', and mentioned that he learnt nothing of his own history while he was at school. 'They just wiped out your cultural identity, you had no right to exist - according to their outlook . . . the music and the cultural programmes broadcast by the Israeli media are all foreign to me and most Sephardim.' Ben Simhon's play entitled *A Moroccan King*, about the immigration of the Jews from Morocco, describes a Jewish community in Morocco which was told that the long-awaited Jewish Messiah had appeared and had come to help them get to Jerusalem to found the kingdom of heaven on earth. Since the legend foretold that they would fly to Jerusalem astride clouds, they went up to the rooftops and jumped off in order to mount the clouds - but they fell to their deaths! The author thus intimates that the immigration of the Moroccans to Israel was mass suicide. After much effort, Ben Simhon managed to get the play produced in Israel, although with some changes to make it more palatable. (In July 1989, Ben Simhon took an active part in the Toledo Conference between Sephardi intellectuals and the PLO.)

In a special debate organized by the Jewish Agency in Kfar Hamakabiya, Asher Edan (of Tunisian origin), a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Tel Aviv, stated 'the problem is that the European colonialists came to this country and decreed that its culture would be Ashkenazi. Equality will only be obtained when Sephardim gain control of the financial resources of the state and the Histadrut.' Subsequently he became unemployed. Shlomo Tsadoq said that 'Motti Gur, the former chief of staff, fired the

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opening shots when he stated "We'll screw the Sephardim like we screwed the Arabs."

The aforementioned Dr Gabriel Ben Simhon took part in the debate, saying that 'we live in cultural exile. They have changed our culture without telling us.' Hayyim Siran, an expert in theatre, added that there was discrimination in the theatre and that it was difficult to produce plays which dealt with the Sephardi problem. He mentioned that in his position in Israeli television, he has to fight to have Sephardim employed.⁵⁷

In an interview with a correspondent of Zu Haderekh,⁵⁸ the Moroccan singer, Shlomo Bar, stated 'I want to teach my son Arabic, so that he will be able to speak with our Arab neighbours and be a bridge to peace.' Bar formed a group of Moroccan singers, called 'The Natural Choice Band', to revive Arabic music amongst the Sephardim. He said that since arriving from Morocco, he had lived in poverty and cultural deprivation. He had been constantly despised for being Moroccan and made to feel inferior. He added that his parents were so naive that they were not aware of their debased place in society and that he could not explain this to them. He stated that 95 percent of prison inmates were Moroccan owing to prevailing social conditions, and that Jews in Morocco had not been the victims of any massacres at the hands of the Muslims and that their Muslim neighbours in Morocco had always respected and prayed at the graves of Jewish saints.⁵⁹

In the aftermath of the cut-backs of the education budget, some Sephardim demanded that the subsidy to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra be cut off. The journalist, Natan Donevitz, objected to this saying that 'we must find a substitute for western music so that Orientals will like it too.' He did not, however, suggest setting up an orchestra for Arabic music.⁶⁰

THE END OF THE SEPHARDI HEBREW SCRIPT

As a step toward the 'national unity', the establishment banned the old Hebrew script which had been used by Sephardim for centuries, and imposed the use of the Ashkenazi Hebrew script. This was yet another cruel act, since most of the Hebrew documents and texts and the works written in Arabic by Sephardi intellectuals were written in this oriental Hebrew script. Sephardim had used this script when they wrote letters, diaries and accounts in Arabic, as well as using the Arabic script.

MISPRONUNCIATION OF HEBREW

Hebrew is a Semitic language which developed in the Middle East and was spoken by the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the prophet Moses, Kings David and Solomon and later by Saladin's physician Maimonides. The pronunciation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet thus corresponds with those of the Arabic alphabet. Sephardim who lived in the Middle East have pronounced them thus since the dawn of history. The Ashkenazim, on the other hand, being Europeans, cannot pronounce 50 percent of Hebrew consonants correctly. In any case, the correct pronunciation was distorted and they pronounced h like kh, the rolled r like a French r, the guttural 'ayin like a glottal stop and so on. They preserved these mispronunciations and vaunted them as part of their European identity, laughing at Sephardim who pronounce the letters correctly.

Many Sephardi children have, accordingly, taken up imitating the accents of their Ashkenazi teachers to avoid being laughed at, while others have affected Ashkenazi accents to hide their origins and to overcome discrimination in the labour market. However, since the appearance of the Black Panthers in the seventies, it has become acceptable to keep the original accent.

THE ERADICATION OF SEPHARDI WRITERS AND POETS

The answer to the question Where are the Sephardi writers and poets who immigrated to Israel is that Israel has eradicated them culturally.

The atmosphere of Zionist nationalist racism against the Arabs and everything Arab has forced these writers and poets to desist from further output. In addition, bearing in mind that it is not easy for their descendants, who have been born and raised in Israel, to learn Arabic, most of the younger generation cannot read Arabic even if they speak it at home. Thus, few people read Arabic, and it has become increasingly difficult to publish in Arabic. Some authors have taken to writing in Hebrew, including Samy Mikhael. The Iraqi Samir Naqqash is the only one who has persisted in writing his works in Arabic. It was he who declared 'I still respect myself as an Iraqi.' Naqqash in his works describes the upheaval of Sephardi emigration as 'a catastrophe' which prevented him from

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settling down anew in Israel after having been arbitrarily uprooted from Iraq. Ha'aretz described Naqash as 'a man with a complex'.⁶¹ 'He is a Jew living in the Jewish State, but he writes in Arabic.' According to Ashkenazim, this constitutes a 'complex', since they refuse to admit an historical truth - that the Sephardim are an inseparable part of Arab culture. We should mention that Ashkenazi immigrants from Soviet Russia continue to produce literary works in Russian, but this has not been described by Ha'aretz as a 'complex'!

The root of the problem is that Ashkenazi settlers attempted and are still trying to erect an iron curtain, to cut Sephardim off from their cultural homeland. Hundreds of thousands of Ashkenazim revisit their original countries and no one accuses them of treason, whereas one Sephardi from Iraq, Nawi, tried to go back to Iraq. Thereafter he was arrested and imprisoned in Israel for five years for simply trying to visit his birthplace - Baghdad.

DISREGARD OF SEPHARDI WRITERS ABROAD

The Israeli media and school syllabuses do not just ignore Sephardi cultural heritage, but also Sephardi writers, intellectuals and poets who now live outside Israel. Currently Ashkenazi Israel lauds every Ashkenazi writer or intellectual who lives in Europe or America and lays claim to him even if he distances himself from Zionism. The journalist, Benny Tsiper, writing in Ha'aretz about Sephardi intellectuals outside Israel,⁶² pointed out that it was France, and not Israel, that arranged commemorative services following the death of Albert Cohen, the Greek Sephardi who is considered one of the greatest writers of this century. His popular French novels have been published all over the world and translated into different languages. Tsiper asserted that this author represented Sephardi culture which has been ignored by Israel. He added that France had absorbed all the literary and artistic works that Sephardi intellectuals had created - those same people who in Israel are contemptuously referred to as 'the oriental communities'. He mentioned some of the writers, such as Patrick Modinanu, Edmond Zabas (of Egyptian origin) an eminent poet in France today, and Darida al-Jazairi who represents modern French philosophy. We must also mention Elias Canetti who was unknown in Israel until he won the Nobel Prize, whereupon Ha'aretz published an article on him. Although Canetti is not a Zionist, most of the article on him dealt with the 'struggle

De-Education And Cultural Oppression

of the Zionist movement in Bulgaria'.

Sephardi young people in Israel know almost nothing of their history or culture. The Zionist rulers know too well that he who has a knowledge of his culture can develop his identity, and that he who has an identity can shape his own future. In spite of that, incidents of discrimination, which the Sephardi confronts from the cradle to the grave, help to create his identity. We must also not forget that he is surrounded by 160 million Arabs who are proud of their heritage.

RESULTS OF THE POLICY OF DE-EDUCATION AND CULTURAL OPPRESSION

1. Widespread failure and illiteracy at school. The American anthropologist, Arnold Lewis, wrote an important study on this subject entitled *The Power of Misery and Education* (1979), in which he stated that a third of primary school pupils study in 'remedial' schools, or 'need special care'. According to the Ashkenazi Zionist dictionary, these expressions mean 'Sephardi'. Out of 287 pupils included in the study, there were only 22 Ashkenazi pupils. Lewis said that 25 percent of the teachers were not qualified in the subjects they were teaching. The English teacher could only speak a few words of English, and teachers tried to convince Lewis that 'these pupils' had been brought up in a 'primitive' culture, which was why their intellect and motivation were weak. Lewis confirmed that the Ministry appointed under-qualified teachers in that belief that 'these pupils' did not need high-grade teachers. The government inspector appointed a woman to teach English, for example, after she had failed at other schools. When asked about this by Lewis, the inspector replied, 'the truth is that these pupils do not need to study English because they will all be doing very simple jobs.'⁶³

The Ministry of Education published the results of its investigation into this problem, which were reported in an article by Nilly Mendler.⁶⁴ The report said that 40 percent of nine-year olds in slum districts failed in reading, writing and arithmetic whereas the national failure average was 14.3 percent. The investigation confirmed that the pupils who fail do not even know a few basic words. However, the failure rate in some districts is 20-25 percent, and this is because classes there have just 20 pupils. The headmaster of the Herzeliya School in Tel Aviv, Dr Carmi

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Yogev, stated that 80 percent of the Sephardi pupils, who finish their elementary education in the Hatikvah slum district, cannot read or write. They do not know the whole alphabet and have a minimal grasp of the language. In the development towns, 60-70 percent of the children are classified as remedial.⁶⁵

Zu Haderekh, quoting Yizhak Kadmon, Chairman of the Social Workers Union, reported⁶⁶ that 14,000 illiterates had joined the armed forces over the previous three years. It also reported that a prison inmate costs the state I£180,000 per annum whereas the treatment of a juvenile delinquent costs much less than that: approximately I£10,000.

Owing to the low level of education available for Sephardim in the slum districts and the development towns, some families have started sending their children to boarding schools. These are generally religious, agricultural, vocational or military schools. The number of boarders between the ages of 13 and 18 is between 15 and 20 percent of the school population. The Public Committee for the Defence of Sephardi Education carried out a study which showed that the level of education in these boarding schools is not much better than in the schools of the slum districts. This means that the child at boarding schools is physically removed from his family, with the resultant psychological problems, but he does not get a better education for all that.⁶⁷ In addition to psychological damage, the boarding schools manage to cut the pupils off from their cultural environment, and inculcate them with either religious or political extremism, or both. In the yeshivot of Degel Hatora they have to speak Yiddish.

In the Ashkenazi schools, the educational standard has remained high in spite of cutbacks. These schools have started paying teachers of subjects, such as mathematics and science, three times as much as other teachers. The director of the Ministry of Education, Dr Shoshani, is aware of this, but declared that it was an 'necessary evil'. One of the most corrupt acts is to pay a teacher for two or three hours when he has taught only one. Parents have also started paying extra fees so their children can study subjects not on the curriculum, something over which the Ashkenazi Teachers Unions have been remarkably quiet. Teaching in state schools has thus been divided into two parts, one for the rich and one for the poor. Nurit Dovrat, the journalist who published these facts,⁶⁸ stated that this phenomenon, termed 'grey education', can also be found in the health service where it is called 'black health'. Nahman Raz of Kibbutz Geva, Chairman of the Parliamentary Education