

THE NEW IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL

According to eye-witness reports recently received, the atmosphere in Israel is charged with bitterness and resentment. More than 200,000 former DP's from the concentration camps of Germany, Austria, and Italy as well as Jews from some Islamic countries entered Israel in hope of finding there the many promised opportunities of starting a new and peaceful life. What they found was anything but such a chance. The authorities are not even able to provide the flood of new settlers with any living accommodations whatever. Only one third of the new arrivals found quarters in the deserted homes of the forcibly evicted Arabs. More than 150,000 of these unhappy people are placed in camps that bear a dismal resemblance to the dwellings they had but recently left. The lack of adequate food, medical care and proper shelter creates a desperate situation. Some cases of suicide were reported; "squatters" moved into homes of some old timers. There are hunger strikes and angry demonstrations of resentful people who came to the State of Israel tempted by the careless promises of the Zionists.

Israeli opinion is aroused. The press accuses the new arrivals of thievery and other criminal acts. Another segment of public opinion decries the new immigrants' lack of idealism and of the spirit of sacrifice. Leading Zionist personalities demand that the unchecked immigration movement of Jews into Israel be stopped. They believe the gates of the new state should be closed at least temporarily, so that the flood which endangers the young state may be rammed.

There is no doubt whatever that the new state is not yet ready to accept as many immigrants as are directed into it. The Negeb desert could conceivably be developed by idealistic pioneers into an habitable region. The area, however, is not a territory where tired and exhausted people who had gone through

the ordeal of Nazi persecution and years of exile could gain a new start toward a peaceful life—the only thing they desire. We do not deny the right of Zionist pioneers to sacrifice their lives on the shrine of the State of Israel. What we resent is the Zionist practice of luring plain people, who have no desire to do pioneer work, with all manner of promises, only to use them to develop the deserts.

Let us not forget that the plight of the new arrivals in the State of Israel, terrible as it is at the present time, would have been even worse had the Arab population not been driven from the Israeli territory. At present, when more than half a million Arab displaced persons are demanding permission to return to their former homes, the State of Israel is not in a position to provide shelter and work for the new Jewish settlers. How the State of Israel could possibly cope with a Jewish immigration of any scope without the "miracle" of the vanished Arabs is beyond anybody's imagination. Yet the Arab refugee problem remains most urgent, and it is to be hoped that it will be solved according to humane principles rather than by the methods of irresponsible nationalism.

Before the establishment of Israel and while the Arab-Jewish hostilities were in progress, Zionists were quite boastful about the immigration possibilities of the State of Israel. When the British Government mentioned the possibility, under certain conditions, of permitting 100,000 new Jews to enter Palestine, the Zionists were loudly resentful at the suggestion. And even now, when some of the more responsible Zionists demand that immigration be restricted, the majority of the Zionist rulers of Israel maintain that "the more people the better for the State of Israel. We need them for two purposes: to fight the Arabs and to develop the desert. We regret the casualties, but they are necessary if we want the State of Israel".

State versus human lives is the slogan of all nationalism. The Jewish brand is no exception.
