

*We will be a light unto nations*

*But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt*

Going back having moved forward.

Back home it takes on yet another perspective. Describing it in shorthand to others who have no conception of the complicated mixture of emotions. So I say, to circumvent it all, its like being white in South Africa, and yes in some ways that describes it. But it misses out the horror, the sense of shock and the feeling of betrayal and yet at the same time the defensiveness, hearing people say you have no right to judge, you don't live here and don't want to make aliyah. But to come back after eighteen years and feel less at home, less identification, to see the worst aspects of a people brought to the fore and the positive messages of the culture buried beneath the jackboots of the army. For a people denied their rights for centuries, murdered and tortured, to turn round and do the same has to be the saddest indictment of humanity.

Next year in Jerusalem. No longer a sentiment to feel identification with. Jerusalem, more oppressive than anywhere else. Beautiful, tragic Jerusalem, streets bathed in golden light, narrow secretive passageways steeped in history. With one stride I pass from the beautiful, carefully reconstructed Jewish quarter to the dilapidated arab quarter. Everywhere Israeli army patrols, on top of the Damascus Gate an Israeli soldier watches, gun in hand, the wheelings and dealings of arab stallkeepers. Omnipresent, the mistaken belief that normal life can continue in the shadow of the gun.

It can't. People wander through the markets, buy food, clothes, laugh, argue and jostle but stand aside for the Israeli patrols which push their way through. Tourists follow the stations of the cross down the Via Dolorosa, in and out of souvenir shops. So careful to avoid answering in the wrong language, is he an arab or a jew, so I speak english.

A metaphor for the whole of Israel - its not possible to tell the difference except by external tokens, a kippah, a keffiyeh or items of jewellery. Instead of reassurance, this provokes fear.

For a woman, wandering through the old city is a peculiarly dislocating experience. There are no half measures. Sitting in the Jewish quarter square surrounded by hosts of children with mothers in wigs or hats despite the heat of the sun. Black coated chasids scurry past, not a question of averted eyes, more an attitude of beneath their dignity to acknowledge existence of the unclean. For women, it is not a question of extremes, only of one extreme. As if nothing has moved on from the days of 'a woman of virtue her price is far above rubies'. No scope to be different, surrounded by the weight of uncompromising conformity.

And so I sit, self-consciously aware of being an interloper, no more at home here than anywhere else.

As the light drops the square fills with etiolated young men in black, anywhere else their slightly foetid air would provoke concern for their health, earnestly arguing with each other. Their unhealthiness reminds me of ghetto pictures from pre-nazi europe, I start to re-examine my assumptions, the palour having nothing to do with the exigencies of life then, but to do with their way of living it.

- Contrary to myths in the West, Soviet Jewish emigration not due to either western pressure or vagaries of soviet attitude to jews. Complex mixture of reasons. Underlying is the general issues of soviet nationality policy and low level general misturst of jews in russia.
- But definite stages of the movement - initially, highly motivated, zionist, religious. Also split in terms of where from. Most jews assimilated and so emigration for economic/social reasons, jews from areas not Soviet pre-1945 least assimilated and less invested in the system so more eager to leave.

*"Data provided by soviet sociologists confirm the thesis that today the new middle class is the main carrier of nationalism, used as an instrument of struggle against other ethnic groups for economic and political privilege. These findings confirm the central marxist tenets that an ethnic group is not a homogenous entity. It is divided into social classes, and different social classes and groups have different types and degrees of structurally determined receptivity to nationalist ideas."*

*"The conflict between soviet jewry and the regime is not externally induced, accidental or dependant on some psychological characteristics of the soviet leaders. It is an inevitable consequence of the social characteristics of soviet jewry and soviet nationality policy, both of which have been shaped by internal economic and political realities stretching back to the beginning of this centuray and even beyond."*

1965 - 78

497 protest demonstrations

64.5% national demonstrations

80% of these organised by Jews, Germans and Crimean Tartars

(54.3% jews)

Fears for access to education and job opportunities for children of jews have roots in the late 60's, Brezhnev era.

Rise of anit-semitism - not insitutionalised, mainly russian

*"The policy of restricting jewish access to higher education comes from above and is santioned by the ideology of combating 'subversive zionism' (but due to other ethinc pressures, surplus of highly educated, need to control national feelings in republics etc). Pragmatic anti-semitism of convenience, reinforced by nationalistic russian ideology, surges spontaneously from below, from the russian educated class. There is no doubt that russian*

nationalism does not correspond to the policy of sovietisation and has an anti-soviet character.

Three reactions -

1. emigration movement

2. 'ideology of assimilation' - issue produced by the passport system, 'it would be sufficient to remove these points from questionnaires and passports and to forbid personnel departments to take an interest in the nationality of the person being offered employment for the assimilation of jews to proceed at a considerably increased pace' (Medvedev)

3. 'ideology of professional superiority' 'used to the fact that they must work more and better than others to attain this status and must display particular enterprise.' So 'the jew is not just a soviet subject but to some extent, a positive supporter of the system'

'The jews are a welcome element in the Pax Sovietica with two strict provisos: that they assimilate completely and that they don't occupy leading positions.'

(also that they don't occupy too many positions in the middle class)

So policy of allowing emigration as solves the number problem and also encouraging assimilation as numbers become more acceptable. (pg116 - 117)

pre-74 almost all jewish emigres went to Israel

post-73 drop in no to Israel. static then rise in non-Israel

By August 1981 proportion of noshrim was nearly 90%

Israeli survey - immigrants who did not settle in Israel tended to stress political and economic motives for leaving USSR and state that their jewish experiences were mainly negative.

immigrants to Israel tended to emphasise ethnic motivations to a greater extent and reveal that their jewish experiences were on the whole more positive

\* Its no surprise that myths propounded, that west sees itself as having exerted leverage when in fact not the case. Nor is any surprise that anti-semitism is also not necessarily a key factor. Anti-semitism subsidiary to economic issues and only comes into play when economic circumstances present.

Look at immigration as a middle-class exercise. Although other factors must come into play - as Israel not the best place to go so must be a certain amount of desperation. But that desperation likely to be of an economic nature, particularly now.

QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED -

1. Main reasons for leaving
2. Subsidiary reasons for leaving
3. What would have had to be different in order to stay
4. Who wanted to leave - main motivator
5. What factors made it difficult - friends, family etc
6. Was Israel a positive choice
7. How much had you heard about Israel
8. Expected problems - economic
9. - social
10. Problems actually met
11. Difference between men and women's experience
12. Would you go back - under what circumstances
13. What do you miss
14. Long term future

Need to look at the long term affects on general population of influx of higher educated and different ethos. Also likely effects in terms of general shift to the right in politics.

Affect on Palestinians of soviet jews and potential numbers

reading all this stuff about Israel I forget the purpose of why I'm going and concentrate instead on the danger, wanting to meet and discuss the palestinian issue and how difficult travel in the West Bank will be. I forget that that is not why I am going. Having said that I must make sure I have access to settlers from SU in occupied territories and ask non-settlers how they feel about that as their likely future.

It all feels very odd. It's so long since I've been there and when I was there I was so young and insecure. I can remember the harassment from men so clearly and the hassles just walking down the street but it was before I was really politically aware and the politics of it all just passed me by. How different now.

So why am I so negative about going. Partly Joe, partly the hassles of setting up any new project. But something else underlying it. My own insecurity. Having to face all the hassles of a new project but with the additional emotional issues. Throwback to adolescence.

So many strands running through it all. Separating them out really difficult.

Why is fanaticism so frightening and so deadly ? Because it gives no ground to reason.

*Stephen Brook - pg 242, quoting Dr Yakhod -*

*'To be a Jew and an Israeli are as different as day and night, For years the refuseniks have been identified as Jews and then overnight they had to become Israelis. Soviets who live in the United States are still Jews and like to identify with Jews. They remain conscious of anti-semitism because of their constant humiliation in Russia and as a result they feel overwhelmingly Jewish. For me, as an Israeli, this talk which I hear all the time when I visit the United States, is meaningless.'*

*- even their sense of Jewishness jeopardised after emigration.*