

ISRAEL AND THE NAZIS

by Amnon Katz

Being in Israel again, twenty two years after I left it for good, proved a powerful cultural shock.

There is substance to Hitler's favorite term *Weltanschauung* (world picture). Truth is in the eye of the beholder. What he sees is largely preset in his own mind. The people in Israel are exposed to the same news that we watch. They get it directly from CNN. They observe the same facts, but see something entirely different. What *they* see is one phenomenon and one only: intolerance - racial, ethnic, and religious. They elevate this phenomenon to a law of nature. They predict and eagerly anticipate the triumph of intolerance everywhere.

In this country the fall of the Soviet Union is seen as the triumph of personal and commercial freedom over Communism. In Israel it is viewed as the inevitable downfall of any framework in which different ethnicities and religions are supposed to coexist. The USA, in their view, is not much better off. The It is a total failure (as the LA riots amply demonstrate). Give it a few more years, and it, too, will disintegrate for the same reason.

The strife in Yugoslavia or the rumor that Slovakia may secede from its union with Czechia are obvious confirmations of the thesis. The unification of Europe? A pipe dream! Opening of borders in Europe? "Ethnic suicide." Give the union ten years, and it will disintegrate. Or the Germans will take it all.

Negative motivation has been part of Zionism since its inception. The official founder, Theodor Herzl, conceived his idea as a reaction to the Dreyfus trial in 1895. At that time the modern Jewish resettlement of Palestine had already been underway for ten years. The people who thought out and who acted out this saga, before Herzl and after him, were in part moved by anti-semitism in Europe culminating in bloody pogroms in Russia. But as the drama in Palestine unfolded, the participants found a host of positive motives. In the forties, with immigration restricted by the British, the locally raised generation became dominant in the fight for independence. For them, antisemitism was a faraway abstraction, while their own country, which they called "Land of Israel", was the reality.

The new Palestinian community rediscovered the traits required for sovereignty: Control of land, mastery of agriculture, a full spectrum of occupations and skills, dispersion of population, armed militancy... Each one of these was a step away from the tradition of the Jewish communities from which they or their parents originated. And with each step grew