



FROM EUROPE'S EAST TO THE MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL'S RUSSIAN AND POLISH LINEAGES

EDITED BY

KENNETH B. MOSS, BENJAMIN NATHANS,

AND TARO TSURUMI

From Europe's East to the Middle East

JEWISH CULTURE AND CONTEXTS

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Introduction

Kenneth B. Moss, Benjamin Nathans, and Taro Tsurumi

In popular discourse, Israel is often defined as an enclave of the West in the Middle East—either as “the region’s only democracy” or as a “remnant of European colonialism.” Many scholars, reluctant to adopt such single-minded categories, have nonetheless situated Israel and Zionism in contexts decisively defined by Western and Central European trajectories. In addition to the projection of West European imperial power overseas, these trajectories include the emergence and globalization of the European nation-state, the recasting of a Jewish national consciousness stamped by Europe’s nationalist moment, and the rise of a newly racialized anti-Semitism. Situating Israel within these historical trajectories is particularly important insofar as the conflict in Palestine/Israel today is largely defined as a contest over statehood, national self-determination, and Israel’s self-definition as a Jewish state—a point brought home most recently by the controversial “nation-state law” passed by Israel’s parliament (Knesset) in July 2018, which declares that “the right to national self-determination in Israel” belongs “uniquely to the Jewish people.”¹

Yet neither this retrospective view nor the definition of Israel as a Western enclave does full justice to historical reality. Most of the protagonists of Israel’s founding—and indeed most of Palestine’s Jews prior to the 1940s—were born and raised in Eastern Europe, in the territory that spans today’s Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and parts of Russia. They were products of Eastern Europe’s specific Jewish cultural formations (and intra-Jewish conflicts), as well as of Eastern Europe’s distinctive path to modernity, in which multiethnic empire was the predominant form, both democracy and overseas empire figured very little, and the nation-state was both the focus of intense aspiration and late in coming. Indeed, one of the early puzzles of Israeli society was how East European Jews could have spawned, in the space of a single generation, a society renowned for its martial democracy. The present volume takes its point of departure from the simple proposition (which will grow more complicated in its

elaboration) that there is much we cannot understand about the history of Zionism as an ideology and transnational movement, about Jewish life in Ottoman and British Palestine, and about the history of Israel without renewed attention to this East European genealogy.

Place, of course, is not synonymous with identity. Earlier experiences do not predetermine later trajectories, and we ought not fall into the trap—one with its own popular if increasingly faded pedigree in Israel—of seeing the history of Jewish life in Palestine and the history of Israel as essentially an extension of East European (Jewish) political and cultural ideals and conflicts into a putatively empty social space. In this volume's bid to renew and recast historical attention to the nexus among East European Jewry, the transnational movement that Zionism became, and the state and society that Israel is, the editors and participants do not seek to produce another version of this well-worn narrative. It does seem clear to us, however, that the historiography of Zionism, Israel, and Palestine needs to turn or perhaps return its attention to the history of East European Jewry in order to understand questions manifestly central to it—not least because of how differently historians have come to understand the modern histories of Eastern Europe and its Jewries in the past few years.² To take one example: The question of Zionism's (and Israel's) relationship to European colonialism has rightly commanded a tremendous amount of historiographical attention in recent years. Yet even as historians have moved beyond polemical binarism toward a more nuanced appreciation of how Zionism was simultaneously permeated by European colonialist and Orientalist sensibilities and shaped by a peculiar kind of Jewish colonial condition,³ the filaments that connect this rather abstractly cultural story to the nationalists who founded the state of Israel and shaped its policies toward Jews and Palestinians remain barely visible.

One way to render those filaments visible is by applying the techniques of transnational history, an approach that highlights movements, ideas, and population flows operating across conventional nation-state borders, above or below relations among states themselves. In one sense, of course, transnational phenomena are nothing new in Jewish history; they have been a defining quality of the Jews' millennia-long dispersion, linking rabbis and merchants across far-flung regions. But transnational phenomena—including the Jewish variety—acquired new power and significance in the era of globalization. Novel technologies of travel and communication shrank the distance between Europe and other parts of the world, even as a new Jewish cohort of activist intellectuals, self-described modernizers, joined the fray. It also seems important to us to investigate further the specific and multilayered ways by which Zionism became an ever more transnational politics: A movement originating at the intersection of Russian Jewish and Central European Jewish agendas became entangled in the interwar period with

British imperial politics, an increasingly U.S.-centered Jewish transnational politics, and—not least—Polish and Eastern European national politics, all at once.

David Engel's chapter in this volume (Chapter 9) illustrates the explanatory leverage of such an approach when applied to Eastern Europe and Israel. Engel reconstructs a tradition of thought and statecraft in interwar Polish nationalism in which the guiding principle was a conception of the state as the jointly held inalienable property of the Polish ethnonational community; on this principle, the Polish state was to serve both as executor of a neutral commonweal that might include all of Poland's citizens and as the caretaker of the real Polish people's property and the needs of its true owners. Engel begins to show us how, in their interaction with Polish ethnonationalism, Zionists contested but also absorbed and emulated this approach, which proved well-suited to the ideological needs of a movement that aspired simultaneously to some forms of supra-ethnic citizenship and democracy and to an aggressive program of compensatory institution building, land taking, economic development, cultural reformation, and ethnic self-determination for its Jewish majority. Anyone who studies the ways in which successive Israeli governments have treated Israel's Palestinian citizens (in relation to how they have treated Israel's variegated Jewish population as both subject and object of development) will experience a shock of recognition upon reading Engel's chapter. To be sure, for Palestinians in Israel and perhaps too under Israeli control in the occupied territories, the question of whether they are living under a West European model or a variant of the Polish ethnonational statehood model may seem academic. Yet historians have good reason to pursue the question of how such East European "solutions" to the problem of reconciling compensatory-developmental ethnonationalism, modern citizenship, and the fact of multi-ethnicity shaped Zionist practices toward both Jews and Arabs.

The payoff of a piece like Engel's lies in how it captures the impact of an East European ideological formation in Palestine and Israel—one of the themes of the present volume. Engel's essay also embodies a second concern central to this volume: rethinking the history of Zionism itself by reopening the question of how that movement, although transnational, was shaped and reshaped by the challenges of Jewish life in Eastern Europe—problems that changed dramatically over the sixty years spanning the birth of the Love of Zion movement in 1881 and the beginning of the destruction of East European Jewry in 1941. Unsurprisingly, the history of Zionism was for a long time written from within the ideological conflicts that consumed the movement. Historians naturally took as their research program an investigation of this or that aspect of what was understood as a sustained conflict between "political Zionism" and "cultural Zionism," or between "bourgeois" Zionists and those who combined their Zionism with socialist ideas, or between the movement's secular and religious streams. There

was (and remains) much merit to such approaches. And there is surely just as much merit in the countervailing drive among more recent scholars of Zionism to seek out the affiliations of Zionist thought and imagination with largely West European forms of thinking about the East, about “modernity” and “barbarism,” about Jews and Judaism, Arabs and Islam.

The present volume does not reject these approaches in favor of East European formations in the history of Zionist political culture, even in Eastern Europe itself. After all, if Eastern Europe had ever constituted a self-contained cultural zone—a notion which, as Larry Wolff famously demonstrated, may have been more a modern Western invention than anything else⁴—this certainly became less the case in the era of Zionism’s birth. Fin-de-siècle Eastern Europe experienced particularly rapid and wrenching change in social, economic, cultural, and political life even before the violent metamorphosis wrought by war and imperial collapse in the 1914–1921 “continuum of crisis.”⁵ As historians of Eastern Europe have long recognized, Russian and other East European intelligentsias oriented much of their social thought and their competing visions of modernization toward some construal of the West. In Eastern Europe, as in the Ottoman Empire and points further east, modernity projects were shaped in relation to an initial impulse toward self-conscious “Westernization,” and this was manifestly no less the case with Zionism than with other “East European” ideological formations that flourished in the region—perhaps indeed more so, given Zionism’s pan-European presence.

This should not blind us, however, to the many ways that distinctive social, political, and intellectual terrains of imperial and postimperial Eastern Europe *did* bear powerfully on the character of the Jewish modernity projects born there, Zionism included. To rehearse some familiar but essential points in brief, Europe’s eastern half was fractiously multiethnic: a region in which multiple populations, including the Jews, were pervasively distinguished—and often enough, divided—by religious confession and calendar, economic function, language, dress, endogamy, and, lending meaning to such differences, self-identity. This made for fluidity but, even more so, conflict, well before the rise of modern nationalisms. The political structure within which many Jews lived prior to World War I was a complicated *mélange* of interventions by imperial governments (often with results quite different from those the state had intended); the persistence of the traditional communal system (*kahal*), which in various ways continued to shape Jewish daily life; and emergent municipal and civic structures shot through with contradictions and tensions peculiar to the conflicted modernization project of the autocratic state and new forms of ethnopolitics.

In late imperial Russia, ethnic identity continued to be shaped by occupational differences: Jews were not merely an ethnic and religious minority but a

loosely assembled caste of merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans in a still mostly agrarian society. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, these distinctions became increasingly politicized. East European Jews encountered a more complex terrain of ethnic antagonisms and emergent nationalisms than did their West European counterparts. Jews in tsarist Russia stood between Russian imperial nationalism and Polish and Ukrainian ethnic nationalisms, while suffering from popular anti-Semitic violence. Zionists both reacted against and emulated such plural nationalisms and violence. Furthermore, this distinctive sociopolitical matrix was matched by a cultural situation utterly unlike that of West European Jews. Whereas the Jews of Western and much of Central Europe encountered the late nineteenth century as part of the general European bourgeois *Lebenswelt* and as Frenchmen and Germans in their own eyes, the Jews of Eastern Europe confronted modernity for the most part as inhabitants of a distinct and densely encompassing realm of religious-cultural practices, beliefs, norms, and narratives that was deemed by all concerned to stand in some profound and unsustainable tension with that modernity. And those who survived the era of war and revolution in Eastern Europe experienced a wrenching political transformation unlike anything their West European Jewish counterparts encountered: a sudden transition from imperial subjecthood to a new world of aspiring nation-states for which the existence of minorities was not a given but a problem.

Part I of the present volume, “Imperial and National Crucibles,” takes up that transition, exploring not just what Jews left behind but what they took with them after centuries of immersion in various East European imperial settings. Moving beyond the well-charted influence of Russia’s revolutionary subculture on the formation of Jewish political parties, Israel Bartal, in Chapter 1, “‘Little Russia’ in Palestine? Imperial Past, National Future (1860–1948),” links population resettlement projects sponsored by the Russian imperial state, starting in the early nineteenth century, to subsequent Jewish ambitions for resettlement in Palestine. Decades before the Zionist movement embraced the idea of turning Jews into farmers and anchoring them in the lands of ancient Israel, the tsarist government sought to advance its hold over “New Russia”—another territory wrested from the decaying Ottoman Empire—in part by stimulating the migration of Jews from the northwest provinces of the Pale of Settlement. Much more was at work here than simply the technique of using managed resettlement to create geopolitical facts on the ground. Animated by Enlightenment notions of progress, tsarist authorities understood resettlement on farms in formerly Ottoman lands on the northern littoral of the Black Sea as a means to cure Jews of their alleged social parasitism, turning them into productive, useful subjects. Seen against the broader background of population policies in Russia’s imperial borderlands, the

waves of Jewish resettlement in Palestine between 1882 and 1923 (the various *aliyot*) begin to look less anomalous.

Just as the Zionist project of cultivating a Jewish peasantry owed much to its imperial Russian predecessor, Bartal argues, so too the urban culture forming in Tel Aviv in the 1920s and 1930s drew on the experience of Odessa and other port cities in New Russia, which had similarly sprung as if from nowhere. The radical émigrés from the tsarist empire who gathered in Tel Aviv quickly formed the New Yishuv's political and cultural elite, with ambitions for social engineering that matched those of the authorities in Saint Petersburg across much of the previous century. Indeed, as Tsurumi notes in Chapter 2, "From Hyphenated Jews to Independent Jews: The Collapse of the Russian Empire and the Change in the Relationship Between Jews and Others," a significant subset of the Zionist leadership in Russia was convinced that the social effects unleashed by the struggle to create a modern Jewish state would extend back to Russia's Jews, who even the most optimistic Zionists understood would continue—or so it seemed at the beginning of the twentieth century—to constitute the majority of the world's Jewish population. Contrary to the image of Zionists as having consigned the Jewish diaspora to the dustbin of history, Tsurumi uses the example of Daniel Pasmanik to illustrate a Zionism intent on elevating the Jews' status within the Russian imperial framework, recasting them as a nation-in-the-remaking, fully capable of forging alliances with other national groups within the empire, above all with ethnic Russians.

Tsurumi's investigation uncovers two unexpected phenomena. First, Zionists such as Pasmanik found themselves remarkably well aligned with their Jewish rivals, liberal activists such as Maxim Vinaver and Simon Dubnow, and for a brief period even collaborated with them in the campaign for Jewish political and civil rights in Russia. Rather than a purely tactical move, Tsurumi insists, engagement with domestic Russian politics represented a Zionist strategy of nation building *within* an imperial framework, and thus a sign of a certain reservoir of confidence vis-à-vis the majority Russian population. And therein lies the second unexpected phenomenon: In contrast to their fellow Jews in France, Germany, and other West European countries, whose social advancement seemed to require constant refutation of the charge that they constituted a "nation within the nation," many Jews in Russia—Zionists such as Pasmanik among them—became convinced that social advancement required that they assert themselves precisely as a nation among the empire's other nations.

It was not so much the collapse of the imperial Russian state in 1917 that put an end to such dreams—both the Provisional and the Bolshevik governments were prepared to preside over a multinational polity—but rather the massive wave of anti-Jewish pogroms that followed, claiming many tens of thousands of

Jewish lives. Not only was the number of casualties incomparably greater than in previous pogrom waves (e.g., in 1881–1883 or 1903–1906); it was no longer possible, even for those so inclined, to place responsibility for the pogroms on the state, for the simple reason that during the latest wave of violence and civil war (1918–1921), the state had in effect evaporated. For Pasmanik and like-minded Zionists, Tsurumi writes, the multinational Russian incubator of Jewish nationhood had ceased to exist, leaving as the sole option the independent pursuit of a sovereign Jewish nation-state in the ancient homeland. Henceforth, Jewish nationalism would perform as a soloist rather than as a member of an ensemble.

As Anita Shapira notes in Chapter 3, “Jewish Palestine and Eastern Europe: I Am in the East and My Heart Is in the West,” the Bolshevik Revolution cut off the transnational Zionist movement, including the Yishuv, from what hitherto had been its most important human reservoir. Emigration from the newly established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was reduced to a trickle. In a sense, Zionists from the Russian Empire had always lived at some remove from Russia itself, insofar as the vast majority of them came from the empire’s non-Russian peripheries, where they had lived among Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, and others. The Russians they knew best were the ones who populated the classics of Russian literature, the Bazarovs, Karamazovs, and Kareninas whom the émigrés took with them to Palestine. Surveying a wide range of memoiristic and literary representations of Russia and Poland by Jews in Palestine and later in the State of Israel, Shapira finds a stark divide. “Russia became a myth,” she writes, “and admiration for it increased precisely because the real Russia was inaccessible.” By contrast, among Jews from Poland, who dominated the waves of immigration during the interwar period, the increasingly bourgeois and militantly nationalistic tenor of Polish life remained both familiar and real. Among the left-leaning majority in the Yishuv, this generated a widespread antipathy to the Polish legacy, as contrasted with the abiding romance of Russia’s soulfulness and universal ambitions. For Jews on the right, Shapira claims, Polish ethnic nationalism was both exclusionary and formative.

The multilayered relationship between Polish and Jewish nationalisms lies at the heart of Chapter 4, by Marcos Silber, “Stateless Nation: A Reciprocal Motif in Polish Nationalism and Zionism.” In much of the existing historiography, Zionism in Poland has been portrayed as either an imported product, brought by Jewish immigrants from Russian-controlled Lithuania (the so-called Litvaks), or as a movement that developed locally as a compensatory Jewish response to hostile Polish nationalism. Both of these accounts reinforced an idea favored not just by Zionism but by Jewish tradition, namely, that modern Jewish nationalism drew on internal Jewish idioms and sources via a process of organic renewal from within. By contrast, Silber finds a deeply reciprocal relationship whereby

nineteenth-century Polish writers came to terms with their own exile and statelessness—Poland having been erased from the map of Europe by the encroaching empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria—by appropriating the ancient Jewish motif of the nation deprived of its state but nonetheless intact and alive. The great poet Adam Mickiewicz, whose wife descended from a Jewish family belonging to the sect of Jacob Frank, was the key figure in the process of appropriation, a process that translated the ancient Maccabean revolt into the language of modern romantic nationalism, and thus into prototypes for Mickiewicz's generation of exiles who dreamed of resurrecting the Polish state.

Mickiewicz's image of Jews as the paradigmatic stateless nation, Silber shows, came to permeate nineteenth-century Polish literature, art, and public discourse. One of its unintended effects was to make ancient Jewish motifs palatable, even attractive, to acculturated Polish Jews who had been busily distancing themselves from traditional Judaism, only to find fin-de-siècle Polish culture taking an increasingly anti-Semitic turn. Polish literature in particular, with its contemporary valorization of the Maccabean rebels, served as a mold, Silber argues, into which Jews could "pour Zionist materials." Expanding on the chapters in this volume by Engel and Shapira, Silber traces the influence of Polish nationalism on Zionist Jews in terms of its productive as well as exclusionary effects, and not only on right-wing Revisionists, but across the political spectrum of the Yishuv.

The assumption that Jewish life in Palestine and Israel was deeply shaped by the East European Jewish background of so many of prestate Palestine's Jewish immigrants is, as we have noted, foundational in academic scholarship as well as in wide swaths of Israel's segmented and divided public memory and popular culture. Yet, as with any foundational assumption, particularly one bound up with the sense of self cherished by a society's dominant elements, this is one that is in perpetual need of critical scholarly scrutiny. Perhaps in part in reaction to the enduring power of this assumption, for several decades now much key revisionist work on the history of Palestine, the Yishuv, and Israel has deemphasized East European legacies and instead emphasized the powerful influence of local Palestinian factors and encounters on the evolution of Zionist, Yishuv, and Israeli-Jewish institutions. Well aware of this far-reaching challenge to the old paradigm, the chapters in Part II of the present volume, "Groups and Institutions," take upon themselves the task of revisiting the overdetermined history of East European "transplantation" onto Palestine's and Israel's soil with sharpened and chastened critical instincts.

Ziva Galili, in Chapter 5, "The Paradox of Soviet Influence: The Case of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir from USSR," reconstructs how the political sensibilities and choices of the members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir in Palestine were pervasively shaped throughout the 1930s and beyond by beliefs, assumptions,

and habits of thought born of the members' particular shared experience in early 1920s Revolutionary Russia. Many socialist Zionist movements in Palestine drew some sort of vague inspiration from the Revolution, but this particular cohort was forged in the unique alembic of the Russian Revolution's early sociopolitical experimentation, mobilization, and radical sociopolitical reordering. Consequently, they came to Palestine imbued with confidence in the possibility of "socialist construction" on a grand scale, extreme commitment to atheism and to socialist ideological consistency generally, a vision of how class and national identities could be reconciled that was drawn not from socialist Zionism's synthesizer-of-choice Ber Borochov but from Bolshevik nationalities-policy assumptions, and a deep sense that revolution required all radical elements to unite into a single encompassing party. Where the first half of Galili's chapter reconstructs in rich detail the process whereby these sensibilities were implanted, appropriated, and negotiated among the tight-knit circles of the Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir movement in the early 1920s Soviet Union, the second part explores the tension-ridden "translation," in her felicitous term, of this ideological "legacy" in "the radically different context in Palestine." Galili reconstructs the influence of Soviet Marxist political-intellectual convictions on the kibbutz members' choices regarding the most fundamental questions of the era for Left Zionism generally, from the relationship of socialist Zionists to the rising power of Ben-Gurion's and Berl Katznelson's Ahdut ha-'avodah Party to the emerging conflict between Jews and Palestinians.

Iris Brown, in Chapter 6, "Triumphs of Conservatism: Beit Yaakov and the Polish Origins of *Haredi* Girls' Education in Israel," embodies the same careful delineation of a specific case of transplantation—and at the same time points readers toward a very different topic in the history of connections between East European Jewish and Israeli society: those between East European Jewish and Israeli ultra-Orthodox, or *haredi*, Judaism. Like Galili, Brown lays aside any general account of transplantation in favor of a focused reconstruction of the East European history (or histories) of a particular Israeli institution: the flourishing Beit Yaakov/Beys Yankev educational network, which provides a strict Orthodox education to girls and young women. Brown shows us, first, that through the 1920s, the Beys Yankev school system was actually a far cry from what it is today. Under the pedagogical leadership of the now-forgotten Shmuel Deutschlaender, Beys Yankev actually hewed to a line surprisingly close to that of nineteenth-century German Jewish Modern Orthodoxy, defined by the "encourage[ment of] a combination of Judaism and general culture." Yet the story here is not, as we might expect, of a surprisingly flexible East European Jewish traditionalism undone by a more consistently anti-modern ultra-Orthodoxy in Israel. Thus, second, Brown shows us that, in fact, Deutschlaender's humanistic curriculum was ejected from the Beys Yankev schools in the 1930s in Poland itself, by Hasidic

educational leaders like Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean, who felt that Deutschlaender had “enmeshed” Beys Yankev “in the Enlightenment psychosis.” In that sense, Beys Yankev came to Israel already purged of non-haredi sensibilities and suited to provide haredi society in Israel with women equipped to be self-sacrificing and self-directing bearers of Orthodoxy’s mission to sustain its now-massive *bevrat ha-lomdim*, the “society of [male] learners” in which men are enjoined to devote themselves as far as possible to lifelong full-time study of Judaism’s classical texts.

As ultra-Orthodoxy moves from strength to strength in contemporary Israeli society, new generations of scholars are investigating its history without the weight of secularist assumptions about its inevitable decline. In turn, these scholars are also going beyond a binary image of haredi Judaism as either a direct continuation of East European ultra-Orthodoxy (whether “vital” or “fossilized”) or as something utterly recast by the radically new conditions of life in a declaredly Jewish state with a Jewish but non-Orthodox majority and public sphere. Benjamin Brown, in Chapter 7, “Hasidic Leadership: From Charismatic to Hereditary and Back,” provides a study in religious phenomenology that constitutes a challenge to the very idea that the development of haredi Judaism in Eastern Europe or Israel—or anywhere else—can be satisfactorily explained in terms of the influence of external institutional contexts. Brown’s essay concerns the hereditary mode of leadership that marks one of the defining features of Hasidism, the pietistic religious movement that came to dominate East European Jewish religiosity in the nineteenth century and that remains central to the ever-expanding global world of ultra-Orthodoxy today. Brown’s chapter investigates three types of deviations or complications in the twentieth century and up to the present: cases of tzaddikim who were dynastic heirs but also wielded unusual charisma in their own right; cases of new, that is, self-made tzaddikim; and the recent phenomenon of *mashpi'im*, preachers who are not tzaddikim but who nonetheless attract substantial followings among Hasidim, not least via new media. Brown is ultimately guarded in making claims about how these alternatives to dynastic leadership are connected, if at all, to Hasidism’s undoubtedly wrenching transition from Eastern Europe to Israel. Brown’s chapter presents an important challenge to historians’ common assumptions about the determining power of institutional environments (“context”) and exemplifies a newly vigorous conviction among scholars of Judaism that religious phenomena in modern Jewish history have to be approached as substantially autonomous structures that may be affected by the environment but also make their own history.

Several of the chapters in this volume take up a surprisingly under-researched variation on the question of the Yishuv’s connections to East European Jewry, one that reverses direction to investigate the impact of the rapid interwar devel-

opments in Palestine/the Yishuv on East European Jewry.⁶ Chapter 8, Rona Yona's "Connecting Poland and Palestine: The Organizational Model of He-Haluts," examines the process by which the Polish branch of the Zionist settlement-preparation movement He-Haluts (The Pioneer), which emerged during World War I, was recast in the second half of the 1920s by Palestine's emergent United Kibbutz movement. By the time He-Haluts became the most important mass Zionist organization in crisis-wracked Poland in the early 1930s, its leadership, goals, and institutions were pervasively defined by Yishuv actors, ideals, needs, and struggles.

Yona's chapter is a study in disproportion and the power of motivated avant-gardes to reshape institutions, showing how, beginning in 1926, the newly consolidated United Kibbutz movement and its leadership at Ein Harod recast He-Haluts as a way to shape new cohorts of Zionist youth willing to commit to Ein Harod's demanding ascetic-collectivist experiment. In so doing, she shows, Palestinian kibbutz Zionism reshaped the whole sweep of left-leaning youth Zionism in Poland. Yona's essay goes beyond the complex tensions within the divided Zionist Left to demonstrate how, by 1933, even the defining tensions within the most important and consequential mass Zionist organization in Poland and perhaps the world were shaped primarily by intra-Yishuv struggles and agendas. In its detailed reconstruction of how new forms and institutions of socialist Zionism in the Yishuv recast Zionism in Poland, Yona's chapter marks a major development that builds on pioneering work by Anita Shapira and Yaacov Shavit, among others, and also offers a model for careful research on parallel phenomena, perhaps indeed beyond the socialist Zionist milieu.

In keeping with the present volume's goal of integrating the study of the Jewish Diaspora and Palestine/Israel, Part III, "Formations of Political Culture," deals with ideas about and practices of power that flowed between Europe and the Middle East both within and beyond Zionist circles. The Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union constituted a watershed in this respect, leading to a ban first on "bourgeois" Zionist activity and then on Zionism and all other forms of Jewish "nationalism" inside the Soviet Union. As a result, the resurrected Polish state that emerged from the collapse of Eastern Europe's empires after World War I (prefiguring the resurrected Jewish state that would emerge from the collapse of West European empires after World War II) became the demographic center of Jewish political activity in Europe.

In the era between the two world wars, diaspora Zionist history entered a new phase that would change the course of Zionist history in general. As David Engel demonstrates in Chapter 9, "Israel's Polish Heritage," Zionists originally conceived of Jewish nationalism within a multinational setting, and this premise continued in the Zionist movement in newly established Poland, a third of whose

population was non-Polish. But the mainstream of the Polish establishment strongly held the idea of the state as the jointly held inalienable property of the dominant ethnonational community, and although Zionists criticized this idea outwardly, they began to absorb it and aimed to establish a Jewish state in Palestine as the exclusive property of the Jewish people. Similarly, as Kamil Kijek shows in Chapter 10, “Violence as Political Experience among Jewish Youth in Interwar Poland,” the interwar era, with its authoritarian modernism and faith in the efficacy of violence, shaped the political culture of young Zionists and Bundists. Violence not only affected the material, physical, and external conditions of Jewish life, it also became an internal element of interwar Jewish political culture. Portions of Jewish youth internalized political violence in certain settings as part of the general pan-European drive toward radical transformative and coercive politics.

These changes in Jewish political experience coincided with the emergence of a new option for diaspora Jews. The Yishuv, which began to be perceived as a genuine Jewish society in the making, became an increasingly feasible destination for immigration, even by non-Zionists. Kenneth B. Moss, in Chapter 11, “From Zionism as Ideology to the Yishuv as Fact: Polish Jewish Reorientations Toward Palestine Within and Beyond Zionism, 1927–1932,” frames Palestine’s influence on Polish Jewry not in terms of intra-Zionist exchange but in terms of how the Yishuv’s emergence as a real, viable society compelled ever deeper and more various forms of interest among Polish Jews of many stripes and reshaped Polish Jewish political imagination and judgment well beyond Zionist circles. Focusing on a period when growing numbers of Polish Jews sensed their future in Poland slipping out of their hands, this chapter anatomizes new approaches to the Yishuv among both committed members of Poland’s Zionist subculture and a growing range of *non*-Zionists, including some affiliated with expressly anti-Zionist circles. In turn, it argues that these engagements bred not only greater openness toward Zionism’s myths about national regeneration in the Land, but also the opposite: hunger for accurate understanding of the Yishuv as a society and deep interest in looking past Zionist rhetoric to investigate what alternative life chances the Yishuv might actually offer to Jews, collectively and individually.

Mihály Kálmán, in Chapter 12, “Hero Shtetls: Reading Civil War Self-Defense in the Yishuv,” traces another interwar history of how a crisis in East European Jewish experience partially recast both Zionism and the Yishuv. Between 1917 and 1921, the collapse of the Russian Empire unleashed massive and gruesome anti-Jewish violence (pogroms) across formerly imperial territory, particularly in Ukraine. This unprecedented violence provoked Jewish self-defense efforts that were equally unprecedented in size, scope, and organization. But although outspoken Zionists were centrally involved in the self-defense, its

place in Zionist memory proved complicated. Kálmán's chapter explores the complex and disputed place of revolutionary-era pogroms and self-defense in the interwar Yishuv, focusing both on the memory-work of immigrants to Palestine in the early 1920s (the Third Aliyah) who had themselves been involved in self-defense and on its mixed reception more broadly. Although the pogroms of the Russian civil war era were far more numerous and resulted in many more casualties across a far larger regional scale, in the Zionist narrative dominant in the Yishuv these pogroms continued to be overshadowed by the pogroms of 1881–1884 and 1903–1906, which bore a close connection to the First Aliyah and the Second Aliyah, respectively. In the Yishuv and in Israel especially in its first few decades, the memory of self-defense in Ukraine served as a source of inspiration for militarism and collective identity among Third-Aliyah immigrants in the Yishuv and the Haganah in particular, but remained marginal to a larger Zionist narrative focused on the Second Aliyah era and substantially closed to histories of the Diaspora after 1917.

Part IV, "Soviet Interludes," unsettles the notion that Jews in the USSR ceased to participate in Zionist and other transnational networks of communication and activism that lie at the heart of this volume. To be sure, chapters by Chizuko Takao and Benjamin Nathans concentrate on the early and late decades of the Soviet experiment, indirectly highlighting the extent to which the tumultuous Stalin era (1928–1953) did indeed isolate Soviet Jews (and other Soviet citizens) from the rest of the world. Before and after Stalin, however, significant numbers of Jews in the USSR remained or became linked to Jewish groups on other continents, whether in the Yishuv and the State of Israel or in the United States and other Western countries. And those groups in turn continued to wrestle, in new forms, with the question of whether to direct their energies toward the resettlement of Soviet Jews in the Jewish state, or to support diasporic versions of a Jewish future as well.

In Chapter 13, "American Jews and the Zionist Movements in the Soviet Union: The Joint and He-Haluts in Crimea in the 1920s," Takao explores Jewish agricultural settlements on the Crimean peninsula sponsored by the Soviet government and assisted by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint), a transnational welfare organization. While Crimean colonization appeared to represent a stark alternative to the Zionist project in Palestine—"Trotsky versus Balfour," as one contemporary memorably put it—Takao highlights the two camps' shared ambition to cultivate a new breed of Jews, productive tillers of the soil and pioneers of collective human labor. Indeed, it was precisely the Zionist training farms in Crimea that came closest to embodying the Soviet vision of collectivized agriculture, several years ahead of the system violently imposed by Stalin during the first Five-Year Plan. That this early experiment was

supported by the American Joint, representatives from the Yishuv, and the Soviet government makes it only more remarkable.

A half-century later, in the era of what Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev liked to call “developed socialism,” such cooperation was unthinkable. The Cold War had redrawn the global map, and with it relations between Europe’s East and the Middle East. Geography notwithstanding, the State of Israel now firmly belonged to “the West,” and Cold War Zionism refocused the idea of Jewish freedom in an anti-totalitarian mode. In the final chapter of this volume, Chapter 14, “Refuseniks and Rights Defenders: Jews and the Soviet Dissident Movement,” Nathans explores the uneasy relationship between a new generation of Soviet Zionists (those to whom Soviet authorities refused to grant exit visas became known as “refuseniks”) and the broader Soviet movement for civil and human rights, a significant proportion of whose members were also of Jewish background. While Soviet Zionists made their case in terms of “repatriation”—a limited rationale well within Moscow’s repertoire of ethnopoltics—Soviet rights defenders appealed to the more universal human right of freedom of movement, including the freedom to leave and return to one’s country. Despite being divided by competing logics of collective repatriation and individual rights, refuseniks and human rights activists in the USSR were closely intertwined on a personal level and highly dependent on the same networks of sympathizers abroad. Both their conflicts and their overlapping struggles, Nathans suggests, echoed the fraught relations between respective predecessors in the late imperial era.

From Europe’s East to the Middle East seeks to both renew and recast our understanding of the tumultuous and entangled histories of East European Jewry, the transnational movement that Zionism became, and the settler society from which the country that is contemporary Israel emerged. The editors are acutely aware of the dearth in this volume of voices speaking from and about the Arab/Palestinian population. No account of transnational influences between Eastern Europe and Palestine/Israel can claim to be comprehensive without including such perspectives. Insofar as the present volume accurately reflects the current state of historical knowledge, we consider this a pressing agenda for future research, no less significant for Israel’s historical lineage than the Jewish population was for the societies of Eastern Europe.

Some of the chapters in the present volume contend with the entanglement between Europe’s East and the Middle East by zooming in on its regional variations, applying distinctions between the Polish and Russian realms to the study of Zionism and other forms of Jewish nationalism. Both realms begin, in our account, as imperial spaces within the Romanov dynastic domain, only to go their radically separate ways in 1917: Poland toward an autonomous nation-state, Russia

toward an altogether new type of state, a union of socialist republics. Both formations continued to shape and be shaped by Jewish ideas of nationhood and collective labor, respectively.

Others chapters, by contrast, emphasize transregional Jewish lifeworlds that resist being categorized as either “Polish Jewish” or “Russian Jewish,” namely those of Hasidic and ultra-Orthodox Jewry. With a historical momentum of their own, these lifeworlds have demonstrated unexpected staying power both in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe and in Israel, where they exercise a still-unfolding, ever-widening influence on Israeli society. They, along with other groups whose paths are explored in this volume, remind us that the history of Jewish migration from Europe’s East to the Middle East is not reducible either to the history of Jewish nationalism or to the unfolding of a European imperial project. Indeed, once we understand migration as involving not just the unidirectional movement of people but the circulation of ideas and practices, we begin to confront in its full complexity a cardinal, perhaps the cardinal, feature of modern Jewish history: its transnational entanglement with the histories of other peoples.

Notes

1. Section 1.2, “Ha-Zekhut le-mimush ha-hagdarah ha-‘atsmit ha-le’umit bi-Medinat Yisra’el yihudit la-‘am ha-Yehudi,” Ministry of Justice, Israel, <http://www.justice.gov.il/StateIdentity/ProposedBasicLaws/Pages/NationalState.aspx>. We note that the spelling error in “Proposed” is in fact part of the web address.

2. Antony Polonsky’s three-volume synthetic history of Jews in Russia and Poland is a touchstone of this new history; see his one-volume précis, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: A Short History* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013). See also Kenneth B. Moss, “At Home in Late Imperial Russian Modernity—Except When They Weren’t: New Histories of Russian and East European Jews, 1881–1914,” *Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 401–52.

3. Derek Penslar, *Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2007), ch. 5.

4. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

5. Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

6. Pioneering works on this matter include Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), chs. 5–6; Yaakov Shavit, “Erets Yisra’el u-Folin ke-ma’arekhet politit meshulevet,” *Medinah, mimshal, ve-yabasim benle’umiyim* 25 (Spring 1986): 148–60, among others.

PART I

IMPERIAL AND NATIONAL
CRUCIBLES

CHAPTER 1

“Little Russia” in Palestine? Imperial Past, National Future (1860–1948)

Israel Bartal

History and Prophecy

In the midst of World War I, as the vast Jewish community in Eastern Europe absorbed an unprecedented battering, the historian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) concluded his three-volume historiographic opus on the history of Russian Jewry (subsequently incorporated into his *World History of the Jewish People*). Describing the Jews’ imperial experience in a brief appendix to the English edition of the work, the Jewish Russian chronicler wrote the following:

Nearly twenty centuries have passed since the ancient Judeo-Hellenistic Diaspora sent forth a handful of men who established a Jewish colony upon the northern Scythian, now Russian, shores of the Black sea. More than a thousand years ago the Jews of Byzantium from one direction, and those of the Arabian Caliphate from another, went forth to colonize the land of the Scythians. The Jew stood at the cradle of ancient Kievan Russia, which received Christianity from the hands of the Byzantines. The Jew witnessed the birth of Catholic Poland, and during the stormy days of the crusaders, fled from the West of Europe to this haven of refuge which was not yet entirely in the hands of the Catholic Church. He has witnessed the rise of Muscovite Russia, tying the fate of one-half of his nation to the new Russian Empire. Here the power that dominates history opened up before the Jewish people a black abyss of medievalism in the midst of the blazing light of modern civilization, and finally threw it into the flames of the gigantic struggle of nations. What may the World

War be expected to bring to the World-Nation [i.e., the Jews]? Full of agitation, the Jew is looking into the future, and the question of his ancient prophet is trembling on his lips; "Lord God! Wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" [Ezekiel 11:13]¹

Having personally witnessed the dying days of tsarist rule, Dubnow was terrified by the torrent of violence that drenched the Jewish masses that inhabited the areas of the hostilities. As the Great War inundated East European Jewish communities with unprecedented devastation, it seemed to him that Russian Jewry had reached the end of history. The desperate remarks quoted above were written before the 1917 revolutions, the civil war, and the consolidation of Soviet rule. Some six decades later, an Israeli historian, Shmuel Ettinger (1919–1988)—he too a Russian Jew—summed up the history of Russian Jewry. Ettinger's remarks appeared after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, in the aftermath of Stalin's reign of terror:

The willingness to reach out to the Jews and allot them a place in Russian life seems to have been greater when the Russians were inclined to reach out to Western ideas and follow their example. [The tendency] to reject and assault them came about when Russia turned inward and followed its traditional patterns. The eras of relative liberalism and pivoting to "Westernism," however, have been few in the past 200 years, and the ascendancy of Russian nationalism and continual insularity . . . are what prompted young Jews in Russia to despair of the possibility of changing the trend of [the country's] development and reinforced the turn to Jewish nationalism and the viewing of the Jewish future outside [Russia's] borders.²

Ettinger, like his predecessor Dubnow, saw the re-encounter between Jews and the Russian Empire as the story of a continual struggle between Western Enlightenment and the benighted Byzantine-Christian legacy. Both historians viewed it as a struggle that, on the one hand, linked the enlightened absolutism of tsars Alexander I and II with the February 1917 revolution and, on the other hand, connected Christian reactionism à la Nicholas I with the inward-facing Russian nationalist policies of Stalin's day. Either way, Dubnow and Ettinger, two nationalist historians who entertained radical worldviews, predicted, sixty years apart, that the Jews of the Russian Empire would meet their demise when the conservative, extreme-nationalist forces in Russia would surmount the Western liberalizing trends. For both historians, the legacy of West European Enlightenment in its Russian incarnations shaped a bipolar historiographic approach

(not to mention political outlook) that interpreted the state of East European Jewry as oscillating between emancipatory redemption and national revival. In the most recent generation, the European Enlightenment legacy seems to have lost its ability to shape historiography due to the vigorous offensive of postmodernism and the resounding post-World War II failure of the great ideologies. In retrospect, however, it would seem that both historians' prophecies—of devastation during World War I and of Jewish national resurrection and the emigration of millions from the crumbling empire—have come to pass, irrespective of their ideological views and political leanings. The end of Russian Jewry and the Russian episode in Jewish history did in fact take place toward the end of the second millennium of the Common Era. Today, more than 1 million citizens born in the USSR and its successor states are living in the Jewish nation-state in the Land of Israel, far from the borders of what once was imperial Russia. However, in contrast to the centrality that has been given to the discussion of the Jews' encounter with imperial Russia in the historiography of Russian Jewry, this mass transplantation is notable for its marginality in research on the history of the modern Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

Toward an Imperial History of the Yishuv in Palestine

Much of the scholarship on the emergence of the Jewish national entity in pre-1948 Palestine concerns the awakening of Jewish modernist movements in the Russian Empire. Surprisingly enough, most studies pay little if any attention to the impact of the Russian "imperial environment" on the shaping of the New Yishuv in the 1881–1948 period—that is, from the first agricultural colonies established by immigrants from Eastern Europe to the founding of the Jewish state. The Jewish national project in Palestine began in the last decades of the multiethnic empires and developed in the post-Ottoman Middle East. One may study the Jewish community in pre-1948 Palestine as a cluster of groups of immigrant settlers who originated in several empires (the German, the Austro-Hungarian, the Russian, and the Ottoman), each group carrying its imperial political, social, and cultural experiences.³ The New Yishuv that emerged in late Ottoman and early British Mandate Palestine was not built by Jewish farmers and laborers only. An influential group of intellectuals played a hefty role in the national enterprise. Writers, poets, teachers, political activists, and newspaper editors, along with amateur geographers, archaeologists, and historians, toiled to shape the infrastructure of a new "national culture" in Palestine.⁴ This culture, which would become a principal element of Israeli identity, was unprecedented in Jewish history. By appearances, its roots were planted among several Jewish renewal movements that surfaced and developed in Central and Eastern

Europe only in the century preceding the First Aliyah (1881–1903). This culture, however, is unique in its blend of an attachment to premodern religious traditions along with concepts, values, and outlooks absorbed from European modernism. The Land of Israel, for example, was a familiar part of the belief system of members of traditional Jewish society. However, innovative Western ideas and concepts that appeared chiefly in the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement and the other modernistic currents that flowed abundantly through the Jewish communities of nineteenth-century Europe changed the images and meanings of this territory. Namely, the Holy Land was transformed, even before 1914, into a historical-political entity in the modern Jewish mind. This radical turning point established a strong similarity between the aforementioned groups of Jewish political activists and intellectuals and corresponding groups in the national movements of other Central and Eastern European ethnicities from the late nineteenth century onward. All of these movements subjected their ethnic community's ostensibly traditional beliefs and cultural forms to some degree of critique and reformulation in terms of Western secularist ideas of various sorts. Here, early twentieth-century agents of the nascent Hebrew culture in Palestine (most of whom were immigrants from the Russian Empire) strongly radicalized this tendency by acting to stamp out the premodern cultural legacies while selectively integrating some of their elements in a secular-national way. They sought to “nationalize” the imperial cultures that the immigrants in the national *aliyyot*—the immigration waves—had imported, that is, to translate, rework, and adapt them to the new Hebrew national discourse.⁵ The resurrection of the Hebrew language as the language of the post-imperial nation-state's culture is a case in point. Whereas imperial authorities had prodded the Jews to abandon the vernaculars of their premodern corporative settings in favor of the imperial tongue (Russian, German, Hungarian, Polish, etc.), it became conventional wisdom in Palestine that not only the premodern vernaculars but also the imperial languages that most of the immigrants spoke should be replaced by the revived national language.⁶

Looking back across the past two centuries, one may state that the imperial experience, above all that of Russia, figured importantly in shaping the politics and culture of the Yishuv up to 1948. The nationalist settlers in Palestine read into the new homeland ideas, metaphors, political concepts, as well as realities of life, that were of Russian origin. Today's Israel is better understood if one links several trends in Russian imperial history (both tsarist and Soviet) with events and processes in the history of the pre-1948 Yishuv. I present several conspicuous historical phenomena that influenced the Jewish immigrants, changed the course of their lives, and shaped their spiritual world even before they left the Romanov Empire en route to the old-new Land of the Patriarchs. The creators of the Zionist

historical narrative, as it took shape from the first days of the settlement enterprise in Palestine, tended to underscore the commonalities among the immigrants from the diverse Jewish diasporas. As part of their effort to portray the resettlement project as the common property of the entire Jewish nation, they labored to "translate" the contributions of immigrants from non-European areas into Western and Zionist conceptual terms. Concurrently, they also "translated" the behavior of the East European immigrants themselves into the same language. Thus, the unique voice of those arriving from imperial Russia was subsumed in the unified national story; these immigrants' powerful connection with the political, social, and cultural world of their origin was overshadowed and banished from memory. Historically speaking, however, it is hard to overstate the definitive significance of the East European context in the history of the national aliyot. I am not speaking about the routine contents of the classic Zionist-minded historical account, namely the connection between the pogroms in 1881–1882, 1905–1906, and 1919 and Jewish resettlement in the Land of Israel.⁷ Instead, I am referring to the broader long-term influence of the geography, demography, economics, and political history of Eastern Europe in general on the patterns of migration to the Ottoman Empire.

Migration and Urbanization

One of the most important phenomena in East European Jewish history in the century preceding the First Aliyah was, as noted earlier, the mass migration of Jews from what had been, until 1795, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the northwestern part of the empire, toward the south. The great migration of East European Jews to Central and Western Europe and to the Americas is well known.⁸ That westward migration, however, despite its massive impact on the history of the modern Ashkenazi diaspora, was until very late in the nineteenth century somewhat smaller in magnitude than the mighty tide that moved southward. In the last few decades of the eighteenth century, imperial Russia annexed vast territories from the Ottoman Empire. To these lands, which the empire termed the "New Russia" (the Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Taurida guberniyas), a "migration of peoples" ensued—including massive numbers of Jews. This enormous migratory project was, in the historian Alexander Erkind's mind, part of the country's efforts to "colonize" its own vast territory.⁹ The imperial authorities encouraged Jews who were moving out of the northern regions (Lithuania and Belarus) to resettle there. From the Austrian part of partitioned Poland (Galicia), too, large numbers of Jews migrated southward and eastward. Dozens of new cities were established in the new areas, and, within less than a century, hundreds of thousands of Jews had settled in the southern segment of the Russian

Empire. Odessa, a new imperial port city that had been home to fewer than ten Jews in 1791, developed the largest Jewish community in the Pale of Settlement by the time of the First Aliyah. In 1794, 244 Jews lived in the new city. In 1880, the Jewish population of Odessa reached 55,300.¹⁰ By 1897, almost 140,000 Jews lived there—the second-largest community (after Warsaw) under tsarist rule. A similar migration took place to Bessarabia, which had also been annexed from the Ottomans. Jews also migrated in large numbers to Moldova and Wallachia. Imperial considerations had caused a mighty population shift, with hundreds of thousands of Jews relocating and participating in the establishment of new cities.¹¹

The Jews who settled in these areas stepped into an ethnic cauldron replete with tension, the scene of the great waves of pogroms during the last years of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth. In Odessa, six pogroms took place between 1821 and 1919. The Russian government had encouraged Jewish migration not only to settle sparsely populated areas but also to remove a population group that had been regarded as nonproductive and economically harmful to the other inhabitants of the northwestern districts of the empire. Paradoxically, the Jews were regarded, concurrently, as an undesirable social element in the northwestern provinces and as agents of the imperial authorities and the state culture in the peripheral territories that had been annexed from Turkey.¹² This dual policy toward the Jews, rooted in programs from long before that had aimed to reform them in the dying days of the independent Kingdom of Poland, gave rise, among other things, to the world's largest Jewish agricultural resettlement projects.¹³ This policy was aimed mainly at the frontier areas between two empires, the Russian and the Ottoman. The Jews were not the only ethnic group that migrated in large numbers to the empire's southern territories. Germans, Bulgarians, Serbians, Greeks, and Armenians did the same. A large proportion of the new settlers (including Jews who had migrated from the northwest) had resided within the confines of several empires and had maintained strong relations with fellow ethnics across the frontiers. The tsarist regime extended its patronage to some members of the ethnic groups that had dwelled in the Ottoman Empire (Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbians). In turn, members of other nationalities (Circassians, Chechens) that had been victimized by Russia's overland expansion policy migrated from imperial Russia and resettled in Ottoman territory.

Within this ethnic and political tapestry and among the migration movements that crossed the seams of the multinational empires, the First Aliyah (1882–1903), Second Aliyah (1904–1914), and Third Aliyah (1914–1923) do not seem anomalous. The nexus of, on the one hand, interimperial migration by members of a diaspora that inhabited three empires in southeastern Europe, and

the growth, on the other hand, of a national movement, is a phenomenon found among other ethnic and religious groups in that part of the world. The Jewish national migrations from imperial Russia coincided with the awakening of other national movements on the southeastern fringes of Europe. One may also detect the focal point of these migrations as resting on the seam among the Russian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. In a certain sense, one may even regard the immigrants to Palestine as an extra-imperial branch of the great internal migration to the south. As noted above, the Russian government had little sympathy for Jewish migrants in either case, perceiving the very act of emigrating (including to the Land of Israel) as a deportation that would correct the Jews’ moral virtues and/or reduce the damage that they were causing to society and the economy.¹⁴ Some of the new settlers in Palestine internalized the accusations concerning the exploitation of the peasantry and believed that the establishment of farming colonies in Judea and the Galilee, just like the establishment of similar settlements in the provinces of New Russia, would cure their corrupt brethren of the ill effects of their parasitism and lack of productivity.¹⁵ Jewish agriculture in the Land of the Patriarchs was meant, at least for some fervent Jewish nationalists, to solve a problem of the Russian Empire by means that were conventional among the authorities in the old homeland.

The aforementioned migrations—which had relocated hundreds of thousands of Jews from the northwest reaches of the empire to the new districts in its south, and millions of Jews to other European and to overseas countries—had a highly significant effect on the shape of modern Jewish culture. The mighty shift of the East European Jewish population in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played an important role in the emergence of modern nationalism. The early Russian Jewish nationalists embraced a sociopolitical project that had traced its birth to imperial legislation decades before the Hibbat Zion movement.¹⁶ Among other things, they wished to encourage mass migration to territories outside the empire—a notion that was not new in tsarist policy toward the large Jewish population that had come under its rule in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, the idea of ousting Jews from Russian-controlled districts had been current among imperial officials since the partition era. (In fact, it had come up even before the partitions of Poland, in the debates about reforms in the Polish Four Year’s Sejm in 1788–1791).¹⁷

In sum, the demographic flow from the Russian Empire to the Ottoman was a new stage in a *longue durée* process that had been advancing for centuries among East European Jewry. The world’s largest Jewish community in the modern era had been formed, sustained, and ultimately dislodged amid waves of migration that had been crossing the Ashkenazi diaspora since the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era. The directions of the migration varied over the centuries; the

greatest change, one that had an enormous long-term impact on Palestine, took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the East European sphere stopped receiving in-migrants from the West and began to export masses to the West and to destinations overseas. In the early part of that century, East European Jewish settlers had moved from Austrian territory eastward and settled in new towns established in the territories that Russia had annexed from the Ottoman Empire. At the end of that century, a reversal of polarity occurred: masses of Jews abandoned the Russian Empire and sought their livelihood in the large cities of the West. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, who were only partly exposed to the imperial culture, left the lands of Eastern Europe between 1867 and 1939 and thronged to the urban slums of Europe and the Americas. A weak trickle of migrants, which expanded into a genuine tributary in the 1920s and 1930s, debarked in Palestine. It created the New Yishuv of the national aliyot era, layer by layer.

The modern era witnessed another large-scale (and overlapping) type of internal population movement in the Russian Empire—the move from small locales in gubernias of the Pale of Settlement to urban localities in the Russian interior and to Congress Poland. Internal urbanization had an immense effect on the social, economic, and cultural complexion of Russian Jewry.¹⁸ Urbanization in Russia had been a pronouncedly imperial phenomenon. It was particular to the imperial era in the history of Russian Jewry. Indeed, Polish Jewry had been central in colonization and the establishment of new cities in the Early Modern period. For centuries, the Jews of Poland had constituted an urban social class in the feudal order of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, the Jews' relationship with the East European big city did not take shape before the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because that great feudal state had no large cities. Until the later decades of the eighteenth century, the largest towns in the Commonwealth had populations of several thousands. The largest Jewish communities in the prepartition days, including Brody (7,191 Jews in 1765) and Vilnius (3,887 in the same year), were several thousand strong.¹⁹ The intensive urbanization that took place in the vast territories between the Baltic Sea in the north and the Black Sea in the south began under the rule of three empires that annexed large swaths of territory from Poland, and gathered strength in a steady flow of migration during the nineteenth century. As already noted, Odessa, the big city that lured tens of thousands of Jews, evolved from a village where there had been a small Ottoman fortress after Catherine II's armies occupied the steppe north of the Black Sea in 1783. In Warsaw, one of the historical capitals of the Polish crown, Jews were excluded until the last days of Stanisław August Poniatowski. They lived in Praga,

a suburb on the other side of the Wisła. A census in 1897 found nearly 220,000 Jews in Warsaw, the largest Jewish community in the Russian Empire.²⁰ The community of Vilnius, nearly 60,000 strong, according to the aforementioned census, had fewer than half the Jews of Odessa. It had less than one-third of those in Warsaw. From the largest Jewish community in partition-era Poland, Vilnius fell to fourth place, after Łódź, where almost 100,000 Jews lived in 1897.²¹ The migration of East European Jews from the shtetl to the city (within the empire and without) coincided with the political changes that swept partitioned Poland and the annexed Ottoman territories.

The East European city came about and evolved within the framework of imperial policies that the Austrian and Russian authorities applied in the annexed lands. Habsburg officials, for example, initiated an imperial development project at the city of Chernivtsi, right after the first partition of Poland, inviting merchants, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs of several ethnoreligious groups to help develop trade and other businesses. Jews took a considerable role in making this evolving imperial city a multicultural space. On the one hand, the German language—due to state policy and the growing cultural influence of the Jews—became the *lingua franca*. On the other hand, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chernivtsi became a center of Romanian, Ukrainian, and Jewish nationalism. Similar imperial policies of openness made the newly created cities in Southern Ukraine cauldrons of ethnic conflicts. Odessa, on the coast of the Black Sea, enjoyed special preference from its very first days. This imperial port city attracted Polish nobles, refugees from the French Revolution, and Jewish merchants from Galicia, on the Austrian side of the border. The very same regime that limited the settlement of Jews in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and Smolensk by statute encouraged, as we recall, mass migration to “New Russia.” Urbanization took a great leap forward in the Soviet era and hundreds of thousands of Jews thronged to the large cities of the USSR.

In the modern period, three types of Russian imperial urban Jewish communities existed:

1. Old cities, where veteran communities expanded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (examples are Vilnius, Białystok, and Berdichev)
2. Cities that were new or that had lacked a Jewish population until the nineteenth century (examples are Odessa, Warsaw, Łódź, and Kishinev)
3. Cities beyond the Pale of Settlement or outside the historical demographic-ethnic boundaries of Polish Jewry (such as Saint Petersburg and Moscow)²²

Twentieth-century Russian Jewry is emphatically a product of the urbanization process. All major Jewish modernist movements in imperial Russia, including nationalism and social radicalism, evolved not in provincial towns (where, by contrast, the Hasidic movement flourished in its early stages), but rather in the urban sphere of the modern city.

The City Experience: Odessa in Tel Aviv

The modern consciousness of those Jews who eventually reached Palestine was shaped not only by the great ideological and political projects of late nineteenth-century East European Jewry; the experience of urbanization as such had a major transformative effect as well. Modern Jewish culture generally, and its important branch in the Russian Empire particularly, were pronouncedly urban phenomena. The cultural endeavors, literary output, and political activity that were associated with the new centers in the metropoli of the empire and abroad developed in direct correlation with the emergence of new communication media and unprecedented forms of social organization: "In addition to engendering a growing sense of crisis," notes the historian Scott Ury, "these and other urban centers also gave birth to fundamentally new means of communication and collective organization among both Jews and non-Jews."²³ In the words of Svetlana Natkovich (on Odessa), the emergence of new economic systems in the imperial city shaped a new urban mentality: "The key feature of the exchange economy in this alternate dimension of the Odessa business world was operations with fictitious capital, which were carried out partly in opposition and partly in dialectic symbiosis with the pre-capitalist economy that relied more on concrete values of things and time. . . . This combination of different economic perceptions was in part responsible for the formation of the Odessa mentality and poetics as found in fiction written about Odessa or by Odessans."²⁴

Jewish authors and poets who wrote in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian (theirs was indeed a trilingual culture) lived and worked in large cities, and the urban experience was reflected in their literary endeavors. The new Hebrew poetry and prose were products of openness to the European world of ideas, with its aesthetic values and artistic tastes. West European culture and the ambiance of the metropolitan city connected well with the consciousness of the writers, who tended to associate anything that seemed to belong to the Old World with the precapitalist *shtetl* and the feudal agrarian economy of the Pale of Settlement—whether real or imagined.²⁵ Many Hebrew writers who were harbingers of the new culture that would eventually emerge in Palestine had been born in *shtetlakh*, or small villages, received traditional Jewish schooling, and headed for

"the big city" while abandoning, to one extent or another, their old ways of life. After spending years in various towns, each one reached one of the great cities, and they came together to form Hebrew literary centers. Sholem Yankev Abramovich (Mendele Moykher Sforim, 1835–1917) was born in a small town in Belarus named Kapyl. He lived for decades in Kamianets-Podilskyi (Ukraine), and ultimately settled in the great city of Odessa. The poet Chaim Nahman Bialik (1873–1935) was born in Radi, a Ukrainian village, grew up in Zhitomir, and established his residence in Odessa; only after the 1917 revolutions did he leave for Berlin and ultimately settle in Tel Aviv. Isaac Leib Peretz (1852–1915), born and raised in Zamosć, Poland, spent most of his years in Warsaw. Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the political leader, author, and poet, was an exception: He was born in a major city (Odessa), and his entire political career and literary oeuvre were deeply embedded in the experience of that great commercial center.²⁶ For many young people who joined the new modernist movements, the geographic transition from shtetl to city was an exodus (or, at times, an escape) from the social and cultural shackles of the traditional community; it had an ideological complexion. Thus, on their way to Palestine, many of the shapers of the new Hebrew culture passed through one of the imperial cities. After experiencing life in the big city and imbibing urban culture, they exported both to the Middle East and left a deep imprint on the modes of activity, the artistic style, and the vision that they wished to fulfill in the old-new homeland.²⁷ The historian and ethnographer Alter Druyanov (1870–1938), an influential Zionist intellectual who was born in a small town in Belarus, lived in Vilnius and Odessa from 1909 to 1921, before coming to Tel Aviv. Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943), whose Hebrew poetry had an enormous impact on the shape of modern Israeli culture, moved from his home village to Odessa, where he encountered the best of European cultures. In 1931, fourteen years after the Russian Revolution, he settled in Tel Aviv. Druyanov and Tchernichovsky brought to Palestine the Jewish urban modernism that had emerged in the immigrant postcorporate communities in Russia. Both their political worldviews and the cultural baggage imported from Eastern Europe were marked by a tensional combination of radicalism, conformism, universalism, and ethnic separatism.

Many Jewish authors, intellectuals, and political activists who had initially followed the routes of migration within the Pale of Settlement participated in the exodus to towns outside the Pale, and ultimately left imperial Russia altogether, for the United States, Germany, and Britain. While a handful of members of this immigrant group headed to Palestine, other offshoots dispersed among the new urban émigré communities in the West. By the early twentieth

century, not a few Hebrew writers who had reached Palestine from imperial Russia settled in emerging urban centers such as Jaffa and Jerusalem, including Yosef Haim Brenner (1881–1921) and Simha Ben Zion (Gutman, 1870–1932). As the New Yishuv in Palestine jelled, it absorbed the cultural legacy that had evolved over several decades in imperial cities. As Mirija Lecke has observed, multinational imperial Odessa was a unique city on Russia's periphery. After its destruction by the Soviet regime, it lived on in the Odessan style and as the myth of "Old Odessa," both of which provided Russian culture with ways of talking about diversity. Lecke analyzes right-wing Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky's novel *The Five* against the backdrop of the Odessa myth. Its narrative construction and stylistic composition were designed, according to Lecke, to undermine a politicized, "textbook" reading of the plot. Jabotinsky instead draws a multivocal artistic image and, in his poetic activity, overcomes the confines of nationalist ideological discourse.²⁸ In a way, something of that multivocal style found its way to the newly emerging "Hebrew City" on the shores of the Mediterranean. Here, radical universalism, nationalistic enthusiasm, and a bourgeois lifestyle à la Odessa could work hand in hand to shape modern Israeli culture.²⁹

The population of readers of Hebrew in Palestine steadily expanded due to Hebrew educational institutions, established on the basis of patterns imported from Russia, in which Hebrew poetry and prose were incorporated into the curriculum, and because the new Hebrew literature was part and parcel of the new national cultural enterprise. Quite paradoxically, a cultural center developed in Palestine that, while encouraging innovative Jewish arts and endeavors, strengthened the influence of the Russian imperial culture in the New Yishuv. It happened at a time when Russia's diplomatic (and other) representatives in the Holy Land harbored no sympathies, to put it mildly, for the imperial subjects who had settled in Ottoman territory. The imperial Russian culture imported by the migrants to Palestine was oppositionist in nature. In Palestine, just as in the fin de siècle "old country," an ideological, political, and mental gulf lay between the Jewish intelligentsia, the Russian regime, and Russian society's conservative wings. Groups of radical émigrés, arriving from Russia on the eve of World War I, eventually formed the political and cultural elites of the New Yishuv. As such, they contributed much to the identification of Russian culture with ideas of grand political and social reform that originated in the political radicalism of Alexander II's reign (1855–1881) and the Russian socialist parties of the turn of the twentieth century. Even though the members of these immigrant groups championed cooperative agricultural settlement, their centers were in the cities. It is for good reason that some connected Odessa, a leading hub of the Jewish national movement—a multicultural, cosmopolitan imperial city—with Tel Aviv,

the suburb of Jaffa that became, almost overnight, the focal point of the new Hebrew culture in Palestine.³⁰ Odessa had been established almost *ex nihilo* in the late eighteenth century as a city without a past. It attracted, as mentioned above, migrants of various ethnicities from elsewhere in the empire and from without. "By the 1870's, many Odessa Jews had integrated into their lives changes considered to be highly suspect and innovative by Jews elsewhere in the Pale."³¹ Similarly, Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 on sand dunes north of the ancient port city of Jaffa. It was imagined, like Odessa, to be a city without a past. It took less than three decades to become the largest Jewish metropolis in British Palestine. The liquidation of Jewish national cultural activity in Russia during the decade following the 1917 revolutions and the mass emigration from Poland in the interwar era completed the cultural migration, shifting to Tel Aviv the main share of the Zionist political and cultural institutions, organizations, and activist cadres that had existed in Eastern Europe. Everything that had been shut down, outlawed, or obliterated within the Soviet Empire continued to flourish in the steadily growing immigrant community in Palestine.

One Eastern European city . . . was regarded as a worthy model for emulation. This was, of course, Odessa. . . . Haim Nachman Bialik . . . stressed that Tel Aviv should try to look like the Ukrainian "Southern Beauty" by imitating Odessa's long and wide boulevards and its impressive plentiful trees, defying the hot climate. Attempts to turn Tel Aviv into a seaside holiday resort were also inspired by Odessa, where hundreds of coffee houses—many of them owned by Jews—were open till the late hours of the night. Still, one has to keep in mind that Odessa, an important Jewish center until the Soviet era, was considered Russia's most western city. . . . Odessa, like Trieste, Salonika and Tel Aviv as well, sometimes seemed as having an independent urban identity, somewhat separated from their comprehensive surroundings.³²

Tel Aviv in the 1920s and 1930s saw an efflorescence of social life patterned after the Russian Jewish bourgeoisie, a kind of life that the cities of the motherland no longer offered. It became a free urban space, offering a whole variety of Hebrew newspapers, private and public publishing houses, coffee houses, kosher gourmet food stores, sports clubs, Hebrew theater, and an opera house.³³ Much of this culture had moved from its original Eastern European locus to the cities of Palestine. Concurrently, the labor parties, also centered in the cities, sustained a political and cultural discourse that they had imported from the clubs of the pre-1917 radical movements of Eastern Europe. On the eve of World War

II, Tel Aviv retained something of the urban culture of pre-World War I imperial Russia.

Imperial Reforms and the “New Jew”

The Jews of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had been exposed, from the first days of Russian rule in the last decades of the eighteenth century in the areas annexed to the Russian Empire, to government projects involving social and economic reform, correction of moral virtues, and the shaping of a “New Jew”—an ethical subject, useful to the state and loyal to the tsar. Such projects, which included elements of human engineering in the spirit of various metamorphoses of the ideas of the European Enlightenment, would accompany the ongoing Jewish encounter with imperial Russia for some two hundred years. They were so influential as to totally transform the face of Jewish society, expunging the old ethno-religious identity from the premodern feudal order and bringing on a series of alternative modern identities. The main identities were internalized by the Jewish intelligentsia, who served as the empire’s agent, so to speak, vis-à-vis its fellow ethnics. Judah Leib Gordon (1831–1892), the foremost Haskalah Hebrew poet, elaborated this “New Jew” idea in a 1863 poem:

Awake, my People!

...

Raise your head high, straighten your back,
And gaze with loving eyes upon them.
Open your heart to wisdom and knowledge,
Become an enlightened people, and speak their language.

Every man of understanding should try to gain knowledge,
Let others learn all manner of arts and crafts;
Those who are brave should serve in the army;
The farmers should buy ploughs and fields.³⁴

This role did not disappear with the flowering of modernist movements in the second half of the nineteenth century; it only changed some of its ideological properties and revised its social and political goals. For example, *maskilic* (i.e., members of the Jewish Enlightenment movement) support for the government’s colonization project until the 1880s was replaced by encouraging Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine without abandoning the goal of producing a reformed “European Jew” (e.g., the change that prominent *maskil* Moses Leib Lilienblum

[1843–1910] underwent, while in Odessa, in his transition from social radicalism to nationalism). The empire's Enlightenment discourse in its new national garb also played a very respectable role in the formation of the new society that had begun to evolve in Palestine in the late nineteenth century. For more than two centuries, the Russian policy—tsarist or Soviet—toward the large Jewish minority spun on the axis of obliterating the unique premodern ethno-religious Jewish identity and reshaping it along the lines of political ideology. Programs for "regeneration," "productivization," "resettlement," or "Russification" pulsed through Russian legislation relating to the Jews. The implementation of these ideas amid changing realities, evoking reactions from the Jewish side, gave rise to "internal" Jewish efforts to effect reform and change. Thus, for example, the imperial project of making the "nonproductive Jew" a farmer, had been enthusiastically embraced by Hibbat Zion.

In later years, the nationalist-populist idea of making the Jews "productive" underwent a reincarnation in the radical Jewish movements that arose in the Russian Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. This phenomenon became an inseparable part of Jewish political parties' platforms both before and after the 1917 revolutions. Arguably, then, the creation of the "New Jew," an idea that dominated the modern national discourse in Palestine and, practically speaking, determined the map of new Jewish settlement projects there from 1881 onward, was actually a more recent corollary of an imperial encounter that took place on another continent and at another time. Indeed, the idea of creating a Jewish peasantry was hatched in the minds of government bureaucrats and social reformers at the time of Alexander I and flowed from the adoption of ideas of the French physiocratic school. It was only later that the Jewish settlers in Palestine embraced this idea and acted to fulfill it there. The Haskalah movement in Eastern Europe "Judaized" this socioeconomic outlook of the Enlightenment legacy and bequeathed it, several decades later, to Hibbat Zion and Am Olam (in Yiddish, Am Oylom, a Jewish national settlement movement that established farming colonies in the United States).³⁵ These movements appended the ideas of agrarian socialism from the time of Alexander II to the romantic maskilic legacy. In the twenty years that followed, socialist Zionists, territorialists, and also philanthropists seeking to redeem the impoverished Jewish masses in the Russian Pale of Settlement adopted the idea of bringing Jews back to the soil.

The human-engineering projects that were launched with imperial patronage gathered strength under the totalitarian Soviet regime. The mammoth enterprise that was meant to shape the ideal Soviet man still left room for the unique integration of two identities: the Jewish-ethnic and the Soviet (resulting in what may be considered a form of imperial affiliation). The story of the Jewish

ethnic identity in the Soviet Union was but another manifestation, a radicalized one, of the modernist Jewish effort to create a new Jewish entity, choosing certain elements from that legacy and melding them into an unprecedented cultural product.³⁶ Something similar, although on a different scale, occurred in interwar Palestine. In the Land of the Patriarchs, Zionists of all factions wished to create a new Jewish entity, an ethnic group living in a perfected, exemplary society. Examining the political culture of the various movements during the British Mandate from the standpoint of traditional Ashkenazi society (the one that imperial agents and socialist Zionist world reformers wished to obliterate), one finds that the officials of the Yevseksiia (the Jewish section of the Communist Party) differed little from the Zionists, the Bundists, or the secular Yiddishists. All of them, without exception, sought to shape a “New Jew” and produce a modern Jewish culture out of the legacy of the past and the contents of the Jewish bookshelf. They differed only in the measure of radicalism of their approach to the components of the old Jewish legacy.

A lavish menu of socionational utopias continually threatened the survival of Jewish traditional life in the Russian Empire. The threat mounted whenever human-engineering ventures received state support, which became a reality in the Soviet Union. In the Jewish street, moreover, parallel and quite similar schemes, movements, currents, and parties developed. Thus, the Russian Empire and the Jewish movements sometimes vied, in a very real way, for primacy in shaping the future Jew. Furthermore, the Soviet Union’s early years saw the launching of national projects that aimed to steer the “New Jew” to Palestine as well as imperial projects on Soviet soil. They largely overlapped and sometimes engaged each other in a blunt dialogue. It is difficult, however, to overlook the similarity of goals and the commonality of discourse between the Soviet imperial side and the radical nationalists’ Yishuv side. The sharing of this discourse even spawned ideas of integrating the Zionist enterprise into the Soviet revolutionary project—ideas that accompanied the Zionist Left for decades and persisted on the Israeli political scene until the second half of the twentieth century, two decades after Israel had won its independence.

Cultural Diversity, Political Visions

The First Aliyah colonies, established between 1882 and 1903, created a microcosm of the diverse cultural groups that had emigrated from the Russian Empire.³⁷ The population of Rishon Letsiyon, on the plain fronting the Judean Hills, had a totally different composition from that of Yesud ha-Ma’ala, in the Upper Galilee. Rishon Letsiyon was inhabited by people from new cities in the southern

provinces of the Russian Empire, whereas Yesud ha-Ma’ala received a population of Hasidim from age-old communities in Poland. Many of the first settlers in the farming communities that were established in Palestine in the last decades of the nineteenth century had been exposed to acculturation processes and Western influence before they left the Russian Empire. The large majority of Jews who came from northeastern Romania, including the founders of Zikhron Yaakov and Rosh Pina, were migrants from the two empires—Romanov and Habsburg—that had annexed the districts of eastern and southern Poland. Narrowing our discussion to Imperial Russia, we may state that the newcomers associated migration to Palestine after the 1881–1882 pogroms with the loss of trust in the state’s attitude toward its Jewish subjects. It was not because of a sudden disillusionment brought on by the deterioration of relations with the surrounding societies or spontaneous reluctance to integrate into the imperial culture. Quite a few Jews, considering themselves loyal subjects of the tsar, sincerely expected (or so it seemed during the reign of Alexander II, 1855–1881) the state to protect them from violent assaults by the autochthonous populations that surrounded them. Therefore, it is no wonder, as noted above, that the first members of Hibbat Zion continued to cling to Russian discourses of the time concerning the economic damage that the Jews of the Pale of Settlement were ostensibly inflicting on the peasantry. The social reform ideas that the colonization societies wished to implement in Palestine were meant to reconfigure the patterns of economic activity that enraged the exploited population groups in the Pale of Settlement.³⁸

At the time of the First Aliyah, however, immigrants who had only an exceedingly superficial relationship with Russian culture before moving to the Middle East had also reached Palestine. In the 1890s, 97 percent of Jewish subjects of tsarist Russia specified Yiddish as their mother tongue, while only some 60,000 Jews (among more than 5 million) could be considered immersed enough in Russian culture to belong to the second generation of speakers of the imperial vernacular.³⁹ This minority was composed of urban Jews who had chosen to embrace the imperial culture. They, or their offspring, attended Russian-speaking schools and absorbed the bourgeois ideas, behavior patterns, and lifestyles that were typical of the eras of Alexander III and Nicholas II. Some of them, living in cities and towns that were hundreds of miles from any venue that could host real social contact between Jews and Russians, underwent partial acculturation in the empire’s ways. Others, in contrast, enlisted in the liberal-radical wing of the imperial culture. The *biluim*—members of the Bilu movement—brought to Palestine something of the Russian oppositionist culture of the 1860s and 1870s. The pioneering ideal of the First Aliyah years, which the

biluim who founded Gedera (1884) wished to fulfill, was influenced by radical Russian literature and inspired by the writings of Pisarev and Chernyshevsky.⁴⁰ The biluim and their ideas were marginal anomalies in the reality of the New Yishuv during the First Aliyah. The influence of radical ideas made in Russia ascended during the Second Aliyah (1904–1914) and the Third Aliyah (1919–1924).⁴¹

During this period, groups of young people reached Palestine and brought with them, from the empire, political and cultural baggage that they had amassed in the Russian Pale of Settlement between the 1905 uprising and the 1917 revolutions—baggage imprinted as well with the experience of the terrible pogroms of 1918–1919 and the associated self-defense efforts, the chaos of the civil war, and the early days of the Soviet state. Several Marxist versions of Jewish nationalism, agrarian socialism, fervent secular Hebraism, self-defense experience coupled with romanticist paramilitarism, and much more—all found their way to late Ottoman Palestine. In subsequent years, the leading cadres of these societies assumed positions of leadership in the Yishuv and played decisive roles in the expansion of the Zionist project in Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel. East European patterns of political organization were copied over to the Middle East. Most political parties in Israel's early years traced their origins to the Russian Empire (or the Austro-Hungarian Empire).

The two most prominent labor parties in the early twentieth century—Poalei Tsion and Ha-Po'el ha-tsa'ir (which merged in 1930 to form the Palestine Labor Party, Mapai, the dominant parliamentary faction on the Israeli political scene until 1977)—drew their inspiration from Russian wellsprings. The former was inspired by the Marxism of the theoretician Georgi Plekhanov, a father-founder of the Russian S. D. (Social Democratic) Party (in a Jewish national iteration engineered by the Poalei Tsion leader Ber Borochov). The Ha-Po'el ha-tsa'ir derived its inspiration from Tolstoyan neo-Romantic populism and ideas of agrarian socialism à la the S. R. (Socialist Revolutionary) Party. Members of Poalei Tsion read the realities of the Ottoman Empire through emphatically Russian lenses.⁴² In the Old Yishuv in Palestine and the Sephardi communities in the towns of the Ottoman Empire, they pinpointed groups of workers who seemed, in their eyes, to be partners, in terms of ethos and class, of the much larger Jewish proletariat (and its still larger artisanal and lumpen proletarian penumbra) in the Russian Empire. They attempted to form relations with social-democratic parties among other ethnicities in the empire and, on the eve of World War I, devised plans to establish Jewish autonomy within a multinational Ottoman Empire.

As David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1888–1963) best understood the matter, the Jews were an ethnic group that was strewn across

three modern multinational empires. Like the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Serbs, the Jews had a homeland; a considerable number of them, however, had been scattered across a three-empire diaspora, and yet, they saw no political contradiction between a partial state of dispersion and dwelling in a homeland. They pasted the autonomist model, an accepted construct in the Jewish Russian political discourse shortly before World War I, onto the reality of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, basing themselves on four hundred years of the Jews’ status as a *millet*—a recognized ethnoreligious community within the Ottoman Empire (just as other empires had recognized nationalities, from the Roman Empire in antiquity to the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires of the Modern Period)—they believed it possible to restore Jewish self-rule in the Ottoman Empire under the Ottoman flag. The autonomist discourse about Palestine’s past as a district in a multinational empire crossed political borders. It proposed a secular-historical nexus between Jews and the Land of Israel, amid picking and choosing among different and sometimes clashing elements from the country’s past.⁴³ The ancient history of the Second Temple Period, especially those chapters on the Jews’ struggle for autonomy, had been appropriated by fervent Marxist and romanticist dreamers for a new ethnopolitical discourse. No matter how phrased, however, this modernist discourse clashed with the traditional religious dichotomy of “exile” versus “redemption.” It also abetted the idea of different ways of engaging the local Palestinian Arab population, viewing that population not through the lens of a foreign occupier but rather as a related ethnic group with which integration should take place—yet another decidedly secular component of Jewish nationalism.

Members of Ha-Po’el ha-tsa’ir, in contrast, sought to encourage intimate cooperative settlement in Palestine and to create their preferred version of the Zionist “New Jew,”⁴⁴ a peasant immersed in nature. For decades, the Zionist labor parties contended with the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and waged a multifaceted dialogue with what had transpired in the Soviet Union. The question of how to relate to what those who used the Yishuv political jargon tended to call “the world of tomorrow” (i.e., the political, social, economic, and cultural realities in Soviet Russia) was an important element in the Yishuv/Israeli political culture from the Third Aliyah to the years after Stalin’s death (1953). The traces of Soviet influence in Israel were palpable in many domains at that time, including the youth-movement culture and the ambiance of various underground organizations.⁴⁵ Along with social-democratic parties, a Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was established in the early 1920s.⁴⁶ Quite a few members of the Zionist Labor Movement maintained intricate relations with it. Sometimes there was little difference between anti-Zionist radicals and members of

nationalist movements in their solutions to the woes of East European Jewry. Likewise, the cultural visions of members of different political camps were not always much differentiated.⁴⁷ A blatant crossing of the vague borders between Zionist pioneering and anti-Zionist communism occurred in Palestine in the second half of the 1920s, when a large group of members of Gdud ha-'avodah, a socialist Zionist labor organization, seceded from this association, returned to Russia in an organized manner, and joined the Jewish agricultural settlement project in the southern USSR.⁴⁸

Shortly before the 1948 war, members of the underground paramilitary Jewish Freedom Fighters organization (Lehi/Sternists) were able to join up with members of the PCP and collaborate in securing Soviet support for the struggle for statehood. At the convention of the Hebrew Fighters Party (Mifleget Ha-Lohamim ha-Ivri'yim)—a political party established by members of Lehi who convened at the Rama Cinema in Ramat Gan in March 1949—an ideological squabble broke out between Nathan Yellin-Mor, who demanded that the former Lehi members become a socialist labor party with a pronounced leftist tilt and a pro-Soviet orientation (the party had joined the Soviet Friendship League) and Israel Eldad. When Yitzhak Shamir, later to become Israel's prime minister, representing the Likud Party, sided with the Soviet orientation, the matter was resolved; more than half of the delegates to the convention voted in favor of the pro-Soviet platform.⁴⁹

It would be a mistake, however, to think that the influence of late-tsarist Russian acculturation on the political culture in Jewish Palestine was limited solely to the labor movements in the New Yishuv. During the Fourth Aliyah (1925–1929), a new political player that also derived some of its inspiration from its East European heritage, the Revisionist Movement, attained growing influence. As mentioned earlier, Odessa-born Vladimir Jabotinsky—a preeminent product of the Russian imperial city of commerce and a man who was fully at home in Russian culture—developed a liberal national sociopolitical doctrine that found supporters among the urban class that burgeoned due to mass interwar Jewish immigration from Poland and Germany.⁵⁰ His most lasting achievement, as Brian Horowitz writes in his introduction to the English translation of Jabotinsky's *Story of My Life* (1936), was “the establishment of a Zionist rightwing political orientation that has served as a permanent alternative to the Israeli left.”⁵¹ This right-wing orientation brought from Odessa to Tel Aviv was permeated with the national liberalism that had evolved in the urban, multiethnic, bourgeois atmosphere of the big imperial port city. In Jabotinsky's later political career, Western liberalism and secular Jewish nationalism had to be compromised. Both trends co-existed, in mutual tension, in the growing bourgeois

political sector of the Yishuv. "Given his later ideological turn, it is not surprising that he [Jabotinsky] could never really sort out the subtleties and complex contradictions of Jewish acculturation and embourgeoisment in late nineteenth-century Russia."⁵²

Israel and Imperial Russia: The Final Chapter?

The post-World War II waves of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe that swamped the fledgling State of Israel (1948–1968) had an enormous impact on the nascent national culture. They brought to the country hundreds of thousands of expatriates from Warsaw, Vilnius, Odessa, and other towns where the new Hebrew culture we surveyed in the previous pages, the offshoots of which had been replanted in the Middle East, had taken shape. This population of Jews, however, was different, distinct from the generation discussed earlier, of David Ben-Gurion, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and Ber Borochov. The immigrants who streamed from Eastern Europe to Israel after the end of World War II did not resemble, in their demographic makeup and social nature, the members of the 1881–1939 migrations that had set the New Yishuv in motion. In historical terms, one may divide post-World War II immigration to Israel into two cultural and linguistic stages: the "Polish" stage, mainly in 1949–1968, and the "Russian" stage, starting a few years after the Six-Day War. Between the 1940s and the 1970s, most of those reaching Israel were refugees who had been displaced during the war and the Holocaust and had lost relatives, property, and their social and cultural underpinnings. Nearly all of them, after entering the Israeli melting pot, joined political and cultural systems that their counterparts from earlier aliyot had established. Although Polish and Russian were common vernaculars in Israeli towns and villages in the 1950s and the 1960s, the cultural baggage that the newly landed had brought received neither prestige nor establishment recognition. Many Holocaust refugees in Eastern Europe had returned from the USSR to Poland in the mid-1950s, and nearly all members of this group came from areas that the Russian Empire controlled until after World War I—the interwar nation-states that the empire, in its Soviet incarnation, re-annexed.

In fledgling Israel, no influential mass movements or large political parties came into being that preached the preservation of the East European linguistic and cultural legacy (unlike what happened in the large emigration destinations in Western Europe and the Americas). Nor did additional political parties emerge that expressed a secular messianic vision in the spirit of human engineering that the Enlightenment heritage, in its radical East European metamorphosis, advocated.

Just the same, writers and poets in Israel continued to nurture their culture and language and write in Yiddish and Polish without striving to earn official recognition. The immigration from the USSR that began in the 1970s, in contrast, brought to Israel nearly a million people who were second-, third-, or fourth-generation carriers of Russian culture—an imperial culture in Soviet guise. The huge numbers of Russophone immigrants who adhered to the language and culture with which they identified acted, collectively, to vitiate the discourse of the Hebrew-Zionist political culture that had enjoyed hegemonic status in Israel's early years.

With the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the East European era in Jewish history appears to be expiring. The disintegration of the USSR precipitated mass emigration and the dramatic depletion of the Jewish population living under Russian rule. In today's postimperial era, the largest Russian Jewish community in the world inhabits a Jewish nation-state that bases a hefty share of its institutions on the Russian imperial experience. The great exodus from the former Soviet territories expedited a historical process that had begun in the second half of the nineteenth century. It seems to be the closing chapter of the Russian Jewish imperial encounter. In 1959, some 2,300,000 Jews lived in the Soviet Union. Thirty years later, as the Soviet regime began to fall, 1,500,000 remained. In 2000, only 500,000 remained. Between 1983 and 2006, about 1,600,000 Jews left the former Soviet Union. Roughly a million of them reached Israel, 325,000 settled in the United States, and 220,000 relocated to Germany.⁵³ Nearly all of the hundreds of thousands of émigrés from the imperial territories, offspring of the largest Jewish community in the world, reside in Israel, North America, and Western Europe today. Thus, as happened a hundred years earlier, a new Russian Jewish diaspora has formed in the West and in Israel. The cultural legacy that the masses of post-Soviet émigrés brought from the Russian Empire to the new destination countries has added another tile to the mosaic of Jewish identities at the dawn of the twenty-first century. It is a diverse multilingual and multicultural mosaic, and some of its most important roots hearken back to the 250-year-old Russian Jewish imperial experience in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, Vilnius, and Warsaw. Within this mosaic, the Russian Jewish community in the Middle Eastern nation-state continues to carry the residue of the culture of a vanished empire.

Notes

1. Simon M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1920), 168–69.

2. Shmuel Ettinger, *Ben Polin le-Rusyah: Mebkarim be-toldot Yehude Mizrah Eropah*, ed. Israel Bartal and Jonathan Frankel (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yisra'el, 1994), 439.

3. For examples of the imperial impact on the shaping of modern Hebrew culture in pre-1948 Palestine, see Israel Bartal, ed., *Ha-Agalah ha-mele'ab: Me'ab ve-esrim shenot tarbut Yisra'el* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim 'a. sh. Y.L. Magnes, ha-Universitah ha-Ivrit, 2002).

4. For a detailed description and analysis of this pre-1948 cultural project, see Zohar Shavit, *Toldot ha-Yishuv ha-Yehudi be-Erets Yisra'el me-az ha-'Aliyah ha-rishonah: Beniyatah shel tarbut 'Ivrit—Helek A* (Jerusalem: Ha-Akade'myah ha-le'umit ha-Yisra'elit le-mada'im u-Mosad Byalik, 1998). See also Israel Bartal, "The Ingathering of Traditions: Zionism's Anthology Projects," *Prooftexts* 17, no. 1 (1997): 77–93.

5. For a recent study that argues that the formative period of the new Hebrew culture predates World War I, see Arie B. Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

6. For a more nuanced picture of the linguistic processes that took place in pre-1948 Palestine, see Liora R. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014). This book demonstrates how Jews in Palestine remained connected linguistically by both preference and necessity to a world outside the boundaries of the pro-Hebrew community, even as their leadership promoted Hebrew and achieved that language's dominance.

7. See the recent innovative work by Mihály Kálmán on the ways in which the Russian Jewish experience of pogroms shaped pre-1948 paramilitary organizations in Palestine, in Chapter 12 of this volume. See also Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*, Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Gur Alroey, "Mif'al le'umi zeh i-cfshar le-ha'amid 'al ha-hemlah vaha-rahamim': Teguvatah shel ha-Yishuv vaha-tenu'ah ha-Tsiyonit la-pogromim be-Ukra'inah, 1918–1920," *Iyunim bi-tekumat Yisra'el* 23 (2013): 411–50; idem, "Ha-Gibor ha-Ivri vaha-korban ha-Yehudi: Ha-Pogromim be-Ukra'inah u-me'ora'ot 680–681," *Tsiyon* 79, no. 4 (2015): 551–58.

8. For a recent analysis of the 1874–1924 emigration to the West, see Gur Alroey, *Ha-Mabpekhab ha-sheketah: Ha-Hagirah ha-Yehudit meba-Imperyah ha-Rusit, 1875–1924* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yisra'el, 2008).

9. Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011).

10. Patricia Herlihy, *Odesa: A History, 1794–1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 251.

11. Israel Bartal, "Jews in the Crosshairs of Empire: A Franco-Russian Comparison," in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 116–26.

12. John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772–1825* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 117–43.

13. Israel Bartal, "Farming the Land on Three Continents: Bilu, Am Oylom, and Yefe-Nahar," *Jewish History* 21 (2007): 249–61.

14. This was stated explicitly in the 1804 *Statutes Concerning the Organization of the Jews*: "Numerous complaints have been submitted to us regarding the abuse and exploitation of native farmers and laborers in those provinces in which the jews are permitted to reside. . . . The following regulations are in accord both with our concern with the true happiness of the Jews and with the needs of the principle inhabitants of those provinces." Quoted in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd ed., ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 375.

15. This almost totally forgotten response to the pogroms in 1881–1882 was well known to early Zionist historians: Ben-Zion Dinur, "Tokhniyotav shel Ignatyev le-fitron she'elat ha-Yehudim' u-ve'idot netsige ha-kehilot be-Peterburg bi-shenot 641–2," *He-Avar* (1963): 3–82.

16. Hibbat Zion was a Jewish national movement established in the Russian Empire following the pogroms of 1881–1882 and the enacting of the May Laws in 1882. The movement aimed to promote the establishment of Jewish agricultural colonies in Palestine.

17. On the impact of late eighteenth-century Polish reform projects on imperial Russian legislation on the Jews, see Jolanta T. Penkasz, "To What Extent Did Prince Adam Czartoryski Influence Alexander I's 'Jewish' Statute of 1804?," *Polish Review* 40, no. 4 (1995): 403–14; Israel Bartal, "Vier-jahressejm," *Enzyklopaedie juedischer Geschichte und Kultur*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2015), 288–90.
18. For a comprehensive study on the demography of Russian Jewry, see Shaul Stampfer, "Aspects of Population Growth and Migration in Polish-Lithuanian Jewry in the Modern Period," in Israel Bartal and Israel Gutman, eds., *Kiyum va-shever: Yehude Polin le-dorotehem, kerekb alef* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yisra'el, 1997), 263–85.
19. For the most detailed studies on both communities, see Yisrael Klauzner, *Vilna, Yerushalayim de-Lita: Dorot rishonim, 1495–1881* (Tel Aviv: Bet Lohame ha-Geta'ot, 1988); Börries Kuzmany, *Brody: A Galician Border City in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
20. On the emergence of the Warsaw community as the largest Jewish urban center in the Russian Empire, see Yankev Shatsky, *Geshikhte fun yidn in Varshe*, vols. 1–3 (New York: YIVO, 1947–1953).
21. For studies on Jewish Łódź during the Imperial era, see "Jews in Łódź, 1820–1939," *Polin* 6 (1991): 3–261.
22. For the case of Saint Petersburg/Petrograd-Leningrad, see Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 81–198; Michael Beizer, *Evrei Leningrada, 1917–1939: Natsional'naia zbizn' i sovetizatsiia* (Moscow: Mosty Kultury, 1999).
23. Scott Ury, "Urban Society, Popular Culture, Participatory Politics: On the Culture of Modern Jewish Politics," in *Insiders and Outsiders: Dilemmas of East European Jewry*, ed. Richard I. Cohen, Jonathan Frankel, and Stefani Hoffman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 153.
24. Svetlana Natkovich, "Odessa as a 'Point de Capital': Economics, History, and Time in Odessa Fiction," *Slavic Review* 75, no. 4 (Winter 2016), 848.
25. Israel Bartal, "Imagined Geography: The Shtetl, Myth, and Reality," in *The Shtetl: New Evaluations*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 179–92.
26. In her path-breaking analysis of Jabotinsky's *The Five* (1936), Svetlana Natkovich describes the author's Odessa sentiments, fifteen years after the Bolshevik Revolution, as "nostalgic identification with Odessa's bourgeois milieu and its mythology." Natkovich, "Odessa as a 'Point de Capital,'" 862.
27. Israel Bartal, "Nasledye i bunt: Literatura na ivrite v ross'yskoe imperii," in *Istoriia, evreiskogo naroda v Rossii*, vol. 2, *Ot razdelov Pol'shi do padeniia Rossiiskoi imperii*, ed. Ilya Lurie (Moscow: Mosty kultury, Gescharim, 2012), 440–75.
28. Mirja Lecke, "Odessa Without Dogma: Jabotinsky's *The Five*," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2012): 325–50.
29. A recent study on Odessa sheds light on this city as an "east Mediterranean port-metropolis, through the activities of its ethnic groups." In many ways, this perspective contributes much to our understanding of the Odessa-Tel Aviv connection, since it is relevant to the Arab-Ottoman city of Jaffa, and the tensional encounter of a multiethnic "Oriental" neighborhood with a newly created community of imperial Russian immigrants. Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
30. See Steve Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Abad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Barbara E. Mann, *A Place in History: Modernism, Tel Aviv, and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1–25.
31. Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 151.
32. Anat Helman, "Odessa's Wide Boulevard or the Narrow Alley of the Shtetl? East European Facets in the First Hebrew City" (paper presented at the conference "Beyond Eastern Europe: Jewish Cultures in Israel and the United States," Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, March 18–20, 2007).
33. For a recent reconstruction and analysis of pre-World War II urban life and culture in Tel Aviv, see Anat Helman, *Young Tel Aviv: A Tale of Two Cities* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 2010).

34. Yehudah Leib Gordon, "Ha-Kitsah 'ami," *Ha-Karmel* 7, no. 1 (1866), trans. D. Goldman, quoted in Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 375.
35. Bartal, "Farming the Land on Three Continents."
36. On the responses of Jewish intellectuals and writers to the challenge of the Russian Revolution and their efforts to recast themselves and other Jews as a modern nation, see Kenneth B. Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
37. Mordechai Eliav, ed., *Sefer ha-'Aliyah ha-rishonah*, vols. 1–2 (Tel Aviv: Yad Yitshak Ben Tsevi, 1981).
38. Dinur, "Tokhniyotav shel Ignatyev." The Hibbat Zion texts are permeated with the idea that the immigrants' colonization project was meant to radically change the economic relations between Jews and non-Jews. For some collections of primary documents of the period, see Shmuel Yavnieli, ed., *Sefer ha-Tsiyonut, kerekh bet. Tekufat Hibat Tsiyon, mekorot u-te'udot* (Tel Aviv: Mosad Byalik, 'al yede Devir, 1942); Yisrael Klauzner, *Be-bit'orer 'am: Ha-'Aliyah ha-rishonah me-Rusyah* (Jerusalem: Devir u-Mosad Byalik, ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1962); Alter Druyanov and Shulamit Laskov, eds., *Ketavim le-toldot Hibat Tsiyon ve-yishuv Erets Yisra'el*, vols. 1–7 (Tel Aviv: Universitat Tel Aviv, 1982).
39. Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha-itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit ba-me'ah ha-tsba-'esre* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1970): 35.
40. Shulamit Laskov, *Ha-Biluyim* (Jerusalem: Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit 'al yad ha-Histadrut ha-Tsiyonit ha-'olamit, 1979); Joseph Salmon, "Ideology and Reality in the Bilu Aliyah," *Journal of Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1978): 430–66; Shlomo Na'aman, "Bilu: Tenu'at emantsipatsyah ve-guf mitnahel," *Ha-Tsiyonut* 8 (1983): 11–56.
41. Israel Bartal, Yehoshua Kaniel, and Zeev Tsahor, eds., *Ha-'Aliyah ha-sheniyah*, vols. 1–3 (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1997). We still lack a critical history of the Third Aliyah. For the most comprehensive book, edited by a contemporary eyewitness, see Yehudah Erez, ed., *Sefer ha-'Aliyah ha-shelishit, kerekh alef-bet* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1964).
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43. Israel Bartal, *Kozak ve-Bedvi: "Am" ve-"erets" ba-le'umiyut ha-Yehudit* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2007); Simon Rabinovitch, "Diaspora, Nation, and Messiah, an Introductory Essay," in *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States*, ed. Simon Rabinovitch (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 2012), xv–xli.
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50. For recent interpretations on the impact of Odessa on Jabotinsky's cultural and political legacy, see Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925–1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1988); Michael Stanislawsky, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Svetlana Natkovich, *Ben 'anene*

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51. Brian Horowitz, "Introduction: Muse and Muscle, *Story of My Life* and the Invention of Vladimir Jabotinsky," in Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Vladimir Jabotinsky's Story of My Life*, ed. Brian Horowitz and Leonid Katsis (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 2.

52. Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 123.

53. Marc Toltz, "Ha-Demografyah ha-Yehudit: Mehe-'avar ha-Sovyeti la-hoveh ha-post-Sovyeti," in *Toldot Yehude Rusyah*, vol. 3, ed. Mikha'el Beizer (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yisra'el, 2015): 315–37.

CHAPTER 2

From Hyphenated Jews to Independent Jews: The Collapse of the Russian Empire and the Change in the Relationship Between Jews and Others

Taro Tsurumi

Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940) represents the transformation of Russian Zionism from an intra-imperial movement to an international movement. In his early career he was a Russified, rather cosmopolitan Jew, who entertained the possibility that the Russia of the future could be a multinational polity.¹ He later became a radical Zionist, who, in proposing the Jewish Legion during World War I and founding the Betar youth movement, initiated the militarization of Zionism from the European side, and attempted to expedite the achieving of Jewish national sovereignty in Palestine, while abandoning the idea of multinational statehood in Europe. This drastic change in his position remains an enigma in Zionist history. However, he was not an exceptional figure in Russian Zionist history in this shift, although not all others who made this shift became militaristic. Individuals involved in the Russian Zionist Organization and its official weekly, *Rassvet*, which were ideologically supported by Jabotinsky, as well as forgotten Zionists such as Abraham Idelsohn (1865–1921) and Daniel Pashmanik (1869–1930), were indeed liberal in the context of the Russian and Zionist politics of their time. They were nonsocialists, and, for a certain period, they cooperated with Russian Jewish liberals, who were involved in the Constitutional Democratic Party of Russia (Kadets). Occasionally referring to the Austrian Marxist theory of nationality, with its vision of multinational statehood, they sought coexistence with other peoples in the Empire. They were jubilant over the February Revolution in 1917, expecting the democratization of Russia, where Jews would

be granted not only civil rights but also national rights. Yet the Bolshevik takeover of Russia caused them to immigrate to Western Europe, and several of them, including Joseph Schechtman (1891–1970), worked together with Jabotinsky even after his radical criticism of the mainstream Zionist leadership became apparent. What, then, radicalized imperial period Russian Zionists in the nationalist or militarist sense?

The hypothesis of the present chapter is that the collapse of the Russian Empire effected the change in the Zionist trend. The collapse has two parts: (1) the dissolution of the old polity and (2) the loss of trust in Russians and other national groups that connected Jews with other subjects in the Empire. The former is an objective fact, whereas the latter is a subjective perception. Therefore, while the former affected every Jew, the latter was the main cause of the diversity of Jewish reactions to the imperial collapse. In fact, not all Russian Jews or Zionists became radicalized after the Empire collapsed; there were Jews who continued to trust Russians or, in some vague sense, Russia as a native country, even after that. The comparison of Jews who reacted differently to the imperial collapse reveals the difference in perceptions that finally divided these groups of Jews. Furthermore, it illustrates the context from which Zionism emerged and reveals what fundamentally distinguished the Zionist movement from other Jewish movements. For this purpose, this chapter focuses on, along with Jabotinsky and his comrades, Daniel Pasmanik, a Zionist who did not follow the path of Jabotinsky, and continued his involvement in Russian politics even after he immigrated to Paris. I also examine non-Zionist Jewish liberals, or liberal Jewish nationalists, including Maxim Vinaver, who was active as a White Russian, even in exile. Pasmanik stood somewhere between Jabotinsky and the non-Zionist liberals in his attitude toward Russia and the relationship among its peoples; non-Zionist liberals defined Russia and Russians as integral elements of their identity, whereas Jabotinsky's circle became indifferent to Russia.

Jews and the Russian Empire

Until its collapse, the Russian Empire was the most important demographic center of the Zionist movement.² Neither a nation-state nor a would-be nation-state seeking homogeneity, it was an empire. The significant characteristics of the Russian Empire as they related to Zionism can be summed up in the following two points. First, as was the case with the Turks in the Ottoman Empire, the ethnic Russians—"Great Russians," the ruling people of the Empire—did not necessarily consider themselves culturally superior, particularly to the peoples living in the western region of the Empire, and were not regarded as such by others.³ Moreover, since the Empire's ability to acquire new territories was greater than its

capacity to rule them, it had to rely on its subject peoples, particularly the local elites.⁴ This is one reason that the tsarist regime lacked a coherent policy, even with regard to the enforcement of the notorious “Russification.” True, the government began to promote Russification with increasing intensity, particularly after the 1860s. Yet plenty of non-Russians retained important positions in the Empire.⁵ Rather, the tsarist regime was trying to create an imperial identity for its people—as *rossiiskii* people, or subjects of the Russian state. The regime was not trying to create a *russskii* people, or “Great Russian” (ethnic Russian, plus Ukrainian and Belarusian) identity into which non-Russians could also be integrated.⁶ Accordingly, albeit with some restrictions, many of the ethnic or religious groups in the Empire enjoyed some degree of autonomy, and the Empire retained ethnic diversity.

Second, the level of oppression by the government, including Russification, differed among ethnic groups. This characteristic of the Empire is complementary to the first one. For example, on the one hand, Ukrainians and Belarusians were categorized as Russian and were never recognized as distinct ethnic groups. Their distinct cultural activities were constantly under pressure from Russification, as were those of the mostly Catholic Polish and Lithuanians, who were always under the suspicion of the tsar.⁷ On the other hand, Baltic Germans, Estonians, and Latvians, for instance, who were for the most part friendly with the Russian government, were granted virtual autonomy.⁸ From the point of view of the time, this variegated situation could cause the highly oppressed, including the Jews, to expect that if certain conditions were fulfilled, it would not be necessary to leave the Empire, because it would be possible to live a life of at least some autonomy there. Indeed, as discussed below, the mind-set of Zionists was more or less along this line.

The Jews in the Empire were by no means passive about the government’s policies. There was interaction between the Empire and its Jews. From the beginning, both the government and non-Jewish intellectual society rarely conceived of the “Jewish Question” in racist or essentialist terms. According to Eli Weinerman, there were very few, if any, racist discourses on the Jewish Question until the twentieth century, and although some such discourses appeared around the 1905 revolution, they hardly gained wide support.⁹ Even in Germany, it was only in the late 1870s that racist views began to appear in public, and it was only after Germany’s defeat in World War I that racist views began to prevail. Instead, Russians had adopted the policy of making the Jews *as a group* more “useful” and less “harmful.” *Opinion* (1800), by Gavriil Derzhavin, the future minister of justice under Alexander I, inaugurated a policy founded on a nonracist perspective on the Jewish Question. This report became the basis for the deliberations by the Jewish Committee in 1802 and of the legislation that resulted in

the Jewish Statute of 1804. Indeed, Derzhavin's strong prejudice against the Jews—as exploiters of farmers, for example—is evident throughout the report.¹⁰ However, he believed that the Jews could be transformed into “useful” subjects of the Empire, as in Germany, where the Mendelssohnian school—the progenitor of the Jewish enlightenment movement, the *Haskalah*—had succeeded in producing enlightened or “useful” Jews.¹¹ In other words, Derzhavin understood Jewish “deficiency” as changeable without Jews ceasing to be Jews. From then on, the government promoted what Benjamin Nathans has called the policy of “selective integration,” encouraging “useful” Jews in terms of occupations and knowledge of Russian language and culture. The “useful” Jews had a chance to be permitted to reside beyond the “Pale,” in Saint Petersburg, for instance.¹² Although it is not possible to characterize these “useful Jews” precisely, they were evidently the opposite of the stereotypical images of exploiters and fanatics in the eyes of the regime. Until the collapse of the Empire, the official policy toward the Jews was basically along this line: the government half-heartedly attempted to undermine the collective existence of the Jews while trying to integrate them into the Empire. To be sure, after the enthronement of Alexander III (1881–1894), anti-Semitism grew within the government. Still, since Jews played an integral part in the economic development of Russia at the time, the government hesitated to initiate a fundamental change in its policy toward the Jews.¹³

From the Jewish perspective, although the period under Nicholas I (1825–1855) was known as one of the darkest ages in Jewish history, the reign of Alexander II (1855–1881) was characterized by rising hopes for emancipation. According to Il'ia Orshanskii, a Russian Jewish lawyer and historian of the late nineteenth century, Jewish elites “had begun to consider themselves not merely people and citizens, but *Russian people and citizens of Russia*” as early as the late 1850s.¹⁴ The *Haskalah* came to the Russian Jewish community in the early nineteenth century. The emergence of a group called the *maskilim*, or Jewish enlighteners of the *Haskalah*, who attempted to reform Judaism and Jewish society as a whole, came along with an increased distrust of the traditional Jewish establishment and the state's support of *maskilic* institutions.¹⁵ Zionists are generally said to have their roots in the ranks of the *maskilim*. Most Russian Jews lived traditional lives, following Rabbinic Judaism, throughout the nineteenth century, and the *maskilim* were a tiny minority. But *maskilim* in Russia—as opposed to their German counterparts, who tended to be estranged from the Jewish masses—more often directed their efforts toward improving the status of the Jews as a whole, so they would be “selected” as a “useful” Jew.¹⁶ On the one hand, they defended Jewish interests, serving the role of apologists for Judaism or Jewish society and mediators between the Jewish population and the government, and, on the other hand, they educated the Jewish masses to make them more “useful.” These two points were intertwined,

for Jewish sociopolitical status in the Empire appeared to be a function of Jewish reputation in the eyes of others.¹⁷ Zionist historiography has usually described these leaders of the Jewish Enlightenment as “assimilationists.” In reality, however, they desired *acculturation*, in the sense of the word used by sociologist Milton M. Gordon, integration into the Empire without the loss of their Jewish collective identity through the acquisition of the dominant culture of the Empire.¹⁸ In effect, they strived not for ethnic Russian culture but, rather, for a modern culture based on the Russian language.

Russian Zionists in the Imperial Period

Zionism as an organized movement called Hibbat Zion began after the 1881–1882 pogroms, which occurred mainly in southern Ukraine. Initially, Hibbat Zion mainly focused on the colonization of Palestine and the cultural development of Jews. Western Zionists, led by Theodor Herzl, established the World Zionist Organization in 1897, but the Zionists of Hibbat Zion, after joining them, played a pivotal role.¹⁹

At the turn of the twentieth century, socialist trends developed within Zionism in the Russian Empire. Ideologically, these socialist trends, reflected in Poalei Tzion among other groups, were the main foundation of Labor Zionism, whose prominent figures, such as the first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, immigrated to Palestine in the Second Aliyah. Although nonsocialist Russian Zionism has been far less researched, probably because it used to seem less important in retrospective, this movement, which remained in Russia until the Bolsheviks took control of the entire country, should not be overlooked. Within the general political scene of the Empire in this period, the other prominent political trend was liberalism, which was associated with the Westernizers and developed among the *zemstvo* (local government) movement. Naturally, liberalism, with a somewhat nationalist inclination, also became prevalent among Jews. During the Revolutionary years (1905–1906), Russian Zionists associated with other liberal Jews, including Jews involved in the Jewish People’s Group led by Maxim Vinaver, and the Folkspartei, led by Simon Dubnow.²⁰

In the year the World Zionist Organization was founded, the Bund was established in Vilna (Vilnius); it focused on the present needs of the Jewish workers. As we see below, since its inception, Hibbat Zion had also viewed its activities as a means to improve the status of Jews within the Empire. However, the Zionist focus on *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work in the present), emphasizing the improvement of Jewish life and its level of culture in the Diaspora, was further accelerated as a result of Hibbat Zion’s rivalry with the Bund.²¹ What we call “Russian Zionism” here emphasized this aspect of *Gegenwartsarbeit* and it was therefore also called

“Synthetic Zionism,” as it synthesized work in the Diaspora—including political activity and cultural work—and the colonization of Palestine through practical settlement and cultivation and diplomatic negotiations. During the 1905 Revolution, this trend in Zionism, along with socialist Zionism, became prevalent in the Russian political arena.²²

In this period, *Gegenwartsarbeit* became even more important. Russian Zionists not only strove for the colonization of Palestine but also for the development of Jewish life and culture in the Diaspora. The motive behind such a focus on the diaspora Jewish community was complex. First, without the support of diaspora Jews and the development of Zionist consciousness among Jews, the goal of the Zionist movement would have been unattainable. In order for the Zionists to freely encourage Zionism among Russian Jews, they needed the Russian regime to be a democracy; during the imperial period, the Zionist movement was permitted only on the condition that it aimed to encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine. Thus, it was natural for Russian Zionists to engage in activity promoting the democratization of Russia, especially when it seemed within reach after the 1905 Revolution.²³

Second, as I reveal elsewhere and discuss below, for some Zionists, the colonization of Palestine was not necessarily the goal but rather a means.²⁴ Under the Zionist flag, they attempted to improve the status of Jews in the Russian Empire. The historian Yehuda Slutsky divided nonsocialist Russian Zionists into two groups. The first comprised those based in Odessa and followers of Menahem Ussishkin; they concentrated on the colonization of Palestine and were even opposed to political activity by Zionists in the Diaspora. For them, the aim of *Gegenwartsarbeit* would have been at best the preparation for the colonization of Palestine only. Yet the second group, the circle that published *Rassvet*, living in Vilna, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg, took *Gegenwartsarbeit* far more seriously.²⁵

The mouthpieces of Russian Zionism were the monthly publication *Evreiskaia zhizn'* (Jewish life; Petersburg, 1904–1907) and the weekly publication *Rassvet* (Dawn; Petersburg /Petrograd, 1907–1915, 1917–1918), the official organ of the Russian Zionist Organization. Many individuals contributed to both periodicals, including, for example, Idelsohn, Pasmanik, Julius Brutzkus (1870–1951), and Jabotinsky. *Rassvet* first appeared with the title *Khronika evreiskoi zhizni* (Chronicle of Jewish lives; Petersburg/Petrograd, 1905–1906, 1918–1919), changing its name several times to *Evreiskii narod* (Jewish people; Petersburg, 1906) and then *Evreiskaia zhizn'* (Moscow, 1915–1917). These weekly publications were the most highly distributed Russian-language Jewish periodicals in the Empire and were major periodicals for the entire Zionist movement as well. At one point, their reach was very extensive; for example, in 1916 the weekly *Evreiskaia zhizn'* had 17,335 subscribers. To provide some context for this figure, the largest number of subscribers

that the German weekly of the World Zionist Organization, *Die Welt* (1897–1914), achieved was approximately 10,000.²⁶ In 1911, approximately 8,000 people subscribed to *Rassvet*, whereas only 3,000 subscribed to *Ha-Olam*, the Hebrew weekly of the World Zionist Organization.²⁷

In December 1906, Russian Zionists held the third all-Russian Zionist Conference in Helsingfors. There, they adopted the Helsingfors Program, which advocated the democratization of Russia, with rights for each national group, including autonomy for each nationality within the framework of the state and the recognition of the Jews as a nationality so that they would be eligible for these rights. Although the failure of the 1905 Revolution dampened this enthusiasm, Russian Zionists still considered Russia an integral part of their project.²⁸ For example, even at the end of 1914, when the condition of Jews further deteriorated because of the war, Idelsohn (under his pen name “Davidson”), the editor of *Rassvet*, wrote the following: “Our life is, despite all the restrictions, interwoven with a great many threads in the general economic, social, and intellectual lives of the entire population [of Russia], and we are not a small but a big group in the relatively motley tribal constituency of the Russian [*rossiiskogo*] state.”²⁹

Such deep concern by Zionist diaspora Jews for the country in which they lived—especially in the generation before Jabotinsky’s—has been overlooked by the traditional Palestine-centered Zionist historiography. Some historians of East European Jewish history, however, have highlighted this aspect of ambivalence in Zionist thought, particularly in the case of Polish Zionism in the interwar period, that is, after the imperial collapse.³⁰ The collapse of the Empire on which diaspora Jews depended was a watershed moment in the development of Zionism and in the long run changed the direction of the Zionist movement.

From the beginning, not a few Russian Zionists were more interested in the improvement of the status of Jews in the Russian Empire than in establishing Jewish Palestine per se. Considering the reason why only Jews were persecuted, Leon Pinsker, a prominent leader of Hibbat Zion, wrote in his monumental pamphlet *Auto-Emancipation* (1882) that the Jew was “regarded as neither a friend nor a foe, but an alien [*Unbekannte*], the only known thing about whom is that he has no home.”³¹ Consequently, “the nations never have to deal with a Jewish nation [*jüdischen Nation*], but always merely with Jews [*Juden*].”³² Pinsker posited that Jews were discriminated against because they were considered to be inferior, and, moreover, they considered *themselves* inferior. According to Pinsker, if Jews were recognized as a nation equal in value to other nations, and not as an inferior, peculiar group simply called “Jews,” their position in the Empire would improve.³³

Two decades later, Russian Zionists involved in *Rassvet* still shared this view: Jewish territory or, more specifically, the attempt to achieve it in Palestine, would form the foundation for categorizing Jews as a nation. Thus, in a 1904 essay in

Evreiskaia zhizn' on "The Jewish Question in the Russian Publications," the Russian Zionist publicist Julius Brutzkus averred that "the establishment of the center [of the Jewish nation] . . . is the shortest way to the recognition of the Jewish nationality by the entire world."³⁴ Russian Zionists foresaw that otherwise the pejorative attitude toward Jews among Russian peoples would continue.

A second matter of concern here was Jewish self-esteem. In 1911, Idelsohn noted the following: "Rather than restrictive laws and orders [on Jews], the accumulation of tiny cavils, various persecutions, and the desire to give pain, to disgrace, and to make us aware that we are unequal to others create the looming desperate situation in which we are put. This probably creates moral suffering rather than actual harm."³⁵ To the Zionist mind, self-esteem was important not just for the sake of self-satisfaction but also for the sake of self-defense. Another Zionist publicist, Daniel Pasmanik, argued that Jews should not be servants of the ruling nation, nor should they go to other minorities to form a coalition. Instead, they should concentrate their energy not merely against suffering but also on attaining the national ideal. Pasmanik believed that "the more we become strong, the more we will be taken into consideration" by even anti-Semites, and indeed of any sort, including racial anti-Semites.³⁶ In the article "Russian Anti-Semitism," Pasmanik asserted that the fundamental cause of contemporary anti-Semitism was Jewish rightlessness, or "not enmity against the enemy but mockery of the defenseless."³⁷ The failure of Zionist parties to achieve seats in the election for the second Duma (parliament) in 1907 discouraged the Zionist policy of *Gegenwartsarbeit*. Symptomatically, Pasmanik wrote at the time that Zionists' over-involvement in Russian politics at the time of the Helsingfors conference was ill conceived, and that *Gegenwartsarbeit* had to serve merely as a means to attain Zionism's goals in Palestine.³⁸ Yet this disappointment appears to have been only a reflection of momentary temporal frustration. As we see below, Pasmanik was again, and even more deeply, involved in Russian politics after the outbreak of World War I. Even after 1907, Russian Zionists, including Jabotinsky, continued to discuss the theory of multinational statehood and autonomy for national minorities, with reference to the Austro-Marxist theory of nationality (in the writings of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer), expecting that Russia's future polity would be multinational.³⁹ The Helsingfors Program was reprinted in *Rassvet* immediately after the February Revolution and reconfirmed at the Russian Zionist Conference held in Petrograd.⁴⁰ Although this program has occasionally been viewed as evidence of Zionist involvement in multinational politics,⁴¹ little attention has been given to the fact that this so-called Zionist program contains no reference to Palestine; its every demand concerns Russian domestic affairs. Rather than synthesizing Zionist ambitions in Palestine with the work to be done in the Diaspora, this ideology appears

to be a Zionism without Zion. Given that the tsarist government was indulgent toward the Zionist movement insofar as it exclusively aimed to get Jews out of Russia, Russian Zionists' involvement in changing conditions in the Diaspora is remarkable.

In short, for these Zionists, the focal point was not the land of Palestine itself. Considering what would happen even if the "attempt to achieve Jewish autonomy in Palestine" did *not* succeed, Idelsohn wrote the following in his article "Palestine and Equal Rights" in 1914: "The claim for Palestine is the highest manifestation of the inner consciousness of our equal standing, and clearly, it is the proclamation of ourselves as a nation [*narod*], which has the right to a fragment of land on the earthy sphere, as Poles, a huge number of whom are living outside Poland and are not denied the full rights in the places of 'dispersion.'" ⁴² With their trust in, if not simple affection for, Russia, that is, their belief that if certain conditions were fulfilled, Jews could live a respectable life in Russia, these Zionists were ideologically close to Russian Jewish liberals, many of whom, Vinaver among them, were involved in the Kadets. In fact, although only for a short period, Russian Jewish liberals and Russian Zionists cooperated for Jews' attainment of equal rights and the election of Jewish parties to the Duma. ⁴³

The Crisis of the Empire and a Zionist in Support of the Whites

The sequence of dramatic events following the outbreak of World War I in 1914 seriously affected Russian Zionists' assumptions about the relationship between Jews and Russia. With the change in international politics, and ignoring the Zionist Organization's neutral policy, Jabotinsky proposed the establishment of the Jewish Legion within the British Army in Palestine to fight against the Ottoman Empire. ⁴⁴ The case of Pasmanik was more striking. ⁴⁵ Receiving the news of the outbreak of the war in Switzerland, where he lived with his family, he went back to Russia to join the Russian Army as an army surgeon, officially fighting against Germany. When the February Revolution erupted in Russia, Pasmanik participated on the side of the Kadets. In his memoir, Pasmanik stated that he was convinced that Russia was at a critical juncture because Russia was not capable of a socialist revolution but only of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. ⁴⁶ Pasmanik became involved in the Crimean regional government led by the Kadets, with Foreign Minister Vinaver among them. Although Pasmanik continued to identify himself as a Zionist, he became estranged from the Zionist Organization. In fact, in 1924 Joseph Schechtman, a right-hand man of Jabotinsky, referred to Pasmanik, who, in his view, was involved in anti-Zionist activity, in critical terms. ⁴⁷ By 1920, Pasmanik had already contributed several articles

to *Evreiskaia tribuna*, and by the early 1920s, he had also become estranged from Vinaver's circle because he had become a monarchist.⁴⁸ This all raises the question of why Pasmanik, a Jew, was involved in the White movement. Together with the Ukrainian nationalist army, the White Army was notorious for a number of pogroms during the Civil War, and it is well known that because of that, most Russian Jews ultimately came to support the Bolshevik regime over the alternatives.⁴⁹

In September 1919, Pasmanik contributed an article entitled "The Jewish Question in Russia" to *Obsheche delo* (Common cause), a Russian White daily published in Paris, which he joined in 1920. In this article, Pasmanik stressed that although Bolsheviks had instigated few pogroms, they had destroyed the economic life of the Jewish middle class, the main body of the Russian Jewish economy. He further argued that although Bolshevik rule had rarely caused pogroms, once it was overthrown, unprecedented, brutal pogroms would occur because there were Jews among the radicals, such as the commissars. He noted that in his close observation of the activity of Denikin, the general of the White Army, no pogrom had occurred in the area under Denikin's rule (although present scholarship would not agree). He explained the reason as follows: "The unit of General Denikin entertained the ideal of *gosudarstvennost'* [statehood], under which the harmonious unity of the various classes, peoples, and religious groups would be achieved. Such a cultural concept of *gosudarstvennost'* firmly contradicts the anti-Jewish pogroms. Therefore, despite the anti-Semitic atmosphere of this and other officers or soldiers, his army as a whole did not allow pogroms, which, in the final analysis, cast seeds of disharmony throughout the state."⁵⁰ Pasmanik seems to define the term *gosudarstvennost'* as the existence of or aspiration for a disciplined, strong state and a nonpartisan, statewide outlook.

An analysis of the arguments published by Pasmanik in the 1920s reveals that Pasmanik supported the Whites mainly for three reasons. First, like other Jews involved in the Paris Russian Jewish weekly *Evreiskaia tribuna*, he believed that the Bolsheviks represented the Jews' worst enemy. He suspected that the Bolshevik policy against the bourgeoisie as well as against Jewish nationality and religion would annihilate the very foundation of Jewish nationality. He contended in *Evreiskaia tribuna* in 1920 that even after experiencing Symon Petliura's or the White Army's pogroms, Jews remained hostile toward the Bolsheviks because their regime would destroy Russian Jewry.⁵¹

Second, as his argument on Denikin's *gosudarstvennost'* suggests, Pasmanik believed that pogroms occurred first and foremost as a result of the dissolution of the state, or catastrophic anarchy, rather than the ill intentions of statesmen. His belief was not without reason, if not balanced. In fact, most notably during

the years 1917–1918, in which the state apparatus was paralyzed, Jewish and other presses, including *Rassvet*, reported on bread and “drunken” pogroms, that is, pogroms instigated outside of the state apparatus that terrorized Jewish shops.⁵² Various kinds of people in the territory of former imperial Russia, including those in the Red Army, were involved in pogroms, and those in the White Army were only part of them.⁵³ Third, Pasmanik was convinced that, since it had no objective foundation, the Bolshevik regime was bound to collapse eventually. He thought that the problem was the anti-Semitic discourse equating Jews with Bolsheviks, which was prevalent throughout and beyond Russia. Pasmanik worried that when the Bolsheviks were defeated, anti-Bolsheviks would take revenge on Jews. He therefore stressed the importance of demonstrating the Jewish struggle against Bolshevism, which would rebut any argument that lumped the Jews with the Bolsheviks.⁵⁴

These points explain why he supported the Whites instead of the Reds, but a more fundamental question arises: Why was he so obsessed with Russia, first and foremost? It was not only because he could not abandon numerous Jews still living in Russia but also because he could not detach himself from Russia. In his last book, published in 1930 in French and immediately translated into Hebrew, Pasmanik used the terms “Judaism” and “Hellenism” to describe a Jewish identity that could be effective in a specific context. Judaism, according to Pasmanik, stresses ethics and represents the “East,” a worldview based on time and eternal movement, whereas Hellenism stresses aesthetics and represents the “West,” a worldview based on static lands and fixed images. Judaism includes the concepts of justice and brotherhood, while Hellenism includes the concepts of beauty and freedom. He stressed that these two terms are complementary concepts, and that no conflict should occur between the two.⁵⁵ Although he did not clarify it, it seems that what he dreamed of in Russia was a regime based on Hellenistic principles, where the people of Judaism could find their own role. Not only because of his practical interests but also because of his Jewish identity, he expected that the Jewish future could most effectively be associated with Russia. What Pasmanik became aware of at this stage was the mode of identity defined not by an individual alone or by others alone but an identity *together with* others. It is analogous to the identity of a merchant who needs at least one customer in order to be identified as a merchant. Although the merchant is not the creation of the customer, without any customers the merchant will be in bankruptcy and thus cease to be a merchant. The identity of the merchant is realized in the customer’s presence. Similarly, the identity of Jews, for Pasmanik and other Russian Jewish liberals, was inextricably connected to their relationship with Russians and various others in the former Empire. As we see below, awareness of this aspect contrasts

with the aspiration for independence, or national sovereignty, promoted by Zionists like Jabotinsky and Schechtman.

Russian Jewish Liberals in Paris

Russian Jewish liberals most represented the idea of a relationship between Jews and Russia. The comparison of these liberals with postimperial Russian Zionists typically illuminates what divided those who remained in the Russian world and those who left it. What I call Russian Jewish liberals here are those who were involved in the Russian Jewish monthly *Voskhod* (Sunrise, later the weekly *Novyi voskhod*, or New sunrise, and *Evreiskaia nedelia*, or Jewish week) and established the Jewish People's Group under its leader Maxim Vinaver in 1906, actively engaging in Russian liberal politics centered on the Kadets.⁵⁶ After the October Revolution in 1917, they followed a path similar to Pasmanik's. As one of the leaders of the Kadets, Vinaver went to Crimea, where the Whites established a regional government. Pasmanik edited the Kadets' weekly in Crimea during the same period. But when the Bolsheviks defeated the White's regional government, Vinaver, like Pasmanik, went into exile in Paris. Together with Pavel Miliukov, a leading figure of the Kadets and Russian liberalism in general, he edited the Russian White newspaper *Poslednie novosti* (Latest news).

Vinaver was born to a middle-class Jewish family in Warsaw 1862. After graduating from the University of Warsaw, he settled in Saint Petersburg. Elected to the First Duma as Saint Petersburg's representative from the Kadets, he focused especially on Jewish issues and he was deeply involved both in Russian liberal politics and Russian Jewish liberal politics. He established both Miliukov's newspaper and the above-mentioned weekly *Evreiskaia tribuna* (Jewish tribune) in 1920.⁵⁷

Evreiskaia tribuna shared Pasmanik's viewpoints on pogroms, described above.⁵⁸ More importantly, and in a similar vein to what Pasmanik's 1930 book described as a relationship between Judaism and Hellenism, the weekly also emphasized the specific relationship of Jews and Russia. In the first issue of *Evreiskaia tribuna*, Vinaver identified the Russian problems of the moment as separatism and Bolshevism, each dependent on the other. In his view, although Polish Jews were connected to Polish culture, the rest of the Jews in the former Russian Empire—such as those in Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania—were influenced by Russian culture. Furthermore, he contended that, whether Zionist or not, Russian Jews were interested in a unified Russian economy.⁵⁹ He thus called for the reunification of Russia for the sake of Jews.

The central concerns of *Evreiskaia tribuna* were anti-Semitism and the democratization and reunification of Russia. One article in *Evreiskaia tribuna*

contended that the Jews dispersed throughout the previous imperial territory preferred the unity of Russia, since its dissolution would divide its Jews. Another article identified the Jewish role in Russia as that of “westernizer,” with their “eager aspiration for a cultural establishment, the cult of reason, and creative positivism.”⁶⁰ The same author elaborated on this concept in another article as follows:

Jews who are persecuted and without rights everywhere are always westernizers and Europeans. . . . They are often more European than Russians, and occasionally more European than Europeans. . . . Jews are city people, who are from towns and not fields. . . . They are intellectuals, merchants, urban people and Western people. . . . Russian Jews are not only westernizers but also cultural. They not only champion the West, democracy, and the “city” against “particularity,” but they would also champion civilization against “Scythians,” and they always champion “Russia in Europe” and never “Russia against Europe.”⁶¹

Another typical Jewish role discussed, primarily as an appeal to Russians, was reconstructing and reinforcing the Russian economy. An article titled “Jews and the Economic Rise of Russia” included the following contention: “Grant Jews true equal rights . . . without racial discrimination. This is one of the first necessary conditions for the economic resurgence of Russia and for her defense against possible foreign domination.”⁶² Another article, entitled “The Role of Jews in the Work of Economic Resurgence of Russia,” argued, “In industrial and economic activity in Russia, no area exists whose core does not include Jews.”⁶³

It is broadly known that Jewish people in Eastern Europe, including those in Russia, often played the role of intermediaries—merchants, tradesmen, handicraftsmen, and intellectuals—in multiethnic, multireligious, and class-divided empires. The description of Jews discussed in the weekly was congruent with this fact or, at any rate, shared this image, perhaps with some exaggeration. The belief that Jews had their special roles in Russia reinforced Russian liberal Jews’ self-respect, as well as their attachment to Russia. For Jews with this mindset, attachments to Jews and Russia reinforced each other, since Russia offered a stage to those who could play the archetypal role of Jews.

Such a perception was by no means one-sided. There were Russian counterparts who regarded Jews as their partners. First of all, the conception of Russia as a multiethnic entity was rather common, if not universal. Sergei Witte (1849–1915), the first quasi prime minister in the constitutional regime after the 1905 Revolution, wrote the following note in his memoir: “The great Russian Empire, in its thousand years of existence, was formed in a process whereby Slavic tribes

living in Russia, with force and arms and by other means, gradually absorbed the entire masses of other nationalities. In this way the Russian Empire emerged, which represented a conglomerate of various nationalities, and therefore, in essence, *Russia does not exist, but the Russian Empire does*.”⁶⁴ Witte, who was born in Tiflis, the present-day capital of Georgia, and whose father came from a Lutheran Baltic German background, might have been a rather exceptional figure among Russians. But, tellingly, it was Pasmanik who quoted these sentences in his book *Russian Revolution and Jewry* (1923).⁶⁵

Evreiskaia tribuna often focused on non-Jewish Russians who were sympathetic to Jews. For example, the journal ran an article on Lev Tolstoy’s unpublished letter devoted to the Kishinev pogrom. In it, Tolstoy expressed his compassion for Jewish victims as “the sons of God the Father, like any people,” and criticized the “lies” and “unfairness” of the Russian government.⁶⁶ Likewise, the journal discussed Vladimir Korolenko, a journalist and writer who was born to Ukrainian and Polish parents in Ukraine, that is, the Pale, and thus knew the Jewish situation well and criticized the same pogrom and defended Jews during the Beilis Affair blood libel case. Vladimir D. Nabokov, the Kadets politician and the father of the writer Vladimir V. Nabokov, who defended Jews during these events as well, was also mentioned in the journal.⁶⁷

In some situations, ethnic Russians specified Jews as important partners of Russia, although sometimes in a different sense than the Jews expected. The most obvious such example among Russian intellectuals would be religious figures such as Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948), both of whom regarded the Jewish question as a Christian question. Both considered Jewish beliefs and Christian beliefs to be connected, and both thought that true Christians could overcome violent anti-Semitism. For them, Jews were to have a universal as well as a national mission.⁶⁸

Although such a Christian logic seems irrelevant to the Jewish liberals’ argument, the names of both Solovyov and Berdyaev appeared in *Evreiskaia tribuna*. Commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the death of Solovyov, an issue in August of 1920 ran three articles about him, one of which was written by Vinaver. Vinaver initiated his short article with a story of how Solovyov prayed for the Jewish people on his deathbed. Vinaver wrote:

For West Europeans, Russian life for a long time will appear a chain of puzzles, and one of them is . . . the Russian Jewish problem. Why are the people, enduring such anguish from the step-mother country, attracted back to it with such spiritual yearning, with such an auspicious hope in the bright future? What secures such a hope? The best reason would be

the figures of the Russian people, in whom Russian national genius is embodied in its clearest form. In them the key to our connection with Russia resides, and in them the security of our future resides.

One of them is Vladimir Solovyov.⁶⁹

Another article in the same issue pointed out that Solovyov was not satisfied with requiring equal rights for Jews, which Russian liberal Judeophiles supported, but instead insisted on a special status for Jews in the future state.⁷⁰ In 1924 *Evreiskaia tribuna* reprinted one of Berdyaev's articles from the Kadets journal *Rul*. Titled "The Jewish Problem as a problem of Christians," this article first gave an overview of the various types of anti-Semitism. Berdyaev attributed racial anti-Semitism to Germans and argued that religious anti-Semitism, which was the dominant form in Russia, could not be racial because Christians could not forget that Jesus was Jewish. He argued that anti-Semitic Christians and anti-Christian Jews had, in fact, a number of things in common. For example, anti-Semitic Christians are devoted to the Jewish Messianic idea. Further, the anti-Christian Judaic idea of kingdom and bliss in this world pertains not only to Jews, but also to Aryans, as the way to the kingdom of God is open to them all. Berdyaev contended, "In the Russian spiritual setting and Russian Christianity, Judeo-Christian, national messianic elements were strong. Russians should have done the experiment of the realization of the 'earthly paradise,' the kingdom of absolute justice on Earth, together with Jews." He argued that the violent anti-Semitism Jews encountered constituted the death of the Russian spirit.⁷¹ Berdyaev counted on the interaction and cooperation of both Jews and Russian Christians.

Perhaps the fact that a number of Russians experienced exile after the imperial collapse strengthened these Jews' compassion for Russians. In the article "Historical Experiment," which at first glance appears to criticize Russians' abuse of Jews, journalist Il'ia M. Vacilevskii writes, "Russians became [the] Jews of Europe" because half a million Russians became refugees due to the Civil War. In his view, after facing anti-Russian attitudes for a year or two in every country where they currently lived, Russian refugees would understand Jews, who, for thousands of years, had lived in such a condition. He wrote that it would be desirable that such an agonizing and severe experience should end soon, and Russia should be resurrected, summoning its dispersed sons. "In restoring free and democratic Russia, . . . let it not forget the clear and obvious results of the tragic experience we saw. Let it forever keep in mind that the disgraceful phenomenon of anti-Semitism does not concern only one [people], that is, the Jewish people." For "anti-Semitism is not a theory but a savage instinct of the affluent with regard

to the starved, of the well-off toward the bereaved.”⁷² Vacilevskii implied that Russians thus had become a target of persecution similar to anti-Semitism and would therefore become sympathetic to the Jewish condition.

The Controversy Between Liberals and Zionists

The appearance of such articles in *Evreiskaia tribuna* in the early 1920s demonstrates that Russian Jews involved in the journal still believed in the multiethnic nature of Russia—or the “Russian Empire,” in Witte’s terms—and in a special relationship between Jews and Russians. Russian Zionists other than Pasmanik, however, became more skeptical of such a view in their exile. In 1922, there was a controversy over what should be the nature of a future Russia between Schechtman, in the Russian Zionist weekly *Rassvet*, which was revived in Berlin in that year, and Russian Jewish liberals in *Evreiskaia tribuna*. In the inaugural issue of *Rassvet*, published in April of that year, Schechtman wrote the article “Russian Democracy,” arguing that the so-called Russian democratic intelligentsia—who defined themselves as cosmopolitan, non-national, and indifferent to nationality—were now becoming eager to preserve not only their own nationality but also their dominant power over all other peoples under the protection of the Russian State.⁷³ To this, two Russian Jewish liberals—A. Kulisher and N. Sorin—sent a rebuttal to the weekly, which was published in a May issue together with Schechtman’s commentary. They claimed that the distinction between “state patriotism,” which Russian liberals propounded, and “national chauvinism” was essential. It was, they contended, similar to the situation of the Zionist project in Palestine, where Jews as well as other national groups should cooperate with each other within a liberal union under the leadership of the British Empire and on the soil of a democratic state.⁷⁴ Schechtman criticized this argument, especially for its presumption that Jewish nationals were affiliated with *Russian* democracy. In Schechtman’s view, Jews should belong to *Jewish* democracy, and could not belong to Russian democracy. He also attacked the Russian liberals’ claim on the sacred wholeness of the Russian territory. He asked why the wholeness of Estonian territory, for example, was any less sacred.⁷⁵

Interestingly, Miliukov, the prominent ethnic Russian leader of Russian liberalism, contributed the article “Nationality and Nation,” arguing against Schechtman’s article, to *Evreiskaia tribuna*. Miliukov, who occasionally wrote to the weekly, contended that, as with British democracy or Swiss democracy, Russian democracy, or democracy with multiple nationalities, could exist. In his terms, various nationalities (*natsional’nost’*) in these countries could regard themselves as part of the same state-nation (*natsiia*). Miliukov maintained that, as was the case with Zionism among Jews, only a few parties among Russians, and not

liberals, stressed Russian nationalism.⁷⁶ The fact that Miliukov's article appeared in *Evreiskaia tribuna* means that Russian Jewish liberals shared a similar view, and that these liberals could be confident of the symbiotic relationship between Jews and Russians. In fact, Kulisher, one of the authors of the article that first attacked Schechtman, again gave his opinion in the journal. His argument is as follows: Schechtman asks why the Great Russian rejects the territorial independence of other nationalities. For the Russian (*rossiiskii*) patriot, the unity of the Russian territory is important. The theory of a "national state" (a state with only one nation) would oppress national minorities and contradict Jewish national interests. The task of Jewry should not be the advocacy of the fragmentation of Russia. Schechtman fails to acknowledge that Jews who have Jewish national consciousness have the right to participate in Russian democracy. "If it were not for 'dual citizenship [*poddanstvo*]', in any realm of political and cultural life—even in national life, there would be no state nor culture; there would only be national savagery." The port of Tallin (Estonia) is necessary to both Estonia and Russia, on whose economy Estonia relies. National boundaries should be demarcated in a way that does not develop and eternalize enmity and alienation. "Nationalism fallen unconscious" cannot be the aim of Zionism. If the "either . . . or . . .," that is, "Tertium non datur," principle were applied to Palestine, Palestine would belong only to either Arabs or Jews.⁷⁷

The controversy between Schechtman and Russian (Jewish) liberals illuminates the rift between Russian (Jewish) liberals who conceived of Russia as an amalgamation of several nationalities and the Zionist Schechtman, who rejected such a view, and seemingly believed that democracy could only be ethnic democracy.

Pogroms and the Transformation of Zionism

As Russian Zionist leaders became detached from the homeland of the Russian Jewish *narod*, the sense of *Gegenwartsarbeit* changed. In 1923, *Rassvet* ran an article titled "On *Gegenwartsarbeit*." The author, I. Samunov, recalled the original meaning of the term as the aspiration for maximum national rights and for the unity of all Jews in each country or society. He emphasized that practical work in Palestine alone could not define Zionism, since it lacks a connection with the Jewish people in the Diaspora. However, he proposed the exclusion of the term "*Gegenwartsarbeit*" from the Zionist program for fear that it could discourage some Jews from participating in practical Zionist work in Palestine. Although Samunov asserted that the development of Zionism with emphasis on *Gegenwartsarbeit* would lead to the growth of Zionist activity in the Diaspora, and that his proposal would merely modify the meaning of the term, this proposed

change suggests a transformation in the nature of Zionism.⁷⁸ Zionism for him was no longer a movement that would position Jews appropriately in the Russian (or some other diasporic) sociopolitical arena, but, rather, it was a movement essentially for the sake of Zion, or for the Jewish nation defined exclusively by Zion.

For Zionists involved in Berlin's *Rassvet*, Russia was a place to which they could no longer return. The editor of the journal, Solomon Gepshtein, recalled five years later that, after the Revolution in 1917, "the fate of Jews was intermingled with the fate of new, free Russia," for Zionists as well as socialists and liberals. But every Jew, even socialist Jews, he contended, was a loser, and all the supposedly lasting work created during the Haskalah was destroyed. "We—Russian Zionists—today with silent sorrow and distress recall those bright days. . . . We, as every Russian Jew, are in the battered and smashed camp, but we carried our Torah out of the fire."⁷⁹

Pogroms during the Civil War were decisive for these disillusioned Russian Zionists who had withstood the shock of previous smaller pogroms. In March 1923, the Russian Zionist M. F. Gindes held a lecture on "Jewry and Contemporary Russia," following Joseph M. Bickerman's lecture on "Russia and Russian Jews" in January of the same year. As *Rassvet* reported, Bickerman, a Russian Jewish writer, a supporter of the Whites and a founder of the Patriotic Union of Russian Jews, called for Jews' involvement in the regeneration of Russia, referring to Jews' responsibility, to some extent, for the destruction of Russia.⁸⁰ Gindes was opposed to this view, maintaining that the history of Jews in the Diaspora is the history *over* [that befell] Jews rather than the history *of* Jews, and that Russia, which had created terrible conditions for Russian Jews, would be responsible for its own destruction. In the discussion reported in *Rassvet*, while seemingly non-Zionist participants argued that Jews should be Russian patriots, and that 90 percent of Jews hoped for the resurgence of the old Russia, Schechtman persisted in saying that Jews did not expect the resurgence of Russia, nor did they regret the Revolution.⁸¹ What divided Jews involved in the White movement, such as Bickerman, Vinaver, and Pasmanik, and those in the Russian Zionist circle, such as Schechtman and Gindes, was their different understandings of pogroms during the Civil War. The former regarded pogroms as part of broad violence during the Civil War due to the prevailing anarchy, whereas the latter could not tolerate pogroms that were, in their view, essentially anti-Semitic. In the pages of *Rassvet*, there were criticisms of Bickerman's lecture based on its apparent excusing of the White Army for its role in pogroms.⁸² Schechtman sarcastically noted, "In Bickerman's 'philosophy,' pogroms are trivial and not serious."⁸³ In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Schechtman wrote the article on Pasmanik, which indicated that the latter became estranged from Zionism because he sided with the "White

armies of generals Denikin and Wrangel, who were responsible for innumerable anti-Jewish pogroms.”⁸⁴

In the inaugural issue of *Rassvet* in Berlin, Moshe Kleinman wrote that the new *Rassvet* would take over from *Rassvet* in Petersburg. But he also wrote the following: “Unprecedented bloody violence against the defenseless Jewish population, the massacre of whole cities and shtetls, the riots by the armed free men [*vol’nitsa*], invasion into Jews’ shoddy houses under any flag, coarse *national* oppression—all of these turned the eyes of the last blind people to the real nature of the surrounding human materials [*chelovecheskii material*]. Confronting the avalanche of merciless facts in life, the last among preachers of ‘cultural amalgamation’ and ‘rapport’ disappeared.”⁸⁵ Kleinman’s use of “unprecedented,” “whole cities and shtetls,” and “the armed free men” (presumably Cossacks) indicates that he is referring to pogroms during the Civil War that were literally unprecedented in magnitude, rather than pogroms in general, including those during 1881–1884 and 1903–1906. What is striking here is that he describes Russians as “human materials,” with which any communication would have been impossible. In other words, for him, Russians were no longer trustworthy. Though the series of pogroms during the Civil War was not the first occasion in which Russian Jews were devastated by Russia(ns), it may have been the last straw partly because it occurred *despite* the turnover of the oppressive tsar and partly because the severity of these pogroms far exceeded previous ones.

Conclusion

In articles published in the middle of 1923, Schechtman wrote that Palestine was a country for both Jews and Arabs, where the relationship between the two was cooperative and the interests of the greater Arab movement and those of the Jews in Palestine coincided. But he often emphasized that Palestine was not essential for Arab nationalism, and that it was excluded from the Hussein–McMahon Correspondence as a territory of the future Arab state. Moreover, while Schechtman said that Zionists would recognize the full national rights of Arabs in Palestine, he noted that that would be the case *only* when the Arabs recognized the same rights for Jews. The “preconditions” he required for Arabs were twofold: the approval of the construction of the Jewish national home in Palestine and Jews’ free immigration there.⁸⁶ As expected, he never thought of the amalgamation of Jews and Arabs in any sense. A few months after Schechtman’s articles on these topics, Jabotinsky published the famous article in *Rassvet*, “On the Iron Wall,” in which he argued that, upon encountering a steadfast military defense by the Jews, the Arabs would begin to think of compromise.⁸⁷ For

both men, Palestine was enmeshed in a conflict between two sovereign nations, each of which would never act on the other's stage, but only on its own.

Schechtman and Jabotinsky completely abandoned identities that included hyphenation and attempted to defend the independence of Jewish identity as a nation. In hindsight, this appears to be self-evident as a Zionist principle. However, this chapter shows that this change occurred most dramatically during the last moments of the Russian Empire, after a previously gradual evolution, rather than at the beginning of the emergence of the Zionist movement. Under tsarist Russia, however oppressive it was for its subjects and for its Jews in particular, Russified Jews had a stage on which they could play out their role. To be sure, from the outset, the Zionists, who most emphatically defined Jews as a nation rather than as a religious group or as an ethnic group that was a subcategory of Russians, attempted to make Jews as independent as possible. As I have discussed elsewhere, they endeavored to avoid the essentialization of Jewish identity and thus were skeptical of defining a "Jewish role" in Russia as the liberals did. For the Zionists, this attempt sounded apologetic.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, as was most clearly represented by the Helsingfors Program, many Russian Zionists defined Zionism as a strategy to make Jews perform more effectively on the stage of the Empire. In this sense, the Zionists still trusted, even if they did not adore, Russia. In other words, Russified Jews, including Zionists, conceived of Jewish existence in Russian terms.

In the mindset of several Zionists, the collapse of the Empire, and the resulting pogroms, destroyed this mode of identification—the mode of conceiving of one's identity in conjunction with others'. While Russian Zionists such as Jabotinsky and Schechtman continued to write in Russian (*Rassvet* continued until 1934), they did not discuss their relationship with the countries where they lived—Germany and France. Not only objectively, but also in their subjectivity, they quit the Russian stage, never substituting it with another nation; they never became Russian-turned-German or French Jews, nor did they show any interest in becoming Palestinian (Middle Eastern/Arab) Jews. Instead, they began to look for their own stage—sovereignty. The growing interest in the military in Zionist thought was relevant to this transition of the Zionist conception of Jews. Also, it coincided with the development of the concept of population transfer in Zionist thought.⁸⁹ Schechtman became a famous advocate of forced migration. His perspective is characterized by his definition of population transfer as a solution for national questions, rather than as the natural movement of people for socioeconomic reasons.⁹⁰ The common feature of this militarism and the concept of population transfer as a solution for national questions is the clear divide between "us" and "them," disregarding the Jews' connection with others in the local context.

The common thread in world history in the early twentieth century was the transition from the system of empires to one of nation-states, and the development

of the Zionist movement apparently fits this model. Yet Jews, accustomed to empires in terms of identity as well as economy, by no means transformed themselves naturally and instantly. The reshaping of their identity into one that could fit the nation-state system required defining themselves as independent Jews, without any reference to others who did or could validate their identities as Jews. On a more micro level, the unprecedented violence during this transition eroded the trust between Jews and Russians that was the foundation of Russian Jewish identity. The development of Zionism in Russia's first two decades of the twentieth century was the process of the de-hyphenation of Jews—from Russian Jews to independent Jews—which irrevocably changed the ways in which Jews associated with others.

Notes

1. See, for example, Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
2. This section is an abridged version of part of my article "Was the East Less Rational Than the West? The Meaning of 'Nation' for Russian Zionism in Its 'Imagined Context,'" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 14, no. 3 (2008): 366–70. The Jewish population in the Russian Empire in 1897 was approximately 5 million; only one-tenth of the Jewish population (0.5 million) resided in Germany at that time. It is estimated that more than half of the prominent Zionist leaders in the world were from the Russian Empire. See Tsurumi, "Was the East Less Rational Than the West?," 363.
3. Matsuzato Kimitaka, "Polish Factors in Right-Bank Ukraine from the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century" [Japanese], *Slavic Studies* 45 (1998): 101–28.
4. S. Fredrick Starr, "Tsarist Government: The Imperial Dimension," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 18.
5. Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2001), 319.
6. David G. Rowley, "Imperial Versus National Discourse: The Case of Russia," *Nations and Nationalism* 6, no. 1 (2000): 23–42.
7. Raymond Pearson, "Privileges, Rights, and Russification," in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, ed. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1989), 85–102.
8. Kappeler, *The Russian Empire*, especially ch. 7.
9. Eli Weinerman, "Racism, Racial Prejudice and Jews in Late Imperial Russia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 3 (1994): 442–95.
10. Chizuko Takao, "Gavriil Derzhavin's *Opinion* (1800) on the Jews," in *The Slavic World and Its Surroundings: Collection of Essays on History* [Japanese], ed. Yamamoto Toshiro (Tokyo: Nauka, 1992), 99–118.
11. Arnold Spinger, "Gavriil Derzhavin's Jewish Reform Project of 1800," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 10, no. 1 (1976): 1–23. See also John D. Klier, *Russian Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772–1825* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), ch. 4. This work is a comprehensive study on the earliest period of Russian Jews.
12. Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), ch. 2.
13. Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1986), ch. 4; Heinz-Dietrich Lowe, *The Tsars and the Jews, Reform, Reaction and Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia, 1772–1917* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), ch. 6.

14. Orshanskii, *Evrei v Rossii* (Saint Petersburg, 1877), 180, quoted in Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 53, emphasis in original.

15. Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983).

16. Ideologically, the Haskalah in Eastern Europe emphasized Jewish collectivity; see Yosef Salmon, “The Emergence of a Jewish Collective Consciousness in Eastern Europe during the 1860s and 1870s,” *AJS Review* 16, nos. 1–2 (1991): 107–13.

17. The following three works depict Russian maskilim’s political activities—in a broad sense—based on Jewish collectivity within the Empire in the late nineteenth century: Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); John Doyle Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*. Klier’s work presents the image of the Jews in the Russian public as well.

18. Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

19. David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

20. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 161–69; Christoph Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1900–1914* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); Alexander Orbach, “The Jewish People’s Group and Jewish Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1906–1914,” *Modern Judaism* 10, no. 1 (1990): 1–15.

21. Yosef Goldstein, *Ben Tsiyonut medinit le-Tsiyonut ma’asit: Ha-tenu’ab ha-Tsiyonit be-Rusyah be-resbitab* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 82–83.

22. However, some nonsocialist Zionists based in Odessa, such as Menahem Ussishkin, were against the participation of Jews in Russian politics. See Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha-‘itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit be-resbit ha-me’ab ha-esrim (1900–1918)* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Agudah le-heker toldot ha-Yehudim, 1978), 218, 223.

23. See Chapter 9 by David Engel in this volume.

24. For the initial period of Russian Zionism, see Tsurumi, “Was the East Less Rational Than the West?” For the period until the 1917 Revolution, see idem, *Zion Imagined: Russian Jews at the End of Empire* (Japanese) (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2012); idem, “Neither Angels, nor Demons, but Humans: Anti-Essentialism and Its Ideological Moments Among the Russian Zionist Intelligentsia,” *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 4 (2010): 531–50.

25. Slutsky, *Ha-‘itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit*, 218, 223; Vladimir Levin, “Ha-politikah ha-Yehudit ba-imperiyah ha-Rusit be-‘idan ha-re’aktsyah” (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007), 147–64.

26. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 22 vols. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 21:8.

27. Slutsky, *Ha-‘itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit*, 252.

28. Levin, “Ha-Politikah ha-Yehudit,” 147.

29. A. Davidson [Abraham Idelsohn], “Palestina i ravnopravie I,” *Rassvet* 50 (1914): 4.

30. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1925* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Engel’s Chapter 9 in this volume.

31. Although he wrote this pamphlet first in German to appeal to Western Jews, it was mostly among Russian Jews that this pamphlet found supporters.

32. Leon Pinsker, “Autoemancipation!” *Mahnruf an seine stammesgenossen* (Berlin: Commissionsverlag von W. Issleib, 1882), 2, 8; emphasis in original.

33. For more details on this mindset of the Hibbat Zion ideologists, see Tsurumi, “Was the East Less Rational Than the West?,” 371–73.

34. J. Brutzkus, “Evreiskii vopros v russkoi pechati II,” *Rassvet* 3 (1904), 211.

35. A. Davidson [Abraham Idelsohn], “Sovremennye motivy,” *Rassvet* 36 (1911): 4.

36. D. Pasmanik, “Natsional’naia bor’ba i antisemitizm,” *Rassvet* 52 (1912): 13.

37. D. Pasmanik, "Rossiiskii antisemitizm," *Evreiskaia zhizn'* 15 (1915): 7.
38. Levin, "Ha-politikah ha-Yehudit," 152; D. Pasmanik, "Voprosy blizhaishego kongressa," *Rassvet* 26 (1907): 17.
39. Taro Tsurumi, "An Imagined Context of a Nation: The Russian Zionist Version of the Austro-Marxist Theory of Nationality," in *Bounded Mind and Soul: Russia and Israel, 1880–2010*, ed. Brian Horowitz and Shai Ginzburg (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2013), 77–96.
40. *Evreiskiaia zhizn'* 12–13 (1917): 15; Yitzhak Maor, *Ha-tenu'ab ha-Tsiyonit be-Rusiyah: mereshitah ve-'ad yamenu* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), 444, 446.
41. See, for example, Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1995), 114–15, 169.
42. A. Davidson [Abraham Idelsohn], "Palestina i ravnopravie II," *Rassvet* 51–52 (1914): 33.
43. Yitzhak Maor, *She'elat ha-Yehudim ba-tenu'ab ha-liberalit veba-mahpekhanit be-Rusyah (1890–1914)* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1964), 49–50; Alexander Orbach, "Zionism and the Russian Revolution of 1905: The Commitment to Participate in Domestic Political Life," *Bar-Ilan* 24–25 (1989): 7–23; Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics*, 19–44.
44. For the quarrel between Jabotinsky and Pasmanik over this issue, see Joseph B. Schechtman, *Rebel and Statesman: The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story, The Early Years* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 215–16.
45. For the details of Pasmanik's trajectory, see Taro Tsurumi, "Jewish Liberal, Russian Conservative: Daniel Pasmanik Between Zionism and the Anti-Bolshevik White Movement," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 1 (2015): 151–80.
46. D. S. Pasmanik, *Revolutsionnye gody v Krymu* (Paris: Imprimerie de Navarre, 1926), chs. 1–5.
47. I. Shekhtman, "Evrei i Rossia," *Rassvet* 13 (1924): 7–8.
48. For the details on Pasmanik, see Taro Tsurumi, "Jewish Liberal, Russian Conservative: Daniel Pasmanik between Zionism and the Anti-Bolshevik White Movement," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 1 (2015): 151–80.
49. For the backgrounds of Jews who ended up supporting the Bolsheviks, see Elissa Bemporad, *Legacy of Blood: Jews, Pogroms, and Ritual Murder in the Lands of the Soviets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13–34.
50. D. Pasmanik, "Evreiskii vopros v Rossii," *Obshee delo* 57 (1919): 4. See Budnitskii, who also quotes Pasmanik's article. According to Budnitskii, the article exemplifies Kadets Jews' underestimation of the ill intentions of the Whites. Oleg Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites, 1917–1920*, trans. Timothy J. Portice (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 292–93.
51. D. Pasmanik, "Muki rossiiskogo evreistva," *Evreiskaia tribuna* 30 (1920): 1.
52. Vladimir P. Buldakov, "Freedom, Shortages, Violence: The Origins of the 'Revolutionary Anti-Jewish Pogrom' in Russia, 1917–1918," in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. Jonathan Dekel-Chen, David Gaunt, Natan M. Meir, and Israel Bartal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 74–91. The historian Peter Kenez noted that anarchist bands engaged in the most unrestrained pogroms against Jews in Ukraine. See Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919–1920: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
53. For example, in Ukraine in 1919, the largest number of perpetrators of recorded pogroms (40 percent) were allies under Symon Petliura, whereas 17 percent of pogroms were perpetrated by the White Army and 9 percent by the Red. See Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). For documents (especially reports published in newspapers) in Russian by contemporaries, see L. B. Miliakova, ed., *Kniga pogromov: pogromy na Ukraine, v Belorussii i evropeiskoi chastii Rossii v period Grazhdanskoi voiny 1918–1922 gg., Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007).
54. D. Pasmanik, "Chego-zhe my dobivaemsia?," in *Rossia i evrei: Sbornik pervyi*, ed. Otechestvennoe ob'edinenie russkikh evreev zagranitse (Berlin: Osnova, 1924), 207–28.
55. Daniel Pasmanik, *Qu'est-ce que le Judaïsme?* (Paris: Librairie Lipschutz, 1930); idem, *Mipnei mah ani yehudi?*, trans. Israel Karnieli (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at Moriyah, 1930).

56. For Russian Jewish liberals, see Maor, *She'elat ha-Yehudim be-tnu'ab ha-liberalit*; and Gassenschmidt, *Jewish Liberal Politics*. For Vinaver in particular, see Brian Horowitz, *Russian Idea—Jewish Presence* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013). For an overview of the journals the Jewish People's Group published until the imperial collapse, see Slutsky, *Ha-'itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit*, 321–97.

57. Horowitz, *Russian Idea—Jewish Presence*, 37; Christoph Gassenschmidt, “Maksim Moiseevich Vinaver,” *Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, yivoencyclopedia.org, accessed October 26, 2016. For Vinaver, see also Viktor Kel'ner, *Shchit: M. M. Vinaver i evreiskii vopros v Rossii v kontse XIX-nachale XX veka* (Saint Petersburg: European University at St. Petersburg, 2018).

58. One of its articles agreed with General Wrangel's declarations about the Jewish Problem. While noting that Denikin's measures against popular anti-Semitism were not satisfactory, it expressed its total agreement with Wrangel's view that “only when the legal order of Russia becomes established, will social life be normalized and, accordingly, Jewish life will resume its course.” See D. Meerovich, “Deklaratsiia gen. Vrangelia po evreiskomu voprosu,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 31 (1920): 5.

59. M. Vinaver, “Russkaia problema,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 1 (1920): 3–4.

60. Vera Kaplan, “‘Evreiskaia tribuna’ o Rossii i russkom evreistve (Parizh, 1920–1924 gg.), v kn. M. Parkhomovskii red., *Evrei v kul'ture russkogo zarubezh'ia: Sbornik statei, publikatsii, memuarov i esse 1919–1939 gg. Vypusk II* (Jerusalem: Published by the compiler, 1993), 167–80; V. E. Kel'ner, *Ocherki po istorii russko-evreiskogo knizhnogo dela: vo vtoroi polovine XIX—nachale XX v.* (Saint Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2003), 158–171. For the argument about Jews as “westernizers,” see Bor. Mirskii, “Evreiskoe zapadnichestvo,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 25 (1920): 4–5.

61. V. Mirskii, “O putiakh Rossii,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 61 (1921): 2.

62. P. Apostol, “Evrei i ekonomicheskie pod'em Rossii,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 7 (1920): 3.

63. A. Mikhel'son, “Rol' evreev v dele ekonomicheskogo vrozozhdeniia Rossii,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 9 (1920): 3–5.

64. Graf S. Witte, *Vospominaniia: Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Knogoizdatel'stvo “Slovo,” 1922), 116. Here Witte contrasts this with a “half-comical nationalist” party's claim that “Russia must be for Russians.”

65. D. S. Pasmanik, *Russkaia revoliutsiia i evreistvo (Bol'shevizm i iudaizm)* (Paris: Franko-Russkaia izdachel'stvo, 1923), 245.

66. Anonymous, “L. N. Tolstoi o Kishnevskom pogrome,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 109 (1922): 4.

67. M. Vinaver, “Korolenko,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 106 (1922): 2–3; Anonymous, “V. D. Nabokov,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 118 (1922): 1.

68. Judith Beutsch Kornblatt, “Vladimir Solov'ev on Spiritual Nationhood, Russia and the Jews,” *Russian Review* 56 (1997): 157–77; Paul Berline, “Russian Religious Philosophers and the Jews,” *Jewish Social Studies* 9 (1947): 287. Such Russian intellectuals were not necessarily against Zionism; some even thought of the promise of utopia in spiritual terms. See Brian Horowitz, *Empire Jews: Jewish Nationalism and Acculturation in 19th- and Early 20th-Century Russia* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2009), 82.

69. M. Vinaver, “Pamiati Vladimira Solov'eva,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 34 (1920): 1.

70. N. Minskii, “Vladimir Sovol'ev o evreistve,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 34 (1920): 2.

71. Nikolai Berdiaev, “Evreiskii vopros, kak vopros khristianskii,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 8 (1924): 1–3.

72. I. M. Vasilevskii, “Istoricheskii opyt,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 55 (1921): 1–2.

73. I. Shechtman, “Russkaia demokratia,” *Rassvet* 1 (1922): 8–10.

74. A. Kulisher and N. Sorin, “Pis'mo v redaktsiiu,” quoted in I. Shechtman, “Russkaia demokratiia i natsional'nyi vopros,” *Rassvet* 5 (1922): 7.

75. Shechtman, “Russkaia demokratiia i natsional'nyi vopros”: 7–9.

76. P. Miliukov, “Natsional'nost' i natsiia,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 138 (1922): 1–2.

77. A. Kulisher, “Natsionalizm do poteri soznaniia,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* 131 (1922): 2–3.

78. I. Samunov, “O Gegenwartsarbeit,” *Rassvet* 7 (1923): 7–9.

79. S. Gepshtrein, “Piat' let,” *Rassvet* 9 (1922): 1–2.

80. Oleg Budnitskii and Aleksandra Polian, *Russko-evreiskii Berlin 1920–1941, Historica Rossica, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2013), 177; “Evrei i Rossia,” *Rassvet* 5 (1923): 17–18.
81. “Evreistvo i sovremennaia Rossiia,” *Rassvet* 14 (1923): 10–11; “Evreiskaia zhizn’,” *Rassvet* 16 (1923): 15.
82. “Evrei i Rossia,” *Rassvet* 5 (1923): 17.
83. “Evreiskaia zhizn’,” *Rassvet* 16 (1923): 15.
84. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 15:676.
85. M. Kleinman, “Ot ‘Rassveta’ do ‘Rassveta,’” *Rassvet* 1 (1922): 5, emphasis in original.
86. I. Shechtman, “Arabskii gosudarstva,” *Rassvet* 18 (1923): 4–5; idem, *Rassvet* 19 (1923): 6–8; idem, “Arabskaia federatsiia i Palestina,” *Rassvet* 22 (1923): 1–3; idem, “Nasha arabskaia politika,” *Rassvet* 31 (1923): 4–6.
87. Zhabotinskii, “O zheleznoi stene,” *Rassvet* 42–43 (1923): 2–4.
88. They were especially antagonistic toward the discourse of the “Jewish mission” among German Jews and the argument that Jews should be assimilated as Russians because Judaism no longer held significance for them. Tsurumi, “Neither Angels, nor Demons, but Humans.”
89. For the concept of “transfer” in Zionist political thought, see Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).
90. Antonio Ferrara, “Eugene Kulischer, Joseph Schechtman and the Historiography of European Forced Migrations,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 4 (2011): 715–40.

CHAPTER 3

Jewish Palestine and Eastern Europe: I Am in the East and My Heart Is in the West

Anita Shapira

The subtitle of this chapter is an inverted quote from the famous poem of Yehuda Halevi, originally depicting the yearning of Jews for the Land of Israel. The irony of the inversion suits the theme of this chapter.

In classic Zionist imagery, the Land of Israel was the heart's desire and source of yearning for Jews down the generations, and those who emigrated to it did so spurred by national ideology. Today, however, the studies conducted by Gur Al-roey about Jewish migration at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century tell a different story: Most immigrants came first and foremost for economic reasons, then because of fear of pogroms, and only in third place—and very few at that—for ideological reasons.¹ In my early days as a student I was given a salutary lesson on the limited place of ideology in people's major decisions. My first research project was on the history of the *Trumpeldor Gdud ha'avodah* (labor battalion)—a band of dedicated pioneers, mainly from Russia, who immigrated to Palestine in the early 1920s. In the second half of that decade, a group numbering some sixty to seventy of them left Palestine together, returned to the USSR, and set up a *kibbutz* in the Crimea in the belief that there they would be able to realize their dream of an egalitarian society. As part of my study I requested an interview with the then governor of the Bank of Israel, David Horowitz, who had been a member of the *Gdud* in the 1920s. His comrades accused him of being largely responsible for the *Gdud*'s shift to the left, and, as they put it, “he jumped from the wagon” at the last moment and remained in Palestine. I expected his answer to my question of why he stayed in Palestine to be a fervent expression of the Zionist credo, but his reply was an eye-opener:

"I'm Polish," he said, "what would I do in Russia?" At that moment I realized that a person's origins, his motherland, the language in which he studied, all shape his destiny no less than ideological beliefs.

Immigrants' connection to their motherland is universal. They bring with them the image of that country as it was formed in their mind at the time they left it. Over time the image becomes idealized, and nostalgia cloaks the hardships of the past in gentle hues. Furthermore, immigrants typically undergo a radical transformation in their way of life in the wake of their immigration, but in their mind the motherland is as it was when they left it. When the immigrants from the former Soviet Union reached Israel in the 1990s, Israelis expected to re-encounter the people of the Second Aliyah (1904–1914). But it soon became apparent that there was absolutely no resemblance between the idealistic revolutionaries of the first *aliyot* and the left-hating materialists of the present.

The subject of the present chapter is the reciprocal relations and mutual images shared by the Yishuv—the Jewish community in Palestine—and Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. It is impossible to know what the long-term influences of the Yishuv on East European Jewry might have been, and vice versa, had the world's largest Jewish community not been annihilated in the Holocaust. We can, however, examine their mutual relations and influences between the two world wars and also the images that remained in Israeli culture.

The Mythology of "Great Russia"

The Jews of Russia and Poland belonged to the same cultural sphere that in the late eighteenth century was divided between Russia, Germany, and Austria. As a result, they belonged to various multinational empires with different cultural traditions, and in retrospect to different national and linguistic spheres. Russian influence was dominant, since the majority of Jews lived under the rule of the tsarist empire. The Jewish community in Russia gave birth to the nascent Zionist movement. It was in Russia that the Hibbat Zion movement was founded; it was from there that the first generation of Zionist leaders came. The Hebrew cultural center in Odessa, under the spiritual leadership of Ahad Ha'am, exerted its influence throughout the Empire. Indeed, the first two *aliyot* came not only from the Russian Empire, but from the other part of Poland, including Galicia, and Romania too. However, the predominantly Russian image of the Zionist movement blurred this fact. The Biluim, around whom the pioneering myth of the First Aliyah was woven, spoke Russian, as did the Third Aliyah immigrants. The modern Hebrew term *moledet* (literally, "birthland"), signifying one's native country, is a translation of the Russian *rodina*, in contrast to the Central and West European preference for "fatherland" or "motherland." In the ideology and

culture of Jewish Palestine, the term *ivri* (Hebrew) was also derived from the Russian *evrei*, a more respectful term for a Jew than *zhid*.

Until the 1990s, the Third Aliyah was the last for which the impact of Russianness was dominant. In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Yishuv was cut off from what until then had been the largest and most important Zionist center. From the early 1920s till 1945, only a few thousand people emigrated from Russia to Palestine. The largest number of immigrants during that time, who formed the critical mass of Yishuv society, arrived from Poland. Relations between the Yishuv and Eastern Europe during the interwar period thus centered mainly on Poland.

Jews usually tended to identify with the imperial powers in whose territory they resided. They were the forces that granted protection to the Jews. Nationalism in Eastern Europe was usually accompanied by anti-Semitic inclinations. The states established in Eastern Europe after World War I were ethnonationalistic and tended to discriminate against Jews. On the other hand, Soviet Russia seemed to be heir to the imperial powers in the best sense: it appeared to embody a combination of nationalism and cosmopolitanism; it had international horizons; it was multinational; it fought against anti-Semitism, at least during the 1920s; and it sought global reform. In the Zionist mindset Russia was and remained the land of great ideals, the source of Hebrew culture, birthplace of the literary and political Zionist center. In the collective memory of the Yishuv, Russia was considered superior to Poland: It was the country in which Zionist idealism was formed and from which sprang the worldview of reforming a nation and the world, a notion that thrilled the people of the Second Aliyah. Thus Ben-Gurion, a native of Plonsk, only forty miles from Warsaw, where he grew up before immigrating to Palestine in 1906, always claimed that he did not speak Polish and chose to learn Russian because Polish was a superfluous and unnecessary language.² Considering the fact that he assisted his father, a *winkeladvokat* (writer of petitions and letters) for local Polish peasants, it is hard to believe that he did not speak Polish. But in his writings and correspondence I found no reference to either independent Poland or Polish culture, even though he spent a great deal of time in that country in the 1930s on Zionist Congress election campaigns. The writer Yosef Haim Brenner served in the tsarist army, was familiar with the Russian *muzhiks*, and had no illusions about their brutality. He grieved bitterly for the victims of the 1905 pogroms and had no reason to like Russians,³ but it was the Poles whom he abhorred. He described them as snobbish hypocrites who derided and denigrated the Jews.⁴ In his view, Polishness would lead to assimilation: thus his descriptions of Diasporin and Oved Etzot in his novel *From Here and There*, and their experiences in Lwów, which was both a center of Jewish education and of Polonization. Despite his positive personal

memories of his stay in Lwów, he was hostile toward Polishness: When he wanted to say something derogatory about Arabs in Palestine he likened them to Poles. "It's better to meet a Great Russian in Tambov, not to mention a Lithuanian near Kovno—than those Eastern Poles."⁵ In a commentary on Blok's poem "The Twelve," which he published in Hebrew translation in the *Ha-Adamah* journal in 1920, Brenner accepted the poem's casting of drunken, brutal fighters of the revolution as bearers of the Messiah's cross.⁶ By contrast, when Jabotinsky sought a Hebrew translation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword*, Brenner castigated him and described the book as "this empty novel of the poet of the Polish nobility."⁷

The Second Aliyah immigrants knew that ordinary Russians were not created in the image of Tolstoy or Turgenev, but their admiration of nineteenth-century Russian literature, belles lettres, and political tracts was one of the most salient elements in Yishuv culture. Admiration for the great Russian soul à la Dostoevsky, torn between good and evil, which was a cultural construction and did not necessarily exist in reality, derived from the books they read rather than encounters with flesh-and-blood Russians. Among the Jews who came to Palestine there were few who had direct contact with Russians. Yet Russian literature shaped the images and ideology of generations in the Israeli Labor Movement.⁸ One can find incarnations of these images decades later, in several contemporary novels: one is Meir Shalev's *Roman Rusi* (A Russian affair, or A Russian novel, published in 1988 and translated into English as *The Blue Mountain* in 1991). Shalev describes the immigrants' eternal yearnings for Russia and for the lover with whom contact has been lost but for whom love is still alive, despite decades of separation. For Shalev, this was "a Russian affair."⁹ Yuval Shimoni's *Kav ha-melakh* (The salt line) was published in 2014. The book's protagonist is a young Jew who suffered terrible trauma in a pogrom in the wake of which he joined one of the terrorist groups, which dispatched him to murder another Jew suspected of informing to the Okhrana. After the murder, he flees to central Asia and ultimately reaches Nepal, an ostensible symbol of the end of the world. His Israeli grandson, who knows very little about him, imagines his grandfather as a heroic revolutionary who sacrificed his life for the greater good, and decides to follow him to Nepal.¹⁰ Nurith Gertz recently published a novel ostensibly based on the life of the poet Rachel (Bluwstein), *An Ocean Between Us*,¹¹ and here too we find the motifs of infinite yearning, aspirations of re forging the world, and an unfortunate love. All three authors are Israelis who have never experienced Russia. The Jewish Russian characters and the plots in these novels, the first two in particular, range between the realistic and the fantastic. Shifting the images into the world of fantasy enables continued admiration of Russianness, irrespective of reality.

Whereas novels on Russia oscillate between reality and myth, the stories about Poland and its Jews have tended to be realistic and to paint an unflattering picture of Polish Jewish immigrants. The protagonists of the works of Hanoach Bartov, Avraham Heffner, Yaakov Shabtai, and even Amos Oz are men who failed in the transition from Europe to Palestine.¹² The immigration process severs them from their cultural roots. They are intellectuals aspiring to become proletarians in Palestine. Whereas Russian Third Aliyah pioneers became genuine workers, at least in their public image, immigrants from Poland failed in this mission. The collective memory that described the Russians as having passed this test and the Poles as having failed was perpetuated in belles lettres.

Russia became a myth, and admiration for it increased precisely because the real Russia was inaccessible. Russian songs were translated and became Hebrew folk songs, and Russia was idolized. But Poland was the place from which Jews came to the Yishuv, bringing patterns of behavior, culture, and language. Home was there, the family was there. "At night, when there was a hot dry wind and the windows were open, all the souls flew back to Miechow, Krakow, Lyas, Leczycka—and the white houses on the seashore here were empty. In daytime they made out they were working and happy and alive. At night—the city emptied and they all flew back home," says the narrator's mother in Heffner's *Kolel ba-kol* (Tout Compris).¹³ "What did Avrum Schein believe in," asks Hanoach Bartov in his *Little Jew*, "six years after being cut off and uprooted from the world of his forefathers? . . . That world went on living inside him."¹⁴ The narrator (perhaps Bartov himself) describes how he would tell his father about his visits to Europe and even the United States, but for the father the delights and treasures of the European cities were no match for Kalisz, his birthplace. The church in Kalisz, the gardens in Kalisz—what are Notre Dame and the Tivoli Gardens compared with them? All this related to Poland before 1939.¹⁵ But when the son returns from a visit to Poland in the 1960s and wants to tell his father about what he had seen in the city of his birth of which he was so proud, the father refuses to listen: The world of his Poland no longer exists and he does not want to hear what the *goyim* have replaced it with.¹⁶

The Poland of Jews

The Poland that immigrants brought with them was chiefly the Poland of Jews. Only rarely did a non-Jewish figure appear in memoirs, literature, or studies on Polish Jewry. As Isaac Bashevis Singer once wrote, "Jews and Poles lived together (*geleybt tsuzamen*) for eight hundred years, and didn't live together (*tsuzamengeleybt*)."¹⁷ This appraisal reflects the frustration of a Yiddish author who lived in

the major Yiddish center of Warsaw, a center that the Polish cultural world was unaware of—just as the Polish and even the Jewish Polish literary world was foreign to him. The sense of estrangement is further attested to in the descriptions of the motherland in contemporary memoirs. There are forests, rivers, streams, snow; there is a town. The reader gets the impression that there were no non-Jews there, except for representatives of the government. The yearning is for the physical landscape, the town or city, the Jewish society that is a world unto itself. Even in the autobiographies written by Jewish youths, commissioned in the 1930s by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, there is hardly any mention of social relationships with Poles.¹⁸

It seems that the Zionists distinguished between two circles of identity: The first is the national circle, in which there was separation between Jews and Poles. The second is the cultural circle, in which there was some overlap on the Jewish side, with Polish culture. The state-funded Polish schools taught in Polish. The vast majority of the Jews could not afford to send their children to the Tarbut network of Jewish schools, which taught mostly in Hebrew, nor to the Polish Hebrew schools, which were less nationalistically inclined. Both systems were private. Financial pressure directed Jewish children to the public schools, which resulted in rapid cultural Polonization. The diminishing status of Hebrew and Yiddish in favor of Polish projected onto the books people read, the history they learned, and their everyday behavior. “In his knapsack every immigrant (*oleb*) brought his childhood for his own children,” Heffner wrote.¹⁹ In Galicia, Polish had a particularly strong influence, but in the ethnonationalist atmosphere in Poland between the two world wars, the option of Jewish assimilation was difficult. Indeed, Polish scholar Kamil Kijek claims that “two decades under the Second Polish Republic saw an unprecedented rise in the popularity of Jewish nationalism.”²⁰ Polish language, culture, and history were taught to one degree or another in all Jewish schools. The students’ nationalist awareness was heightened as a result of these studies and gave rise to a strong nationalist sentiment, but due to strong anti-Semitism on the part of the Poles, this feeling could not lead to Polish identity. It created a Zionist identity, not a Polish one. Thus, Polish nationalism, with which most Jews could not associate themselves, bolstered Zionism in Poland. In Galicia, as mentioned, the influence of Polish culture was particularly strong, but the Jewish writers in Galicia who wrote in Polish were Zionists. Indeed, the cultural circle did not overlap the national one. A person could admire Mickiewicz, love Polish literature, but still identify with the Jewish people. The founders of the Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir movement who came from Galicia read with bated breath Władysław Brzozowski’s novel *Flames*, which relates the tale of a Polish revolutionary who dedicates his life to

the revolution and Polish freedom. But they were Zionists and immigrated to Palestine. In commemoration of the book that had such a great impact on them they named one of their kibbutzim after it (*Lehavot ha-Bashan*, *Flames of Bashan*).²¹

In Palestine too there were implicit Polish influences. For example, the common use of the term “national” as an adjective: “National Bank,” “national economy,” “national culture,” “national identity,” and so forth. But in the cultural and political spheres, Polishness was considered inferior to Russianness. Since the Fourth Aliyah (1924–1926) the image of immigrants from Poland has become rooted as nonproductive, culturally pretentious middle-class people who strove to achieve a high standard of living, which was incongruent with conditions in Palestine. The Fourth Aliyah brought to Palestine families of merchants, many of whom were traditionally observant.²² They sought to transfer their previous lifestyle to their new country. The middle class and its aspirations aroused bitter enmity in Palestine and also in Zionist circles in Poland. Part of it derived from the feeling that a new contender for the title of “builder of the country” had arrived on the scene, wishing to build the country quite naturally and without revolutionary socialism. This interclass rivalry played an important role in the hostility of the press toward the Fourth Aliyah, which was accompanied by a whiff of *Schadenfreude* when, after less than two years, it came to an end in one of the greatest economic and Zionist crises that Palestine had known.²³ But its origins lay also in the perception that Palestine was supposed to create a New Jew, and not recreate the petty Jewish merchant from *Dzeka* and *Nalewki*, Warsaw’s commercial streets known for their impoverished peddlers.

The ostensible contrast between Polishness and Russianness was one of images: The Russian Jews were considered Romantics, visionaries, utopian world builders. In contrast, the Polish Jews seemed to be bourgeois, lacking vision, with no aspirations to create a new world; they simply wanted to go on being bourgeois but to live among Jews.

The Poles were regarded as the ones who fostered urban culture, and that was considered inappropriate. Tel Aviv was actually founded by Russian immigrants in 1909, but from the 1920s onward it was a magnet for anyone who wanted to live like a bourgeois, not a pioneer. From the time of the Fourth Aliyah, and even more so during the Fifth, Tel Aviv’s cafés and kiosks were presented as a model of decadent idleness that was inappropriate to the nation-building period. The figure of the real estate broker who went out to his business in the morning wearing a suit and twirling a cane was perceived as a copy of the Jewish speculators in Warsaw.²⁴ Tel Aviv was presented as a city of temptations that ran counter to the pioneering ideals of the country’s builders. Defaming

Polishness was an attempt to overcome the attraction of the good life symbolized by Tel Aviv.

A love-hate complex was evident in Palestine toward “the Poles,” that is, Jewish Poles. The term *Polania*, a woman from Poland, or in Yiddish, *a Poilishe dripkeh*, entered Israeli folklore as a derogatory sobriquet, something like the more modern “Jewish American Princess.” It expresses aversion to ostensibly self-indulgent Polish Jewish women in contrast to the dedicated, committed Russian- and Palestine-born ones. These images also had gender implications: Pioneering was masculine, whereas city life was considered feminine. Women were depicted in belles lettres as not wholeheartedly supporting their husbands’ decision to immigrate to Palestine. They yearned for their mothers’ indulgence, the shelter of the family. They wanted to go home, both in the physical sense—back to Poland—and metaphorically, to bring to Palestine the bourgeois or, more precisely, the petit bourgeois way of life of the family in Poland. In some of the books I have mentioned there is a description of either the Rosenthal or Czech dinnerware displayed in the cabinet and presented as a symbol of the aspiration for the good, bourgeois life.²⁵ But the women’s yearning for “home” can also be interpreted in a more positive manner. The dinnerware signified their longing for beauty, a little gentility in the rough, Spartan life that had been imposed upon them. This was also manifested in their aspiration—that gave rise to mockery—to keep the fine clothes they brought from home, which were useless in the Middle Eastern heat and in a society where the fashion was simple attire. It was manifested in baking cakes in the circular *wundertopf* baking tin on a smoking kerosene stove in order to give their families the feeling of Shabbat. In a family that lived in one of the moshavim, a woman would sew sackcloth curtains for her house on which she drew geometrical shapes. One of the women’s expressions of aspiring to beauty were the flowerbeds they tended next to their houses, or the flowers they expected their husbands to bring home on Friday evening, holidays, and birthdays. Ornamental flowers were a Polish, not a Jewish, tradition. In Polish Jewish shtetls it was hard to find houses that reflected aesthetic sensitivity, and flowers were considered superfluous. But Polish Jewish women who learned from gentile women how to dress well and groom themselves also learned to imitate their love of flowers.²⁶

Women were agents of Polonization: the men usually studied in Jewish educational institutions for a few years at least. The girls were sent to study in public schools, and already in the nineteenth century they studied Polish literature and history, Latin, and the classics. It was they who brought to the family the link to high culture, a concert or a play. In Amos Oz’s memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, his mother’s difficulty in adapting to the wretched reality of life in Palestine

and her longing for the culture and aesthetics she knew in Poland is one of the axes of the plot.

Oz's mother's family came from Rovno, the administrative center of the Volhynia district, which, although it was more prestigious than the surrounding towns, lacked the cultural power of such major centers as Krakow, Lwów, or Warsaw. The borderlands in the east were the most backward part of Poland. This was also one of Poland's poorest regions and anti-Semitism was rampant there. Yet Oz's mother still yearns for the culture she had known in Poland.

Quite naturally, the Zionist movement, which offered an escape from this harsh reality of poverty and anti-Semitism, attracted numerous supporters who no longer believed in the prospects of integration into the Polish state. It was not by chance that in the borderlands of eastern Poland the movement was far stronger than in the more developed regions of the country. This was a manifestation of measured modernization that did not imply abandoning Jewish identity.

It was a region of jostling national cultures: Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish. It was here that the Tarbut school network flourished, a network dubbed "a typical representative of the Land of Israel on Polish soil." In these schools the students learned in Hebrew, diligently cultivating the Sephardi accent, studying Jewish history according to Graetz and Dubnow, singing Hebrew songs brought from Palestine, and holding ceremonies and celebrating festivals in accordance with the new traditions developed in Palestine. The culture of Jewish Palestine was brought to Poland through these schools. The problem, however, was that only middle-class families could afford them. Congress Poland and Galicia were dominated by the Orthodox Agudat Yisrael and Polish schools, and they constituted a vast majority of some 80 percent of the schools attended by Jewish children. Furthermore, the Polish government demanded that every school teach the core subjects of the Polish language, literature, and history. The Tarbut schools also taught these subjects, and Polish national symbols were clearly evident in them. It was precisely because the students in these schools were protected against anti-Semitism, which was a seminal experience in state schools, that the absorption of Polish culture in them was not bound up with ideological ambivalence.²⁷ But, as I mentioned earlier, the national circle was separated from the cultural one, and so Polish-national indoctrination was reworked by Jewish school students into enthusiasm for Zionism.

If the Tarbut schools represented the importation of Hebrew culture from Palestine for the Jewish upper-middle class, He-Haluts represented its importation aimed at the lower classes. He-Haluts was founded in Revolutionary Russia and was imported into Poland from Russia and later from Palestine. It was an organization of young people preparing to immigrate to Palestine. The history of He-Haluts in Poland reflects the constant need for charging the youth movements

in general—and He-Haluts, the avant-garde nuclei of labor Palestine in Poland, in particular—with enthusiasm and work modes from Palestine. From the mid-1920s the Palestinian Jewish settlement movements dominated the core groups of He-Haluts in Poland and gave them a clearly defined goal—life in a kibbutz in Palestine. They thereby fostered a continuous reserve of manpower for themselves, a pipeline of influence over the leftist youth of Poland that were attracted by the Soviet magnet and aspired to reforge the world, and a means of increasing its influence on the Zionist Left in Poland by cultivating groups of activists for the Zionist Congress election campaigns. The Zionist Left in Poland relied on importation of revolutionary energies from Palestine. This was a small but important minority in Polish Jewry and the Zionist movement in Poland. Ben-Gurion's attempt in the late 1920s to establish a broader sphere of labor Palestine influence in Poland through a labor congress ended in dismal failure. This indicated the limited ability of the Yishuv to spread its wings over the larger Jewish Polish community that possessed far stronger resources.²⁸ The Palestinian patterns that were absorbed into Poland came through the Tarbut schools and He-Haluts, which succeeded in rooting a Jewish Palestine ideological and cultural commitment that gained strength with the rise of anti-Semitism in Poland in the 1930s.

Certificate Immigrants

In 1989 the Hebrew University of Jerusalem held a conference on the so-called Certificate Immigrants. According to British Mandate regulations, a Jew who enrolled and was accepted as a student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem or the Haifa Technion, and who paid a year's tuition in advance, was entitled to a certificate of immigration to Palestine. Acceptance was conditional on fluency in Hebrew, but the university did not insist on this. It was an escape route for young Jews from Poland.²⁹ A few years after the conference, the Hebrew University published *The Book of the Certificate Immigrants*, which contains the memoirs of close to one hundred of these immigrants.³⁰

Most of the memoirs contain a description of the train journey to Constanza (Romania) and from there the voyage to Palestine aboard the SS *Polonia*. It seems that the number of young people who immigrated in this way was approximately two thousand. A few women received student certificates, but a considerable number made the journey by means of fictitious marriages. Hanoch Bartov relates: "When Father and Mother talk about young men who travel to Poland from Palestine and marry there, they call the marriage by another name, a fiction. Sometimes when a young man enters a fictitious marriage, the girl's parents pay all his travel expenses."³¹ Occasionally the girls' families paid for the

couple's passage to Palestine in return for the young man's consent to put the girl's name on his certificate. As the British government's immigration regulations became more stringent in the wake of the 1936 Arab Revolt, there was an increase in the number of immigrants who had no intention of studying at the university from the outset, and once they reached Palestine they reclaimed their enrollment fee. The "students'" behavior resembles a parallel phenomenon of He-Haluts immigrants from the movement's training farms, a large number of whom reached Palestine with no intention of joining a kibbutz, and used the training route as a way of getting out of Poland. The difference between the two populations lies in their financial status: He-Haluts attracted people from the lower-middle class whereas the university attracted the better off.

The immigrants who chose to publish their memoirs are not a representative sample of Polish Jewry but of the educated class, some of them youngsters who were steeped in Polish culture. The future Professor Joshua Prawer told of his youthful love of Polish culture and Romantic literature. He wrote poems in Polish. "My parents spoke Yiddish to one another, but they spoke Polish to me."³² There was a Zionist atmosphere at home that did not run counter to the love of Polish culture. "The people who came from Poland had a broad education, [but] most of them had difficulty speaking Hebrew and continued speaking Polish in Palestine," Prawer stated.³³ A group of future historians was formed among the students from Poland: Prawer, who studied the Middle Ages; Alexander Fuchs, Antiquity; and Jacob Talmon, modern history, but all three focused on general history. This was possibly the result of growing up in a Polish habitat, unlike the young people who studied at Jewish institutions. The more educated immigrants were polyglot: one related that they spoke Polish and Yiddish in the street; at home his father spoke to him in Hebrew, his mother in Russian, and he learned German at the gymnasium.³⁴ Another said that "in the busy streets [of Tel Aviv] people spoke Yiddish and Polish, Russian and German, and when the sun went down, in the beachfront cafés they began playing dance music, well-known melodies like 'Mein Shtetele Belz' and Polish tangos." A Polish singer, Hanka Ordonówna, gave a series of performances in Palestine.³⁵ It turns out that the zealotry for Hebrew and the banning of foreign languages, particularly Yiddish—which according to certain researchers was a source of anguish for the immigrants—were more theoretical than real, since multilingualism flourished in the streets of Tel Aviv. The lending libraries had books in Yiddish, Polish, Russian, and German, and people spoke in their mother tongue. But the younger generation had already assimilated Hebrew and abandoned multiculturalism. It is difficult to avoid speculating that had it not been for the Holocaust, would Polish have supplanted the Jews' languages in Poland just as English did in the United States?

One of the most notable things in the immigration stories of the “Certificate Immigrants” is the relatively high percentage of Revisionists among them. There were two probable reasons for this: first, the Revisionists constituted a larger segment of the Jewish middle class than the He-Haluts immigrants; second, for political reasons they were discriminated against by the Labor-dominated Zionist administration in the allocation of immigration certificates, and therefore chose the student option. The first young man whose story is related in *The Book of the Certificate Immigrants* is Yitzhak Yezernitsky-Shamir, one of the leaders of Lehi (“The Stern Gang”), who later became prime minister of Israel. Although the university’s Warsaw office refused to grant him a certificate, stating that “we have no knowledge of his intention to study,” the academic secretary in Jerusalem demanded that “a certificate be arranged” for the young man, who spoke superb Hebrew. This is an example of the type of Betar youngsters who chose the student certificate route.³⁶

The Revisionist youth movement, Betar, was founded in the mid-1920s. Although its leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, hailed from Russia, the movement was under strong Polish influence. There was no great social or cultural disparity between the members of Betar and the youngsters who chose the Palestine labor youth movements. The youngsters’ choices were often random, especially of those who came from the Jewish lower classes in the eastern Polish towns. However, after Pilsudski’s putsch in 1926, the increasing influence of Polish nationalism on Zionism in Poland can be discerned. Soviet Russia was hostile toward Judaism and Zionism alike and became a competitor for the hearts and minds of Jewish youth. In contrast, Polish nationalism of the Pilsudski era displayed relative toleration of Jews, both Judaic and Zionist ones. The anti-Semitic aggression that came to the fore in the second half of the 1930s had been moderate while Pilsudski was alive. The influence of Polish nationalism on the Zionist Right was strong.

There was much in common between Polish nationalism and Zionism, _ especially the Zionist right wing. These were two national movements that espoused an extraordinary fusion of religion and nationalism. And indeed, many religious Zionists chose to join the Revisionist camp rather than the Left, which espoused atheism. According to Daniel Heller, who researched Betar in Poland, Jabotinsky, who was completely secular, adapted the character of Betar in Poland to the prevailing Jewish religiosity. The influence of Romantic nationalism on both the Polish and Zionist movements was obvious from the outset—it was not by chance that Jabotinsky felt that translating Sienkiewicz was a worthy project. Admiration of a glorious past, resentment of a dismal present, and hope for empowerment in the near future formed the Romantic base of both movements. In addition, these were two national movements driven by a strong sense

of victimization (Poland as Jesus among the nations, and Jews as the eternal victims of persecution). Moreover, both were driven by a sense of wounded pride and insult (the Poles due to their country's partitions in the nineteenth century, and the Jews because of their rejection by Polish society).

The influence of Polish nationalism on the Zionist Right was manifested in hatred of the Left (which was presented as identical to communist Russia), admiration of authoritarianism, and derision of parliamentarianism and democracy. This was accompanied by admiration of military force, a trait shared by Pilsudski and Jabotinsky. The latter wrote his *Samson* as a Romantic national epos aimed at strengthening national pride and encouraging a willingness to use force to attain the movement's goals. Jabotinsky was blessed with both irony and a sense of humor, and he knew how to sweeten the bitter pill of nationalism in the will and testament he ascribed to Samson, when, in addition to his demand that the Jews crown their own king (à la Pilsudski) and learn how to make arms, he also demanded that they learn how to laugh. His followers in Poland did not always know how to add a pinch of skepticism such as this to their worldview, and the same applies to the members of the Zionist Left, who in that ideological era were no different in their zealotry from their counterparts of the Right.

As opposed to the Left's vision of a just, socialist society, the Zionist Right sought to preserve the existing order and viewed the bourgeoisie as the class of the future. Its New Man was not a revolutionary, just a proud Jew willing to fight for his people and country. This was the guiding principle of Jabotinsky's "monism." In his study of Betar in Poland between the two world wars, Heller describes the Betar membership's admiration of Polish national symbols, their imitation of the uniforms of Polish youth movements, and their admiration of rhetoric, ceremonies, and songs.³⁷ Heller opens his study with a description of the participation of a young Betar member in a Polish Remembrance Day ceremony. The young man's name was Menahem Begin. Whereas the Left extolled the martyrs of the Russian *Narodnaia Volia*, the Right drew its national symbols from Poland and Ireland. Admiration of the book *Flames*, mentioned above, was common to Betar and Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, similar to the admiration of Joseph Trumpeldor that was also common to both Left and Right, but with different interpretations and emphases. The members of Betar strove to attain legitimacy from Polish nationalism, and, according to Heller, they displayed loyalty to Poland more than any other Zionist group. They even spoke of two motherlands. Their internalization of Polish nationalism did not run counter to their Zionist loyalty. But they avoided criticizing Polish anti-Semitism until after World War II. Menahem Begin remained loyal to Anders' Army, with which he arrived in Palestine. When offered the post of heading the Etzel in Palestine, he refused to desert. On the contrary, he waited, ignoring the harsh anti-Semitism in that

army until his Polish commanding officer allowed him to leave. It was a later expression of the Right's linkage to Polish nationalism and codes of honor.

To Poland—and Back

The memoirs and belles letters of the interwar period are rich in descriptions of journeys from Palestine to Poland and back. After the Holocaust, many Jews who came from Poland firmly refused to visit the country of their birth: As the graveyard of the Jewish people, they contended, there was no one and no place to visit there, similar to the claim of Bartov's Avrum Schein. In the years between 1945 and 1990 the East European Bloc was practically closed to Israelis. It therefore seemed that immigration to Palestine-Israel was a sort of watershed after which there was no looking back. This was not the case in the 1930s: visits to "home," which was still there, in order to show grandchildren to grandparents, to convalesce after an illness, to rest and be pampered by one's mother, were the heart's desire of many, and many went back. *The Certificate Immigrants Book* is filled with the wisdom of hindsight on the subject of the Holocaust: Many who told their stories speak of the sense of impending catastrophe, of the pogroms and the attacks on Jewish students, and of their gratitude to the Hebrew University that saved their lives. But in real time they did not have the feeling that war was imminent, a war that would unleash a terrible disaster. Many traveled to Poland in the summer of 1939. In her autobiographical *Not from Here*, Nurith Gertz describes the journey of her mother and older sister to Poland in the summer of that year, and the desperate efforts of mother and daughter to get back to Palestine.³⁸ Among the "certificate immigrants" too there were some who went to Poland that summer and got out by the skin of their teeth.³⁹ The journeys to Poland in the 1930s reflected the feeling prevalent in many people that there was something transient in the Zionist enterprise, that it was not yet "the real thing," and so contact with "home" was maintained. "Home" was there. In the 1930s the Yishuv was relatively weak compared with the biggest Jewish community in the world, and although it spread independent wings on the national level, on the individual level the warm relations with "home" were preserved and immigrants gave preference to the Old Country.

Images of Russian utopian idealism shaped the spiritual world of the Jewish Left in Palestine. Indirect importation of this idealism and culture to Poland can be seen through He-Haluts and the Tarbut schools network. On the other hand, Polishness, which Jews who went through the Polish interwar educational system perceived as a cultural tradition of the middle class, shaped urban culture in Palestine, and to a great extent Polish nationalism shaped the political culture of the Right in Palestine and in Israel. Another Polish import is the

ethnonationalist tradition in Israel of today, which is in a constant clash with the liberal Western European and American cultural traditions. This point is addressed extensively in David Engel's Chapter 9 in this volume.

In the years preceding the meltdown of the Eastern Bloc, the memory of the Holocaust, and the deep resentment felt by the survivors toward Poland, the homeland that did not show mercy to its Jewish citizens, made most Israelis avoid visiting Poland, even more so than visiting Germany. Today nostalgia cloaks the memory of Poland as the heart's desire of the grandparents' generation. The cultural Polonization of the 1930s is no more: the number of Polish speakers in Israel is diminishing with the disappearance of the immigrants' generation. But the alienation and separation between the Polish Jewish world and the Polish world is intact to this day and is notable in the tours of Poland by Israelis: in addition to "roots" tours, which are very popular among the descendants of Polish Jews, other tours take visitors to sites connected with Jewish history. Whereas initially these were limited to sites connected with the Holocaust—the Warsaw Ghetto, Rapoport's Ghetto Heroes Monument, the death camps—today they are linked to Jewish culture, especially its religious aspect, such as graves of prominent rabbis and the remains of yeshivas. In contrast, the tours recommended by the Polish Institute in Tel Aviv focus solely on the magnificent past of the Kingdom of Poland: castles, palaces, churches. Two parallel worlds that do not meet.

Notes

1. Gur Alroey, *An Unpromising Land: Jewish Migration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); and Gur Alroey, *Ha-Mahpekbah ba-sheketab: ba-Hagirah meba-Imperyah ba-Rusit 1875–1924* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-Toldot Yisra'el, 2008).
2. Shabtai Teveth, *Kin'at David* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1978), 1:26
3. See Anita Shapira, "Brenner v'ha-Rusim," in *Yehudim, Tsiyonim, u-mah she-benehem* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2007), 209–29.
4. Yosef Haim Brenner, "Mi-pinkas," *Kuntres*, March 23, 1920, reprinted in his *Ketavim* (Collected writings), 4:1833–1835 (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1984).
5. Ibid.
6. Yosef Haim Brenner, "Be-shule gilyonot ha-po'ema," *Ha-Adamah* (June–July 1920), reprinted in *Ketavim* 4:1800–1805.
7. Yosef Haim Brenner, "Ba-esh uva-hercv," bibliography, *Ha-Adamah* (November 1920), reprinted in *Ketavim* 4:1655.
8. Michael Confino, *Diyn 'al Berl me-et Anita Shapira* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved and Tel Aviv University, 1985), 17–28.
9. Meir Shalev, *Roman Rusi* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1988).
10. Yuval Shimoni, *Kav ba-melakh* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2014).
11. Nurith Gertz, *Yam beni le-venekh* (Or Yehuda: Devir, 2015).
12. Hanoch Bartov, *Shel mi atab yeled?* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1970); idem, *Yehudi katan* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1980); Avraham Heffner, *Kolel ba-kol* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1987); Yaakov Shabtai,

Zikbron devarim (Tel Aviv: Siman Keri'ah, 1977); idem, *Sof davar* (Tel Aviv: Siman Keri'ah, Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1984); Amos Oz, *Sipur 'al avahav ve-hoshekb* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005).

13. Heffner, *Kolel ha-kol*, 46.

14. Bartov, *Yebudi katan*, 20.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 118–27.

17. Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Forverts*, September 17, 1944, quoted in Nathan Cohen, *Sefer, sofer ve-'iton* (Jerusalem: Warsaw Center for Jewish Culture and Magnes Press, 2002), 243.

18. Ido Bassok and Avraham Nowerszttern, eds., *'Alilot ne'urim: Otobiografyot shel bene no'ar Ye-budim mi-Polin ben shete milhamot 'olam* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2011).

19. Heffner, *Kolel ha-kol*, 125.

20. Kamil Kijek, "Was It Possible to Avoid 'Hebrew Assimilation'? Hebraism, Polonization, and Tarbut Schools in the Last Decade of Interwar Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 2 (2016): 108.

21. See Michael Steinlauf, "The Polish-Jewish Daily Press," *Polin* 2 (1978): 222, for example.

22. On the economic background in Poland that was one of the motives behind the Fourth Aliyah, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Between the Social and the National: The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918–1939," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 55–70.

23. See the seminal study by Dan Giladi, *Ha-Yishuv bi-tekfut ha-'Aliyah ha-revi'it, 1924–1929* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1973).

24. Bartov, *Shel mi atab yeled?*, 49. See also Chaim Arlosoroff, "Le-ha'arakhat ha-'Aliyah ha-revi'it," *Kitve Hayim Arlozorov* (Tel Aviv: A. Y. Shtibel, 1934), 3:107–14; and Berl Katznelson's speech delivered at the Fourth Ahdut ha-'avodah Conference, reprinted in *Kitve B. Katsnelson* (Tel Aviv: A. Y. Shtibel, 1945–1946), 3:28–47.

25. In writing on these topics I was assisted by Ruth Schoenfeld's article, "Avot u-vanim: ha-'Aliyah mi-Polin ba-shanim 1924–1932 be-'ene ha-dor ha-sheni," *Gal-'Ed* (1997): 15–16, 213–37, particularly 219.

26. In this description I was assisted by both my personal recollections and my unfinished study on aesthetics in the Yishuv.

27. Kijek, "Was It Possible to Avoid 'Hebrew Assimilation'?", 25–27.

28. For sources on He-Haluts, see Anita Shapira, *Berl: Biyografiyah* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1980), 428–64; and also the doctoral dissertation by Rona Yona on He-Haluts in Poland between the two world wars, which is to be published shortly in book form: *Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim: Tnu'at ha-avodah ve-ha-aliyah mi-Polin 1923–1936* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2021). Reference to Ben-Gurion's attempt to expand Yishuv influence in Poland is discussed solely in Yona's study [Hebrew]. I would also like to thank Yona for bringing to my attention some of the sources I used in this article.

29. A detailed description of immigration during the British Mandate period can be found in the book by Aviva Halamish, *Be-meruts kaful neged ha-zeman: Mediniyut ha-'Aliyah ha-Tsionit bi-shenot ha-sbeloshim* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2006).

30. Sinai Leichter and Chaim Milkov, eds., *Sefer' ole ha-sertifikatim: Zikbronot, te'udot, igrot*. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993).

31. Bartov, *Shel mi atab yeled?*, 222.

32. Leichter and Milkov, *Sefer'ole ha-sertifikatim*, 213.

33. Ibid., 212.

34. Ibid., 101.

35. Ibid., 74.

36. Ibid., 16.

37. Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

38. Nurith and Devorah Gertz, *El mah she-namog* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1997).

39. Examples: Malka Avital immigrated to Palestine in 1935, returned to Grodno for a visit in 1939, was trapped by events in Poland and Russia, and returned to Palestine after great hardship in May 1940. Leichter and Milkov, *Sefer' ole ha-sertifikatim*, 38–39. Simcha Antman immigrated to Palestine

in 1934 and after obtaining Palestinian citizenship returned to Poland for a visit in 1936, after which he came back to Palestine with a girl he married fictitiously; *ibid.*, 70–77. Raya Jaglom immigrated to Palestine in 1938 and returned for a summer visit to her parents in Kalisz to enjoy a vacation from her studies in August 1939. She was saved thanks to the Palestine visa she had; *ibid.*, 138–41. Meir Sokolowsky visited his hometown of Roszimi, near Slonim in what is now Belarus, and came back with a bride; *ibid.*, 184–89. Yisrael Cerna relates that in 1937 he and his friend, future professor Alexander Fuchs, traveled to Poland for a vacation at Cerna's parents' home, entered into fictitious marriages, and returned to Palestine at the end of the summer; *ibid.*, 202–3.

CHAPTER 4

Stateless Nation: A Reciprocal Motif Between Polish Nationalism and Zionism

Marcos Silber

Any citizen of the State of Israel could complete the sentence: “. . . is not yet lost.” There is another state whose citizens could also complete that sentence—Poland. If in the State of Israel they would insert the words “our hope,” in Poland they would say “Poland.” Indeed, some would argue that the words “is not yet lost” were lifted by Naftali Herz Imber, the flamboyant poet born in Złoczów in Galicia, from the first line of the Polish national anthem—“Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła.”¹ As far back as the 1980s David Engel posed in an unpublished lecture this question: What can we learn from this example? Do we have before us a transfer of cultural ideas from a Polish national culture to an emerging Jewish national culture, or is this just a hint of a few Polish motifs that were absorbed into a Jewish nationalism that also drew from other national movements, most notably the German and Russian?² And also from the ethnonational struggles within the Habsburg Empire?³

The claim has frequently been made that Polish culture transmitted relatively few assets to the Jewish national movement and Jewish settlement in Palestine, and those few didn’t go much beyond folk wisdom regarding “Polishness” and sexist remarks about Polish women. This claim arises in the main because very few Zionist leaders and ideologues (apart from the Revisionists) openly admitted to any influences whatsoever.⁴ On the contrary, the standard narrative has it that Jewish national consciousness among Polish Jewry developed only *after* the cultural influence of the Polish milieu had been thrust aside. Such comments may be found in the writings of noted Polish Zionists such as Yitzhak Gruenbaum, who took several opportunities, in his important essay on the history of the Zionist movement, to emphasize the Litvak (i.e., Jewish Lithuanian) foundations of Polish Zionism, and in the memoirs of Abraham Podlishewski, a noted Zionist

leader in Warsaw.⁵ Such claims are common in Polish Jewish historiography, which tends to cast the Jewish national idea among Polish Jewry as a Litvak creation, alien to the Polish cultural world.⁶

In the early 1980s, Ezra Mendelsohn remarked in his classic study of Polish Zionism between the wars that “Polish nationalism exerted a tremendous influence on Polish Jewish youth and pointed large numbers of Jews toward Zionism.”⁷ Engel took this a step further by suggesting, in the course of the aforementioned lecture, that various Zionists adopted certain Polish motifs almost unconsciously, and that these motifs penetrated so deeply into the core of the Zionist ethos that they came to be perceived as an intrinsic part of Jewish nationalism in general and Zionism in particular.⁸ This unconscious absorption had made them invisible. Focusing on the Zionist Right, historians Yaacov Shavit and Daniel Heller have demonstrated how profoundly Revisionist Zionism in Poland was shaped by Polish motifs.⁹ Similarly, Kamil Kijek’s pioneering study of Jewish youth in Poland between the wars notes the deep-seated connection between exposure to the nation-fostering messages embedded in Polish language and literature, on the one hand, and the process of thrusting aside the Polish “we,” on the other—a complex process Kijek calls “symbolic acculturation.” These approaches suggest, in Kijek’s view, an interpretation of Zionism as an internalization of Polish nationalist discourse.¹⁰ Yfaat Weiss suggests that the construction of Israeli citizenship is an internalization of the construct of Polish citizenship between the wars.¹¹ Engel wrote in a similar vein when discussing what citizenship meant to Polish Zionists.¹²

I concur with these arguments. Polish Zionism between the wars drew both consciously and unconsciously on the motifs and symbols of the Polish cultural milieu. While Mendelsohn, Engel, Shavit, Weiss, Heller, and Kijek discuss the period following the founding of the Second Polish Republic in 1918, when Jewish integration into Polish culture within a sovereign Poland was at its height, the present chapter sets out to trace the transfer of motifs between Polish nationalism and Zionism *before* 1918.¹³ I follow in the footsteps of Shoshana Stifft and Ela Bauer, who examined the role of Polish nationalist thought in shaping the nationalist ideas of Nahum Sokolow.¹⁴ However, here I examine these concepts not just with regard to a central figure such as Sokolow but among his contemporaries and juniors, with particular attention to the arena of literature.

It is not my intention to give a full review of these transfers but merely to examine one motif: the nation without a state. My central argument is that there were indeed explicit and overt cultural transfers of this motif. These transfers, moreover, were reciprocal. On the one hand, the Jewish exile served as a model for Polish nationalism. Jewish longing for a mythical lost homeland served Polish exiles in Western Europe in the mid-nineteenth century as an archetype of

longing for a Polish homeland that was, for all intents and purposes, lost. On the other hand, Zionism developed this motif and gave it a new interpretation in light of the Polish national paradigm. Jewish nationalism, I claim, internalized Polish nationalist modes of thought. Eventually, those motifs, which acquired a new interpretation, lost any trace of their Polish origin and were integrated “organically” into the emerging Zionist ethos. Thus a reciprocal influence between the Jewish and Polish cultural systems emerged as a by-product of an ongoing, complex dialogue.

A “Jewish” Idea in the Formation of Polish Nationalism

A major turning point in the formation of Polish nationalism was the partition of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century and the subsequent emergence of Romantic Polish nationalism. Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Poland’s greatest “Visionary Poet” (*Wieszcz*) and one of the spiritual fathers of the Polish national movement, popularized and adapted the messianic Polish metaphor, drawing on the French mystic Claude de Saint Martin, who in turn had drawn on the Portugese Kabbalist Martinez Pasqualis.¹⁵ Mickiewicz also borrowed messianic and kabbalistic ideas from the Russian mystic Oleszkiewicz.¹⁶ In addition, he was familiar with the teachings of the Freemasons and Frankists, which he imbibed directly in Poland or Russia and perhaps via his many contacts among families of Frankist origin, foremost among them that of his wife, Celina Szymanowska.¹⁷

Like many writers associated with national movements, Mickiewicz also adopted motifs from the Bible. Much has been written on the use of biblical metaphors in national movements, such as the biblical children of Israel constituting a “chosen people.” Another widely adopted motif is that of moral renewal, in the form of attacks on the internal or external adversaries of the chosen nation. Michael Walzer has noted that the astonishing story of the slaves who rebelled, won liberty, formed laws of their own, and styled themselves a new nation with an independent state has had a decisive impact on many modern nationalisms.¹⁸

In this regard, Mickiewicz’s method of adopting biblical metaphors is unexceptional. Less noticed, however, is how the unmistakable presence of actual Jewish contemporaries in Mickiewicz’s Poland helped shape the Polish national mythology, and how it served to crystallize Polish nationalism in times of crisis.

Mickiewicz examined the Jewish experience in Poland as a model for Polish nationalism in the wake of the failed rebellion of 1830–31 and the exile of Polish leaders by Russian authorities or their departure from Poland (“the Great Emigration”)¹⁹ The most widely recognized expression of the correspondence between Jewish longing for the Messiah and Polish national longing for redemption

is to be found in his epic *Pan Tadeusz*, first published in 1834. Jewish longing figures in one of the poem's high points, "the concert of concerts." In this section, the Jew Yankel, the most exalted figure in the poem, welcomes the soldier coming to liberate Poland-Lithuania, the legendary General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski, whose name formed the acrostic of the Polish national song that became the Polish anthem mentioned at start of this paper. Yankel, a model of Polish patriotism, welcomes the general with these words: "'General,' said he, 'long has our Lithuania awaited Thee—long, even as we Jews have awaited the Messiah.'" ²⁰ In his famous lectures on Slavic literature at the Collège de France, Mickiewicz expanded this motif, and referred to the fact of Jewish existence in Poland as a model for shaping the national hopes of a partitioned Poland. Mickiewicz emphasized that Jewish longing for the Messiah was a model for Polish nationalist longing for a revival of sovereign nationhood and national liberation. Regarding "Polish messianism," he noted in his lecture of July 1, 1842: "It is no accident that the Jews chose Poland as their homeland. . . . They in particular, they who have not ceased to believe in the coming of the Messiah and await him, have no doubt influenced Polish messianism and its character." ²¹

As far as Mickiewicz was concerned, "it is no accident that this people has resided for many hundreds of years in Poland and its fate is tied so firmly to the Polish nation." Mickiewicz held that joint residence on the banks of the Vistula was part of a plan of divine providence, which set before the Polish nation the role model of a nation without a state: "A people which no longer has its kings or its institutions or a political entity, which was forcibly torn from its land and every earthly thing, [is a model] in this new era . . . [for] a Slavic tribe that has almost nothing on the earth, whose entire desire and hope is in its God. . . . A Polish tribe, which will forever cry out, which will never surrender, which was torn to pieces, which was wiped from the European map, which was cast into a diaspora across the wide world." ²²

The parallel Mickiewicz constructs is clear. The Poles had to learn from Jews how to preserve memory for the sake of national redemption, how to be a nation in exile that does not cease bewailing the destruction of its birthright: "There [in Polish lands] live millions who belong to one people, well known across the world, the most ancient in Europe, the most ancient of cultures, millions of children of Israel, who from the depths of their synagogues have not ceased over hundreds of years to weep bitterly, a people without kin or fellow in the whole world." ²³

While Mickiewicz was living in exile in Paris he decided on the ninth of Av of 1845 that "on these very days, actually on the 12th [of August], the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, we'll go to the Jewish synagogue and unite with the people's spirit of our brothers the children of Israel." ²⁴ To followers of the Polish messianic mystic Andrzej Towiański in Paris he declared: "Come, let us bow before

the people of Israel, which for eight hundred years have known how to preserve such a living pain, as if only yesterday its calamity had overtaken it.”²⁵

This motif proved very useful to a key cohort of the Polish intelligentsia known as the “Great Emigration,” which went into exile to Western Europe after supporting the heroic (and failed) uprising to liberate Poland from Russian rule.²⁶ Members of this social class, to which Mickiewicz belonged, saw themselves as not just the prodigal children of a “nation without a state” but also its finest products. True, by any demographic measure almost the entire Polish nation stayed behind on land now divided among three Central and East European empires. And yet, members of the “Great Emigration” saw themselves as the exiled sons of a nation that would repatriate its children, in all their huddled masses, when the time came. As far as they were concerned, the Polish nation was an exiled nation. This ethos found a place deep within Polish nationalism.

Mickiewicz and other Polish intellectuals of his era considered the Jews apropos their national characteristics, and perceived them as a group that had defined itself in the past as a nation and continued to maintain its unique nationhood, despite being exiled from its land, by means of memorial rituals. In their view, the Jewish nation had not given up its claim of sovereignty over its land. By adopting this nationalist worldview, Mickiewicz projected onto the Jews nationalist claims that Jews themselves only made at a later point in time. The traditional demand to “renew our days as of old” (Lam. 6:21) had merely eschatological implications, without any political substance.²⁷

After the reading of the scroll of Lamentations at the Paris synagogue, Mickiewicz asked to speak. He elaborated on the “suffering of Israel” in nationalist terms. The synagogue’s rabbi apparently didn’t understand what the guest wanted, since he spoke not only in entirely alien concepts, but actually said he was speaking “in the name of the synagogues of our land, in which we’ve heard weeping; I speak in the name of the synagogues of East [European Jews] and of the whole world.”²⁸ It is no great surprise that the rabbi objected, demonstratively voicing his reservations and even seeking to leave the event. Mickiewicz, outraged, could not understand his host’s lack of enthusiasm. The two sides spoke at cross purposes, proceeding from entirely different worldviews and vocabularies.

Mickiewicz presented the Maccabees to the followers of Towiański as role models for the heroic Polish struggle for independence against oppressive Russia—a motif repeated in Polish art and literature. “Take the Scriptures and find something similar to the state of our land. Look at the Maccabees,”²⁹ Mickiewicz instructed the noted Polish artist Wojciech Stattler, who took his advice and created his famous painting *The Maccabees*.

Mickiewicz was not the first to point to the Maccabees as a model for resistance to tsarist annexation of Poland. The priest Michal Karpowicz had drawn a similar comparison in 1794, to encourage public support of the Kosciuszko uprising.³⁰ The connection between contemporary Jews and the Maccabees had also appeared in the popular Warsaw daily *Kurier Polski* at the time of the November 1830 Polish rebellion. In December of that year, Joseph Berkowitz, son of Berek Joselowicz, the famous Jewish colonel known for his role in the Kosciuszko uprising, called for the enlistment of Jews to the battle lines and used the precedent of the Maccabee uprising. Joseph Berkowitz noted then that by joining the rebellion, “[Jews] would find consolation in the immortal shade of the heroic Maccabees.”³¹

What led Mickiewicz to search for useful symbols and strategies in the Jewish treasure trove of religious and historical analogies? Was it his admiration of Jews or his wife’s Frankist background? Or perhaps the influence of Towiański’s messianic ideas, which were also apparently influenced by Frankist thinking? Or perhaps merely an ordinary Polish expression of the eschatological-messianic imagery of “thou hast chosen us,” which was prevalent in European nationalist thought?

I tend toward an interpretation founded upon Mickiewicz’s biography, and specifically the family ties that sensitized him, for better or for worse, to motifs drawn from the Jewish milieu. Due to the loss of his wife’s writings, this interpretation cannot claim to be definitive. I do not maintain that Mickiewicz is the descendant of a Frankist family, though other scholars made such claims.³² In my view, he became sensitized to Jewish history due to his close ties to Maria Szymanowska, the scion of a Frankist family, and his marriage to her daughter Celina, whose father also came from a Frankist line.³³

But regardless, most pertinent to the present discussion is that Mickiewicz paid direct attention to traditional Jewish metaphors. He applied them to the Polish predicament and turned them into practical analogies for the formation of Polish nationalism. It is crucial to remember that he was one of the most influential figures in the Polish national struggle, a figure who became iconic in his own lifetime.

Though similar motifs already existed in Polish nationalist thought even before Mickiewicz formulated them,³⁴ he shaped and interwove them with additional Polish nationalist themes into a single coherent conceptual framework. He lent legitimacy to the use of motifs drawn directly from the Jewish milieu, and thereby enabled them to be taken up by other circles of the Great Emigration, and thereafter by ever-wider segments of society in Poland itself. These ideas were absorbed into the Polish national discourse to the point of being regarded as part and parcel of Polish nationalist thought. They formed a kind of habitus.³⁵

The intimate connection between motifs borrowed from Jewish culture and Polish nationalism did not escape the notice of Polish Jewish leaders. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, the most prominent Polish Zionist leader, was aware of the symbiotic link between Mickiewicz's Jewish messianic analogies and Polish nationalism. In an article published in the 1950s, a period of considerable Jewish ambivalence toward the Polish state and Polish nationalism,³⁶ he called Mickiewicz "the prophet of Poland, of the memories of its past, of the hopes for its future redemption, poet of its ruin and revival." These terms, which could have described the prophets of Israel, Gruenbaum used deliberately in characterizing Mickiewicz's thought. He consciously used what he called "ideas belonging to us, the Jews" to critique Polish nationalism and to revive the prophetic crown of contemporary Israel.³⁷ "Polish messianism," Gruenbaum wrote, "did not reach the height of Jewish messianism, did not likewise connect to the human ideal of the End of Days. . . . The Polish visionaries had no heirs." Gruenbaum observed that Polish nationalism had absorbed "our concepts, when the Jews [had not risen above] . . . the prophecy that they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and neither shall they learn war anymore, remains an ideal of the Jewish people to this day."³⁸

Gruenbaum claimed that the transfer process did not alter the Jewish prophetic motifs. At the end of the day, Polish nationalism used messianic analogies to found the Polish state, whereas social concerns were viewed as subsidiary. By contrast, the Polish Zionist movement was imbued with a messianic vision of the ideal, just society that would arise in the Land of Israel. These terms appealed to the Zionist Left, but also spoke to centrist Zionist strands in Poland and even to the religious-Zionist Mizrahi. In any case, Gruenbaum presented the Polish national poet's adoption of Jewish motifs as a flawed imitation.

At this stage of the elaborate process of transfer, Jewish culture served as the "transmitter," while Polish culture, most particularly in its Romantic phase, served as the "receiver," to use Even-Zohar's conceptualization.³⁹

Polish Patriot Literature: A "Zionist" Path to Nation Building

Just as motifs borrowed from the Jewish tradition became central to the Polish nationalist ethos, ideas from Polish nationalist ideology decisively shaped Zionist ideology in Poland. These motifs were central not only in the Revisionist wings, as Shavit and Heller have shown, but also in General Zionism and in socialist Zionism, both in Congress Poland and Galicia, before the founding of the second Polish Republic in 1918.

Memoirs and diaries demonstrate that it was Romantic and heroic Polish literature that served, paradoxically, as the prelude to the stirring of Jewish

nationalism in Poland. The literary arena, consisting of writers and readers, constituted a multicultural meeting point in which traditional myths were interwoven with ethnonationalist agendas for nations lacking states and territories. When Victor Chajes, leader of the Jewish community in Lviv (Lwów, Lvov, Lemberg), looked back in 1926 at the Zionist period of his life that had begun toward the end of the 1890s, he wrote: “[My Zionism was] a period of *Sturm und Drang*, a period of ideals, hopes and dreams, which began when I was fourteen as I read Romantic Polish books and went on to join in patriotic soirees, the underground and prison, commercial academy in Berlin and writing juvenilia in Polish and Jewish journals.”⁴⁰

Chajes did not experience the sharp rejection by Polish nationalism that other proto-Zionists felt, and he eventually returned to the bosom of the Polish nationalism he identified with. Others also testify that they found their way to Jewish nationalism through Polish literature. Anshel Reiss, a key figure in Poalei Tzion of Galicia, associated Polish patriotic ideals with Zionism. In his memoirs he wrote explicitly about his youth in the early twentieth century:

Jewish youth were also raised at the feet of Polish literature, which enticed them with its intellectual ambition and its national spirit rebelling against the dominant conditions of the present. Its unique character and main themes [namely] the duty of loyalty to the Polish people, to its struggle for national liberation, to rejecting foreign rule and longing for independence in the homeland—all these also captured the hearts and minds of Jewish youth and even of Zionist youth.

Wyspiański, Żeromski, Przybyszewski and also [writers] of the previous era, such as Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Sienkiewicz, Zapolska—these were the writers who set the tone for Jewish youth as well. Indeed these young people found in what was said in the annals of literature and poetry of the Polish people also an implication regarding the state of the Jewish people, and so, after the fact, there was strengthened within Jewish youth the affinity and longing for the land of Israel, for Zion.⁴¹

Reiss had made a similar claim shortly after the end of World War II, when he noted in a radio interview in Poland that “Polish national literature, which is steeped in the spirit of struggle for liberty and independence, has prepared Polish Jewry for Zionism, has brought us to the struggle for the liberation and independence of the Jewish people.”⁴²

On the one hand, the generalized, impersonal tone of these testimonies attempts to lend the objective authority of a generational experience to feelings that without doubt were highly personal. On the other hand, Reiss was part of a

generation of Galician Jews that at the turn of the century underwent Polonization due to the autonomy afforded by the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Galicia. The gradual process of Polonization experienced by Jewish Galician youth after the 1880s was based mainly on integration within Polish educational and academic institutions. Although the general orientation of Galician Jews was toward Vienna and German culture, wide circles maintained extensive contacts with Polish intellectuals and adopted a Polish cultural orientation. To be sure, not just Polish but French, German, Russian, and other European authors made a deep impression on Jewish readers at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴³ But Polish literature is the only one mentioned in the context of fostering Jewish nationalism. This is what gave a particular style to the Galician Zionist movement before the founding of the Second Polish republic.

Clearly the intent of Reiss's claims was to sketch a linear process, a supposedly simple one, extending from Polish literature and the ideas it presented (the active struggle to resurrect a nation whose sovereignty had been stolen, the honor paid to liberators of the nation, etc.) to the Zionist movement. But Reiss's story also suggests a chasm between the discourse of building Polish nationalism and those identified as Jews, who were excluded from that discourse. Building a Polish nation required differentiating between "us" and "them."

The testimonies cited above are retrospective. Yet we find similar, if less explicit, contemporaneous testimonies. Galician Zionists deployed Polish motifs of building the exiled nation in order to present equivalent processes vis-à-vis the Jews. This emerges, for instance, from the remarks of Adolf Stand, a senior Galician Zionist and editor of the Zionist annual *Rocznik Żydowski*. In 1905 he noted, in the wake of Herzl's death, that "in dying at the age of forty-four he realized the words of the poet 'and his name was forty-four.'"⁴⁴ The passage quotes Mickiewicz's "The Forefathers" (*Dziady*), which refers to "forty-four" as a kabbalistic reference to the Redeemer. In the work of Mickiewicz it is the poet himself (the numerical value given to "Adam" was forty-four); for Stand it is Herzl, who is comparable here to the "visionary" poet or, in the Israeli terminology, "visionary of the State." As the Polish Jewish literary scholar Eugenia Prokop-Janiec notes in this regard, "Symbolic Polish nationalism has by degrees become a source of Jewish national symbolism."⁴⁵

Yehoshua Ozjasz Thon, a senior Galician Zionist, rabbi of the progressive synagogue in Kraków known as the "Tempel," and in due course a Zionist representative in the Polish Sejm, also adopted the stateless Polish nation as a model. In 1899 he noted in the annual *Abiasaf*: "Polish literature had never been so fertile, so rich, until the whole nation was overcome with the terrible catastrophe [i.e., the partition of Poland]. At that time the *national sentiment* stirred all its slumbering forces and created poets like Adam Mickiewicz, Słowacki and

Krasinski, the soul of whose poems was the national catastrophe and moreover—the national hope. And for us, an ancient people, the national idea that wasn't active till now, has recently come back to life and brought us to found banks and gather noisily at the top of our voice."⁴⁶

We find further examples of this process in Congress Poland under tsarist rule. Joseph Kruk, a Zionist socialist leader of some renown, the son of a family from Częstochowa that underwent processes of Polonization, recalls in his memoirs the question he was asked by Chaim Nahman Bialik in Warsaw in the fall of 1903: "Joshua [Friedman] told me you arrived at Zionism by means of Polish literature. That's very interesting. Is it indeed true? And how did it come about?"⁴⁷

Kruk's response to Bialik is not recorded in full in his memoirs. It can be inferred, however, from earlier chapters in which he describes his family as deeply rooted in Polish patriotic literature and committed to the Polish national struggle against Russia. "The writers of 'Young Poland'—Żeromski, Wyspiański—with their great patriotism," Kruk recalled, "stirred the Jewish feeling in me."⁴⁸ He referred particularly to the book *Nad rzekami Babilonu* (By the rivers of Babylon) by Teodor Tomasz Jeż [Zygmunt Miłkowski]. It was an interesting choice. On the one hand, the Babylonian exile is the most canonical of all; on the other hand, Jeż was one of the founders of the National League, which over time became the *Endecja*, the anti-Semitic Polish nationalist party. Kruk notes that he told Bialik: "In my view, if the Poles—a great and cultured nation, whom I greatly appreciate—have taken as their example the Jews from two thousand years ago, then I'm sure that the Jews themselves all the more so should not allow themselves to forget their forefathers, should not resign themselves to exile and should build themselves anew a homeland of their own that will be a role model."⁴⁹

Ideas from traditional Jewish culture took a central position in the formation of Jewish nationalism in Poland. And yet, it seems to me that Polish national culture, of which literature is the most distinct element, served as a multicultural meeting point and as a reservoir of forms and myths. Polish literature served as a new interpretative context for familiar Jewish traditions—a tool for translating traditional Jewish culture into the modern ethnonationalist reality. Many Jews used canonical Polish literature as a mold and poured Zionist materials into it. They used the network of signs and symbols from the Polish language and culture as models for building the Jewish population into a national public similar in its characteristics to the Polish nation. Thus was formed, consciously or unconsciously, a Zionist nationalist culture that accepted to a great extent Polish attitudes regarding a nation deprived of its territory.

Reiss and Kruk both invoked the writers of the *fin de siècle* Young Poland (*Młoda Polska*) movement, and indeed that cultural trend left a particularly strong imprint on various Polish Zionist circles. In Galicia, Polonized Jewish

students founded a Zionist organ called Young Judea (*Młoda Judea*) in a kind of Jewish counterpoint to Artur Górski's famous series of articles entitled "Young Poland" in the newspaper *Życia*. The Zionist organ absorbed Young Poland's sensibilities, including its critique of the bourgeois liberal lifestyle.

More generally, many young Jews identified with Polish neo-Romanticism's incarnation of the motif of a nation without a state, and adopted it for the purposes of building the Jewish nation. The Zionist Hebrew poet Berl Pomerantz translated the iconic fin-de-siècle play *The Wedding* (*Wesele*) by a major representative of this literary phenomenon, Stanisław Wyspiański, and in the margins of his translation added a discrete personal remark: "An intelligent Jew told me that to the best of his judgment he first became acquainted with and a supporter of Herzl's political Zionism after . . . he saw Wyspiański's *The Wedding*." We are more liable than any other people to understand a work dealing with the fate of a hard-suffering people."⁵⁰

Most interesting in this context are the memoirs of Gruenbaum—that very same Gruenbaum who denied in his pioneering article about the annals of Zionism in Poland any claim that Polish culture had influenced the stirring of Jewish nationalism among the Jews of Poland. In describing his own youth in Płock in the latter half of the 1880s, Gruenbaum emphasizes the powerful impression made upon him by the historical fiction of Henryk Sienkiewicz, *With Fire and Sword* (*Ogniem i mieczem*, 1884) and *The Flood* (*Potop*, 1886). These novels shaped the Polish national narrative by means of a description of Poland's wars in the seventeenth century that dripped with blood and gushed with patriotic heroism. Gruenbaum's admission of enthusiasm for Sienkiewicz's trilogy is by no means unusual.⁵¹ More interestingly, he draws an explicit connection between his experiences in the wake of reading the novel and his Zionism. When he recounts the deep crisis he experienced in his later childhood, he describes in detail how he and his friends would play out dramatic reenactments of great patriotic battles under the influence of Sienkiewicz's novels. After describing the game at length and vividly conveying his enthusiasm for it as a child, he relates "that tragedy which had a decisive impact on my life": a conversation with one of the bigger boys in the gang, called Piawski (or maybe Pajewski), who told Gruenbaum he hated Jews: "I was like all my friends immersed in the world of the heroes of Sienkiewicz's trilogy. In our games I of course represented its heroes. . . . [After that conversation] I burst into tears and ran away from him and never saw him again. . . . I felt I had no place any more among the friends with whom I'd spent two years in riveting games. . . . I distanced myself from my Polish friends and got closer to my few Jewish friends."⁵²

Similar expressions of distress in the wake of rejection against a backdrop of admiration for Polish literature may be found in many other autobiographical

testimonies, and there too we see that the rejection served as a spur to translate Polish national motifs, and particularly the ethnonationalist approach, into Jewish nationalist ones. This process, which was limited in Congress Poland before World War I, became prevalent between the wars. Kijek identified it among Jewish boys between the wars, and termed the process “symbolic acculturation,” that is, the internalization of the ethos and modes of thought of Polish nationalism, and simultaneous alienation from familiar elements of it, following processes of exclusion.⁵³

In fact, young Gruenbaum’s sense of umbrage at his experience of rejection, and the distress that accompanied it, were not the only elements that raised the boy’s Jewish consciousness. Gruenbaum had experienced his Jewishness as natural since his boyhood, and it was an integral part of his day-to-day life. And yet, the insult and distress impelled him to find fitting alternatives for the heroic role models of Polish nationalism. He recounts in those same memoirs that immediately after “that tragedy that had a decisive impact on my life,” he began studying the Hebrew language with his father, and with his assistance read a different heroic literature—in Hebrew.⁵⁴

It is true that the examples cited here, of individuals from Galicia and Congress Poland, from Zionism in general as well as socialist Zionism, reflect first and foremost individual personal experiences. Yet it is also clear that the process of acculturation in Polish Jews quickened over the first decades of the twentieth century, and that although intensive Polonization became a major trend only between the wars,⁵⁵ even before the founding of the Second Polish Republic, internalization of different aspects of Polish culture and emergent nationalism was occurring among Polish Jews on a substantial scale.

Here however, having emphasized commonalities regarding prewar Polonization in Austro-Hungarian Galicia and Russian Congress Poland, I must emphasize a key difference between the two settings. The Galician examples mentioned above represent fairly broad circles of Jewish youth. In marked contrast, the examples of those from Congress Poland such as Kruk, Gruenbaum, and others such as Jan Kirsztrot or even Apolinary Hartglas, who were educated in Congress Poland,⁵⁶ reflect the experiences of relatively narrow circles—children of the elite who had been exposed to a process of Polonization. There were many others in Congress Poland who were more exposed to Russian than Polish culture, and more shaped by the former than the latter. Furthermore, we must recall that most Jewish youth of the lower classes in Congress Poland did not undergo either Polonization or Russification to any great degree before World War I.

For those young Jews both in Galicia and Congress Poland who *did* undergo substantial Polonization, however, such Polonization meant exposure to Polish Romantic, positivist, or neo-Romantic literature, which, broadly speaking, framed

ethnic processes as an organic and desirable development, described social stratification along ethnonationalist lines as natural, and envisioned methods suitable to building a nation without a state. Josef Tenenbaum, a well-known Galician Zionist activist, defined this turn-of-the-century process thus: "The Polish poets, Mickiewicz, Krasiński, and perhaps even a bit more Słowacki, drew inspiration for their messianic ideas from the Jewish Bible. And we, the young people, drew again from the works of these Polish Romantics the great enthusiasm and the burning hope of the return to Zion."⁵⁷

This identification by Gruenbaum and many others with Jewish nationalism involved not simply a reaction to Polish nationalism as a challenge but an internalization of Polish nationalist modes of thought. Gruenbaum and those of his circle saw Jewish nationalism as a means to gain equality and respect in the face of rejection and disdain, and therefore turned it into a fitting alternative to the Polish nationalist ethos. Yet in seeking an alternative to Polish nationalism, they proceeded within the interpretative framework of Polish culture in general and its literature in particular.

Take, for instance, the approach of Jakub Appenzlak, an essayist, journalist, and poet born in 1894, and a senior Warsaw Zionist and editor of the Zionist Polish-language daily newspaper *Nasz Przegląd* between the wars. He grew up in the bosom of Polish culture in Warsaw in his youth, and his Zionism was formed under the influence of Romantic Polish nationalism, which supported the heroic struggle for national honor as described by Romantic Polish poets.⁵⁸ In 1915, before Germany conquered Warsaw and put an end to tsarist rule of Poland, Appenzlak published a poem called "Mowie Polskiej" (To the Polish language). This poem emphasizes the importance of the Polish language in forming Zionism:

The Polish language! Made of Mickiewicz's storms and strong
Norwid's anger,
You rose into a church of freedom. And now on the right-hand side of
a Jew,
You are a sword of rebellion, a legion that fights for other people's
causes.
Speaking you, the language, I voice my nation rising.⁵⁹

Under the influence of visions from Polish Romantic poets, such as Adam Mickiewicz and Ciprian Norwid, Appenzlak constructed Zionism in Polish for his generation in light of the Polish nationalist idea of refounding a state that had been wiped from the world map for generations.⁶⁰ Polish literary scholar Alina Molisak notes that the Polish language served Appenzlak as a tool to express the

idea of national revival and to style a modern Jewish nationalist identity: "Thanks to the visions of the Romantic poets. . . . Jewish aspirations for independence and longing for a homeland can also be expressed."⁶¹ Appenzlak notes that Polish culture and its language were a weapon with which one might realize a supposedly *alien* business, but how alien was it? As we have seen, the Polish language became the language of those Jews who dreamed of Zion on the banks of the Vistula, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the interpretative context based upon the Polish language contained Jewish motifs. Thus the Polish language became an agent for the formation of a Zionist vision and even served as a tool for its realization. For Appenzlak specifically, the Polish case modeled how Jews could construct a "usable past" for a Jewish nation, "and Poland for a role model of how to uncover the ancient wells."⁶² For Reiss, Kruk, Gruenbaum, and many others as well, exposure to the Polish language and reading of Polish nationalist literature served as an interpretative context for the positive revaluation of older Jewish traditions at a time when modernizing Jews like these were generally rejecting that traditional culture and its customs.

Appenzlak used broad collective categories to describe his personal experiences and by these means also shaped them for his generation. This Jewish nationalist approach creates an indissoluble bond between Jewish nationalism and Polish language and culture. As someone born at the end of the nineteenth century and who came to play a central role in propounding Zionist motifs among Jews via the Polish language in the 1920s, he was among those who entwined Jewish nationalism with the values, approach, and ideas of Romantic and neo-Romantic Polish nationalism.

Critiquing Appenzlak's poem, the Warsaw Polish Jewish weekly *Izraelita* asked tartly: "Can the language of [one] nation perform a miracle of national revival for another nation?"⁶³ In my view, in this instance the language not only "performed miracles" for the nation but also defined the character of the discourse, its content and its limitations. By means of the Polish language, its symbols and signifiers, and by means of Polish literature, a Zionist nationalist culture was formed, consciously and most particularly unconsciously, by absorbing to a great extent the ideas of Polish nationalism. The visions of Polish Romantic and neo-Romantic poets lent an interpretative context to Polish notions of the struggle for independence and longing for a homeland, and facilitated parallel Jewish nationalist motifs of a Jewish nationalist vision. The Polish language and its world of associations enabled the stylization of the Jewish nationalist idea.

How may this be understood? Is there no conflict between the two processes? The matter becomes clearer if we grasp "language" acquisition not as a technical process but rather as a process of attachment through which modes of thought dictating the interpretation of reality enter the consciousness of the participants.

One of those modes in that era was what we might call the “grand discourse” of nationalism. Polish nationalism became (in a certain region) the grand discourse, a higher discourse that served as an organizing principle for the totality of discourses, the one that lent them all coherence and served as an organizing principle for interpreting reality. Polish nationalism formed an interpretative context that provided conceptual tools for making sense of a complex and hostile social reality, and lent meaning to events.⁶⁴

Appenszlak, Kruk, Reiss, and others adopted the Polish nationalist approach, distancing themselves from ideas viewed as irrelevant, and approving ideas that suited them from the cultural menu before them. Thus they updated the Polish national discourse and formed an original context: a new nationalist movement paralleling in many characteristics the Polish one. Thus, even before the Second Polish Republic was founded, a Zionist nationalist culture was formed by means of the Polish language, culture, symbols, and signifiers. This helps explain why it also accepted many of the ideas of Polish nationalism.

Polish Nationalist Models as Zionist Rituals

Even distinctly Zionist rituals were styled according to Polish models and added a layer to the transmission system of ideas and motifs between Jewish culture and the Polish one. For instance, the rapid and wide dissemination of the symbolism of Maccabee heroism or of Bar Kokhba's warriors among Zionists in Poland or Galicia at the turn of the century stemmed, in my view, from the tremendous centrality of the Maccabee motif in Polish literature of that period. Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel *Mirtala* (1886), or the poem “Them and Us” (Oni i my), in which Jan Kasproicz praises the “Eliezers and the Maccabees” for the Polish struggle over independence, were quite familiar to the Polish Jewish intelligentsia, which then became the Polish Zionist intelligentsia.⁶⁵

The first Zionists posed Jewish heroic myths against Polish heroic myths. Against the myth of Polish rebellions, the myth of the Maccabee uprising and Bar Kokhba rebellion were newly styled. This “translation” was undertaken through the agency of Polish literature, art, and mythologies. Thus, for instance, the Zionist organ in Lwów, *Przyszłość* (The future) explained to its readers the significance of the battle of Betar: “Betar is the worst catastrophe in the annals of our people, it is our Chaeronea, our Maciejowice.”⁶⁶ By this they meant that the defeat at Betar is equivalent to the greatest battle of antiquity, in which Philip II of Macedonia defeated Athens—but also the battle of Maciejowice, in which Russia defeated Tadeusz Kosciuszko in the Polish rebellion of 1794.

Among Jews who had undergone processes of Polonization, Polish nationalist rituals were a role model for styling Jewish nationalist rituals. It is true that

the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans, and Bar Kokhba occupied a central place in the Zionist pantheon in Poland and beyond, as evidenced by their widespread use as names for Zionist associations.⁶⁷ Yet the reasons for choosing them differed across different national settings. According to Dmitry Shumsky, Prague Zionists chose the name Bar Kokhba for their association not because of particular admiration for that figure's deeds but as a tribute to the drama *Bar Kokhba* by the Czech playwright Juroslav Vrchlický, who called for society to be open to external influences. The society never extolled Bar Kokhba's fight against Rome.⁶⁸ The men who established the Order of Ancient Maccabees in London in the 1890s chose that name instead of previous names like the Wanderer or Wandering Jews (an ironic reference to the "Wandering Jew" in traditional anti-Semitism and a reference to their actual meetings, which were held at a different location each time). The new name was also intended to extol the "classical" period, a role model for imitation in an empire on which "the sun never set."⁶⁹ The order was a kind of exclusive gentleman's club, similar to equivalent clubs in the late Victorian era. Meetings were conducted according to British rules of etiquette, and included a toast to the queen and a lecture by a distinguished guest.⁷⁰ The Zionist student society Hasmonean in Berlin emulated the practices of German fraternities, including gathering in a *Kneipe* and drinking beer according to the rituals of German nationalist student meetings. The Berlin Hasmonean members duelled with swords too (not to emulate their Teutonic forefathers but rather the heroism of the Maccabees).⁷¹

In the Judeo-Polish context, members of the Galician Jewish intelligentsia who were both Polonized and proto-Zionists tended to make much of Chanukah as embodying a Jewish tradition of armed rebellion.⁷² Toward the mid-1880s they formulated annual celebrations to commemorate the heroism of the Maccabees.⁷³ These patriotic celebrations were an alternative to Jewish exclusion from the heroic Polish struggle: Judah Maccabee took the place of Kosciuszko. These celebrations had a secular-nationalist feel and combined nationalist speeches with music and declamations.⁷⁴ They were styled in the manner of Polish patriotic ceremonies in which participants sang patriotic songs and recited nationalist poetry. For instance, new Chanukah songs were composed, such as "There Where the Cedars Are" (*Dort Wo di Zeder*) by Isaac Feld, a law student at Lwów university, which recalls the blood-drenched heroism of the Maccabees in a style similar to that of Polish neo-Romantic poetry.⁷⁵ This is how Tenenbaum explained it: "We translated their national festivals, their heroes, into our nationalist figures, and all that was fine and noble in Polish history took a Jewish form in our longings for redemption."⁷⁶

Thus the festival of Chanukah, a minor festival in the traditional Jewish calendar, gained new meaning and gravitas in the Galician Zionist movement. Maccabee

Evenings became an essential part of the *fin de siècle* Zionist calendar.⁷⁷ Bar Kokhba balls extolled a hero of rebellion against an alien conqueror on his home soil and celebrated him as a role model despite the rebellion's failure, in accordance with Polish models.⁷⁸ The standard-bearers of the Jewish national flag were invested with significance by means of catchphrases and analogies familiar to this public from the Polish nationalist movement.⁷⁹

These celebrations spread, over the course of the 1890s, from Polonized Zionist circles in Lwów and other cities in eastern Galicia to other parts of Galicia, to Congress Poland, Russia, and Germany, even as they were adjusted to unique local conditions.⁸⁰ Thus, for instance, the song "There Where the Cedars Are," which was so rooted in the neo-Romantic traditions of Young Poland, went far beyond Galicia to be adopted in Zionist circles such as the Hasmonian in Berlin.⁸¹ In the same way, additional Polish nationalist practices were converted if they were found to be relevant and useful. They were domesticated, woven into new nationalist rituals, and inaugurated a new wave of songs, ceremonies, and national traditions. I do not seek to claim that traditional Jewish culture had a minor place in the new Zionist culture and the processes of its secularization. My claim is that the Polish nationalist culture became the basis for reinterpreting Jewish traditions familiar to all.

Polish Positivism: A Jewish Way to Build a Nation

The Polish trend that made the deepest impression on the Polish Zionist movement was Warsaw Positivism, and Jewish nationalism in general and the Zionist movement in particular owe it beyond any shadow of a doubt a considerable debt. The failed Polish rebellion of 1863 led to the founding of a new ideological-social movement in Poland. Its adherents reached the conclusion that Romantic rebellions would not lead to political independence and what was required was "everyday" activity that would modernize society and turn Poland into a Western state. That is, the stateless Polish nationalist movement had to promote the building of a modern Polish society, because only on that foundation would political sovereignty be renewed. Warsaw Positivism offered an antirevolutionary approach, advocating the building of a new society on a progressive economic basis, widespread education, and the establishment of social classes previously lacking in the Polish nation. All this would gradually serve as the foundation on which the Polish state would rise again—a process dubbed by Warsaw Positivists as "Working from the Foundation" (*Praca u podstaw*).

It is not hard to trace the influence of Warsaw Positivism on Jewish nationalist circles in Poland, from David Frishman to I. L. Peretz. Haskalah activists with a nationalist orientation in Warsaw explicitly used Positivist expressions in

the 1880s. That said, as Shoshana Stiftel has shown, Nahum Sokolow was without a doubt the essential publicist through whom these ideas reached the Jewish street, via his publications in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish.⁸² Stiftel and Bauer underscore that Sokolow's nationalist approach drew directly on the nationalist approach of Warsaw Positivists.⁸³ These ideas were discussed in the parlor of his home, where Jewish Warsaw's trilingual intelligentsia met on a regular basis.⁸⁴ The relative success of Warsaw Positivism in forming a Polish nationalist identity without political independence convinced Sokolow that its method offered a suitable solution to Jewish misery too. He deliberately transposed a series of motifs from Polish Positivism into Jewish nationalism, while adjusting them to Jewish reality. Thus, as Bauer observes, Sokolow adopted the most fundamental concept of Warsaw Positivism, *Praca u podstaw*, which he translated as *avodat ha-yesodot*.⁸⁵ His aim was to unify the Judeo-Polish intelligentsia and Hebrew Haskalah activists to work for Jewish modernization without the sacrifice of Jewish national identity by appropriating traditional Jewish culture toward Positivist social ends.⁸⁶ As Bauer argues, he thereby also challenged basic assumptions of Polish Positivism, which demanded Jewish assimilation.⁸⁷

Like many of those in the moderate wing of Warsaw Positivism, Sokolow saw Jewish enlightenment and education as vital to forming nationalism in the absence of political sovereignty. In accordance with his Positivist approach, he supported the promotion among Jews of modern culture, science, and languages. Against the approach of Hovevei Zion associations in southern Russia, he argued that Jewish nationalism could not be content with small-scale colonization in Palestine and indeed that colonization was doomed to fail without "work from the foundations." Like Polish Positivists of his time and place, Sokolow proposed that the Jewish national solution had to begin with a sustained, large-scale effort to reshape the Jewish public in Central and Eastern Europe, only then proceeding in a calculated and gradual fashion to build a multiclass society in the Land of Israel, which would allow the emergence of a state. In a sense, in the course of the 1880s and 1890s, he proved that it was possible to found Jewish national existence in the Diaspora upon values and principles not solely connected to Jewish national territory in the Land of Israel.⁸⁸

Some Galician Zionists too adopted Polish Positivist concepts and paradigms. In 1906 Adolph Stand, as one of the central members of Galician Zionism and their representative in the Austrian parliament, wrote to praise Alfred Nossig's rebellion against Galician Jewish liberalism's "mechanical construction of foundations that have no affinity to each other." Nossig, a former central figure among supporters of integration who became one of the most eloquent spokesmen

for Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Galicia, was instead to be emulated for his commitment to “an organic construction from the foundations,” that is, to building a Jewish nation in the Positivist mode.⁸⁹

In one respect, the paths of Polish Positivism and Polish Zionism parted company. The Zionist approach to the Positivist idea of “working from the foundations,” or “organic” work, held that Jewish attempts to preserve the Jewish national spirit need not conflict with their duty as loyal citizens. This contrasted with Warsaw Positivism’s vision of full Polish identification for Jews, both as part of the struggle to build a unified Polish state and as a means to oppose Russification pressures by tsarist authorities. Sokolow, and other members of the Jewish intelligentsia, believed that Jews had to be exposed to modern sciences and even to adopt the language of their surroundings in day-to-day life. And yet, he claimed, this had to be done without giving up on the creation of a unique Jewish culture in Hebrew, which would be added to the Polish culture. Sokolow, Gruenbaum, and others in this circle presented a model according to which the Jewish nation would reside in the countries along the Vistula River beside the Polish nation without relinquishing its uniqueness.⁹⁰ Boleslaw Prus, Alexander Świętochowski, Eliza Orzeszkowa, and other central figures of Warsaw Positivism were unwilling to accept this.⁹¹ They did not understand that demanding that the Jews assimilate unconditionally into Polish culture for the sake of the Polish state, in order to oppose the Russification drive, was essentially identical to the Russification policy the tsarist regime directed at the Poles. In his memoirs, Joseph Kruk wrote: “It was exactly because I opposed the Russification policy both politically and on principle and wanted the Polonization system for Polish schools, that I expressed no less firmly my objection to the Polish identification forced upon the Jewish population. It was a question of political principle and of moral principle. If the Poles object to Russification (and this was their natural and admirable right), they should not force the Polish national culture on the Jews.”⁹² Leading figures in the Polish national movement of the fin de siècle rejected such statements. They demanded complete Polonization of the Jews. As David Frishman wrote in 1886, “This victim of persecution still wants to be the persecutor. . . . It is funny to be persecuted by the persecuted and robbed by those being robbed.”⁹³

Members of the Zionist intelligentsia were greatly disappointed by the Warsaw Positivist response.⁹⁴ Jewish nationalists who had been influenced by Positivism recruited Polish literature itself to their struggle. Thus, where *Pan Tadeusz*’s Yankel embodied for Mickiewicz the interweaving of the “Jewish” motif of the nation without a state into the Polish ethos of nation building, Yankel served Gruenbaum and others as a model figure who enabled a combination of

proud Jewish nationalism with full Polish citizenship, both involved and uncompromised.

Conclusion: A Spiral Process of Transfer and Its Denial

This chapter has illuminated the reciprocal influence between the Polish national movement in its early days and Zionism by exploring many instances of transfer between the two cultural systems, Polish and Jewish, at the outset of the process of nation building. Motifs, metaphors, discourse, and modes of action passed from one to the other and created mutual connections between them. I have focused in particular on a motif essential to both the Polish national ethos and to Zionist approaches: the nation without a state. Several conclusions deserve attention.

First, I have demonstrated that central elements of Zionism apparently drawn from Polish nationalism had actually passed to the Polish nationalist movement from Jewish sources, and were later newly incorporated into the Jewish national movement only after Jews had undergone a process of Polonization. This conclusion contradicts the prevailing Polish Jewish historiography, which stresses the foreignness of Polish Zionism as an alien implant, of Litvak origin, brought to Poland by Russian elements as part of a Russian policy of divide and rule.

Second, processes of transfer were spiral and interpretative. Mickiewicz, who saw Jews as “a model of a nation deprived of its state that maintains its nationalism in exile,” interpreted the Jewish religious tradition with national tools and encouraged his people to take them as a model for their struggle to renew Polish independence. Other Polish national thinkers, poets, and authors adopted these motifs and wove them into their work. Young Jews read these works at the turn of the century and took these motifs, interpreted in the Polish national spirit, and interpreted them anew in a Jewish national spirit. They found therein a trove of analogies and motifs that encouraged them to identify with Jewish nationalism after their attempts to fit into the Polish cultural elite met with rejection.

Third, this reciprocal process indicates that the two national movements were intertwined so deeply that it was possible for central motifs of one to develop through connection, translation, and adoption of those of the other. Each system drew on the other for ideas. The transfer of motifs was assisted by translation, interpretation, and reinterpretation of motifs or modes of action.

Fourth, the scope of the trend of these motifs in this process is not important. What is more important is the depth of the process. Each of the national movements adopted motifs from its counterpart and styled them anew so that they seemed an integral part of themselves, natural and essential to their path. The ideas that the Polish national movement drew from the Jewish system, and

later provided back to the Jewish national movement, penetrated so deeply into the national consciousness of each of the two that they were perceived as an essential component of each movement that made it—and it alone—unique and separate from the surrounding nation. In this context, Polish Zionism is both the source and the secondary by-product of Polish nationalism.

This in turn yields several historiographical correctives. When historians attribute the “Jewish” characteristics of the Polish national movement to some general spirit of Polish Romantic nationalism, as the historian Jacob Talmon did,⁹⁵ they ignore the search conducted by the main builders of Polish nationalism for Jewish motifs in order to adapt Polish nationalism to the circumstances of the Great Emigration. My argument also challenges that Jewish historiography that has recognized the similarities between Polish Zionism and Polish nationalism but ascribed it for the most part to shared structural circumstances without examining how Jewish nationalism borrowed motifs from the Polish nationalist movement around it.

Why did the leaders of Polish Zionism deny the fact that Jewish nationalism served as a model for its Polish counterpart? Why did the Jewish national movement “forget,” even at the start of the twentieth century, its “Polish roots,” which were struck for the most part in the close of the nineteenth century? And if we are to be more precise, how did it come about that individuals like Gruenbaum and his friends recognized the important part Polish culture played in forming their consciousness in their voluminous private biographical writings, and yet in their theoretical writings denied the very existence of such a connection?

It seems that the national ideology, seeking to stress the continuity and persistence of Jewish nationalism, sought to minimize foreign influences. This was particularly important with regard to issues that were perceived as essential to its political claims, due to the anxiety that the revelation of having adopted foreign motifs would undermine claims presented as primordial. Perhaps the renewed political sovereignty of a people who had enjoyed sovereignty in the past, but lost it due to foreign conquest, seemed suited to the Jews alone, because they had trouble finding equivalents for it in other national movements. The idea that a nation could create a state by relying both on messianic ideas and a slow process of Sisyphean labor came to seem specifically characteristic of Zionism, the product of unique historical circumstances little comparable to any other movement, to such a degree that nobody saw any reason to look for its source.

The dismissal of the “Polish Way,” and with it the close dialectical tie between Polish culture and the Jewish nationalist consciousness, served *all* the ideological camps in Poland. Attributing the connection to Litvaks served the Zionist view that Jewish history leads to Jewish nationalism as a result of internal and original

Jewish development, which is unconnected to external cultural “interference.” The claim that Zionism was alien to Polish culture served the Jews in the integrationist camp in Poland, because they longed to differentiate themselves from the nationalist Jews in Poland and present themselves as belonging within Polish nationalism. And Polish nationalist tendencies found in the claim that Jewish nationalism is alien to Poland a weapon with which to dismiss its demands.

Finally, perhaps we should seek the source of this forgetting in a general tendency of European nationalisms each to see itself as solitary, unique, singular, and special. I suspect this foundation will suffice to explain the inability of Zionism to remember the origins of one of its central visions, that of building an exiled nation deprived of a state.

Notes

This chapter is an adaptation of my article “Umah netulat medinah: Ha'avarah hadadit shel ra'ayonot bein ha-leumiut ha-Polanit la-Tsiyonut,” *Zion* 80 (2015): 473–502. It was written with the assistance of grant 811/12 from the Israel Science Foundation. I am grateful to Ella Bauer, David Engel, Noga Gilad, Kamil Kijek, Mina Rosen, and Yfaat Weiss, who made very valuable comments on previous drafts of this article. I'm also grateful to two anonymous peer reviewers of this article on the editorial board of *Zion* for their enlightening remarks.

1. Yitzhak Lufban, “Le-Meoraot ha-yamim,” *Ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir* 1, September 27, 1939, 2–4. I am grateful to Professor David Engel for drawing my attention to this article.

2. For German influence, see, for instance, Johnathan Derek Penslar, *Tikhnun ha-utopyah ha-Tsiyonit: 'Itsu'v ha-bityashvut ha-Yehudit be-Erets-Yisra'el, 1870–1918* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tsvi, 2001), 54–57, 67–68, 138, 156, 159, 163; Yfaat Weiss, “Central European Ethnonationalism and Zionist Bi-Nationalism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 93–117. The role of Russian culture in the stylisation of Zionism and Jewish settlement in Palestine has been the subject of many studies. Anita Shapira remarks in *Yehudim, Tsiyonim, u-mab she-benehem* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2007), 8: “It is impossible to describe the Palestine pioneers, or the people of the Second Aliyah or even the Third Aliyah outside of the Russian context, the Russian revolutionary movements and the Russian tradition” (210–12, 214); see also her *Brener: Sipur hayim* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2008). Recently Rafi Tsirkin-Sadan has explored Yosef Haim Brenner's Russian contexts in *Otiot 'Ivriyot be-sifriyat Pusbkin: Yetsirato shel Yosef Hayim Brenner ve-zikato la-sifrut vela-mahashavah ha-Rusit* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2013). Itamar Even-Zohar explored the role of Russian in the formation of modern Hebrew in “The Role of Russian and Yiddish in the Crystallization of Modern Hebrew” in *Ke-minhag Ashkenaz u-Folin*, ed. Israel Bartal, Chava Turniansky, and Ezra Mendelsohn (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1992), English section 108–12, 116–18. Jonathan Frankel analyzed the role of Russian socialist and populist ideas in Zionist socialism in his monumental *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

3. Dmitry Shumsky suggests that the idea of an Arab-Jewish state in Palestine proposed by the pioneers of Zionist binationalism, and the model of the binational state formulated by the members of Brit Shalom, is rooted in the model of provincial compromises between various nationalities in the Austrian Länder toward the end of the Habsburg era. Dmitry Shumsky, *Ben Prag li-Yerushalaim: Tsiyonut Prag ve-ra'ayon ha-medinah ha-du-le'umit be-Erets Yisra'el* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2010).

4. Yaacov Shavit, “Ben Pilsudski le-Mitskievitsh: Mediniyut u-meshihyut ba-Revizyonizm ha-Tsiyoni ba-heksher shel ha-tarbut ha-Politit ha-Polanit,” *Ha-Tsiyonut* 10 (1985): 7–31; idem, *Ha-Mitologyah shel ha-Yamin* (Tel Aviv: Beit Berl and the Moshe Sharett Institute, 1986), 15–62.

5. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Ha-Histadrut ha-Tsionit," in *Entsiklopedyah shel galuyot, Varshah*, ed. Yitzhak Gruenbaum (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at Entsiklopedyah shel Galuyot, 1952), 357; idem, "Pegishot rishonot," in *Sefer Sokolov*, ed. Simon Rawidowicz (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at ha-Histadrut ha-Tsionit u-Mosad Bialik, 1943), 342. On the Litvaks and their portrayal, see Mordechai Zalkin, "Lithuanian Jewry and the Concept of 'East European Jewry,'" *Polin* 27 (2013): 60–70; Avraham Podliszewski, *Memuarn* (Warsaw: Al-Hamishmar, 1931), 37–43.
6. See, for instance, Piotr Wróbel, "Przed Odzyskaniem Niepodległości," *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)*, ed. Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw: PWN 1993), 53.
7. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years 1915–1926* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 345.
8. On the affinity of Polish Zionism to the conceptual framework of Polish nationalism see Shavit, *Ha-Mitologyah shel ha-Yamin*. Mendelsohn addressed the impact of Polish nationalism on Jewish youth in Poland between the wars in *Zionism in Poland*, 345–346. Emanuel Melzer analyzed the same period in "Hashpa'at ha-hevrah ha-sovevet 'al ha-Tsionut be-Folin ben shete milhamot ha-'olam," *Masi'ah* 16 (1988): 74–85. On the affinity of several strands of Polish Romanticism to ideas drawn from Judaism, see Abraham Duker, "Some Cabbalistic and Frankist Elements in Adam Mickiewicz's 'Dziady,'" in *Studies in Polish Civilization*, ed. D. S. Wandycz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 213–35; idem, "Mickiewicz and the Jewish Problem," in *Adam Mickiewicz, Poet of Poland*, ed. Manfred Kridl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 108–25; Maria Janion, "Tematy żydowskie u Mickiewicza," in *Tajemnice Mickiewicza*, ed. M., Zielińska (Warsaw: IBL PAN, 1998), 79–110; Olaf Krykowski, "Kabalistyczny kontekst myśli genezyjskiej Słowackiego," *Problematyka żydowska w romantyzmie polskim*, ed. Andrzej Fabianowski and Maria Makaruk (Warsaw: Nakładem Wydziału Polonistyki UW, 2005), 43–59. Janion deals with both Mickiewicz's Jewish affinities and their denial in *Do Europy—tak ale razem z naszymi umartymi* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2000), esp. 53–55, 63–63, 77, 69, 121–23, 190–211.
9. See Shavit, "Ben Pilsudski," 7–31; idem, *Ha-Mitologyah*, 15–62; idem, "Politics and Messianism: The Zionist Revisionist Movement and Polish Political Culture," *Studies in Zionism* 6 (1985): 229–46; idem, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* (New York: Frank Cass, 1988), 16, 19, 24–26, 86, 222. See Daniel K. Heller, "The Rise of the Zionist Right: Polish Jews and the Betar Movement, 1922–1935" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2012). My thanks to Kamil Kijek, who drew my attention to this important study.
10. Kamil Kijek, "Polska akulturacja, żydowski nacjonalizm? Paradygmat akulturacji bez asymilacji a świadomość polityczna międzywojennej młodzieży żydowskiej na podstawie autobiografii YIVO," in *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich*, ed. Konrad Zieliński (Lublin 2010), 85–112; idem, "Świadomość i socjalizacja polityczna ostatniego pokolenia Żydów Polskich w II Rzeczypospolitej" (Praca doktorska, Warsaw 2013), 448–56.
11. Yfaat Weiss, "Ha-Golem ve-yotzro o eikh hafakh Khok ha-Shvut et Yisrael le-medinah multi-etnit," *Te'oryah u-vikoret* 19 (Autumn 2001): 45–69.
12. David Engel, "Citizenship in the Conceptual World of Polish Zionists," *Journal of Israeli History* 27 (2008): 191–99.
13. In light of the concepts defined by Even-Zohar, I use the concept of "transfer" rather than "influence" because of the latter's hierarchical implication, and also because the concept of "transfer" suggests that the transferred or misread ideas are a by-product of the needs of the receiving cultural system. See Itamar Even-Zohar, "Factors and Dependencies in Culture: A Revised Outline for Polysystem Culture Research," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 24, no. 1 (1997): 15–34.
14. See Shoshana Anish Stifel, "Min ha-pozitivizm ha-Polani le-le'umiyut Yehudit: 'Itsuv hashkafat 'olamo shel Nahum Sokolov ha-tsa'ir,'" *Gal'ed* 14 (1995): 76–86 (Hebrew pagination); idem, *Ha-Megasheh: Manbigito shel Nahum Sokolov ben masoret le-Tsionut* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2012); Ela Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews: The Development of Nahum Sokolov's Political Thought* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005).
15. Wiktor Weintraub, "Adam Mickiewicz, the Mystic-Politician," *Harvard Slavic Studies* 1 (1953): 139–45; Abraham Duker, "The Polish 'Great Emigration' and the Jews: Studies on Political

and Intellectual History" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1956), 443–44; Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 244; Franz von Baader, *Les Enseignements secrets de Martinès de Pasqualis, précédé d'une Notice sur le martinézisme et le martinisme* (Genève: Arbre d'Or, 2007; first published in Paris, 1900).

16. Duker, "Some Cabbalistic and Frankist Elements," 220–21.

17. Janion, "Tematy żydowskie u Mickiewicza," 98–102 and notes; Duker, "Polish 'Great Emigration'" 536–43, 657–59. Some hold that Mickiewicz himself had Frankist roots. Jadwiga Maurer developed this theme in her book on the Jewish motifs in the life and work of Mickiewicz, *Z matką obcej*. . . *Szkice o powiązaniach Mickiewicza ze światem Żydów* (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1990). This interpretation was opposed by Andrzej Syrokomla-Buřhak, in his polemical (and aggressive) book *Barbara znaczy obca: w odpowiedzi Jadwidze Maurer* (Zielona Góra: Andrzej Syrokomla-Buřhak, 1998). Documents published by Sergiusz Rybczonkek cast a considerable question mark over the great Polish author's Jewish ancestry: "Przodkowie Adama Mickiewicza po kądzieli," *Blok-Notes Muzeum Literatary im. Adama Mickiewicza* 12–13 (1999): 177–91. Many interpretations of the Jewish ancestry of Mickiewicz are based on Mickiewicz's self-description as the son of a "foreign mother" (*z matką obcej*). It should be noted that Mickiewicz's mother was named Barbara, which in Greek means "strange" or "foreign." See, on this interpretation, the recent and controversial work by Bohdan Urbanowski, *Adam Mickiewicz: Tajemnice, wiary, miłości i śmierci* (Warsaw: Zyski i S-ka, 2016), 32.

18. Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

19. On the attitude of members of the "Great Emigration" toward Jews, see Duker, "Polish 'Great Emigration';" Artur Eisenbach, *Wielka Emigracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej 1832–1849* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976), esp. 216–21, 335–39.

20. Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, trans. George Rap (London: Dent and Sons, 1917), 294.

21. Adam Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie*, 6–11 (Lwów: Nakład Księgarni H. Altenberga, 1911), 347–48.

22. *Ibid.*, viii, 113–14, 122. See also Samuel Scheps, *Adam Mickiewicz: Ses affinités juives* (Paris: Nagel, 1964), 55.

23. Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie*, 17.

24. *Ibid.*, xi, 502. This affair was mentioned by A. Z. Aescoly, *Tenu'at Tovianski ben ha-Yehudim: Epizodab meshibit* (Jerusalem: Bene-Bezael, 1933), 46; N. M. Gelber also discussed it in an article that appears to be unpublished: "Adam Mickiewicz and His Attitude to the Jewish Problem," Gelber Archive in the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem), G67–G68. The letter was also quoted by Scheps, *Mickiewicz*, 54.

25. French version of this letter: Atille Begey, *André Towiański et Israël, actes et documents (1842–1864)* (Paris 1912), 90–91; Aescoly, *Tenu'at Tovianski ben ha-Yehudim*, 48.

26. On Great Emigration debates over the Jewish question, see Artur Eisenbach, *Wielka Emigracja wobec kwestii żydowskiej 1832–1849* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976).

27. This verse became part of Jewish prayer. Over the generations, it became a utopian wish of correction, of redemption, and, in general, a wish to return to a perfect world in contrast to an imperfect time preceded by a well-ordered past, to which the believer seeks to return with the help of God. In the Zionist ethos, the return is to earthly political sovereignty. Yosef Salmon, "Hades yemenu ke-kedem' mitos Tsiyoni," in *Ha-Mitos ba-Yabadut, historyah, bagut, sifrut*, ed. Moshe Idel and Ithamar Gruenwald (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1984), 207–22.

28. Mickiewicz, *Dziela wszystkie*, xi, 502–3, Begey, *André Towiański et Israël*, 92; Aescoly, *Tenu'at Tovianski ben ha-Yehudim*, 46–50.

29. Dorota Kudelska, "Machabeusze—'Różany brzask' malarstwo polskiego? (Stattler i Słowacki)," in *Czas i wyobrażenia*, ed. Małgorzata Kitowska-Lysiak and Elżbieta Wolicka (Lublin: Tow. Nauk. Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1995), 139n5.

30. Anna Grzeskowiak-Krwawicz, *Regina libertas: Wolność w polskiej myśli politycznej XVIII wieku* (Gdansk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2006), 38, 41.

31. The call was published on December 21, 1830, according to Artur Eisenbach, "Ludność żydowska Królestwa a powstanie listopadowe," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 97 (1976): 5.

32. Maurer, *Z matki obcej*.
33. Teofil Syga and Stanisław Syenic, *Maria Szymanowska i jej czasy* (Warsaw: Państwowe Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), 452–59; Jadwiga Maurer, “Celina Syzmanowska as a Frankist,” *The Polish Review* 34 (1989): 335–47.
34. Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism*, 239–56.
35. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 467.
36. On the complex relations between Israel and Poland during the 1950s, see Bożena Szajnok, *Z historii i Moskwę w tle, Polska a Izrael 1944–1968* (Warsaw: IPN, 2007), 263–340.
37. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, *Pene ha-dor: Morim, haverim, yerivim* (Jerusalem: Ha-Sifriah ha-Tsiyonit, 1961), 2:215.
38. *Ibid.*, 2:219.
39. Shavit, *Ha-Mitologyah*, 18. On these concepts, see Itamar Even-Zohar, “Universals of Literary Contacts,” in *Papers in Historical Poetics*, ed. Itamar Even-Zohar (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University, 1978), 45–53.
40. Victor Chajes, *Gam Yebudi gam Polani*, ed. Penina Meizlish (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998), 55.
41. Anshel Reiss, *Be-Se’arot ha-tekufah* (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 1983), 21.
42. Archive of Ghetto Fighters House Museum (Kibuts Lohamei ha-Geta’ot), Anshel Reiss Collection, file 28235.
43. See for instance, David Horovitz, *Ha-Etmol Sheli* (Jerusalem: Shoken, 1970), 21.
44. Adolf Stand, “Herzl,” *Rocznik Żydowski* (Lwów 1905), 12.
45. Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, “Jewish Moderna in Galicia,” *Gal’ed* 14 (1995): 29.
46. Jehoshua Ozjasz Thon, *Ketavim* (Warsaw: Achiasaf, 1921), 115; italics in original. See also Shoshana Ronen, “Jehoshua Ozjasz Thon: Jewish Nationality, Polish Paradigm,” in *Polish and Hebrew Literature and National Identity*, ed. Alina Molisak and Shoshana Ronen (Warsaw: Elipsa, 2010), 72–86.
47. Joseph Kruk, *Tibat diglan shel shalosh mahpekkhot*, trans. from Yiddish by Mordechai Halamish and Moshe Hurwitz (Tel Aviv: Makhvarot le-Safrut, 1968), 80.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, 81.
50. On Berl Pomerantz, see Rivka Halperin, “Berl Pomerantz: The Last Hebrew Poet in Poland” (PhD diss., New York University, 1998). Thanks to David Engel, who drew my attention to this work. See B. Pomerantz, “Devarim ahadim me-et ha-metargem,” in Stanisław Wyspiański, *Ha-Hatunah* (Warsaw, 1938), 215. I thank Rachel Manekin for bringing this source to my attention. Pomerantz’s personal comments are printed immediately after the translation of the play and before the notes and explanations. Shmuel Yishayahu Pineles wrote that the notion of redemption in which the play is steeped is a Jewish idea “at its deepest level. . . . The pain of an enslaved people that extols its pain over its celebration is a national custom among Israel. . . . Wyspiański’s messianism draws a helpful spirit from Mickiewicz, who was lured to mysticism by Jewish sources.” “The Wedding,” *Gilyonot* 7, no. 2 (1937): 142–44. See also Halperin, “Berl Pomerantz,” 63.
51. See, for instance, Ze’ev Tsahor, *Hazan—Tenu’at hayim, ha-Shomer ha-Tsa’ir, ha-Kibuts ha-Artsi, Mapam* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tsevi, 1997), 19.
52. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, *Memoirs*, Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem), A127/355.
53. Kijek, “Świadomość i socjalizacja,” 417–42.
54. Gruenbaum, *Memoirs*.
55. Kijek, “Świadomość i socjalizacja,” 417–42.
56. On “Polish” aspects in Kirsztrot’s Zionism, see Gruenbaum, *Pene ha-dor*, 2:171–76. On Hartglas, see Apolinary Hartglas, *Na pograniczudwóch światów*, ed. Jolanta Żyndul (Warsaw: Rytm, 1996).
57. Josef Tenenbaum, *Galitsie, mayn alte beyim* (Buenos Aires: Dos Poylishe Yidntum, 1952), 133.
58. On Appenzlak, see Katrin Steffen, *Judische Polonitat: Ethnizität und Nation im Spiegel der Polnischsprachigen Jüdischen Presse 1918–1939* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). See, too, Alina Molisak, “The Jewish Nation—A Few Remarks on Literature,” *Shofar* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2011): 105–17.

59. Appenzslak, "Mowie polskiej," in Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, *Miedzywojenna poezja polsko-żydowska—Antologia* (Carcow: Universitas, 1996), 67:

Mowo polska! Z burz Mickiewicza, z twardego gniewu Norwida,
Urosłas w kościół wolności. A teraz w prawicy Żyda,
Tys mieczem buntu, legionem walczącym dla cudzych spraw.
Tobą, o mowo, dzis głoszę narodu mego powstanie.

The English translation is by Molisak, "Jewish Nation," 115.

60. Molisak, "Jewish Nation," 105–17.

61. Alina Molisak, "Zionism in Polish, or on a Few of Jakub Appenzslak's Texts," in Molisak and Ronen, *Polish and Hebrew Literature*, 147.

62. Appenzslak, "Mowie polskiej," 67. "I z Ciebie Polsko, przykład mi płynię, jak odkopywać prądroje."

63. "Z pismienictwa," *Izraelita*, *Organ polaków żydów* 48, nos. 14–15 (July 19, 1915), 8.

64. For more on the concepts "discourse" and "grand discourse," see Jan Renkema, *The Texture of Discourse: Towards an Outline of Connectivity Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009); Mats Alvesson and Dan Kärreman, "Varieties of Discourse: On the Study of Organizations Through Discourse Analysis," *Human Relations* 53 (2009): 1125–49.

65. Magdalena Opalska and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover, NH, 1992), 123–27; Ezra Mendelsohn, "Wilhelm Feldman ve-Alfred Nossig: hitbolelut ve-Tsionut bi-Lvov" *Gal-Ed* 2 (1975): 101n61.

66. "Z minionej swietnosci," *Przyszłość* 16 (May 20, 1894): 182.

67. The names Maccabee and Hasmonean were very popular among Zionist organizations. See Azriel Shohet, "Shemot, semalim be-havai Hibat Tsiyon," *Shivat Tsiyon* 2–3 (1952/1953): 58; Ehud Luz, "On the Maccabean Myth of Rebirth," *Ha-Umah* 18 (December 1979): 44–48; Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 88, 122–23.

68. Shumsky, *Ben Prag li-Yerushalaim*, 122, 124.

69. Irit Miller, "Solomon Joseph Solomon, Oman Angli-Yehudi, 1860–1927" (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 2004), 327–29, and note 56.

70. *Ibid.*, 323–36.

71. Richard Lichtheim, *She'ar yashuv, Zikhronot Tsiyoni mi-Germanyah* (Jerusalem: M. Newman, 1954), 84–86.

72. Prokop-Janiec, "Jewish Moderna," 32.

73. François Guesnet, "Chanukah and Its Function in the Invention of a Jewish-Heroic Tradition in Early Zionism," in *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*, ed. Michael Berkowitz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 230–32; This custom began as late as 1884. See Mendelsohn, "Wilhelm Feldman ve-Alfred Nossig," 105n81; Abraham Khomet, "Di tsionistishe bavegung in Tarnov," *Torne: kiem un hurbn fun a yidisher shtet* (Tel Aviv: Landsmanhaftn fun Torner Yidn, 1954), 355.

74. Minutes of the meetings of the Zion Society, Przemyśl December 4, 1898, October 29, 1899, Central Zionist Archives, F33/9. See Reiss, *Be-Se'arot ha-teku'afah*, 18–19.

75. Guesnet, "Chanukah and Its Function," 231; Adolf Stand, "Die Ersten," *Jüdischer Nationalkalendar Almanach auf das Jahr 5679* (1918–1919) (Wien), 104.

76. Tenenbaum, *Galitsie*, 133.

77. Reiss, *Be-Se'arot ha-teku'afah*, 18.

78. Guesnet, "Chanukah and Its Function," 232–34, 104.

79. See Nathan Michael Gelber, *Toldot ha-tenu'ab ha-Tsionit be-Galitsyah, 1875–1918* (Jerusalem: Re'uven Mas, 1958), 135.

80. Guesnet, "Chanukah and Its Function," 234–36.

81. Lichtheim, *She'ar yashuv*, 87.

82. Gruenbaum, "Pegishot rishonot," 339; Stifel, "Min ha-pozitivizm," 75–80 (Hebrew pagination); Ela Bauer, "From the Salons to the Street: The Development of a Jewish Public Sphere in Warsaw at the End of the 19th Century," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 7 (2008): 143–59.
83. Stifel, "Min ha-pozitivizm," 76–86 (Hebrew pagination); Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 56–59.
84. Gruenbaum, "Pegishot rishonot," 339.
85. *Ha-Tsefirah*, 2, September 14, 1887, discussed in Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 91.
86. Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 84–85.
87. *Ibid.*, 58, 66.
88. "Yehi Or," *he-Asif* 1 (1884): 82; Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 66–77; Ela Bauer, "Yeade ha-inteligentsyah ha-Yehudit Polanit," *Ziyon* 68 (2003): 345.
89. Adolf Stand, "Nossig," *Rocznik Żydowski* (Lwów 1906), 1–2; Hebrew translation: *Kitve Stand: Ma'amaram, ne'umim, igrot* (Tel Aviv: Dfus ha-Poel ha-Mizrahi, 1942), 64–69, and particularly 64–65.
90. Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 83–87.
91. See Alina Cała, *Asimilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim (1864–1897)* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989), 257–66, 267, 334–36; Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought Before 1918* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 199–205, 230–33, 235; Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 162–64; Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 82–85, 154–55; Tadeusz Stegner, "Liberale Królestwa Polskiego wobec kwestii żydowskiej na początku XX wieku," *Przegląd historyczny* 80 (1989): 69–88; Jerzy Jedlecki, "The End of the Dialogue, Warsaw 1907–1912," *Jews in Poland* 2 (1999): 111–23.
92. Kruk, *Tabat diglan*, 85.
93. David Frishman, *Partsufim*, vol. 1, *Kol kitve David Frishman* (Tel Aviv: M. Newman, 1964), 183.
94. Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews*, 120–22.
95. Jacob Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt: Europe 1815–1848* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), 96.

PART II

GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER 5

The Paradox of Soviet Influence: The Case of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa'ir from the USSR

Ziva Galili

Among fields and isolated olive trees, that is where Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR chose to settle—"Little USSRia" . . . a gift from the USSR to Eretz Yisrael.

—Yitzhak Yatziv, "SSSeria: A Tourist's View"

You came from Russia and we yearn for you to bring the best of it—the fervent will for action. . . . Eretz Yisrael needs activists like those of the October Revolution.

—Berl Katznelson address to the annual gathering of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR, April 15 to April 20,
1927

These two evocative statements, both from April 1927, are emblematic of how contemporaries viewed Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR, founded in Palestine in August 1924. Built by immigrants from Soviet Russia, it became known simply as "the Russian kibbutz." Three decades later, when I was growing up in that same kibbutz, it counted among its members immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, North America, and India. Yet its "Russianness" was still present in daily life and in commemorative communal displays. There were the Russian words so many adults used in their speech, the Russian songs we sang in Hebrew translation, the embroidered Russian peasant tunics worn on Friday

night, and the Soviet-era novels borrowed from the kibbutz library. Russian and Soviet elements intertwined and penetrated every sphere of life.

The Russian and Soviet roots of the Jewish labor movement in prestate Israel have been studied before, most notably by historians Anita Shapira and Jonathan Frankel, whose books and articles complicated the notion of direct borrowing and a unitary Russian imprint.¹ The “pioneers” of the first three waves of nationally inspired immigrations, they showed, drew on different generations of Russian revolutionary socialism. Whereas the prototypical immigrant of the First Aliyah in the 1880s was vaguely influenced by the *Narodnik* (Populist) worldview and the ideals of “going to the people,” the immigrants of the Second Aliyah (1904–1914) responded to the ideologically charged politics of 1905 by gravitating, alternatively, to the Socialist Revolutionaries or the Russian Marxists (the latter often accessed through the synthesis of Russian Marxism and Jewish nationalism developed by Ber Borochov and his Poalei Tzion party). The immigrants of the Third Aliyah who arrived a decade later (1919–1923) were deeply imprinted by the October Revolution and by Bolshevik radicalism.

My own work has expanded this archaeology of Russian influences to the 1920s and the immigration of some three thousand veterans of Zionist organizing in Soviet Russia. These were young people, the first generation of Russian Jews to have experienced the years of Soviet consolidation, when new institutions framed everyday life and Soviet ideas and images permeated culture, education, and public forums. My investigation into Zionist organizing in the Soviet Union of the 1920s documents the powerful pull of Soviet patterns of speech and action on the members of all organizations, but especially the socialists among them, even when they critiqued Soviet dictatorship and were pursued by its repressive organs. This chapter seeks a deeper understanding of the complex process of transplanting beliefs and practices shaped by one set of circumstances into a new social, political, and cultural landscape. It asks how young Jews translated the confusing realities of the early Soviet Union into a socialist Zionist imperative. What of the welter of ideas, slogans, and cultural habits did they absorb or appropriate? What of their Soviet “legacy” survived the move to Palestine, and to what effect?

These questions are examined through one youth movement—Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir in the USSR—and the kibbutz it created. In Soviet Russia, members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir wrote and disseminated statements detailing their purpose, beliefs, and methods, and, while many of those texts had been lost for decades, some are now accessible in Russian archives. In Palestine, the founders of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir from the USSR documented their every step in the new country in collective diaries, articles for a weekly newsletter, and minutes taken at major and minor meetings. From 1925 to 1932, they also maintained an extensive

correspondence with the movement in Soviet Russia, reporting on every aspect of their collective life, surveying conditions in the new country, and commenting on personal and ideological issues. Another layer of self-documentation was added half a century later, with an ambitious project of oral history that sought to reconstruct the ideological path and organizational history of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, as well as the choices made by individual members.² The multilayered record produced by this movement's veterans offers the historian revealing glimpses into their lived experience in Soviet Russia and a unique point of observation on their thoughts and feelings, reactions and choices, as they confronted a new reality in Palestine.

As I delve into these sources, I am keenly aware of the personal as well as historical meanings they hold for me. The kibbutz in question was my place of birth and family home, and the texts and testimonies explored here are suffused with familiarity and emotive echoes. Moreover, as becomes evident in the following pages, the available sources, both contemporary and retrospective, often speak in the voices of my own parents, Klara and Lasia Galili. Their centrality in the archival record is undeniable, due in part to the mix of activism and reflexivity they held in common, and also to Lasia's place as the author of the movement's founding documents in Russia and the kibbutz's leading ideological guide in its early years.

In Soviet Russia

Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir (the young guard) was one of a dozen Zionist organizations active in the Soviet Union in the mid-1920s, a time of relative relaxation of economic and social controls.³ It was born in May 1922, when a small group of delegates from Jewish scouting groups and Maccabi Jewish sports clubs met in Moscow and decided to form a countrywide scouting movement for Jewish youth and children. They adopted a name popular among local groups of young Zionists in Soviet Russia, apparently unaware of the similarly named youth movement based in Galicia and Poland. The organization grew rapidly, benefiting from relatively lax conditions for activities among children and young adolescents, and support from middle-class Jewish parents. By late 1925 it claimed a membership of 12,000 children, youth, and young adults, organized in more than 160 local "legions," 5 "regional commands" (in Moscow, Gomel, Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkov), and the "Main Command" in Moscow. So successful was this effort at organizing the very young that by 1924 all other Zionist youth movements active in Soviet Russia adopted the same organizational approach.

From the outset, Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in the USSR was an amalgam of groups and approaches, a reality that encouraged programmatic eclecticism. The earliest

pillars of the new movement were Zionism, scouting, and sports. As recounted repeatedly in the movement's oral history, many of the early members had imbibed Jewish nationalism at home; they remembered a photo of Herzl on the wall, collecting coins for the National Land Fund, and reading Hebrew and Zionist texts.⁴ The older among them were exposed in their teens to the vast proliferation of Zionist organizing and publishing during the year of freedom in 1917; others found their way to Zionist texts and libraries left from those heydays, often led by older siblings. In Ukraine and southern Russia, the massive anti-Jewish pogroms of 1919–1920 and the attempts at self-defense served to instill a mood of national defiance. Later on, Zionism grew in response to the ban on Hebrew education, and the perceived failure of the Soviet nationality policy, with its preference for territorial nationalities, to recognize Jewish national aspirations.⁵

Scouting and sports constituted another field of attraction and a channel feeding into Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir. For many, the entry point was a local Maccabi sports club, where young Jews were encouraged to pursue physical activity in a national key. Jewish parents in large Soviet cities often enrolled their children in Maccabi clubs or Jewish scouting as an alternative to the budding Communist youth organizations.⁶ In postrevolutionary Russia, Maccabi clubs supplemented sports with paramilitary exercises.⁷ They attached themselves to the Soviet organization Vseobuch (a Russian acronym for “universal military training”), formed during the Civil War by the veteran Bolshevik N. I. Podvoiskii.⁸ Through Vseobuch and the *terbrigady* (territorial brigades) that succeeded it, Jewish youths found Soviet-sanctioned opportunities to engage in sports and paramilitary training. As late as 1924, the Moscow Terbrigada offered a course for instructors specifically to members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and Maccabi.⁹

Another pathway into Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir led through membership in Russian scouting organizations. While scouting is generally absent from histories of youth culture in Soviet Russia, testimonies by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir veterans suggest that in some cities it constituted a lively, appealing alternative to Communist youth organizations, at least until the early 1920s. Scouting grew in Russia during World War I, when patriotism and pro-British sentiment made it attractive to educators and middle-class students.¹⁰ In the early years of Bolshevik power, scouting groups in Moscow and other cities were organized by charismatic educators intent on resisting the Bolshevik sway by instilling in the youth what they believed to be the true ethos and values of the Russian intelligentsia. Exceptional personalities like gymnasium teacher K. A. Anokhin in Kiev; Vladimir Alekseevich Popov, educator, editor of the popular journal *Around the World*, and founder of the first Moscow *druzhina* (Scout squad; 1915); Valerian Andreevich Bezsonov, head of the Moscow Society of Russian Scouts (MORS); and

MORS scoutmaster Nikolai Fatianov—all left a deep impression on their Jewish disciples.¹¹ Through them, future leaders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir were introduced to the idea of scouting as an educational system, and they continued to seek Bezsonov's advice on questions of pedagogy long after establishing their own Jewish units, separate from Russian scouting.

The foundational *Theses* adopted by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir at its point of formation in May 1922 revealed the movement's roots in Zionism and scouting, while its organizational scheme reflected members' experience with Soviet military practices. The *Theses* opened with well-rehearsed Zionist arguments regarding the deterioration of Jewish life in the Diaspora and the absolute need for a national territory.¹² Next, they stressed the importance of Jewish youth: Only the young, not yet stamped by spiritual discouragement, could develop the will, discipline, and vitality required for building a national Jewish society in Palestine. The closing part of the *Theses* introduced scouting as the ideal system for preparing Jewish youngsters for this historical mission. On this point, the legacy of contacts with Moscow scouting leaders was overlaid with organizational patterns derived from foundational texts of British and French scouting.¹³ As an international, nonreligious movement, scouting was said to be capable of adjusting to different national contexts. Its age-based organizational scheme offered a model for education from childhood into early adulthood. In reflecting on their movement, veterans often equated scouting with an autonomous youth movement, and with a powerful sensation of togetherness and intimacy. And, by all evidence, egalitarian togetherness countervailed the hierarchical rigidity inherent in the organizational scheme adopted by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir on the model of the Red Army's territorial organization.¹⁴

Socialism was a later addition to the complex of ideals, goals, and practices developed by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, at once a natural product of the Soviet environment and a deeply contested element of self-definition. Many of the testimonies recorded by the oral history document the forces pulling Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir members into Soviet society, from the promise of participating in the march toward a better future, of merging with the idealized proletariat, to the opportunities now open to Jews for higher education and professional development. Most of them were Russian-speaking gymnasium and university students who came of age in the early and mid-1920s in large cities, where they were exposed to the overwhelming presence of Soviet discourse and Soviet rhetoric in the public sphere. In school and beyond, they read Soviet literature and Marxist texts in economics, social theory, and the history of socialism, and they became steeped in the dominant language of revolutionary politics.¹⁵ They admired the Russian revolutionaries of the nineteenth century and did not always disentangle them from Bolshevik revolutionary mythology.¹⁶ Lyova Liberman (from Evpatoria) admitted a period

of deep doubt about his Zionism: "We thought . . . here is a socialist country, Jews have equal rights, so we began attending Komsomol meetings."¹⁷ Many activists believed that to inoculate young Jews against the attractiveness of the Komsomol they had to incorporate Marxist literature into their educational work.¹⁸ Fear of desertions was especially acute in large cities and among better-educated youth.¹⁹ Indeed, the siblings of several members had chosen communism over Zionism, creating in one case a near disaster, when a meeting of the Main Command at the home of Riva Chernia was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Riva's brother, Iosif Chernia, and his friend Lazar Shatzkin, both holding high positions in communist youth organizations.²⁰

In summer 1923, leaders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir began to talk about adding socialism to their self-definition alongside Zionism, scouting, and sports. A significant role in this process was reserved for David Ben-Gurion, then secretary general of the Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine (Histadrut), who came to Moscow in fall 1923 as the Histadrut's representative to the International Agricultural Exhibition. By holding up the example of "laboring Eretz Yisrael," Ben-Gurion was able to ease the fear that embracing socialism would undermine the commitment to Zionism. In November 1923, Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir adopted a short programmatic statement that defined its goal as "comprehensive preparation of a worker-collectivist for the construction of Jewish, labor, socialist Palestine."²¹ The statement signified the movement's acceptance of socialism as well as the path charted by Ben-Gurion for members who were reaching adulthood: leave Russia for Palestine to build their own collective. However, in choosing a title for their programmatic statement, they gave preference to the language of their Soviet environment over the ideological terms common among socialist Zionist parties, which Ben-Gurion had urged them to use. The title they chose—National-Class Platform—objectified their self-definition and comported well with Marxist analysis: "nation" and "class" in place of "Zionism" and "socialism."

Soon after adopting the National-Class Platform, the Main Command set to develop a fuller articulation of the movement's goals and methods. Its members engaged a group of younger followers in an intensive study circle, exploring side by side the essence of nationality and of class. Significantly, they did not turn to Ber Borochov, the outstanding Marxist interpreter of Jewish nationalism (in part, because they positioned themselves against the party that claimed his authority and operated within Soviet bounds under the name of the Jewish Communist Party [Poalei Tzion]). Instead, they studied texts by Lenin and Stalin as well as Austro-Marxist theorists of nationality (Karl Renner, Otto Bauer, Rudolf Springer).²² The resulting *Theses on the Essence, Tasks, and Forms of Hashomer Movement*—the most comprehensive programmatic statement of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in the USSR—was an eclectic amalgam of ideas, models, and language.²³

For its analysis of the Jewish condition it borrowed from Marxism and its Soviet practitioners, placing the Jewish question within a particular model of the “evolution of nations” that envisioned emerging national proletariats as the “nuclei of future self-sufficient, classless national collectives.” Following a fundamental tenet of Soviet thinking at the time, the *Theses* stipulated that to achieve full evolution, nations required not only language and culture but a common territory. The argument for Palestine rested heavily on the existence there of “a Jewish working class, an army of workers, not déclassé and demoralized, but class-based and vital.” To account for the special role of youth in the construction of a workers’ entity in Palestine, the new *Theses* again appealed to a universal class law rather than the particular Jewish context: “Youth is the most active element in every class.” The turns of speech are as telling here as the ideas formulated.

The movement’s supreme imperative was to supply reinforcements for a “socialist Palestine,” and it dictated a concrete task: to equip the movement’s graduates (*shomrim*) with the requisite qualities, abilities, and knowledge and dispatch them without delay to Palestine. Overlapping Soviet and scouting visions cohabitated in the description of the ideal *shomer*: “A person of strong and conscious ethical foundations,” a “conscious, active fighter for the interests of his national-class collective,” a member of “a tightly knit comradesly collective, consciously engaged . . . in putting into practice ethical forms of living.” A second set of theses, entitled *Questions of the Shomer Way of Life*, elaborated the educational goals of the movement: to create a “worker-collectivist,” and to foster in him exemplary qualities, including “an ability and a desire to labor; . . . steady, even energy, not an impetuous one; courage and honesty; physical and moral purity that is not sanctimonious, but one resulting from a normal life of a healthy organism.”²⁴

Cultivating an individual personality in the service of the collective had been a hallmark of the Russian intelligentsia, and the ideal *shomer* personality bears resemblance to iconic figures like Rakhmetov from Chernyshevsky’s novel *What Is to Be Done?* A more recent source of inspiration was the Soviet summons to individuals to reshape themselves into proletarian beings. These rhetorical traces are visible in the movement’s journal, where one article urged movement members to refashion their social selves through a “fundamental re-education of the personality,” transforming every aspect of their life and being—from disciplined use of time to healthy relations between the sexes, to living fully within the collective—so as to ready themselves for their ambitious tasks in Palestine and the launching of “what might be called the socialist culture of the future.”²⁵

Members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir appropriated elements of the discourse on the creation of a “New Soviet Man,” using it to personalize their socialist and

Zionist ideas, and fusing it with scouting practices.²⁶ Scouting, they argued, was ideal because its triple age structure preserved a critical tie between the adult shomrim and the reserves of younger children and adolescents, whose preparation demanded early initiation.²⁷ Indeed, Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir's leaders defined their organization as an educational movement (*vospitatel'noe dvizhenie, tnu'ah binukhit*) and in years to come would claim to have created the most effective instrument for educating Jewish children and youth to become pioneers of a particular mold: proletarian and collectivist, committed to national and socialist goals, ready and able to act in pursuit of these goals. To succeed, such cultivation had to take the form of "self-education," autonomous from political parties and other adult forces.

The theses adopted by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir called for class activism and enjoined members to "fight against capitalism and capitalist exploitation wherever confronted with it."²⁸ Soviet rhetoric conditioned these young people to accept implicitly the language of class struggle, yet the concept became tricky when applied to the Jewish social body. Veterans' testimonies show that some movement members visited the youth clubs of Poalei Tzion, where they were exposed to the prognosis of the party's deceased founder, Ber Borochov, of a future class war between Jewish capital and the Jewish proletariat.²⁹ A minority would carry these ideas into Palestine, but most of their comrades saw class struggle through a Soviet prism, as an ideological and symbolic construct, one that gave meaning to collective action directed primarily toward building new, collective structures. In this sense, they were constructivists, and found themselves in line with the constructivism of much of the labor movement in Palestine.

In Palestine

Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir was unique among Soviet Zionist organizations in establishing its own kibbutz in Palestine, officially known as Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR and unofficially as the "Russian kibbutz." Founded in the northern Hula Valley in August 1924, it kept moving in search of work and livelihood, first to Yavne'el in Lower Galilee, from there to Afula in the Jezre'el Valley, then to the outskirts of Haifa. Dwindling work opportunities forced it in 1926 to split into subgroups (detachments) that met only once each year for a kibbutz-wide gathering, held during the Passover holiday when work was slow. It was 1929 before a greatly diminished group reunited in the Jordan Valley, and 1936 when they finally settled on their own land, donated by five neighboring kibbutzim. The new name they took—Afikim (riverbeds)—marked their location between the rivers Jordan and Yarmuk, linking their identity to *place* of settlement rather than their *origins* in Soviet Russia.

The rich documentary record left from those early years is replete with examples of Russian- and Soviet-bred practices. These included the preponderance of Russian in their meetings and newspapers;³⁰ the singing of the “International” (rather than the national anthem “Hatikvah”) at the opening and closing of each gathering and celebration; the assembly held each January 21 to mark the anniversary of Lenin’s death; the staging of speaking and singing newsletters modeled on Soviet factory theaters; the revolutionary Passover seders in which—much like in Evseksiia-inspired seders in the Soviet Union—members symbolically searched for and destroyed the “remnants of capitalism.”

As members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir quickly discovered, the Soviet turns of speech they had used to define their goals and their very selves could be obstacles in their new country, deafening them to the political idiom accepted in the Jewish labor movement and inviting criticism and censure. Thus, on February 12, 1926, when the kibbutz celebrated the opening of a new dining hall to replace the one consumed by fire three months earlier, a moment of elation and pride was met by public condemnation. Most of the hundreds of workers and invited Histadrut leaders applauded the “singing newspaper” (named in the Soviet manner *Blue Shirt*), which satirized every institution of the labor movement, from the factionalism of the labor parties to the deficits accumulated by Solel Boneh, the Histadrut’s public construction company. Other guests were so offended by the humorous presentation of the national anthem that they turned to the press and did not desist until *Davar*’s chief editor, Berl Katznelson, took up his pen to defend the “Russians” and their humor.³¹

In a more damaging example, kibbutz members who attempted to apply their educational methods to marginalized working youngsters in Palestine expected children enrolling in the movement they created, Laboring Scouts (Tsofim ‘Ovdim), to swear allegiance to the “Jewish working class” instead of the “Jewish People.” School principals were outraged and punished students who took the oath. Moderate members of the Histadrut’s powerful Culture Committee, whose purview included special schools for workers’ children, wanted to end all support for the young movement. The issue even came up for discussion at the Third Histadrut Conference in summer 1927. Ben-Gurion and Katznelson took turns urging kibbutz leaders to relent. For this and other reasons, the movement never took off.³²

For individual members, measuring themselves against the ideals established by the movement often led to existential doubt. The annals of pioneering immigrants to Palestine overflow with expressions of despair at their inability to adjust to the harshness of life and to physical labor, which was taken as a sign of personal failure to live up to the ideals they had embraced. In the “Russian kibbutz,” self-criticism extended to members’ perceived failure to live fully the ideal

of collectivism, to achieve true equality between the sexes, and to be reborn as “proletarians.”³³ Goals nurtured in Soviet Russia—an all-encompassing class struggle, large projects of social reconstruction, and countrywide collective entities—added to the disappointment. Members doubted that their work on a drainage ditch in the Hawara swamps or the collective kitchen contributed to the ambitious goal of “constructing a socialist Palestine.”³⁴ During their years of dispersal, the most active members who came from Russia’s large cities congregated in the Haifa and Tel Aviv “detachments,” where they could still dream of an urban industrial collective. When unemployment and internal crisis forced the kibbutz to opt for the established model of an agricultural settlement and move the majority of its members to the remote Jordan Valley, many of these members refused to envision themselves as agriculturists (*hakla’im*) or accept life away from the political and public bustle of the cities. In the course of one year, the kibbutz lost more than half of its members.³⁵

Paradoxes

During its early years, Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir charted a singular and often contradictory political path that perplexed many contemporary observers. First there were the close ties, from as early as 1925, between this group of proud graduates of an autonomous youth movement and Ahdut ha-‘avodah, the majority party in the Histadrut. Then came their surprising decision in April 1927 to reject membership in Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi, a countrywide federation of kibbutzim founded by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir in Galicia, Poland, and elsewhere. Finally, a few months later, they took a conflicted decision to join a competing federation, Ha-Kibbutz ha-me’uhad (United Kibbutz), yet maintain autonomous status within that body. To these “paradoxes,” noted by contemporaries, I add the swift disposal by kibbutz members of the internationalism that had colored their understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine in favor of activism in matters of Jewish armed defense. Each of these paradoxes, I argue, had roots in the ambivalences and contradictions that were part of kibbutz members’ experience in Soviet Russia.

Joining the Party of Ahdut Ha-‘avodah

“How come you, who came from Russia, with your [youth movement] background, moved so quickly into the orbit of the majority party in the labor movement?” This question confronted members of the recently established Russian kibbutz at chance meetings with graduates of Zionist youth movements in Czechoslovakia, Galicia, and Poland, with whom they shared educational practices and an insistence on the autonomy of youth culture.³⁶ This was also the

question posed decades later in a series of conversations with Lasia Galili, the man most responsible for the ideological direction of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR.³⁷ He argued that both sides of the apparent paradox grew organically from the movement's formative years in Soviet Russia. The insistence on autonomy, he explained, was a natural response to what the youth movement members saw as the failures of the historic Jewish socialist parties: their factionalism, narrow platforms, and the scramble of parties and functionaries to remake themselves under Bolshevik rule. And while they exempted the younger Zionist Socialist Party, operating illegally in the Soviet Union, from accusations of self-interested opportunism, they nevertheless rebuffed its political guidance for fear of factionalism. Yet, even as they rejected what was objectionable in the Jewish parties and guarded the autonomy of their movement, the activists of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir were attracted to two components of their Soviet political environment: the discourse on class and class war, and the Soviet example of an all-encompassing party engaged at least rhetorically in leading the march toward socialism.³⁸ Rather than negate political parties qua parties, the leaders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir came up with a definition of the ideal socialist party that owed much to Soviet class rhetoric and Soviet political praxis. A political party stood for a class—"in our case, the working class"—and there could be only one working-class party.³⁹ An article in the movement's mouthpiece from spring 1924 made the same point: "There is only one socialism, and the process of building a socialist society cannot be differentiated by party membership."⁴⁰ In Russia, Galili explained, leaders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir felt no tension between their insistence on autonomy and the acceptance of a single class-based party, for the latter could only exist in Palestine, where a true Jewish working class would come into being.⁴¹

Once in Palestine, the leaders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir quickly identified Ahdut ha-'avodah as the class party of their earlier visions. To their Soviet-trained eyes, its dominant position in every Histadrut enterprise, from economy to culture, consumption to settlement, appeared neither abnormal nor undesirable. Its project of unifying the labor movement fit their idealized vision of the one united class party, and they easily identified with the constructivist preference it gave to building a national-socialist entity over outright class struggle.⁴² Commenting on their growing loyalty to the party, an article in the kibbutz newsletter (rare for being written by a woman) explained that "the very principles we adopted when we knew the reality in Palestine only in theory . . . when we thought more about Russia than about our Palestine kibbutz," dictated the question kibbutz members asked themselves at every juncture as they worked to translate ideological principles into political choices: "Which party serves better the workers' interests?" Again and again, the answer led to Ahdut ha-'avodah.⁴³

Not only Soviet-inflected ideological and political formulations made Ahdut ha-‘avodah attractive to members of the Russian kibbutz. Paradoxically, their self-definition as scouts and members of an educational youth movement allowed the young activists to slip easily into the role of listeners to the trio of senior leaders: Ben-Gurion, Katznelson, and Yitzhak Tabenkin. These veterans of the hallowed Second Aliyah were their seniors, surrogate fathers in age but grandfathers in the chronology of migration waves to Palestine, their authority less objectionable for being one generation removed.⁴⁴ In 1925, 1926, and 1927, a handful of kibbutz activists could be found listening to impromptu lectures by Ben-Gurion, sprawled on the carpet in his living room, or conversing with Katznelson or Tabenkin late into the night at some corner of the kibbutz, about personal struggles and communal dilemmas. They were gratified by the attention of these revered leaders and deeply impressed by the power of their personalities. Recollections of these occasions call to mind earlier encounters with the inspiring educators of Russian scouting, men like Anokhin or Bezsonov. But, in the context of the labor movement in Palestine, admiration and fealty to trusted elders turned into party loyalty.⁴⁵

Just a year into the kibbutz's founding, a core group of its most active members, men and women, formally joined Ahdut ha-‘avodah. Their action drew objections from a vocal minority, by some accounts, mostly men from poor working families in small Jewish towns.⁴⁶ Their sympathies laid with the Marxist party Poalei Tzion-Left and its critique of Ahdut ha-‘avodah for the preference it gave to national capital and constructivist labor organizations as the building blocks of a Jewish economy, and the concomitant neglect of the all-important class struggle between Jewish workers and Jewish capital. The issue of political orientation exposed ideological fissures long submerged under the belief in autonomy and the pride over the movement's unity, forcing members to define the essence of their collective. Two contrasting visions can be detected in the discussions that unfolded in 1926 and 1927, both traceable to formulations we had seen in the *Theses* of 1924. Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and its kibbutz were viewed, alternatively, as a disciplined body participating in the effort to build a "self-sufficient, classless national collective" (an effort many now identified with Ahdut ha-‘avodah) or as a "tightly knit comradely collective, consciously engaged . . . in putting into practice ethical forms of living."⁴⁷ As we see below, the balance between these two visions kept shifting during a year of heightened discussions, as kibbutz members confronted the conflicts in their midst.

Apparently seeking to avoid open conflict, the annual Passover gathering of the whole kibbutz in May 1926 equivocated on party affiliation and chose the vague term "common ideological principles" to define the boundaries of political choice. An article in the kibbutz newsletter gave vent to the bitterness caused by

the ambiguous formula among supporters of political discipline: "We, the kibbutz, can blame those comrades who, out of their half-heartedness, failed to take an indispensable action . . . [their] old 'intelligentsia' habits made them look for points of disagreement in the ideological baggage of the workers' party with whose tactics they essentially agreed. . . . It is time to reject old habits, to reject half-heartedness . . . to honestly examine oneself and follow the path charted by the whole kibbutz."⁴⁸ It is difficult to miss the echoes of Soviet speech in this exhortation to self-examination, ideological clarity, and collective authority, and in the attempt a few months later to purge the collective body of those who defied ideological unity.

In that latter episode, a group of leaders and activists in the kibbutz detachment in Haifa acted decisively to end the ambiguity. Meeting in advance of the elections to the Histadrut's Third Conference in fall 1926, an assembly of the Haifa detachment announced that the formula of "common ideological principles" restricted members to voting for Ahdut ha-'avodah or abstaining.⁴⁹ When two members admitted to have cast ballots for Poalei Tzion-Left, the kibbutz Secretariat announced their expulsion. Critics of the move called meetings in each detachment, where many complained against the presumption of the kibbutz leaders to dictate to members how to vote, arguing that communal solidarity and intimacy stood above political affiliation ("members join the kibbutz not for political demands, but for communal life"). Among defenders of the Secretariat, some insisted on discipline in political matters, whereas others appealed to a deeper meaning of ideological unity as the core of the collective, or, in the words of one speaker: "There are things that are holy for me, and a comrade who does not acknowledge them cannot be a comrade of mine. I could not be a member of any kibbutz that does not recognize the fundamentals of belief in socialist Zionism."⁵⁰ For this and many other members, ideology was not an abstract construct; it gave meaning to life in a small, poor outpost in Palestine, and formed a bridge between their present selves and their youthful decision to join Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and stick with it in spite of ideological and personal temptations.⁵¹

The final act in this drama took place at the annual kibbutz gathering in April 1927, where similar debates and ad hominem attacks ended surprisingly in a compromise on the issue of political discipline.⁵² It was a two-part compromise, designed to accommodate the contrasting visions entertained by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in the USSR and its kibbutz in Palestine. Ideologically, it defined the kibbutz as a branch in the body of constructivist Zionist socialism, sharing the goal of "building the country by expanding [the workers'] economy and strengthening its socialist foundations." In practice, the compromise distinguished between Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR as a pioneering youth movement whose activists must adhere strictly to ideological formulations, and

the broader kibbutz community created by the movement, where looser rules of ideological loyalty would be allowed. In the end, most Poalei Tzion supporters left the kibbutz within a year or two, but the compromise remained in force for decades, allowing the community to be home to generations of oppositional members, while the kibbutz as such and its leadership group became loyal supporters of the party of Ben-Gurion and Katznelson.

Choosing a Kibbutz Federation

The year 1927 saw the emergence of two organizations that sought to unite multiple communal groups under one umbrella. A handful of kibbutzim founded by graduates of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in Galicia and Poland met on April 1 and agreed to unite in Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi (countrywide kibbutz), while Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad (united kibbutz) came into being four months later, when a dozen settled collectives and urban communal groups united around Kibbutz Ein Harod. The creation of the two federations marked a victory for the impulse to aggregate over the cherished particularism of individual communes and settlements, each with its own country of origin, youth movement affiliation, understanding of communalism, and intellectual horizon. Hanging in the balance was the ability of individual communes to weather the economic crisis that began in 1926 by organizing themselves in larger units, pooling resources, and using their concentrated force to lobby with the Histadrut and the Zionist Executive for resources and for allocations of immigration quotas. Beyond such practical utility, the federations stood for distinct models of communalism, advocated contrasting approaches to recruitment in the Diaspora, and differed fundamentally over the question of political affiliation, all issues of supreme importance to members of the Russian kibbutz.

Initially, members resisted the pressure to choose a federation, believing that massive reinforcements from Soviet Russia would make their kibbutz into a sizable body and enable it to convince the emerging blocs to unite in one federation. A halt to immigration ended the dream of becoming a third force, and by spring 1927 the Russian kibbutz entered into intensive negotiations with the two federations in the making. Each attempted to draw it in by sending speakers and inviting kibbutz representatives to planning sessions.⁵³ The wooing reached its zenith during the kibbutz-wide gathering in April 1927. Every leader of note in the kibbutz and labor movements attended that meeting—Katznelson of Ahdut ha-'avodah, Me'ir Ya'ari and Ya'acov Hazan of Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi, Tabenkin of the future Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad, and others. Each appealed to the assembled members with a distinctive vision of the kibbutz and its purpose within the labor movement. In the end, the "Russians" divided their loyalties three ways,

choosing Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad over Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi, yet maintaining their movement's affiliation with the World Organization of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, and reserving their deepest loyalty for Katznelson and the party of Ahdut ha-'avodah.

The choice was a paradoxical one. Members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from USSR had been expected to find their kibbutz home with the graduates of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from Galicia and Poland. After all, they had joined the World Organization of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir at its founding in August 1924, and throughout the 1920s they served on its various bodies. The Polish and Russian wings shared an abiding commitment to engaging Jewish youths in a long process of shaping themselves into ethical personalities and active members in collectives dedicated to national and social renewal. Both wings built their educational approaches on a combination of scouting practices and innovative pedagogical methods. Thus, when a leader of the Russian kibbutz attempted to explain why they objected to a federation composed exclusively of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir communal groups, his starting point was their shared legacy: "The tasks of improving existing communal forms, of crystallizing a kibbutz way of life and creating relations that are more just and moral, fall naturally to the Shomer movement, a movement that stresses prolonged education in order to prepare the personality for mighty internal striving, and to plant in the individual at the dawn of conscious life the principles and particular characteristics [necessary for collective life]."⁵⁴

Notwithstanding all that united the two wings, differences of worldview and preferred modes of action appeared, starting with their earliest direct contacts. Leaders of the Russian wing felt that their success in building a large and thriving movement under Soviet dictatorship entitled them to a voice in the World Organization and a claim on its resources, even as they insisted on secrecy in everything concerning their organization in the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ Early in the encounter they believed that apprenticeship in Soviet Russia made them into more consistent socialists, and they spoke condescendingly of the Polish branch for its continued ties to the traditional Jewish middle class.⁵⁶ Proud of their own determined atheism, they criticized the larger movement's failure to discard religion with the same resolve. Likewise, they interpreted preference for homogeneous kibbutzim, consisting exclusively of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir graduates, as "elitism" born of a middle-class social milieu.⁵⁷

But it was not these differences, based on culture and habit as much as ideology, that held center stage at meetings where the relations between the two camps were discussed. Instead, leaders of the Russian kibbutz raised two issues that can be seen as born of the clash between their Soviet experience and the reality of the labor movement and the kibbutz in Palestine. The most fundamental and

incendiary disagreement concerned the triangular relations among the labor movement at large (represented by the Histadrut), the kibbutz movement, and political parties. As we have seen, members of the Russian kibbutz translated their Soviet-bred conception that there could be only one working-class political party into loyalty to Ahdut ha-'avodah, the majority party of the Histadrut. In contrast, the kibbutzim that issued from Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in Galicia and Poland insisted that their federation must reject affiliation with any and all political parties and sought to enforce this position on all members through the principle of "ideological collectivism." The Russians argued that, whether by intention or default, ideological exclusivism was certain to make Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi into a "political formation" within the Histadrut, thus splitting the labor movement.⁵⁸ "To be sure, we build our commune on the moral and educational principles developed already in the diaspora by the Shomer movement, but we know with absolute certainty that there is no contradiction between our interests and those of every worker, be he a commune member or a single worker in the city. . . . And for that reason, we are against forming a separate political framework for Shomrim only, against turning our kibbutz organization into a political party."⁵⁹ There is a palpable tension in these lines between pride in the educational mission of the Shomer movement and the divisions over labor politics that separated the Russian kibbutz from the rest of the movement and increasingly made its leaders into traitors in the eyes of the Polish wing.⁶⁰

A second objection to Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi was its preference for small, homogeneous agricultural communes. Here again, the contrasting elements in the legacy of the Russian kibbutz came into apparent conflict. On the one hand were powerful memories of the intimacy they had enjoyed in their youth movement, leavened with nostalgia and reinforced by the romance of the underground. In the kibbutzim of Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi a similar mood was reworked into the concept of the "organic kibbutz"—an intimate community of like-minded graduates of a single youth movement, sharing with each other collective life, culture, and political orientation. Longings for such intimacy were voiced at many meetings of the Russian kibbutz, but they clashed with another streak, one best captured by two Russian words: *razmakh* [sweep] and *masshtab* [scale], and better yet, *bol'shoi masshtab* [large scale]. The preference for large scale and a broad sweep was arguably the Russians' most deeply ingrained Soviet legacy, and played an important role in their decision to join Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad, which advocated a model of the kibbutz as a large and growing production unit, engaged in industry and construction as well as agriculture. Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad leader Tabenkin saw the kibbutzim as a vanguard of the Histadrut and Ahdut ha-'avodah, which he led together with Katznelson and Ben-Gurion, and as the nuclei of a future countrywide collectivist society. Members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir

from the USSR opted for this vision over the intimacy and homogeneity favored by Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi, yet demanded autonomy in deciding on the size and makeup of their community.

The decision to join Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad did not end the Russians' conflict-ridden position. In fact, it left them doubly estranged: both within the kibbutz federation they joined and in the youth movement of which they remained a part. Within three years they left the World Organization of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and established their own youth movement for recruiting pioneers in the Jewish diaspora, Scouting Pioneering Youth (No'ar Tsofi Halutsi, or Netsah), with bases in the Baltics and Central Europe. Affiliation with Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad lasted significantly longer, ending only in the early 1950s, when the federation was torn asunder by the "Great Schism," which fatefully weakened the kibbutz movement at large. By then, Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR (now called Afikim) had become a focal point for opposition to the federation's leadership. Kibbutz Afikim itself escaped an internal schism thanks to the compromise its members had struck back in 1927, which allowed individual members to voice oppositional views even as the collective held to a clear, often combative political course.

The "Arab Question"

Seen from the perspective of today's Israel, the paradoxical decisions discussed so far may appear of little consequence. Although central to the alliances, splits, and debates in the labor movement during its long ascent from the 1920s to the 1950s, their relevance declined precipitously in the following decades, most dramatically when three rival kibbutz federations came under one organizational umbrella.⁶¹ In contrast, another nexus of ideas and practices has not lost relevance to this very day—the one concerning relations between the Zionist immigrant settlers and the Arab population of Palestine.

Members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, living and working during their early years in Palestine in proximity to Arabs, responded to the Arab population in ways that were for the most part indistinguishable from the labor movement at large. On personal and cultural levels, they acted as external observers, registering a mix of exotic attraction and cultural condescension. If there was anything unique about these responses it was the way they echoed the romanticized ethnographic style of nineteenth-century Russian tales of the Caucasus. An article in the kibbutz newsletter from spring 1926 (in Russian) exemplifies the influence of these texts:

In Zikhron, I saw a wedding. A groom from Hadera, a bride from Zikhron. They arrived in carts with colorful banners, women wailing their

plaintive songs, the bride cannot stop looking in the mirror, around them Arab riders celebrating a *fantaziya*. Others dance and sing in stuffy mud huts. Statuesque Arab women (*arabki*) bearing tambourines stroll around. Then a wild ending. Going home, Hadera's Arabs quarreled with the Zikhron Arabs. Bloody blows. Jewish policemen and guards arrive, beat everyone mercilessly, then leave contented. And the Arabs? They are not angry, it is the custom, as it was in their fathers' time. Tradition. The poets were right, "To each their own way of making merry."⁶²

Kibbutz members also registered shock and pity at the poverty and harsh living conditions they observed of the Arabs near them, yet they fretted about competing for work with Arab laborers willing to accept exploitatively low pay.⁶³ At the ideological and programmatic level, they focused attention on two issues: the impact of Jewish immigration on Arab tillers of the land and the question of unionizing Arab workers. Although these were points of wider concern within the labor movement, the Russian kibbutz was set apart by its members' seemingly untroubled faith in the power of economic development and in class solidarity across national lines.

As early as December 1924 the kibbutz collective diary recorded a Friday evening discussion of "the Arab question in the countryside." On this and other occasions, members seemed caught between their two beliefs, not contradictory in principle, but difficult to reconcile in the context of Jewish land purchases. On the one hand, they interpreted the Marxist scheme of economic and social development to mean that, in time, the influx of Jewish capital and skilled labor would help intensify Arab farming and bring the Arab economy into a new era. Yet in considering what should be done in the meantime, they opted for class solidarity with the small farmers, who were the immediate victims of this process: "The fellaheen should not be driven away [from their land]."⁶⁴ A speaker at a more formal kibbutz meeting a couple of years later repeated the point: "We must not buy land from the Arab effendis and expel [the fellaheen]."⁶⁵ How, then, did kibbutz members react upon discovering that their first paid job in Afula, in March 1925, was to demolish the mud huts left by fellaheen removed from land sold to Jews by an absentee landlord? The collective diary and other records are silent on this question, suggesting that members suppressed any inner conflict that could have threatened their optimism.

A lengthy Russian-language article sent from the kibbutz to Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir leadership in Moscow did attempt to resolve these tensions. The unnamed author studied carefully the economic, legal, and political feasibility of "linking the sale of land to Jews to the intensification of Arab farming," and while acknowledging that "the Arabs see the development of the country from a political

rather than economic viewpoint," he nevertheless laid out a complex set of actions by which the British government of Palestine could ensure that Jewish settlement would improve the lot of Arab fellaheen, including a dedicated tax on Jewish land purchases to support regional development. "In this fashion, this district, presently a source of malaria and cultivated by primitive methods, could turn into a place of blooming settlements of both Jews and Arabs and into a significant revenue source for the government."⁶⁶ Such optimistic prognoses allowed kibbutz members to hold on to their expectations of peaceful relations between Arabs and Jews, even though some of them had witnessed firsthand the consequences of the competition for land.

A second aspect of this optimism was the insistence on the practical possibility of solidarity between Jewish and Arab labor. In fall 1925, an article in the kibbutz newsletter *Shma' po'el!* (*Hear, Oh Worker!*) called for a single, unified organization of Arab and Jewish workers, which alone could serve the goal of "building an alliance of Jewish-Arab workers in Eretz Yisrael!"⁶⁷ An article next to it condemned the Zionist Executive in Palestine for subsidizing a higher pay for Jewish employees of the British-run railways: not only was differential pay bound to increase resentment between Arabs and Jews working side by side, but improving conditions for Jewish workers would dim their class consciousness. "The worker's goal is revolution, and anything delaying it is against us. We will thank the Zionist Executive for its help, but hand its money over to the strike fund."⁶⁸ At the kibbutz annual meeting in May 1926, the authorized speaker on the "General Situation in the Histadrut" spoke extensively on the "Arab question." Jewish immigration, he argued, puts capital in the hands of large Arab owners, thus nudging Arab society onto the universal path of developing a capitalist economy and a working class, whose interests were similar to those of Jewish workers. Therefore, "The more advanced Jewish worker must help the Arab worker. . . . This is a special task of the Histadrut. . . . It stands at the head of the worker movement in the Near East. It fights for the working class in the East. It has already had an effect on the Arab working class in our country."⁶⁹ Here, grouped together, were several elements attributable in some measure to kibbutz members' experience in Soviet Russia: a Marxist analysis of economic and social development in Arab society; the image of the Jewish worker as "elder brother" to the worker of the East; optimism about international socialism; and a professed commitment to solidarity between workers across national lines.

The full meaning of the speaker's words was underscored by the critical response of Histadrut leader Eliyahu Golomb. He took aim at the effects of Soviet influence, noting that the spread of revolutionary rhetoric among Jews in Soviet Russia had led many to national self-denial. "Equality is an attractive idea," he continued, but not necessarily a practical one. He did not object to raising the

economic and cultural level of Arab workers (“not only out of workers’ solidarity, but for the sake of our national needs”), but stressed that the first imperative was the construction of a Jewish economy through the Histadrut’s economic arm, in which the Arab worker could have no part. Arab and Jewish workers, he concluded, should have separate organizations under the Histadrut umbrella.⁷⁰ The text of this meeting’s resolution on the Histadrut is missing, but since voting took place almost as soon as the speeches ended, it is likely that the text approved by an overwhelming majority was the one prepared in advance by the authorized kibbutz speaker.⁷¹ It must have been comforting for kibbutz members to view themselves as internationalists and seekers of solidarity, and there was little in their lived experience in Palestine to cloud such optimism.

To observers and guides like Golomb, another aspect of the Soviet experience of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir held special interest—their military training and presumed familiarity with Soviet military practices. The source of such expectations was Ben-Gurion, who returned from Moscow in 1923 with tales of the young men he met there, like Red Army veteran Syoma Liubarskii, naval cadet Volodya Itzkovich, and the young scouts training with Vsevobuch. Together with Lasia Iskoz he had scoured Moscow’s old bookstores in search of military literature. Two years later, in Palestine, he urged leaders of the embryonic Jewish defense effort, the Haganah, to seek out Lasia and Volodya.⁷² But not until the Arab-Jewish clashes of 1929 did members of the Russian kibbutz begin to act in accordance with Ben-Gurion’s expectations. Coming after years of little apparent tension between Arabs and Jews, the violence of late August and early September 1929 threw kibbutz members into an experience unlike anything in their earlier years in Palestine. Doubting the safety of their compound, they sent babies and cows to a neighboring kibbutz considered safer for its location on a hill away from the main road. All other members crowded every night into the first floor of a nearby stone house, while a few men who had served in the Red Army or were trained in the technical schools attached to regional Soviet commands stood guard in the kibbutz compound.⁷³

Perhaps because of shock and confusion, the kibbutz never undertook a deliberate consideration of how the events affected their earlier beliefs. But later recollections show that the violence of 1929 shook the hope of many members that economic development and class solidarity could bridge the national divide. One member described her first decade in the country as divided into two periods, one before and one after 1929: “The feeling of a world built on peace was broken and never returned. Our road grew from dreams, but then we began to see the obstacles.”⁷⁴ Members of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir were not alone in experiencing 1929 as a watershed.⁷⁵ But in their case, the dramatic events activated

impulses dating back to the Civil War and the attendant pogroms, reminding some of nights spent hiding from *pogromshchiki*, and others of their service with the Red Army and participation in Jewish self-defense. In their response to the Arab question they drew on two contrasting models accessible from their earlier experience—one built on internationalism and class solidarity, the other on activist, determined armed defense. Under the impact of the shocking events of 1929, they appear to have switched from one to the other in an instant. Their response to the crisis was not simply to modify earlier beliefs, but to discard them altogether, and to become among the most active contributors to the Haganah and the building of a Jewish military force. They sent members to a variety of legal and illegal training camps, and relieved leading members from communal duties so they could serve in the Haganah and go on weapon-purchasing missions to Europe and the United States. In time, these previous believers in Arab-Jewish solidarity became trusted implementers of the policies of Golomb, Ben-Gurion, and other Mapai leaders.⁷⁶

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, we examined the imprints of the early years of Soviet consolidation on a particular group of young immigrants to Palestine. The focus on one community and its project of self-documentation allowed us to move beyond the familiar dichotomy between Bolshevik slogans and Zionist visions, to explore the multiplicity of models still available in the early Soviet years, and the often confused and ambivalent reactions of this self-selected group of young Russian-educated Jews. As we have seen, Marxist ideas and the Soviet rhetoric of radical remaking of both society and the self left deep marks on the language and self-understanding of members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir. Soviet patterns of thought and action penetrated their young lives through school and the public sphere; alternatively, Soviet ideology and imagery were adopted as tools in competition with the Komsomol, and communism more broadly. The boundary between direct osmosis and instrumental borrowing was rarely fixed or clear. Similar blurring affected the other poles of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir identity: Zionism and scouting. Both were framed by Bolshevik power and the social and cultural transformations it wrought. Zionism's appeal grew because of the frustrations of Jewish national aspirations under the "nationality policies," leading members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir to reject the Soviet record on the "Jewish question." All the same, they still borrowed eagerly from the theoretical principles underlying these policies, using them to buttress a belief that national aspirations were compatible with international class solidarity. Scouting represented an alternative to

the Bolshevik appeal to youth, offering a refuge in intimate groups, yet its modes of cultivating a rational ethical personality served to reinforce both the Soviet and the Zionist imperatives of self-transformation.

Some of the varied components of the legacy of Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir from the USSR did not survive the radically different context in Palestine. The meaning of slogans such as "building a socialist Palestine" had to be renegotiated; a proletarian self-envisioning had to give way to an agricultural one; all-encompassing class unity metamorphosed as loyalty to one party. However, the Soviet legacy did have a long afterlife in the kibbutz and the youth movement it sponsored. As kibbutz leaders attempted to carve out a place for themselves in the complicated terrain of the labor movement, they found themselves repeatedly confronting the ambivalences and contradictions of their own make up: between youth autonomy and political adherence, between different models of class struggles in a national Jewish society, between communal cohesion and ideological discipline, and not least—between international class solidarity and national self-defense. It is the central argument of this chapter that these ambivalences and contradictions underlay a series of decisions taken by this community, decisions that were felt well beyond its confines. Seen from another perspective, it is also the case that by focusing on the paradoxical decisions made by Kibbutz Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and exploring their origins, this chapter highlights the unstable, conflicting environment that framed the lives of young Jews attracted to Zionism in the early Soviet Union.

Notes

1. Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Anita Shapira, *Ha-Halikhah 'al kav ha-ofek* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1989); idem, "Black Night—White Snow: Attitudes of the Palestinian Labor Movement to the Russian Revolution, 1917–1929," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 509–43.

2. Capping this effort was the publication of Avraham Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir be-SSSR: No'ar Tsofi Halutsi-Netsah* (Jerusalem: Ha-Agudah le-heker ha-tefutsot, 1981). The project was conducted under the auspices of the Oral History Institute at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem; transcriptions of all interviews are available at its archive. All interviews were conducted by A. Itai, in Hebrew.

3. On the conditions for Zionist organizing during this time, see Ziva Galili, "Merhav ha-pe'ulah ha-Tsiyoni be-Rusyah ha-Sovyetit bi-shenot ha-esrim," *Iyunim bi-tekumat Yisra'el* 14 (Winter 2004): 479–508.

4. Lasia Iskoz (later Galili) recounted a long list of texts he found in his father's library in Smolensk, including periodicals published by the Organization of Russian Zionists, as well as accounts of the early settlement in Palestine. In Belorussia, Zionism was the more prominent pathway into Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir. Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 135.

5. An article in the movement newspaper (in Russian) complained that Jews were "not considered a 'nationality' just because we have no territory; our rights are limited to those given to 'national minorities.'" The article excoriated the Commissariat for Education for its ban on Hebrew: "Nash soiuz i sovets-

kaia vlast'." *Hasomer Hatzair. Organ glavnogo shtaba soiuza*, #1 [April 1924], at the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, Moscow (henceforth, RGASPI), f.445, op.1, d.119, l.109–110.

6. Take the example of four young sisters—Fira, Fania, Raia, and Badia Burovaia—who were registered to the Moscow club of Maccabi by their father. The three older sisters became members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir.

7. Uri Miller, "Maccabi Russia in a General Historical Context," in *Sport and Physical Education in Jewish History*, ed. George Eisen, Haim Kaufman, Manfred Lammer (Netanya, Israel: Wingate Institute, 2003), 118–20. Joseph Trumpeldor suggested that Maccabi should be used to train military cadres for the Jewish settlement in Palestine.

8. This is documented in many meetings, reports, and resolutions by various Soviet bodies. See documents for the years 1922 and 1923 in the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine, Kiev, f.13, d.413, t.2; RGASPI, f.445, op.1, d.119, l.158. About Maccabi and its relations with Vsevo-buch and with Russian scouting, see also Yitzhak Rabinovich, *Mi-Moskva 'ad Yerushalayim. Ha-Ma'avak ha-Yehudi ha-le'umi bi-Verit ha-Mo'atzot* (Jerusalem: R. Mas, 1957).

9. Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 130.

10. A. M. Viaz'mitinov, "Skautskoe dvizhenie Rossii," in *Russkije skauty, 1909–1969* (San Francisco: Tsentral'nyi shtab natsional'noi organizatsii Russkikh skautov, 1969).

11. Members of the movement in Kremenchug spoke also of Scoutmaster Valerian Zefirov, who deserted scouting and subsequently rose to a high position in the Komsomol and then in the Soviet diplomatic corps. Interviews 7 (Kremenchug group) and 11 (Moscow group), Project 131 (Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in the USSR), Oral History Division, The Abraham Harman Institute for Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, Jerusalem (henceforth, OHD).

12. *Tezisy po voprosu o zadachakh i predposylkakh evreiskogo skautinga*, Yad Tabenkin Archive, Series 47, Box 1, Folder 3b.

13. Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* was widely read in Russia since 1908. Other publications were brought to Moscow by a former scout, whose father served as Lithuania's ambassador to Moscow. Interview 16/4, 11–16, and Interview 16/12, 16–18, Project 131, OHD.

14. The organizational structure was proposed by Syoma Liubarskii, a Red Army veteran and the head of the Main Command from 1923 to 1926.

15. Esterka Grosman (later, Gil'adi) remembered spending hours at the central library in Kiev, reading Hegel, Plekhanov, and Marx's *Capital*. Dialectic philosophy was discussed at length, as well as the question of how to combine a revolutionary approach and Jewish revival. Interview 22, Project 131, OHD, 21–22.

16. Many spoke of their admiration for Vera Figner, who spent twenty years in the Shlissel'burg Fortress for her role in planning the assassination of Alexander II. Shmuel Liabok (from Rostov), who testified that he opposed the October Revolution, nevertheless found himself identifying with the Bolshevik heroes of Soviet novels about the revolution and the Civil War. Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 233.

17. Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 189; Interview 26 (with a group from Crimea), Project 131, OHD.

18. Veterans from Mozir, Belorussia, stated that "without socialist ideology we would not be able to withstand" the pressure from the Komsomol. Among the texts they read were works by Karl Marx, Karl Katusky, Otto Bauer, and Nikolai Bukharin: Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 137.

19. Recounting their experience in Odessa, Mania and Yitzhak Levi remembered how the movement gradually lost its gymnasium-educated members to higher education or the Komsomol. Interview 13, Project 131, OHD, 22–23. See also Interviews 16/15, 50–52, and 16/16, 21, Project 131, OHD.

20. Shatzkin served as secretary of both the Komsomol and the International of Communist Youth (KIM); Chernia was said to have been a member of the Executive Committee of the Komsomol. Interview 11 (Moscow group), Project 131, OHD, 16; Interview 16/15, Project 131, OHD, 50.

21. Quoted here from the Hebrew translation in Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir*, 58, which uses the denomination "Eretz Yisrael." However, every document that has come down to us in its Russian original uses the term "Palestine."

22. Interview 16/12, 11–12, and 16/13, 14–16, Project 131, OHD; interview with Lasia Galili, conducted by the Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute, February 3, 1976, Comment 4, Kibbutz Afikim Archive, Kibbutz Afikim (henceforth, KAA), Box 432.

23. “‘Sushchnost,’ zadachi i formy shomerskogo dvizheniia.’ Tezisy, priniatyie Glavnym shtabom soiuzu Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir, Organ *glavnogo* shtaba soiuzu #1 [April 1924], RGASPI, f.445, op.1, d.119, ll.97–98. The theses were discussed at four regional conferences convened for this purpose in May 1924, and approved by a general conference in Kiev in July. Interview 16/11, Project 131, OHD, 30–34.

24. “‘Voprosy byta u shomerov.’ Tezisy, priniatyie Glavnym shtabom soiuzu,” Hashomer Hatza’ir. Organ *glavnogo* shtaba soiuzu, # 1 [April 1924], RGASPI, f.445, op.1, d.119, ll.105–111.

25. “‘Rabota shomerov soiuzu v Palestine,’” Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir, Organ *glavnogo* shtaba soiuzu, # 1 [April 1924], RGASPI, f.445, op.1, d.119, ll.99–100.

26. Senior members of the movement acting as leaders to younger groups were instructed on how to use scouting’s “laws,” “customs,” and “oaths” in teaching their charges to act ethically and become judges of their own deeds. See “Instruktsiia k svedeniui iskliuchitel’no tsofimskikh rukovoditelei-shomerov po provedeniui eticheskikh ustanovlenii,” KAA, Box 426.

27. “‘Sushchnost,’ zadachi i formy shomerskogo dvizheniia.”

28. “‘Voprosy byta u shomerov.’”

29. For example, Aharon Zaslavsky from Kiev, Itai, *Korot Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir*, 161; Lasia Iskoz from Moscow, Interview #16/2, Project 131, OHD, 11–12.

30. Histadrut leader Berl Katznelson excoriated members for failing to use Hebrew at the kibbutz annual meeting he attended in April 1927: “I heard here more Russian than in my whole sixteen years in the country.” KAA, Series KR, Box 4, folder 1.

31. *Davar*, March 10 and April 4, 1926. See also Aryeh Ophir, *Afikim—Darko shel kibuts* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1986), 70–75.

32. On Tsofim ‘Ovdim and the conflicts surrounding it, see *Elik: Afikei bayim* [Letters and Notes of Eliyahuv (Elik) Shomroni] (Afikim: Ihud ha-Kibutsim voha-Kevutsot ve-Kibuts Afikim, 1957), 7–30 and 33–43; part 1 of interview from August 12, 1969, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 25–26; interview with Lasia Galili, conducted by the Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute, February 3, 1976, 102, KAA, Box 432.

33. These complaints were voiced by numerous members on the pages of the kibbutz’s newspaper, *Shma’ po’el!*, and at kibbutz-wide gatherings during Passover, 1926 and 1927.

34. This refrain appeared first in an article in *Shma’ po’el!* and was repeated in memoirs and interviews. See, for example, video interviews from 1981 by Moshe Alpert and Ran Brenner on the Kibbutz Afikim website.

35. These debates were documented in minutes of gatherings from November 1926 to August 1927: The Pinchas Lavon Institute for Labor Movement Research (henceforth, Lavon Institute), Series IV-144, Folders 7–10; KAA, Series KR, Box 8, Folders 1–2. Departing members settled in cities, especially Haifa and Tel Aviv. They were active in the Haganah, the Histadrut, and Ahdut ha-avodah. A significant number sought higher technical education abroad or pursued careers in the arts.

36. Quote from interview on July 24, 1969, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 2. See also part 1 of interview from August 12, 1969, 11.

37. The interviewer, Avraham Itai, entitled the series of conversations from 1969 “Shaping the Ideological Path of the Kibbutz from the USSR,” Series 16, Project 46, OHD.

38. Interviews from July 24, 1969, 2, and December 20, 1970, 6, Series 16, Project 46, OHD.

39. Interview, July 24, 1969, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 4.

40. “‘Rabota shomerov Soiuzu v Palestine.’”

41. Interview, July 24, 1969, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 10–11.

42. Reinforcing the view of Ahdut ha-avodah as a unifying force was its success in August 1925 in bringing the two worldwide organizations of Labor Zionism, the socialist Zionists and the moderate wing of Poalei Tzion, into one organizational framework. Two kibbutz leaders who

represented Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir in the USSR at the Fourteenth Zionist Congress in Vienna attended the unification meeting. Interview of December 5, 1968, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 4.

43. Carmela [Klara Galili], "Aharei pegishatenu," *Shma' po'el!* from May or June 1926, KAA, newspaper collection. The wording quoted here comes from a draft in the author's handwriting. The published article (in Russian, like the draft) was slightly edited, replacing the words "we knew the reality in Palestine only in theory" with "we knew little of the reality in Palestine." KAA, Series KR, Box 2, Folder 3.

44. "Berl was for me a father figure." Anita Shapira interview with Lasia Galili, August 26, 1975, Manuscript Department, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, RS1977, Box 2. Galili described the intensive contact with Katznelson and other leaders as creating a bridge to the Second Aliyah, "over the intermediary layer of the Third Aliyah." Interview from August 12, 1969, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 23.

45. By all evidence, the party's power to deliver resources did not play a major role in the decision, with the possible exception of one or two kibbutz members entrusted with keeping the struggling group provided with funds and work opportunities.

46. See, for example, letter from Abrasha Efrokhi to Yonia [Yosef Yizra'eli], November 12, 1925, KAA, Series KR, Box 2, Folder 2.

47. "Voprosy byta u shomerov."

48. Carmela, "Aharei pegishatenu."

49. Minutes of Haifa Platoon Assembly, undated, Lavon Institute, Section IV, Series 144, Folder 10.

50. From minutes of meetings in Haifa (December 27 and 29, 1926); Zikhron Ya'acov (late December 1926); Tira (January 1, 1927); and the kibbutz Narrow Council, which met in Zikhron January 7–8, 1927, Lavon Institute, Section IV, Series 144, Folders 9, 10; KAA, Series KR, Box 1, Folders 1, 2, 3. The minutes are in Hebrew, although some participants addressed the meetings in Russian.

51. On the power of ideology in everyday life in revolutionary society, see Jochen Hellbeck, "Everyday Ideology: Life During Stalinism," *Eurozine*, <https://www.eurozine.com/everyday-ideology-life-during-stalinism>, February 22, 2010.

52. Ironically, it was Ahdut ha-'avodah leaders, especially Katznelson, who convinced the kibbutz leadership to favor communal integrity over ideological discipline; he even reviewed a draft of their compromise formula. Interview, from August 12, 1969, part 2, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 11–12.

53. KAA, Series KR, Box 3, Folder 7; Ophir, *Afikim—Darko shel kibuts*, 167–68; 176–84; Lovah Levitah, *Be-Ein Harod le-reglei ha-Gilbo'a* (Tel Aviv: Yad Tabenkin and Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1983), 215–24; Haim Hadari, "Mo'etsit Jidro-23 April 1927," in *Shorashim: Kevatsim le-beker ha-kibuts u-tenu'at ha-'avodah be-Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv: Tabenkin Institute and Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad, 1979), 360–63.

54. Lasia Galili, "Darko u-mahuto shel Kibuts Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir mi-SSSR ba-Aretz," *Ziv Ha-shomer* (published by the Supreme Leadership of the Organization of Jewish Scouts Ha-shomer ha-tsa'ir in Lithuania), Kovno, 25 of Adar A, 1927, Yad Ya'ari Archive, Giv'at Haviva (henceforth, YAA), Series 6.4-2 (1). A footnote identified the article as written in December 1926 in Zikhron Ya'acov.

55. See letter of Lasia Iskoz to the Supreme Leadership of World Organization of Hashomer Hatza'ir, Riga, March 10, 1925 (Russian), KAA, Series TN, Box 16.

56. In discussions preceding the departure of Volodya Itzkovich and Lasia Iskoz to Vienna to represent the movement at the Zionist Congress and a following meeting of all Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir delegates, kibbutz leadership defined one of its goals as pushing the larger movement to articulate more clearly its socialist principles. Interview, December 5, 1968, Series 16, Project 46, OHD, 4–8.

57. *Ibid.*, 4–9.

58. The issue had surfaced already during the first encounter between the Russian kibbutz and members of other kibbutzim affiliated with Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir on May 2, 1925, and it came up repeatedly at meetings of the Eretz Yisrael Department of the Supreme Leadership of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir during 1926 and early 1927.

59. Galili, "Darko u-mahuto shel Kibuts Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir mi-SSSR ba-Aretz." When all the kibbutzim of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir met on April 1, 1927, to found their federation, the Russian kibbutz was alone in arguing that "the kibbutz is an instrument serving the whole working class, and should implement the direction of the class." KAA, Series KR, Box 1, folder 8.

60. See records of meetings of the Eretz Yisrael Department on May 24, 1926 and February 19, 1927, YAA, Series 10-5, Box 0, Folder 3; Series H1.2, Box 2, Folder 2.

61. In 1981, Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad and the "Union of Kibbutzim and Kvutzot" (Ihud Hakibutsim Vehakvutsot) reunited in the "United Kibbutz Movement" (TAKAM); in 1999 it was joined by Ha-Kibbutz ha-artsi.

62. KAA, Series KR, Box 1, Folder 1. I have in mind descriptions of Chechens, "Tatars," and other Muslim groups in the Caucasus in the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoy.

63. Author interview with Klara Galili, Spring 1997; Letter #10 to Russia, 1925, KAA, Series KR, Box 2, Folder 4.

64. Diary entry, December 19, 1924, KAA, Series KR, Box 1, Folder 4. The diary reports a "speaking newspaper" on the Arab question on January 29, 1925, but does not provide details.

65. Protocol of an unidentified meeting, Lavon Institute, Series IV-144, Folder 10.

66. "Opyt proshlogo," Lavon Institute, Series VI-144, Folder 5.

67. Dov Katan, "Irgun meshutaf," *Shma' po'el!*, KAA, Newspaper Collection.

68. Ze'ev, "Al ha-taksiv le-po'alei ha-rakevet," *Shma' po'el!*, KAA, Newspaper Collection.

69. Minutes of Kibbutz-wide gathering, Haifa, May 1926, KAA, Series KR, Box 8, Folder 1. See also Ophir, *Afikim—Darko shel kibuts*, 11–113.

70. KAA, Series KR, Box 8, folder 1. See also Ophir, *Afikim—Darko shel kibuts*, 113–15.

71. KAA, Series KR, Box 8, folder 1. See also Ophir, *Afikim—Darko shel kibuts*, 115. Ninety-seven members voted in favor, three abstained.

72. Most prominent among them were Eliyahu Golomb and Sha'ul Me'irov (later Avigur). Interview, January 1982, Project 134 (Sha'ul Avigur), #36, OHD, 1–3; Anita Shapira's interviews with Lasia Galili, August 16, 1975, May 30, 1978, Manuscript Department, National Library of Israel, RS1977, Box 2.

73. Zhora [Shinanskii, later Shinan], "Tse'adim rishonim ba-Haganah," in *Afikim be-mahatsit yovlah* (Afikim: Kibbutz Afikim, 1951), 357–59.

74. Klara Galili, unpublished memoirs, KAA, Klara and Lasia Galili Collections, Box 431, 39.

75. On this question, see Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1929* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015).

76. For example, Zhora Shinanskii was commander of defense in the Jordan Valley in 1948; Zvi Brenner was Orde Wingate's right-hand man in the "Special Night Squads" during the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939; Lasia Galili founded in 1939 *Ma'arakhot*, a journal dedicated to military and strategic questions, and was chief education officer for the Haganah; Yosef Yizra'eli was active in arms purchases during the 1930s and 1940s, then served as deputy to Israel's first Defense Ministry director.

CHAPTER 6

Triumphs of Conservatism: Beit Yaakov and the Polish Origins of *Haredi* Girls' Education in Israel

Iris Brown (Hoizman)

Every Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) girl and boy in Israel is familiar with the Beit Yaakov network of schools: an extensive organization of educational institutions spanning from kindergartens to seminaries that provide professional training to young women, primarily teacher training. The story of this network's advent is likewise well known, and every *haredi* girl has heard the name of its founder, Sarah Schenirer (1883–1935), the “mother” of haredi women.¹ Sarah Schenirer's name has long been a byword for Beit Yaakov—a singular female figure who was transformed into a foundational myth of haredi society.

Sarah Schenirer was active in Poland during the interwar period, while the Beit Yaakov movement, established prior to the Holocaust, truly flourished mostly in the period following it, in the sovereign State of Israel. As described elsewhere,² the ethos of the Beit Yaakov network in Poland, until the deaths of Sarah Schenirer and Shmuel Deutschländer in 1935, was quite different from that of the network of schools established in Israel: The early Polish network placed a much greater emphasis on the Neo-Orthodox doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*—“Torah with the way of the land” (that is, local culture).

By contrast, Beit Yaakov in Israel played a key role in the haredi revolution that created the Israeli “society of scholars”: Some of the movement's leaders encouraged haredi women to go out and work in order to support their Torah-scholar husbands, thereby sustaining the cultural entrenchment of haredi society.³ We ask, then, what brought about this change? Was it the result of the relocation to a different cultural and historical context, or did it begin in Poland, prior to the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel? Is it possible to identify

the conceptual and practical continuity between the movement in Poland and Beit Yaakov in Israel? I attempt to address these questions through a comparison of the figures who founded and led Beit Yaakov in Poland and those who established the movement and headed it in Israel.

Beit Yaakov in Poland, Part 1: The Conservative Reaction of the Late 1930s

Prior to Beit Yaakov's establishment, traditional Jewish education in Eastern Europe distinguished between boys and girls unequivocally. In principle at least, boys went to the *heder*, the traditional Jewish elementary school, and later in some cases pursued advanced study of holy texts in the study house or *yeshiva*, while girls attended public schools, if at all, and received their Jewish education at home. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jewish public and its rabbis debated the need for Jewish girls' schools. The conservative position prevailed,⁴ however, preserving the existing situation where there were no Jewish schools for girls.

That a Jewish girl should attend public school was not generally seen to be a problem: There was no fear that she would be adversely influenced, because the Jewish home was believed to be so influential as to provide an education in Judaism deep and meaningful enough to resist the environment. There was also no fear of *bittul Torah* (wasting time that could be better spent studying Torah), since girls were not only *not* commanded to study the Torah, they were actually forbidden from doing so. Conservative circles were hard pressed to accept the notion that the absence of regular religious education was the cause of girls abandoning religion or for their moral-spiritual decline; after all, it was inconceivable that the Sages in their wisdom had not foreseen, or even considered, that such a problem occur. But where the rabbis of the more liberal factions failed, Sarah Schenirer succeeded. She wrought the necessary change, and not only was she not considered a rebel, she even achieved everlasting glory among the *haredi* public.⁵

Sarah Schenirer was born and raised in a family belonging to the Belz Hasidim, one of the most conservative Hasidic groups in Galicia. Despite this upbringing, she was inspired to establish a girls' school by the sermons of Rabbi Dr. Moshe Dovid Flesch (1879–1944), a proponent of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, which she heard while in Vienna during World War I.⁶ Subsequently, Hirsch's scholarship enjoyed a prominent place in her curriculum, as did his educational doctrine of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.⁷

Schenirer opened her first school in 1917, with just twenty-five pupils. She had the support of leading rabbis such as Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach of Belz

(1977–1985), Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur (1866–1948), and Rabbi Israel Meir Hacohen of Radun (the Hafetz Hayim, 1839–1933). The Hafetz Hayim permitted women to study Torah retrospectively, in light of the problems facing this generation. This stood in contrast to the doctrine of Rabbi Hirsch, who determined that women were permitted *a priori* to study the Torah.⁸

During its early years, the school was strictly a local venture.⁹ It prospered and expanded significantly after 1923, when Agudat Israel granted its patronage and appointed Rabbi Dr. Shmuel (Leo) Deutschländer, director of Agudat Israel's Keren ha-Torah (Torah Fund), to lead the school and help it expand.¹⁰ Deutschländer's efforts on behalf of Beit Yaakov were crucial, and he probably deserves most of the credit for the network's incredible expansion and growth until 1935, the year both Deutschländer and Schenirer died.

Once Schenirer's modest enterprise had expanded to open new schools beyond Poland's borders, Beit Yaakov was unable to supply enough teachers. The organization did not have an official teachers' seminary before 1924, nor did it have a clearly defined pedagogical system or, for that matter, even basic textbooks. Deutschländer is the one who formulated the curriculum and envisioned the intensive summer courses for experienced and new teachers alike, where they were provided a broad and comprehensive foundation in pedagogy.¹¹ He viewed the shortage of skilled teachers as the most acute problem facing the rapidly expanding education network, and thus advocated for a teachers' seminary that would offer a two-to-three-year training program (or at least a whole year). Judith Grunfeld (née Rosenbaum), was one of the first Jewish teachers recruited by Deutschländer from Germany to teach in the new schools and worked closely with Deutschländer and Schenirer.¹² She expresses great esteem for Schenirer's pioneering efforts, but describes Deutschländer as the author of Beit Yaakov's transformation from a successful local enterprise to a global phenomenon: "from a dream of a dressmaker, from the vision of an untrained enthusiast, to the level of a systematic, well-planned organization."¹³ She describes his responsibilities and efforts on behalf of Beit Yaakov: he oversaw finances and the founding of the teachers' seminary in Krakow; transformed the school into a professional institution that could compete successfully with others; developed the curricula, exams, and summer programs; and was the one who obtained recognition from the Polish Ministry of Education.¹⁴ It was Deutschländer's work alongside Schenirer that enabled the Beit Yaakov schools to stand up to the scrutiny of potential teachers, particularly those who hailed from the more educated and well-to-do sections of Jewish Orthodox society and expected a serious and thorough education. In other words, when Deutschländer assumed the organizational and pedagogical reins of Beit Yaakov, he transformed it into an international success.¹⁵

Although Schenirer did not formulate an ordered curriculum for her school, she read and taught from the writings of Rabbi Hirsch and other German Jewish authors, such as Rabbi Dr. Marcus (Meyer) Lehmann.¹⁶ She believed these books had a place in every Orthodox library and made sure they were available in her school library.¹⁷ All the same, Schenirer was the product of the very heart of conservative Hasidic society in Poland, the Belz Hasidim, and certainly knew her audience better than Deutschländer. As such, she was more cautious and restrained, and certainly more conscious of “the rules of the game” in Eastern European Jewish society than Deutschländer.¹⁸ Deutschländer, by contrast, incorporated pedagogy and psychology into teacher training, as well as general studies of languages (Polish and German); literature and general history, including the greatest works of German literature; and the history and geography of Poland.¹⁹

Indeed, an examination of the curriculum prepared by Deutschländer for the Beit Yaakov teachers’ seminary reveals a preponderance of material written by Rabbi Hirsch, as well as by Hirsch’s grandson Dr. Isaac Breuer.²⁰ Thus, for example, six weekly hours were devoted to Bible studies (*Chumash*) using the commentaries written by Rashi and by Rabbi Hirsch. Additional books by Hirsch, such as *Horeb* and *The Nineteen Letters*, and writings by Breuer on the history of the Jews and the Messiah, were also part of the curriculum. Deutschländer also incorporated language studies, to ensure seminary students mastered Polish. An additional, no less remarkable, and somewhat surprising feature of the curriculum was the ambitiousness of the program in German language and literature. Deutschländer wanted his students to be able to read Hirsch’s writings, as well as classical German literature, in the original. The German syllabus for the Beit Yaakov seminary featured, together with Deutschländer’s own collection *Schem VaJephet: Westöstliche Dichterklänge*,²¹ works by great German poets and authors—in German. These included, for example, lyrical poetry by Schiller and plays like Goethe’s *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Christian Friedrich Hebbel’s *Herodes und Mariamne*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*, Stefan Zweig’s *Jeremiah*, and Richard Beer-Hoffman’s *Jacob’s Dream*.²² Studying these highlights of classical German culture aimed, according to Deutschländer, to help students achieve a proficiency in German that would enable them to fully comprehend such works.

It is almost certain that this curriculum far exceeded what Schenirer had in mind when she established her first girls’ school. However, despite this vast gulf between the two in terms of educational philosophy, Schenirer and Deutschländer worked together productively and, in spite of certain tensions, continued to collaborate until the former’s death. Beit Yaakov provided an open Orthodox education, very much in line with the German Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine—

albeit somewhat more restrained—and encouraged a combination of Judaism and general culture.

All this changed, however, in the next chapter of Beit Yaakov's history. After Deutschländer's passing in 1935, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Orlean (1900–1943), a Gur Hasid with no academic background, assumed leadership of the network. The new headmaster of the Krakow branch sought to reverse the reigning approach to the curriculum instituted by Deutschländer and reshape education at Beit Yaakov in the spirit of Eastern European Jewry, that is, to respond to their objections to Rabbi Hirsch's *Torah im Derekh Eretz*.²³

Orlean condemned Beit Yaakov for having become “enmeshed in the Enlightenment psychosis,”²⁴ and was determined to extricate the movement from it. He believed that rather than a vague “education,” students should be provided with “wisdom” (*da'at*), which could only be acquired through the practice of religious commandments.²⁵ While Deutschländer put much store in methodology, Orlean believed it to be of minor importance.²⁶ He hints in his own writings that the incorporation of methodology in the curriculum was aimed at supporting Beit Yaakov's image as a serious educational institution rather than as a goal in and of itself.²⁷

Who was Orlean? A Hasid from birth, he was a loyal disciple of Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter of Gur (1866–1948)²⁸ and, although he began his adult life in trade, he always set time aside for Torah studies. Orlean was one of the founders of Poalei Agudat Israel and its first president (1922–1932) and served as the headmaster of the Beit Yaakov school in Warsaw. He eventually decided to dedicate himself to education and took over the Beit Yaakov seminary in Krakow after the deaths of Schenirer and Deutschländer. He served in that capacity until the beginning of World War II, when the Beit Yaakov schools were shuttered; he continued his educational work throughout the Holocaust, corresponding with his students and establishing five alternative Beit Yaakov schools with his colleagues until his murder by the Nazis in 1943. One contemporary from within the movement described him retrospectively as “a Hasidic Torah scholar who never studied at a secular school or teacher's seminary and never set foot in a university. Despite all this, he became one of the great educators of Poland and was named the ‘educator of the generation.’”²⁹ Orlean did nonetheless study the ideological treatises of German Jewish Orthodox leaders, including Hirsch, Jacob Rosenheim, Nathan Birnbaum (Orlean counted himself one of his followers), and Breuer. He mastered the German language well enough to read general scholarship, pedagogy, and philosophy. In addition to his educational endeavors, Orlean wrote and published extensively in the press. One of his best-known essays, “For the Sated and the Hungry” (*Tsu di zate un tsu di hungerike*) tackled social issues in Jewish light.

The Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine was not just the inspiration for Beit Yaa-kov's founding, but had also been fundamental to Beit Yaa-kov's educational philosophy and curriculum. In order to fully comprehend Orlean's position regarding the doctrine and its implementation in girls' education, we must first examine his attitude toward science and technology, and only then analyze his attitude toward Torah im Derekh Eretz. Orlean laid out his principles of education in his introduction to Rabbi Hirsch's *Foundations of Education* (part 2), together with his approach to the subjects of science and technology and their ideal place in Jewish life and the world at large.³⁰ In Hirsch's book *Jahreswende* (*Cycles of the Year*) (part 4), Orlean added introductory chapters dealing directly with the Torah im Derekh Eretz philosophy and its role in the Jewish world. Certainly it was not by chance that Orlean chose to lay out his approach to these issues in the introductions to the books of Rabbi Hirsch, the founder of Torah im Derekh Eretz. Eastern European Orthodox Judaism (like present-day haredi Jews) was ambivalent about Hirsch. On the one hand, there was much admiration for his actions to "save" German Jewry from the Enlightenment and assimilation. On the other hand, much effort was expended in delimiting his philosophy to a specific time and place and preventing its implementation in Eastern Europe.³¹ By electing to write the introductions to Hirsch's treatises, Orlean both professes his admiration for Hirsch's activities and signaled that the publication and teaching of these books by Beit Yaa-kov did not indicate agreement or endorsement of the doctrine as a whole.

Orlean's introduction to *The Foundations of Education* lays out in detail traditional Judaism's approach to secular studies, as well as the effects of the Enlightenment process, a process that, in his opinion, undermined the proper balance between secular and religious studies and instilled doubts even among the devout. Orlean argues that in the past Judaism had had reservations about learning "external" knowledge and science for their own sake, but had permitted studying them as a means of better understanding the Torah or as a vital source of livelihood.³² With the advent of the Enlightenment movement, this approach changed, and reservations Jews had about secular education transformed into a great attraction. Some consequently disassociated themselves completely from Judaism, while others felt torn by a dual commitment to Judaism and Enlightenment. This situation created "confused minds and initiated a chaotic and psychotic [!] pursuit of 'culture' and 'education.'"³³ This state of affairs had a decisive effect on the curricula of Jewish schools and gave rise to patchwork programs that combined Jewish and Enlightenment educational approaches. According to Orlean, it created "spiritually deformed, disturbed and indeed crippled" graduates.³⁴ This merciless attack was undoubtedly aimed at the curriculum instituted at Beit Yaa-kov by Orlean's predecessor, Deutschländer.

Orlean argued that the pursuit of science and knowledge is fundamentally wrong, since Judaism lacks nothing. Judaism need not feel inferior and ashamed of what it is. Indeed, by any objective measure, Judaism is far superior to any other culture. Orlean systematically analyzes the concept of “culture” and the requirements it must meet. Using two different measures, he demonstrates the superiority of Judaism: The Jewish people were, he claims, the first to develop writing and the first to extend the idea of schooling to the general population rather than to an upper-class minority (citing Yehoshua ben Gamla’s edict).³⁵ Moreover, he argues, the term “culture” can only be used to denote something that is diverse and that enables the realization of the full range of human needs: material, social, moral, and spiritual. Judaism fulfills these criteria by contributing to the inner spiritual strength of man, by developing social sensitivity, commanding a spiritual connection to God, and developing mankind’s moral character.³⁶ Europeans even stand to learn from the Bible and Talmud in the realm of manners and etiquette.³⁷ Judaism shapes men’s personalities, instilling strict discipline and precision in both emotions and intentions. Thereby, it forestalls the dangers of ossification and stagnation, and the mechanism imposed by modernity that has transformed living people to automatons—creatures without spirit, without heart, without life.³⁸ Orlean admits that, as a people, Jews have largely neglected science and technology, but this was done deliberately, he claims, rather than out of some inferior position reflecting inability or misconceptions. Judaism has preferred to leave them for others out of an understanding that everything must be enlisted toward the achievement of spiritual perfection. He explains that, just as a musician who invests all his time and energy into his music is admired—no one would think to accuse him of neglecting the economy or the construction of bridges, since his contribution is precisely that focus on the art of music—one must not accuse Judaism of neglecting the sciences, but rather recognize its spiritual contributions to humanity as a whole.

Jewish genius in science and technology, he argues, is an individual accomplishment rather than an accomplishment of the people as a whole. All the same, despite the fact that Jews focus exclusively on sacred studies in the realm of education, they successfully nurture skills that lead to excellence in all fields. That is why one finds Jews leading many disciplines and why the number of Jewish inventors is not inconsequential.³⁹

Orlean explains that not only is intensive occupation with science not an advantage, it might, in fact, be a flaw that places all of humanity at risk by neglecting mankind’s other abilities. It would inevitably bring about a decline in interpersonal relations. At the root of all scientific endeavors is a materialist perspective. The goal of science, be it conscious or unconscious, is to benefit

mankind materially. Science serves this goal quite well, but the focus on science has come at the expense of investment in other abilities. The consequent deterioration in spiritual connections among people is inevitable. Men have “erected thick barriers, indeed an iron screen, between one person and another. Is it any wonder that European glamour and the American [cultural] skyscraper are under an existential threat as a result?! This is but the natural outcome, which must arrive.”⁴⁰ Orlean concludes:

A single Sabbath has instilled more culture in the [Jewish] People than the most important of inventions or discoveries. One page of the Talmud has fortified [them] more than a thousand sports champions. The Yom Kippur prayer has cleansed the [People’s] souls more than the finest and most noble art. The Halakhah provided resilience that cannot be found in all the researches put together. . . . Clearly such [science] education cannot create a whole person. The whole person as perceived by the Jewish way of life cannot grow out of anything but the soil of the original Jewish education—education based in the Torah.⁴¹

Orlean also directly criticizes the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine and ascribes to it significance as a method of education only in the specific extreme circumstances of German Judaism, for which it served as a lifesaver. These circumstances are unique, and, thus, the system is not appropriate for Eastern European Jewry. He claims that not even Rabbi Hirsch himself viewed it as a worthy system of education in and of itself: rather it was “system appropriate only for the ossifying and decaying portion of the People,” and he was forced “against his will” [!] to adopt into it European elements that are foreign to Judaism in order to revive German Jewry from its “deathbed.”⁴² In other words, Torah im Derekh Eretz was appropriate for that minority, and only that minority, of the people of Israel among which he implemented this approach. Rabbi Hirsch first made sure to strengthen Jewish perspectives and culture, and only then introduced elements foreign to Judaism, working on the assumption that this education could do no harm once their Jewish attitude was reinforced.⁴³ In practice however, despite his great efforts, German Jews were barely able to maintain their Jewish spiritual culture and avoid the influence of the streets over their inner essence. The implications of this interpretation of Torah im Derekh Eretz for the curriculum of Beit Yaakov are self-evident.

Orlean argued that this philosophy starves the Jewish forces of creativity, since it is impossible to invest one’s energies in the Enlightenment and in Judaism simultaneously. Investment on one front means abandoning the other: “Judaism cannot be dismembered and split up.”⁴⁴ This is the reason Western

European Jews lost their “force of creativity in the realm of Judaism itself.” In other words, they produced no illustrious institutions of learning or sages of the same caliber as Eastern Europe. He concludes by stating that Rabbi Hirsch’s philosophy provided relief and deliverance to Judaism, but this relief was not constructive.⁴⁵

Orlean goes on to emphasize that Hirsch’s educational system was not suitable for Poland, not even “under duress” (*bedi’avad*). Poland, unlike Germany, was still “a center of life” rather than a dying corpse. One may “experiment on a minute part, on its deathbed [i.e., Germany], but the center of life [Poland] should be treated with extreme care.”⁴⁶ He reiterates that the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine must not become the original path of world Judaism or the foundations of Agudat Israel.⁴⁷ Orlean does not rule out Jewish participation in science and technology at the abstract level, but he believes such participation would be possible only in “normal” circumstances, when Judaism is not under threat. Indeed, it is natural and necessary that we produce competent mathematicians, technicians, physicians, and the like, since it is best not to become dependent upon any given profession. Moreover, spiritual development requires material independence; after all, “without bread there is no Torah.” However, the current situation, where most of the people turn to material concerns while Orthodox Judaism alone is left to maintain the flame of the Torah, is impossible. Such intense participation in the material world would stifle Jew’s spiritual fertility or kill it altogether. On the other hand, Orlean emphasizes (in line with his socialist inclinations), Agudat Israel does not believe in “idleness”; rather, the path of the Agudah is a necessary “golden mean.” Orlean does not altogether reject general education, like “our opponents from the right [!]” (referring to the rabbinical leaders of Hungary), but neither does he believe it has intrinsic value, like the Neo-Orthodox and other agents of modernity. General education is permissible only in “dying” places like Germany, because of the needs of the times and within the limits of those needs. He reiterates that Jews must preserve their best strength for the Torah while participating to the minimal necessary extent in material culture.

Orlean made similar statements regarding the implementation of Torah im Derekh Eretz in Israel. As the influence of German Jews in Palestine grew in the wake of the Fifth Aliyah (1930–1939), and especially after the rise of Nazism in Germany in 1933 (and possibly also in light of the failed initiative to move Rabbi Hildesheimer’s famed rabbinical seminary to Palestine), Orleans sought to clarify his position: “Should the most gifted and useful segment of German orthodoxy be forced to settle in the Land of Israel, it would not be healthy for them, in my opinion, to bring the Hirsch-Hildesheimer method there with them. This system would be completely superfluous, a diasporic heritage devoid of effect for the

Jewish people added to the chaotic mess of the many movements and ideologies among this generation in the Land of Israel today.”⁴⁸

In contrast, Orlean poses the Eastern European path of fostering the elite of Torah scholars as role models for the developing Land of Israel. He emphasizes, “all who believe in the eternity of Judaism, all who truly appreciate the great potential of the Jewish diaspora in Eastern Europe, must surely also believe that it is feasible.”⁴⁹ Rabbi Orlean brought these strong opinions with him to his position as headmaster of Beit Yaakov and affected a drastic change in its path.

Beit Yaakov in Poland, Part 2: The Internal *Haredi* Debate About the Legacy of Sarah Schenirer

The controversy regarding Sarah Schenirer’s attitude toward Torah im Derekh Eretz arose in haredi circles soon after her death. The debate focused on how much she had been influenced by the doctrine, and to what the extent she adopted it into her curriculum during the early years of Beit Yaakov. Moreover, there were disagreements over the question of whether she had adopted the system for “lack of an alternative,” by force of circumstances, or whether she had viewed it as the preferable system of education from the outset.⁵⁰

Following Schenirer’s death, Deutschländer published an obituary discussing her legacy and the secret to her success in the Neo-Orthodox German Jewish periodical *Nachlath Z’wi*.⁵¹ He ascribed her success to the fact that she introduced Hirsch’s philosophy and writings to young Eastern European women in a thorough and comprehensive manner, thereby paving the way to their acceptance. He noted that Schenirer had insisted that Rabbi Hirsch’s philosophy was a sort of revelation for her, and that she had sought to impart that sense of discovery and enthusiasm to her students. Deutschländer wrote that no other intellectual or spiritual force had a greater effect on Schenirer’s personality than Hirsch’s philosophy, and that deep in the soul of Beit Yaakov’s founder there was a harmonious synthesis of her early Hasidic upbringing and the teachings of the Neo-Orthodox leader of German Jewry. Deutschländer viewed Schenirer’s life story as proof of the lasting, immortal legacy of Rabbi Hirsch, extending beyond the country where he lived and worked to affect Jewish history and destiny as a whole. The fact that one cannot describe the phenomenal growth of Beit Yaakov without referring to the writings of Rabbi Hirsch, he argued, is a sign of divine providence and testimony to the internal strength of the ideas of Torah im Derekh Eretz.⁵²

Interestingly, Orlean also composed an obituary for Schenirer, which he published after he assumed leadership of the seminary in Krakow—and he presented

Schenirer's life's work very differently.⁵³ In contrast to Deutschländer, Orlean argued that Schenirer would have preferred not to rely on the Torah im Derekh Eretz system, and did so for lack of an alternative.

Orlean does not refute her source of inspiration, nor does he deny her encounter with Hirsch's philosophy through Flesch's lectures in Vienna, but he argues that Schenirer was drawn more by the Neo-Orthodox rabbi's rhetoric and oratory skills than by the actual content of his talks. Orlean argues that Schenirer thought these teachings would appeal to Jewish Polish girls who had grown apart from Jewish traditions: "Was it the content of the speech which so pleased her? Certainly not! The old book with *Ivri-Teitsch* [Yiddish] was more than sufficient for her. Her only concern was for the girls of Krakow. For them the old book had no appeal."⁵⁴

Throughout the obituary, Orlean reiterates his argument that Schenirer understood that the books by German Rabbis such as Hirsch and Marcus Lehmann would appeal to Jewish girls in Krakow who had grown apart from traditional Judaism as a result of their attendance in public schools. She understood that, just as these writings successfully affected German Jews on the verge of assimilation, they would work with the Jewish girls of Krakow. All the same, he argues, she was aware of the dangers this educational doctrine posed: She shared the fear that "this modern spirit" would introduce foreign values and harm the "genuine" nature of the people of Israel. Orlean claims that Schenirer never believed that the Torah im Derekh Eretz was fully appropriate for Polish Jewish women in the same way that it was for German Jews, and that she therefore set clear limits and acted cautiously: "With her healthy sensibility she was able to tell where to set the border marker. . . . She fought for true Hasidic comportment with all her might, for modest clothing, for the living Jewish language, for the simple Judaism of home."⁵⁵ The secular schooling instituted at Beit Yaakov, he explains, is "a life necessity," a means of linking peoples and lands, as is all general knowledge imparted at its institutions.⁵⁶

Another essay by Orlean focuses specifically on Beit Yaakov and lays out his educational creed. Orlean attacks those who present the establishment of Beit Yaakov as a remedy for the neglect of Jewish girls' education, a sin ostensibly originating in the inferior status of women in Judaism.⁵⁷ He states that the Sages' proclamation on different educational paths for girls and boys was not some historical error that requires remedying, nor was it a random choice. It certainly was not driven by an agenda to deprive and exclude women; rather it is the outcome of deep consideration. He argues that pedagogical leaders of the day reached a similar conclusion: that education at home is most important and that schooling can only support the influence of the home.⁵⁸ Orlean distinguishes between

schooling and education. Schooling is rooted in wisdom and instills knowledge regarding the content of the commandments as well as greater knowledge of the Halakhah. Education, in contrast, appeals to the emotions and motivation to observe the commandments. In the past, the home was the only place for boys' education and schooling, but as circumstances changed, the responsibility for schooling shifted from the father to the community; education was acquired from the community in any case. Girls, on the other hand, remained at home, since they did not require schooling in a deeper sort of knowledge and, thus, they benefitted from greater, more fundamental education. In this sense, girls gained more than boys, even if they could not partake of more profound studies in the Torah. When a girl witnessed her father and brothers excitedly debating Torah matters at home, she benefitted even if she did not understand a thing, for the scene penetrated her heart and influenced it. "Educationally, this surely had a far greater effect."⁵⁹ Orlean reiterates that there is no reason to take girls out of the home and place them in an external educational framework. There was no point in "replacing the home in exchange for a few hours of artificial life in school. . . . Not only would the school not contribute anything, but it would overshadow the light of the home and obscure the homely ideal."⁶⁰ Even if it has no pedagogical credentials, the home is more "professional" than school education.

Ideally, then, there is no need to replace "the faces of a devoted and loyal father and a good and compassionate mother with a professional teacher."⁶¹ However, he admits that circumstances have changed and have led to a need for girls' educational frameworks. "The Jewish home is no longer the home of the past, the Jewish parents are no longer the same, the patriarchal splendor has faded; . . . the home has become desiccated and pale."⁶² The very bustle of the surrounding environment, the various ideas circulating in society, have had a negative effect on the home. This is why it was necessary to establish a girls' school that would assume the responsibilities previously filled by the home. Orlean emphasizes that one "cannot and should not imitate European schooling; simply emulate Jewish home education." For that purpose, then, it is important to understand the forces influential in the Jewish home, so that they may be reintroduced in the school.⁶³

In light of all this, Orlean determined that what was most necessary for the school was not a program or method, but rather personal example. The teacher assumes the most important role, standing in for the father and mother.⁶⁴ Orlean's priorities are made explicitly clear: "The first point of the home school is the person; the second, the program; the third, the method."⁶⁵ The teacher must possess all the virtues originally transmitted by parents to their children through home education, so that she may influence and transmit them through

the school. This is the core of her specialization, the foundation of a Jewish school.

A textbook written by Orlean for Beit Yaakov, *Yidish lebn* (Jewish life) stands in stark contrast to Deutschländer's own textbook, *Schem VaJephet*.⁶⁶ While Deutschländer's book is written in German and is packed with references from European culture, Orlean's is written in Yiddish and centers on the commandments of Judaism. The commandments having to do with respect for one's parents, one's brothers and sisters, Torah scholars, sages, and elders are central.⁶⁷ A chapter titled "Der vert funem mentsh" (The value of man), is packed with homilies, far removed in spirit and style from the theological arguments of Neo-Orthodoxy on these same issues. There is also, of course, a chapter on "proper comportment," including a section on modest dress.⁶⁸

Orlean did not just object to the implementation of the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine at Beit Yaakov. He upheld the figure of the traditional Jewish woman who guards her modesty and comportment and takes care to stay out of the modern world's revolution in women's rights. In two of his essays he writes at length that the whole point of human existence is to achieve unity and harmony as a family and as a nation.⁶⁹ The best path to realizing this goal is through a leader who is capable of uniting all the parts. The role of the leader, the governor, is not, as is usually assumed, to control his subjects: Ruling, according to Judaism, is a kind of slavery since leadership requires bearing the burden of responsibility.⁷⁰ Therefore, just as Judaism aspires and yearns for the rule of the Messiah, a woman yearns for the rule of her husband.⁷¹ The "government" of the home exists for the sake of family unity.

Orlean explains that husband and wife do not function as individuals, but rather as a single unit. In contrast to the family, the individual has no value in Judaism, he claims. Therefore, only those rights that support family cohesion and bring about true unity, rights that contribute to this goal, are the rights granted to women.⁷² The kind of rights women are struggling for in the modern era, such as voting rights, do not promote family unity. Just the reverse; they can potentially divide the family and create "home dualism," ultimately leading to a "family feud, giving birth to a retarded invalid, bringing a divided soul into the world."⁷³ A Jewish woman relinquishes this "right"; she has no desire for it, since it limits her creative abilities. Such rights position her as an individual, a single unproductive degenerate. In Judaism personhood is acquired through marriage; only the family exists. Full human justice belongs only to the family living together in harmony and peace, "creating through inner reciprocity, bringing only perfect creations to the world, . . . aspiring to devotion to God."⁷⁴

Orlean's battle with modernity and his sensitivity to economic disparities came together at an interesting junction: his struggle against "luxury." Several essays on the subject were collected in a booklet titled *Der Farshvundene Gan-Eiden* (Paradise Lost).⁷⁵ He protests that in current times the desire for luxury has become a "psychosis." The desire to sate one's appetites has reached extremes under the auspices of novel technology; the "eat and drink for tomorrow we die" attitude has taken over Jewish society. People live without considering the consequences and go into debt just to maintain an extravagant standard of living. People are no longer valued for anything but having a purse from Paris, a fancy coat, or a Persian carpet.⁷⁶ Profligacy is the main reason for the economic depression Polish Jews experienced in the 1930s, as well as for the rifts within their households.⁷⁷ In conclusion, Orlean attacks fashion. "A person of our time gets put in his head that every new fashion is one and the same as the standards of beauty," he complains, and proclaims that this is a grave mistake.⁷⁸ The Jewish woman, he believes, has a well-developed aesthetic sense, but this sense has always been directed at sacred things: a handsome curtain for the Torah ark, a pretty matzah cover, attractive dishes for the Sabbath—these are what provided the aesthetic-artistic experience. His struggles against the dictates of fashion, Orlean explains, are by no means aimed at abolishing the appreciation for beauty: "On the contrary, the tendency to admire every new fashion is a sign of a lacking sense for beauty."⁷⁹ He goes on to develop the argument that the struggle to preserve traditional values is one and the same as the struggle to recapture the Jewish spirit of old.

In sum, what is a proper school for girls in Orlean's opinion? For Orlean, the school should not serve to revolutionize or change education, nor should it become a conduit for the importation of the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine to Eastern Europe. A Jewish girls' school is nothing but the product of a specific necessity, and all efforts must be made to minimize its harmful effects while maintaining as much as possible the traditional Jewish girls' education rooted in the home. Such education is aimed first and foremost at molding the pupil in the spirit of the traditional woman. The school must recreate the ambiance of the Jewish home and the forces acting within it. This is why it is most important that the educational persona of the teacher standing in for the mother and father be as faithful an approximation of them as possible.

Under Orlean, Schenirer's and Deutschländer's liberal Beit Yaakov gave way to a different institution, less open to general culture. As we see below, Orlean's approach, which prevailed in the final years before the outset of World War II, was transposed almost entirely intact to Beit Yaakov in postwar Israel. This is most evident in Beit Yaakov's most influential and central institution, the Wolf

Seminary, which set the tone for the entire network of Beit Yaakov schools. When a different approach surfaced, somewhat closer in spirit to the German Torah im Derekh Eretz, it was quickly sidelined.

Beit Yaakov in Israel, Part 1: On the Path of Rejecting General and Torah Education for Girls

The Holocaust devastated Beit Yaakov in Europe, like so many other Jewish communities and their institutions. After World War II, what remained of the network was centered in the places Nazis did not reach, especially Israel and the United States. Few schools were left, yet the network succeeded in recovering, growing, and also splitting.⁸⁰

Two competing Beit Yaakov schools were initially established in the Land of Israel: the first, in Bnei Brak, was shaped by Rabbi Yosef Avraham Wolf (1911–1979), and the other, in Tel Aviv, by Rabbi Meir Szczeransky (1905–1973). The difference between the two, at least in practice, was not great. Yet, there were dissimilarities in style and atmosphere between the two institutions that are noteworthy: Wolf Seminary was perceived as more conservative and closed off while the Szczeransky Seminary was seen as more open and liberal. Both institutions were most significantly influenced by the figures who led them, but, nonetheless, it is useful to compare the differences between these two approaches to the debate among Polish Jewry in the interwar period. Such a comparison reveals that Szczeransky followed the original path of Beit Yaakov in Poland, during the time of *Deutschländer* and *Schenirer*, while Rabbi Wolf followed in footsteps of Orlean.

Rabbi Meir Szczeransky established the Beit Yaakov School in Tel Aviv in 1933. The very decision to establish a haredi Agudah-type institution in the heart of the secular “first Hebrew city” was quite daring. Tel Aviv, then as now, was the epitome of the secular spirit. Moshe Porush (a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem) once noted that “Tel Aviv” and “Beit Yaakov” were two contradictory terms.⁸¹ His son, Menahem Porush (who served as a member of Knesset for Agudat Israel), defined the Tel Aviv of those times as “out of bounds” for haredi Jews.⁸² The city was perceived as a place where it would impossible to raise children on “true Judaism and Torah.”⁸³ This contrasted with the safe territory, Bnei Brak.⁸⁴ The audacity of establishing a haredi seminary in such a place tells us much about Rabbi Szczeransky’s character and inclinations. These same characteristics are what led him to extend, as much as possible, the Hafetz Hayim’s (Rabbi Israel Meir Hachohen of Radun) dispensation regarding Torah studies for women.

Indeed, Szczeransky devoted much thought to the question of women's Torah studies. His views were more liberal than the reigning position in the moderate central stream of haredim. He sharply criticizes conservative haredim (most probably referring to Jerusalemites of the Old Yishuv), who rule out a girls' education framework based on the assumption that Torah studies for women are forbidden. Szczeransky thought that this approach was not truly devout and, moreover, embodied a superficial understanding of Halakhah.⁸⁵ He sought to prove that it was permissible for women to study the Written Torah, even *ab initio*, and extended the dispensation to the study of laws that are relevant to women. In his opinion, it was not merely permissible to study such commandments, but a "*duty and mitzvah to study them*."⁸⁶ He demonstrates that, throughout the generations, there have been women who studied the Torah. He does not even rule out women studying talmudic literature, as long as one can ensure that these studies are beneficial to the woman and improve her religious commitment. In such cases, "there is no doubt that such a woman is permitted to also study talmudic literature."⁸⁷ It is striking, in light of these efforts, that he does not deal with questions of woman's nature or the reasons for the past interdiction.

What about Szczeransky's position regarding secular studies? There is no explicit statement of his opinions on this issue, since he focused on textbooks and did not author philosophical treatises. Nonetheless, a pamphlet he published about Rabbi Hirsch reveals that he felt quite close to this leader of German Neo-Orthodoxy. Although the pamphlet focuses more on details of Hirsch's biography and his efforts to save German Jewry rather than on a discussion of his philosophy, the very positioning of Hirsch as a man whose "memory is bound to that of the nation's greats as the savior of Eastern European Jews and the spiritual father of Agudat Israel," indicates that Szczeransky viewed Hirsch's legacy positively. He may have even seen him as an inspiration: "He left behind a righteous and blessed generation."⁸⁸ It might be said, then, that Szczeransky's silence and refraining from critiquing Hirsch's endeavors (in contrast to so many others) are a sign that he believed Hirsch's philosophy was appropriate for more than just a handful of German Jews at a particular time and place.

The same pamphlet about Hirsch, published in 1941, contains an overview, probably also by Szczeransky, of the Beit Yaakov Seminary. The overview reveals a shortage in professionally trained teachers in Beit Yaakov schools, a problem that leads parents to prefer secular schools for their daughters, since Beit Yaakov cannot boast of accomplishments in general education. The author indicates that this situation is the result of choices made by those who preferred to "forego the pedagogical need for general science in a hopeless situation, for the sake of ensuring

that our education is safe and sound from a moral-religious perspective, and attempted to implement this by producing educators who may have been flawed pedagogically but were capable morally-religiously.”⁸⁹ The author explains that this preference spawned actions that did more harm than good. Even those who advocated it regretted their choice in retrospect. Moreover, it led many parents who might have sent their daughters to receive a haredi education to choose otherwise. The reason Beit Yaakov neglected general pedagogical education was “all because we could not demonstrate equal strengths in religious and in general education, which were the ideal for many.”⁹⁰ The seminary for training teachers and kindergarten teachers, he explains, was established precisely to answer this demand: “Here the trainees receive complete scientific pedagogical education, without giving up an iota of the full haredi religious education. The seminary aims to solve the painful problem of haredi education with a final comprehensive solution and we are convinced that, with the help of God, the seminary’s students will be a blessing and benefit for haredi education wherever they go, thanks to the exemplar education binding Torah and science they received at this esteemed institution.”⁹¹

The overview concludes with details of the seminary’s curriculum: Bible and its commentaries, Mishnah and Midrash, legends of the Sages, prayer, law and ethics, Jewish history, general history, Hebrew, linguistics, literature, English, French, geography, nature, physics, chemistry, math, psychology, history of education, educational theory, teaching, health, drawing, crafts, singing, gymnastics, and more.⁹² This may not be the exact same curriculum offered by Schenirer and Deutschländer, with its emphasis on European literature, but it clearly adheres more closely to it in spirit and principles than to the curriculum laid out by Orlean, who sought to set aside general education and methodology in favor of religious studies and education. The very same overview, with minor changes, reappeared a few years later in another pamphlet published by the Beit Yaakov Seminary in Tel Aviv in 1946. The pamphlet, edited by Szczeransky and titled *He-’Atid* (The future), collected essays on a variety of topics by graduates of the seminary.⁹³

The Tel Aviv Beit Yaakov ultimately had less influence than its rival institution, Beit Yaakov of Bnei Brak, led by Rabbi Wolf. Wolf served as the director of the seminary for nearly twenty years (1952–1970) and transformed it into a key apparatus in the production of generations of young haredi women.⁹⁴ Wolf came to Israel from Germany, where he was raised in the tradition of Hirsch. By the time he left Germany, the local Orthodox community was already riven by the profound dispute over the appropriateness and correctness of the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine. Upon his arrival in Israel, Wolf met Rabbi Avraham Yesha’ayah Karelitz (known as the Hazon Ish), and was deeply captivated by his

personality and influenced by his perspectives. Wolf abandoned the path of German Neo-Orthodoxy and adopted a more conservative haredi approach. When he later became the director of the fledgling Beit Yaakov seminary in Bnei Brak in 1952, he was determined that the institution he led would play a key role in the haredi revolution, in Karelitz's spirit.⁹⁵ This spirit adheres to Orlean's reclusiveness, but adds an additional layer: creating the haredi "society of scholars," where women went out to work in order to support their Torah-studying husbands.

Rabbi Wolf explicated his philosophy in dozens of essays that were later collected in the book *Ha-tekufah u-ve'ayoteha* (The era and its problems).⁹⁶ These essays outline the essence of haredi education and its goals, in Wolf's view, and provide valuable insight into the formulation of haredi educational ideology and its responses to contemporary challenges, especially as it pertains to girls.

The difference between the two Beit Yaakov schools is no less stark in terms of the educational content. As we have shown, Deutschländer's general studies curriculum emphasized languages and humanities, especially literature and poetry, and particularly works of universal value (by cultural standards of that time, in any case). Beit Yaakov's secular studies in Israel were different: general history, Jewish history, math, English, grammar, composition, and reading.⁹⁷ These are largely practical subjects, aimed at having students acquire professional skills. While a haredi girl in Poland studied Goethe, Schiller, and Hebel, the average haredi girl who grew up in the Beit Ya'akov system of the young State of Israel, and even more so that of present day, has most likely never even heard of a non-Jewish writer or poet, nor probably any non-haredi Jewish writers. A young haredi woman graduates from Beit Yaakov with a solid general education in those subjects often on par with that of a young Israeli studying in the state educational system, but her goal is supposed to be acquiring a profession, not acquiring general culture. Indeed, Wolf's educational system is based on the principle that women's education, whether it is religious or general, is but a means to an end. The moment this education strays from its purpose, it becomes invalid. This rule applies both to general studies and to religious studies:

With regard to studying the received Torah, [we should remember that] the power of a woman's learning, not only Torah but other studies as well, should be a means, not an end. A woman should respect her husband, for being her husband, for being a scholar, and the man should respect his helpmate in [upholding] the Torah and the Commandments and in

educating his sons and daughters. . . . Our generation's wise men have seen that additional education and training can overshadow the devoted figure of the Jewish woman.⁹⁸

Extensive education, then, is not only not beneficial, it can even be harmful. The harm Rabbi Wolf identifies is social: the woman might abandon her feminine role to take on a masculine role. Her very devotion as a wife and mother might be compromised (more on this point below).

In contrast to Deutschländer, and similarly to Orlean, Wolf does not view studying, the content of educational programs, or professional teacher training as key goals. Studying has no inherent value unless it is aimed at educating: "the act is the education. . . . everything done outside of that . . . is educational aids."⁹⁹ The goal is to "strengthen and fortify the girls' faith."¹⁰⁰ Formal girls' education is the result of an unfortunate change in circumstances in the family and outside of it. In fact, it is a less valuable substitute for what girls once learned in the educational framework of home.

Ostensibly, women in today's Jewish society acquire a formal education and therefore are superior to women in the past, who had no such education.¹⁰¹ However, Wolf adopts Orlean's line of argument in this case as well and emphasizes that it is not that women's knowledge of the Torah has expanded but that the system of learning has changed. In the men's realm, what was once learned from serving Torah scholars is today learned from the written and printed book. The book is a substitute for life and, as such, is inferior to the original and to the immediate experience of actually living in a scholarly environment. A person who from infancy learns from his environment, can internalize the knowledge acquired, is thus, in this sense, more knowledgeable than someone who simply reads books. "It is a mistake to think that the girl who learns from a book is superior to the virtuous woman who never learned to read. In those times daily life itself was a book."¹⁰² The same idea applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to women's education. Elsewhere Wolf wrote:

The extensiveness of knowledge is not necessarily dependent upon the book, but rather on the environment, social circles, atmosphere being full of God's Torah. . . . A girl who grows up in the house of wise Torah scholars can recite the laws of the Sabbatical Year, even if she does not know in which of the sacred books these laws are written. In previous generations that home was full of holy conversation, about the baking of Matzot before Passover, about the devout selection of an *etrog*, the customs of each holiday, and about the entire Torah.¹⁰³

This knowledge, anchored in the perception of the decline of the generations (*yeridat ha-dorot*), is part of the content that must be instilled in the heart of a Beit Yaakov student. Only if the student truly internalizes it can the teacher declare the education a success: "And if the educator examines his work, whether his education was successful, that will be the sign! When the girl knows that learning is a tool for becoming like the mothers who did not study, then her education has succeeded."¹⁰⁴ Wolf even goes so far as decreeing that "all the studies in Beit Yaakov are nothing but a temporary provision . . . and if no circle is known today that denies girls' education in schools, this is nothing but a sign of decline."¹⁰⁵

What about the teachers in Beit Yaakov? Here too, Wolf adheres to Orlean and prioritizes the teacher-educator's personality and ability to educate over the imparting of knowledge. The primary measure of success for teachers in the institution "is not their students' knowledge but their comportment; these teachers are there not so much to teach, but to educate."¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, Wolf's curriculum emphasizes educational knowledge, that is, the knowledge that brings the student closer to the essence of the commandments rather than the knowledge itself, which is secondary. Thus, for example, Wolf wrote about Ministry of Education programs for nature studies in kindergartens: "You can experiment in pre-schools, but the point is the education, not enriching knowledge or expanding false horizons."¹⁰⁷ It is wrong to merely impart knowledge, since this creates the false impression that science is everything. He reiterates that the sacred and the profane should not be intermingled: "One should not proceed from the Commandments to science or the secular; the Commandments are sacred,"¹⁰⁸ and should be studied in the same manner as they were studied in the past. He admits that this is the system in most preschools in Israel and abroad today, and it cannot be abandoned, but it is important to ensure that the scientific content imparted throughout should remain a secondary rather than the main goal.¹⁰⁹ Haredi educators in the Land of Israel believe that general education is permissible "under duress" only; even religious knowledge is nothing but a means for personal growth. Education for its own sake is not important, and when it comes to girls, even religious knowledge must be aimed at instilling faith and values.

Wolf, like Orlean, concluded that Rabbi Hirsch himself did not view his own educational doctrine as ideal and, if he could, he would have stuck with the traditional method of Jewish education. Unfortunately, the situation in Germany left him with no choice, and he was forced to apply the doctrine provisionally. Ultimately, Wolf pronounces, "It was not the system of Torah im Derekh Eretz itself, but rather the books of the Rabbi [Hirsch] that saved the generation;

his understanding of the Torah rather than his view of the world.”¹¹⁰ Even this success was limited, since Germany produced no prodigies, and very few devoted themselves exclusively to studying Torah. Ultimately, yeshiva students are the mainstay “upon which every house in Israel depends, and it is they who nourish the entire world.”¹¹¹

According to Wolf, Hirsch sought knowledge from general culture, but not its worldviews or ways of life. In practice, however, it is impossible to separate the two: One cannot acquire the knowledge without the worldviews and ways of life. Secular studies are imbued with views contradictory to the Torah, and all secular books contain heresy, both overt and covert. In any case, Torah studies should take precedence over secular studies, since “without this he cannot understand nature and history in the spirit of Rabbi Hirsch.”¹¹²

Wolf distinguishes between Hirsch’s Torah im Derekh Eretz, about which he has reservations and in which he identifies flaws, and a “hybrid” system, which he unequivocally rules out. The hybrid system combines two orientations: Torah and general education, each independent of the other. This hybridization is uneducational, since it combines the Torah with other elements and in practice neglects both. In the Torah im Derekh Eretz system, in contrast, the study of nature and history are an aid to Bible studies: History is studied in the sense that one may study the chronicles of the world according to the Book of Prophets, and nature is studied in the sense that one learns about the work of the Creator and recognize His greatness through a study of the natural world.¹¹³ General education, then, cannot be independent: Education is not a grafting of two unrelated species, but rather two branches of the same tree. Today, Wolf explains, all institutions teach secular studies at some level or another, even as part of Torah studies, but these studies are provisional. The nature of such studies should follow the spirit of Rabbi Hirsch (as he understood it) in that they are aids in the study of the Bible rather than independent subjects. The hybrid education system poses an existential threat, and one must take care not to be seduced by the “disease of grafting.” “The conclusion is clear: Study secular studies based exclusively on the sacred!”¹¹⁴

According to Wolf, since secular studies are already taking place provisionally in girls’ education, it is important to aspire for the good and reject the bad. Furthermore, secular studies should not be imbued with any inherent value. Wolf does not provide many details about how to approach secular studies. For example, geography and history must be taught in the spirit of faith; it is not enough to leave out geological eras and the imaginary age of the world. Likewise, it is not enough to learn about Haifa as a port city with oil refineries since, if we omit mention of the Ramat Vizhnitz community in Haifa, or the unfortunate existence

of public transportation on the Sabbath, a false impression is created that there is a “general” Haifa and then the haredi public, which has separate institutions. In reality, the yeshivas of Haifa, and the haredi *kolelim* (talmudic study institutions for married men) in particular, are the reason for Haifa’s existence, and the earthly institutions are insignificant. The same is true for other lands: one cannot learn about England without mentioning the community of Gateshead, “where there is a very important yeshiva, a teacher’s seminary, a community that is entirely haredi.”¹¹⁵ Its population may be far smaller than that of other English cities, but “it is the weight that matters rather than size.” Wolf concludes: “This is not a perspective, but rather a reality—‘everything is done for the sake of Israel’ (Yevamot: 62). The mayor of New York may not know that Williamsburg, Monsey, Borough Park, and New Square are the heart of New York; but, thank God, we know it—and the person who knows certainly cannot become enslaved to the person who does not.”¹¹⁶

Of the two founders of Beit Yaakov in Israel then, Rabbi Szczeransky’s approach was closer to the spirit of Torah im Derekh Eretz, though more moderate, while Rabbi Wolf, a disciple of the very same school that rejected this approach, gave it a “new interpretation” that dispensed with its essence. By the next generation, Wolf’s approach had clearly prevailed. Even Rabbi Benjamin Szczeransky, Meir Szczeransky’s own son, who took over his position as director of the Beit Yaakov seminary in Tel Aviv, reiterated repeatedly that Rabbi Hirsch’s system was merely used provisionally in response to the needs of the time. In his book *Iggeret Latalmidim* (A missive to the students), he devotes a chapter to the question of general studies at Beit Yaakov.¹¹⁷ In this chapter he surveys different responses to Hirsch’s educational doctrine and demonstrates that Eastern European contemporaries, such as Rabbi Boruch Ber Leibowitz, head of the Kamenitz Yeshiva, and the Gerer Rebbe, the Imre Emet, held Hirsch in great esteem for his rescue of German Jewry. However, at the same time they also indicated that this doctrine was appropriate for that specific time and place only, and its transposition to other places posed an existential threat to Jewish education. Benjamin Szczeransky emphasizes that this was Hirsch’s own position as well. General education should be ruled out: In our era everyone admits that education cannot serve as a tool to rectify the soul.¹¹⁸ General studies are aimed at training students to integrate into humanity’s technological development. However, since this is not the goal of the Beit Yaakov movement—which has no interest in educating women engineers, physicists, or doctors—such studies cannot contribute to instilling the only true wisdom in the world, that is, piety. Therefore, such studies can be dismissed. The central goal in girls’ education is to “raise them to be faithful companions to the Torah scholars, those who meditate on the Torah. In any case, general studies are not very important to fulfilling this

role.”¹¹⁹ It is only because of the requirements of secular law that haredi education is compelled to integrate secular studies, so as to prevent the entry of unworthy teachers into the system.

Beit Yaakov in Israel, Part 2: The Creation of the Haredi “Society of Scholars”

Rabbi Benjamin Szczeransky brings us to the next phase, the great endeavor that the Israeli Beit Yaakov network embarked upon in the 1950s: the establishment of a haredi “society of scholars.” This society, investigated by Menachem Friedman and others, is one in which men study the Torah throughout their lives, while women take on the burden of being breadwinners in addition to managing their home and families.¹²⁰ How did Beit Yaakov ultimately contribute to realizing this goal? It seems clear that Beit Yaakov was an important means of establishing the “society of scholars” in Israel.

The establishment of the “society of scholars” entailed a genuine transformation in the status of haredi women, which, in turn, required a range of explanations and justifications.¹²¹ On the one hand, this new status meant that haredi women were exposed to general society and culture much more than their husbands, and some foresaw that women would become “agents of modernization” in haredi society.¹²² On the other hand, haredi women shouldered the burden of creating the economic foundations for a process that was ultimately aimed at increasing the self-segregation of haredi society. Moreover, these women became enmeshed in a busy, taxing, and challenging way of life, one that left them with little time to meaningfully take advantage of cultural and professional opportunities.

In terms of girls’ education, the “society of scholars” revolution brought down barriers in two key areas: Torah studies for women and the transformation of women into those who bear the burden of supporting the family financially. However, Rabbi Wolf, justifiably considered one of the architects of this revolution, saw haredi society as a continuation of traditional society and the preserver of its values. He emphasized that there was no difference in rank between a man and a woman, since both are capable of achieving closeness to God. Each, however, attains their rank through the fulfillment of a different purpose.¹²³ The man does so through studying Torah, and the woman by enabling him to do so, by making it possible for him to devote his time to that purpose.¹²⁴

We have seen that Orlean was afraid of the disruptions to the family order wrought by modern gender equality. He believed that the means of preventing these disruptions was preservation of the family’s patriarchal structure. Wolf was also fearful of disruption and aware that the traditional family was further

threatened by the very changes haredi society itself had introduced—women's Torah study and their entry into the marketplace. As we have seen, he explicitly called for the preservation of the different purposes of each gender and of the patriarchal family order.

Not surprisingly, Wolf found time to comment on the feminist revolution. Like Orlean, he categorically rejected it and did not believe that it benefits women, since men and women are fundamentally different: "Women's equal rights in the modern world are nothing but a distortion of her natural persona. The reality of the woman created in the six days of Genesis was perverted and distorted."¹²⁵ Man finds satisfaction in different things than a woman. A woman would not find satisfaction in the "equal rights" granted to her, nor would she find happiness and fulfillment. In the modern era, where new avenues have opened up to women and a woman is expected to realize herself in these avenues, she ends up losing on both ends: she does not find satisfaction in public roles, since they do not suit her personality, while at home, in "her own territory," she does not invest as much effort as she used to—"her devotion to her children has diminished, her motherly quality has suffered, and she has lost her ability to imbue the home with warmth, that atmosphere of love for God and mankind."¹²⁶ Thus, she can find no satisfaction there either. Moreover, beyond the individual loss suffered by the woman, the Jewish home suffers as well, through the loss of the warmth it used to be filled with in the past. These developments have led to a situation where women's "desire for sons has suffered and families diminished," leading to the phenomenon Wolf views as "suicide under the guise of 'reduced birthrates.'"¹²⁷ In sum, gender equality has led to the destruction of the family and its blessings.

Although Wolf was instrumental in leading the establishment of the "society of scholars," he elided and avoided discussing explicitly the problems inherent in women's going out to work. The issue is discussed directly in just one place in his book, where he explains that women's work outside the home is not fundamentally different from any other work she does on behalf of the family, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, or raising and educating the children. All this is God's work, including going out into the marketplace for work. The attempt to position work outside the home as extraordinary is fundamentally wrong and derived from a basic misunderstanding. For Wolf, the home is clearly what matters to the woman.¹²⁸

Beit Yaakov presented as its main goal the ideal of "establishing a home for Torah," where the woman's primary role is an "enabler."¹²⁹ That is, a woman's professional occupation is the means, while the man's occupation is the ultimate goal. Not only do women's religious studies at Beit Yaakov schools not enjoy the

same prestige as their husbands' talmudic studies, but they are almost always seen as a method of instilling faith and devoutness rather than knowledge or intellectual skills.¹³⁰ These studies are not even seen as the fulfilling of a commandment, since only men are commanded to study the Torah. Likewise, secular studies at Beit Yaakov are unequivocally seen as a practical means of acquiring a profession that will allow a woman to provide for her family, never as an end in and of itself. A woman need not aspire to be learned herself, but rather should "hope to be the wife of Torah scholar, for whom studying is his life, and mother to sons of the Torah."¹³¹

Wolf's educational endeavor was a success by any measure, probably beyond his hopes and imagination, and maybe even beyond what he would have liked to see it become: Fifty years later, the pattern of marriage, where the husband studies Torah and the wife supports him, has become the norm in Israel's haredi society. Those who deviate from this path are not considered to be living the appropriate life for a devout man.¹³²

Conclusion: The Twofold Victory of the Conservative Model

In general, the conflict over Beit Yaakov's path in Israel appears to be a nearly identical replaying of the previous debate in prewar Poland. In this sense, one might characterize the transformation undergone by the Beit Yaakov network in Israel as completing the victory of Orlean's method over Deutschländer's. Deutschländer believed in Torah im Derekh Eretz and saw value in acquiring a general education for its own sake. He was cognizant of the advantages of education professionally and pedagogically, as well as its role in shaping a student's life and her ability to truly understand and internalize Orthodox Jewish values. Orlean and haredi educators in Israel, by contrast, viewed general education as a mere means to an end, and even religious knowledge was seen primarily as a means of self-improvement: education for its own sake was unimportant, while religious knowledge was aimed at instilling faith and values. If the Polish Beit Yaakov, at one stage, may have symbolized the success and acceptance of the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine throughout Orthodox Jewish society beyond the boundaries of German cultural space, then the Israeli Beit Yaakov epitomizes the decline of this approach in post-Holocaust Israeli haredi society. In sum, Beit Yaakov transformed from an institution with a powerful foundation in the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine to a system focused on fostering the "society of scholars" in accordance with Israeli ultra-Orthodoxy.

All the same, the self-segregation endorsed today by Beit Yaakov did not start with Rabbi Wolf and his fellow leaders of the Israeli network of schools. This was

a process embarked upon by Orlean, who successfully eclipsed his predecessor, Deutschländer, and condemned his path. Thus, haredi Judaism of the twentieth century stood twice at a door offering a path to Neo-Orthodoxy, and twice it turned its back in favor of a more segregated and conservative road.

Notes

1. On Sara Schenirer, see Naomi Seidman, *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2019); Judith Grunfeld-Rosenbaum, "Sara Schenirer," in *Jewish Leaders 1750–1940*, ed. Leo Jung (Jerusalem: Boys Town, 1964), 405–32; Pearl Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart: Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer* (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1991); Michal Shaul, "Dor yatom mehapes ima: 'Moreshet Sara Schenirer' ki-kheli le-shikum ha-Hevrah ha-haredit ahare ha-Sho'ah," in *Me-bisardut le-bitbasesut: Temurot ba-bevrah ha-haredit uve-hikrah*, ed. Kimmy Caplan and Nurit Stadler (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and ha-Kibutz ha-me'uhad, 2012), 31–54; Rachel Manekin, "Mashehu hadash le-gamre: Hitpathuto shel ra'ayon ha-hinukh ha-dati le-vanot ba-'et ha-hadashah," *Masekhet* 2 (2004): 63–85; *Em ha-derekh: Me'asef* [Sara Schenirer Memorial Book] (Jerusalem: Otsar ha-hokhmah, 2005); *Sefer ha-yovel ha-25 shel Bet ha-sefer ha-tikhon veba-seminar le-gananot ule-morot Bet Ya'akov be-Tel Aviv, 1936–1961* (Tel Aviv: Beit Yaakov, 1961); Yehezkel Rotenberg, ed., *Em be-Yisra'el: Sefer zikaron le-Sarah Schenirer*, 4 vols. (Bnei Brak: Netsah, 1955–1960), in particular, the article by S. Yarhi, "Her History and Life's Work," 5–32. On the history of Beit Yaakov, see Abraham Atkin, "The Beth Jacob Movement in Poland (1917–1939)" (PhD diss., Yeshiva University, 1959); Deborah Weissman, "Hinukh banot datiyot bi-Yerushalayim bi-tekfut ha-shilton ha-Briti: Hitgabshutan ve-hitmastudtan shel hamesh ideologyot hinukhiyot" (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993); Hayim Shlomo Kazdan, *Di Gesbikhte fun yidishn shulvezn in umophengikn Poyln* (Mexico: Kultur un Hilf, 1947); Rachel Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters: Jewish Women Runaways in Habsburg Galicia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020) 182–235.

2. Iris Brown, "At the Heart of Two Revolutions: Beit Yaakov in Poland and in Israel, Between Neo-Orthodoxy and Ultra-Orthodoxy" (forthcoming). On the history of Jewish education, see, for instance, Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004); Shaul Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation and Education of Jewish Women in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe," *Polin* 7 (1992): 63–87; Avraham Grinboim, "'Hadar ha-banot' u-vanot be-hadar ha-banim be-mizrah Eropah li-fene milhemet ha-'olam ha-rishonah," in *Hinukh ve-historyah: Heksberim tarbutiyim u-folitiyim*, ed. Rivka Feldhay and Immanuel Erkes (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1999), 297–303; Manekin, "Mashehu hadash le-gamre," 63–85; Antony Polonsky, *The Jews of Poland and Russia* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010), 2:347–50.

3. The term "society of scholars" was coined by Menachem Friedman (see, for example, to describe the ultra-Orthodox sector in Israel in which men continue their Torah studies even many years after their marriage, and are sustained by their wives, state funds, and modest stipends from their "koylel" (study institution). Menachem Friedman, "Summary" [English], in *Ha-bevrah ha-haredit: Mekorot, megamot ve-tahalikhim* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991), iv. For the ideological justifications of this dramatic turn, see Iris Brown, "'I Shall Work': Justifications for and Consequences of Ultra-Orthodox Women Shouldering the Burden of Breadwinning," *Democratic Culture* 14 (2013): 7–74.

4. By "conservative" I wish to denote religious trends that are less open to modernity and change.

5. For more on this phenomenon, see Shaul, "Dor yatom."

6. Rotenberg, *Em be-Yisra'el*, 1:24. For a survey of various testimonies on this question, see, for example, Isaac Breuer, "Hashpa'at sifre ha-Rav Hirsh 'al Sarah Shenirer," in Rotenberg, *Em be-Yisra'el*, 3:31; Leo Deutschländer, "Sara Schenirer," *Nahalat Tzevi* 7/8 (March–May 1935): 168–71.

7. Brown, "At the Heart of Two Revolutions."

8. Schenirer encountered Rabbi Hirsch's model in Vienna. In tandem with the doctrine of Torah im Derekh Eretz, which had to do with the combination of secular and religious studies, Hirsch's model determined that women are permitted a priori to study the Torah, and that the only thing distinguishing them from men is the study of Halakhah, Jewish law. According to Hirsch, the transmission of the Halakhah through the generations is the responsibility of men and, therefore, only they are permitted to study the Halakhah and its sources. Women are exempt from these studies. He believed that the study of the Bible, ethics, and other Jewish subjects, in contrast, are also necessary for girls. For more on the development of formal Torah studies for women, see Iris Brown, "Ben teva' ha-ishah le-marut ha-ba'al," *Zebuyot* 3 (2013): 97–112.

9. See, for example, Wolf S. Jacobson, *Zikbronot* (Jerusalem: ha-Merkaz le-sifrut haredit be-Erets Yisra'el, 1952), 107.

10. Wolf S. Jacobson, *'Esa de'i me-rabok: Pirke zikbronot* (Bnei Brak: Netsah), 95. Also see Gershon Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 167–68. Bacon describes a gradual process leading up to this, from a local Agudat Israel decision in Krakow to the national level.

11. Atkin, "The Beth Jacob Movement," 38.

12. Dr. Judith Grunfeld (Rosenbaum) was an active partner in the efforts to extend Beit Yaakov beyond Poland, and was Deutschländer's assistant both in his educational endeavors and in his fund-raising for the seminary in Krakow. See Miriam Dansky, *Rebbetzin Grunfeld: The Life of Judith Grunfeld, Courageous Pioneer of the Bais Ya'akov Movement and Jewish Rebirth* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1994), 87–171; Miriam Strak Zakon, *The Queen of Bais Ya'akov: The Story of Dr. Judith Grunfeld* (Southfield, MI: Targum, 2001), 47–71; Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart*, 58–64, 75–81.

13. Grunfeld-Rosenbaum, "Sara Schenirer," 426.

14. *Ibid.*, 426–27.

15. However, in contrast to Schenirer, who received appreciation and everlasting fame for her efforts on behalf of Jewish girls' education, Deutschländer's name is largely unknown and conspicuously absent from haredi literature. I have treated this phenomenon in depth in Brown, "At the Heart of Two Revolutions," and demonstrated that this overlooking of Deutschländer is largely ascribable to the Neo-Orthodox approach he sought to bring to Beit Yaakov.

16. Jacobson, *Zikbronot*, 209.

17. Schenirer, "Letters," in Rotenberg, *Em be-Yisra'el*, 1:60.

18. Sarah Schenirer, *Vos darf zayn mit der yudisher tokhter?* (Lodz: Ferlag Beit-Yaakov-zhurnal, 1930). This pamphlet was written some thirteen years after establishing Beit Yaakov and presents a more conservative position aimed at an audience of relatively conservative Orthodox parents. This pamphlet was eventually translated into German and Hebrew, and one can find significant differences between the different language versions. The translators appear to have adjusted the pamphlet to its target audience. The German and Hebrew versions published in Israel introduce a curriculum that includes secular studies, while the Yiddish original published in Poland omits mention of them.

19. Leo Deutschländer, *Bais Jakob: Sein Werden und Wesen* (Vienna: Verlag der Keren Hathora Zentrale, 1928), 39–40, 42. We return to the curriculum later in this chapter.

20. *Ibid.*, 40, 41, 43.

21. Leo Deutschländer, *Schem VaJephet: Westöstliche Dichterklänge: Jüdisches Lesebuch*, (Breslau: Priebatsch's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1918). The book was written prior to his joining Beit Yaakov, when Deutschländer was occupied with establishing Orthodox Jewish educational institutions in Lithuania.

22. Deutschländer, *Bais Jakob*, 43.

23. Mordechai Friedmann, "Mifgash yahadut Torah 'im derekh erets 'im ha-harediyut ha-mizrah Eropet," in *Torah 'im derekh erets: Ha-tenu'ah, isbeha, ra'ayonoteha*, ed. Mordechai Breuer and Asher Wasserteil (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1987), 173–78; Emmanuel Bloch, "Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch and the Doctrine of 'Torah Im Derekh Erets' in the Eyes of the Hareidim," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 24 (2015), 273–300; Eliezer Hayoun, "Rashar Hirsch—Mitos harig be-hevrat ha-lomdim ha-haredit," *Heker ha-bevrah ha-haredit* 4 (2017): 55–80, www.jstor.org/stable/24432029.

24. Orlean, *Be'ayot ha-binukh* (Jerusalem: Moreshet Sofrim, 1984), 192.
25. *Ibid.*, 191.
26. Orlean believed that the primary focus was the person, or the teacher; the program (or curriculum) comes second, while method is of minor importance, in third place. *Ibid.*, 40.
27. *Ibid.*, 41. For more on the Beit Yaakov curriculum, especially during Orlean's last years, and the distinctions between the various kinds of schools that were part of the network, see Kh. Sh. Kazdan, *Di gesbikhte fun yidisbn shulvezn*, 489–99.
28. Known as the “Imre Emet.”
29. Hillel Seidman, *Isim she-hikarti* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1970), 193.
30. Yehuda Leib Orlean, “Mavo,” in Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Yesodot ha-binukh*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Netzah, 1958).
31. See Friedmann, “Mifgash yahadut Torah”; Bloch, “Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch”; Hayoun, “Rashar Hirsch.”
32. Orlean, “Mavo,” 24–25.
33. *Ibid.*, 11.
34. *Ibid.*, 12.
35. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra, folio 21, 1.
36. Orlean, “Mavo,” 24–25.
37. *Ibid.*, 26.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 34.
40. *Ibid.*, 39.
41. *Ibid.*, 41.
42. Orlean, *Be'ayot ha-binukh*, 102, 38.
43. *Ibid.*, 98.
44. *Ibid.*, 101.
45. *Ibid.*, 102.
46. *Ibid.*, 38–39.
47. *Ibid.*, 103.
48. *Ibid.*, 114–15.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Apparently this debate preceded the internal Orthodox debate that erupted many years later about the Torah im Derekh Eretz doctrine as a whole. This debate focused on the question of whether the doctrine emerged in retrospect, out of necessity, or was a priori intended as such. See Friedmann, “Mifgash yahadut Torah”; Bloch, “Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch.”
51. Leo Deutschländer, “Sara Schenirer,” *Nach'lat Z'vi* 7/8 (Marz–Mai 1935), 168–71. Deutschländer also submitted a briefer, rather banal, obituary to the Third Grand Convention of Agudat Yisrael: Leo Deutschländer, “Sara Schenirer S.a.,” in *Programm und Leistung: Keren HaThora und Beth Jakob* (London: Verlag der Keren Hathora-Zentrale, 1937), 90–91. The same volume also contains an obituary of Deutschländer, written by Louis Weiler (92–94).
52. Deutschländer, “Sara Schenirer,” 168–71.
53. Yehudah Leib Orlean, “Eshet hayil,” in Rotenberg, *Em be-Yisra'el*, 3:36–57. Orlean's essay builds on the famous chapter from Proverbs by the same name: He works through each verse from Proverbs to explain how Schenirer was a “woman of valor” in line with the biblical description.
54. *Ibid.*, 37.
55. *Ibid.*, 39.
56. *Ibid.*, 42.
57. Orlean, *Be'ayot ha-binukh*, 29–40.
58. *Ibid.*, 29.
59. *Ibid.*, 37.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*

62. Ibid., 38.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 39.
65. Ibid., 40.
66. Judah Loeb Orlean, *Yidish lebn: Lern kapitlen far Yebadus* (Warsaw: Grafia, 1933; 2nd exp. ed., 1938); Deutschländer, *Schem VaJephet*.
67. Orlean, *Yidish lebn*, 18–23, 32–40.
68. Ibid., 101–2.
69. Judah Loeb Orlean, “Ahdur” in Rotenberg, *Em be-Yisra’el*, 231–47; a similar essay appears in his book *Be’ayot ha-binukh*, 55–72.
70. Orlean, “Ahdut,” 239–40.
71. Ibid., 242.
72. Ibid., 246.
73. Orlean, *Be’ayot ha-binukh*, 69.
74. Ibid., 70.
75. Judah Loeb Orlean, *Der farsbivundener gan-edem* (Warsaw: Bajs Jakow, 1931).
76. Ibid., 1–2.
77. Ibid., 5–6.
78. Ibid., 8.
79. Ibid., 9.
80. On splits and factions within the Beit Yaakov network, see Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah*, 158–59.
81. Moshe Porush, “Bet Ya’akov be-Tel Aviv,” in *Sefer ha-yovel ha-25 shel bet ha-sefer ha-tikhon veba-seminar le-gananot u-morot “Beit Ya’akov” be-Tel Aviv* (Tel Aviv: Beit Ya’akov Seminary, 1961), 57.
82. Menahem Porush, “Beit Ya’akov and the Yeshivas,” in *Sefer ha-yovel*, 62.
83. Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, quoted in Moshe Mordechai Schlesinger, “Peninim mi-shulhan gavoha,” *Yated Ne’eman, Sukkot holiday supplement*, November 13, 1989, 5.
84. Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah*, 116–17.
85. Meir Szczeransky, “Berurim bi-devar limud Torah le-nashim,” in *Sefer ha-yovel*, 103; Meir Szczeransky, *Or ha-Me’ir* (Tel Aviv: Beit Ya’akov Seminary, 1941), 6–7.
86. Emphasis in the original. Szczeransky, “Berurim bi-devar limud Torah,” 106.
87. Ibid., 107. Rabbi Szczeransky was an educator and administrator but was not considered an authority in talmudic studies. Therefore, he presented his position to one of the great rabbinical leaders of his time, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin. Sorotzkin, who had served as the chairman of Agudat Israel’s Council of Torah Greats, replied at length. The reply reveals that Szczeransky had raised the possibility, at least theoretically, that a “select excellent few” girls could study talmudic literature in depth. See Meir Szczeransky, “Teshuvah bi-devar limud Torah le-nashim,” in *Sefer ha-yovel*, 110.
88. Meir Szczeransky, *Gedole Yisra’el: Rabi Shimschon Refa’el Hirsh* (Tel Aviv: Beit Yaakov, 1941), 21.
89. Szczeransky, *Or ha-Me’ir*, 53; Szczeransky (anonymously), “Sekirah,” in *He-’Atid: Kovets ma’amarim*, ed. Meir Szczeransky (Tel Aviv: Beit Yaakov, 1946), 20. It should be noted that the Beit Yaakov high school was established in 1933 and the teachers’ seminary in 1937.
90. Szczeransky, *Or ha-Me’ir*, 54.
91. Ibid., 54.
92. Ibid., 56–57.
93. Szczeransky, *He-’Atid*.
94. Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah*, 57–58.
95. Ibid., 57–58.
96. Yosef Avraham Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve’ayoteha*, 4 vols. (Bnei Brak: L. Friedmann, 1984).
97. The examinations, which are today administered by Israel’s Ministry of Education, are theoretically meant to be at the same level as general matriculation exams. It appears, however, that the level is lower in English and Math. A passing grade in these examinations is 60, which is also the

threshold for acceptance to thirteenth- and fourteenth-grade tracks, which award teaching certification, technical training certification, or a diploma from the Ministry of Commerce and Employment.

98. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 177.
99. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 1, *Hinukh*, 50.
100. Ibid., 44.
101. Ibid., 45.
102. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 175.
103. Ibid.
104. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 1, *Hinukh*, 46.
105. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 176.
106. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 1, *Hinukh*, 110.
107. Ibid., 297.
108. Ibid., 301.
109. Ibid., 302.
110. Ibid., 87.
111. Ibid., 93.
112. Ibid., 88–93.
113. Ibid., 100–107.
114. Ibid., 103.
115. Ibid., 106.
116. Ibid.
117. Benjamin Szczeranski, *Igeret la-talmidab* (Tel Aviv: Beit Ya'akov Seminary, 1988), 348–57.
118. He argues that the Holocaust is decisive proof that education and science contribute nothing to rectifying human nature: “There is no need for further evidence beyond the Holocaust and this wretched destruction to refute the ‘progressive’ view about the contribution of culture and science towards rectifying human nature and refining his spirit and qualities.” Szczeranski, *Igeret la-talmidab*, 354.
119. Ibid.
120. Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah*, 57–58.
121. I have treated this topic in depth in Brown, “I Shall Work.”
122. Menachem Friedman, *Ha-Ishah ba-haredit* (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim le-heker Yisra'el, 1988), 11–15. In a later article, Friedman withdrew this prediction and attempted to explain why it did not come to be. See Friedman, “Kol kevodah bat melekh huts'ah: ha-Ishah ha-haredit,” in *Barukh she-'asani isbah? ha-Ishah ba-Yahadut meba-Tanakh ve-'ad yamenu*, ed. David Ariel-Joel et al. (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Aharonot, Sifre Hemed, 1999), 189–205.
123. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 1, *Hinukh*, 46.
124. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 177. For more on this subject, see Brown, “I Shall Work.”
125. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 109.
126. Ibid., 111.
127. Ibid., 177.
128. Ibid., 181.
129. Saul Berman, “The Status of Women in Halakhic Judaism,” *Tradition* 14, no. 2 (1973): 8.
130. If we were to review various answers by Israeli haredi rabbis and educators, we would find that their primary justification for permitting women to study Talmud is their fear of the negative effects of exposure to general education, popular culture, and the streets. They appear to be less concerned with women's lack of appropriate religious knowledge. This perspective seems to have gained acceptance and even become more extreme. Rabbi Wolf Jacobsohn writes that the purpose of girls' education today is “not to increase the girls' knowledge but to save souls.” Jacobsohn, *'Esa de'i merabok*, 235–37. Rabbi Wolf reiterates: “The purpose of Beit Yaakov is not livelihood, but education.” Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 4, *De'ot u-midot*, 212–17. Beit Yaakov regulations determine that the role of education is not merely to impart knowledge but also to impart spirit and become an in-

fluent force in shaping students' personalities. The undervaluing or denigration of knowledge appears to be a regular theme among haredi educators in Israel. Knowledge is merely a means in shaping the student's path.

131. Wolf, *Ha-Tekufah u-ve'ayoteha*, vol. 1, *Hinukh*, 55–56.

132. Friedman, *Ha-Hevrah*, 74–77; idem, “Ha-Ishah ha-haredit,” in *Eshnav le-bayehen shel nashim ba-havarot Yehudiyot*, ed. Ya’el Atzmon (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1995), 273–90.

CHAPTER 7

Hasidic Leadership: From Charismatic to Hereditary and Back

Benjamin Brown

Hasidism is a movement with hereditary leadership. This fact brooks no dissent. The first shoots of the dynastic pattern began to appear as early as the late eighteenth century, they became common in the early nineteenth century, and, by the mid-nineteenth century, they became the rule followed by the vast majority of Hasidic groups. However, there are exceptions to this rule, and it seems that such exceptions have grown more common in the course of the second half of the twentieth century, as Hasidism has replanted itself in Israel, the United States, and other Western democracies.

Although Hasidic leaders and their followers eagerly wished to preserve the patterns that had characterized Hasidism in Eastern Europe even as they replanted the movement in its new settings, and partly succeeded in doing so, these new settings have had unforeseen impacts on Hasidic life. On the one hand, the Hasidic rebbes had to found their courts almost *ex nihilo*, and develop new organizational structures that rendered Hasidism still more institutionalized than before. Thus, the Hasidic communities established comprehensive educational systems and mutual-aid funds that serve members from cradle to grave. Towns and neighborhoods that belong to particular Hasidic groups have become a widespread phenomenon, and the average Hasid's opportunities to leave his community have been reduced. In Israel, the Hasidim have become part of Israel's distinctive *haredi* "society of scholars" (to use Menachem Friedman's term),¹ embracing its defining ideal of full-time talmudic studies for all competent men, even after marriage, in stark contrast to the practice in Eastern Europe. Israeli Hasidim have grown ever more involved in the national political system, once largely dominated by Israel's secular Jewish hegemony.

All of these factors differentiate contemporary Hasidism quite substantially from the Hasidism of prewar Eastern Europe. Even more so, they differentiate Hasidism from its remote late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century past character as a movement oriented around spiritual seeking under the guidance of mystical-charismatic leaders.² But even if this is true to a considerable degree, over the course of the twentieth century, and especially in recent years, some figures in the Hasidic movement have revived some of the spiritual elements of the movement's remote Eastern European past, and given them a new shape. And, by the same token, many Hasidim have clearly come to yearn for such spiritual leaders. The more general renewal of religious spirituality toward the end of the twentieth century added its own impetus to this trend, as has the emergence in recent years of new forms of *nonhereditary* leadership in Hasidic life.

Two major developments, which occurred consecutively over the course of the past seventy years, can be said to have framed the basic tendencies of post-Holocaust Hasidism in Israel (and to a lesser degree in other new centers). On the one hand, as it began to reemerge from the ashes in years following the Holocaust and Israel's establishment, Hasidism—still weak—found itself confronting a sovereign, secular Jewish state led by its ideological adversaries. Under such circumstances, it was perhaps natural that Hasidic leaders and communities felt a conservative need to stick to institutionalized leadership (and well-established institutional patterns on the whole). By contrast, more recent decades have seen a dramatic expansion of Hasidism, the development of a more variegated constituency, and growing self-confidence; such circumstances pave the way for growing openness to new, somewhat anti-establishment forms of leadership (and noninstitutional patterns on the whole). Both of these developments have shaped the changes that Hasidism has undergone in its passage from Eastern Europe to Israel. Three major types of nonhereditary leadership in contemporary Hasidism have taken shape or gained coherence against the background of these two general transformations. The first is the phenomenon of *tzaddikim*, who, though their authority is rooted in the normative dynastic system, show notable *independent* charisma. The second is the phenomenon of the “new” *tzaddikim*, leaders who have emerged at the center of later Hasidism despite lack of any pedigree. The third is the phenomenon of the *mashpi'im*, or “fervent preachers,” a phenomenon that circumvents the institution of the rebbe in general and dynastic rebbes in particular. While the second phenomenon existed in prewar Europe, in particular in Hungary, the first and the third are more peculiar to the setting of the Western countries in the period of the second postwar Hasidic generation, that is, from the 1980s and on. In Israel, a high birthrate, generous government support, and strong hierarchic organization enabled the Hasidim to establish large communities, which helped create tight social solidarity, provided them with many

of their basic needs, and fostered their *esprit de corps*. In some of the communities, however, the rebbe has become almost unreachable, and direct contact with him has decreased to the necessary minimum. The strength of the institutionalized community has thus become a source of weakness as well. Some Hasidim were and remain satisfied with that state of things; others, though, have sought to fulfill their spiritual quests “outside,” in other forms of Hasidic community, without necessarily leaving their home community. In some cases, the mother community has felt strong enough to contain minor deviations; in others, such “straying” has actually meant cutting the old bonds. This chapter delineates these three types of leadership, describes their development, and suggests a few directions for their further analysis.

Historical Background: The Heteronomous Turn and the “Dynastization” of Hasidism

In early Hasidism, until approximately 1815,³ Hasidic leaders gained their status by virtue of their charisma, in the Weberian sense of the word—a supernatural gift or endowment of divine powers that enabled them to exceed regular human capabilities.⁴ In the case of Hasidism, this connotes individuals who attained powerful mystical experiences, or discovered the ability to perform wonders, and who became prominent in their environs in spite of the fact that they did not have a glorious lineage.⁵ In later Hasidism, through a process that became increasingly well established in the early nineteenth century, the movement became dynastic.⁶ Thus, individuals who had achieved their positions by their own right bequeathed them to their sons, grandsons, or some other successor in their families. These heirs often achieved charisma as well, but this was what Max Weber called “inherited charisma” (and I return to this term below). Some of these dynasties continued as one line, but the majority split into numerous branches. They fought with each other, reconciled, and intermarried in the best tradition of royal dynasties and aristocracies throughout the world. This process took place in parallel with a broader process of the reembrace of conservative, traditionalist ideals, such as Torah study, the strict fulfillment of the mitzvot, and the discarding of “dangerous” values once accepted in early Hasidism, such as mystical *devekut* (cleaving to, or reaching intimate communion with, God), the elevation of alien thoughts (sinful or mundane ideas) during prayer, and “sin for the sake of Heaven.” Mendel Piekartz called this process a “retreat to the heteronomous elements of the religion,” but we will refer to it more simply—and less judgmentally—as “the heteronomous turn.”⁷

There are, it seems, a number of reasons for this process. I note here three main factors, all of which played a part: first, the general and inherent need of dynamic

religious movements to attain routinization and institutionalization; second, the need to develop an “Orthodox response” to the forces of secularization and modernity that were beginning to gain ground in Eastern Europe; and third, the impact of criticism from the Mitnagdim, the opponents of Hasidism within traditional society. The first of these factors is most closely identified with the arguments of Gershom Scholem, and is consistent with Weber’s sociological theory, as Steven Sharot has convincingly demonstrated.⁸ The second need was discussed in a pointed manner by Piekarz, and corresponds closely to the theory of “Orthodoxy as reaction” as postulated by Jacob Katz.⁹ The third was suggested by several Orthodox authors, and was even attributed to the third rebbe of Habad, Menahem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Tzemah Tzedek.¹⁰ In any case, reality required, and perhaps even forced, the leaders of Hasidism to descend from their sublime heights and provide solutions for urgent and mundane challenges.¹¹

The transition to charismatic succession, as well as the heteronomous turn in general, reflect institutionalization, and this process is open to value judgments. Those who favored the romanticization of Hasidism expressed reservations about this process, which they saw as “decline,” “degeneration,” and “waning.”¹² We may refer to this approach as “the degeneration thesis.” Conversely, the same development may be regarded as a process of healthy maturation vital for a movement that sought to offer not only a spiritual foundation but also a social and even political framework, and that was forced to defend itself in the face of the waves of modernization that threatened its very existence—an approach that we may call “the maturation thesis.”¹³ Naturally, these are judgment calls that cannot be determined by the facts alone. Regardless, both of these accounts suggest that the revival of some of the non-institutionalized patterns can and should be considered signs of religious revival.

By the late nineteenth century, the victory of the hereditary model in Hasidism seemed absolute. There were, however, a few important exceptions even then. At least three types of phenomena complicate the picture of “dynastization” triumphant. Those three types, which I enumerated in the introductory section—that is, the dynastic tzaddikim with independent charisma, the “new” tzaddikim, and the mashpi'im—have not so far challenged the dynastic model, but at least the third one has begun to concern some of the present rebbes and their court establishment. I consider each of these types separately.

Pedigreed Tzaddikim with Independent Charisma

As noted, leaders in a hereditary system often enjoy a charisma, but that charisma is usually characterized as “inherited charisma”—whatever supernatural “halo” the leader possesses, he possesses by dint of his predecessors.¹⁴

This characterization certainly holds for the vast majority of rebbes in later Hasidism.

However, it is not true for all of them. Even Martin Buber, who was one of the pioneers of the “degeneration thesis” and included the linear succession of rebbes as one of the clearest signs of “decline,” saw fit to single out certain successor rebbes as worthy of attention alongside the founder figures his account privileged—the line of succession of the Maggid of Mezeritch (not only down to Rebbe Yisroel of Ruzhin, but even down to his sons!) or the sons of Rebbe Mordekhai of Lekhovitch and of the Maggid of Kozhnitz.¹⁵ His distinction appears to be between individuals who secured their leadership position solely on hereditary grounds and those who, despite being leaders by dint of succession, showed *independent* charisma that might have emerged and influenced their surroundings even if they had *not* inherited their status. However, while in principle the same phenomenon could have appeared in the twentieth century, or indeed later, Buber ends his book at the close of the nineteenth century, as if to suggest that even these remnants of charisma have their limit.

Yet, in fact, well into the twentieth century we can find tzaddikim who could easily have been included in Buber’s book. I will mention just two examples: Rebbe Aharon Rokeach of Belz (1880–1957) and Rebbe Ya’akov Aryeh Milikowsky (b. 1947)—the current Amshinover Rebbe.¹⁶ R. Aharon Rokeach, the Belzer Rebbe, has been the subject of some research interest, but this has focused almost exclusively on his escape from Hungary in 1944.¹⁷ Secular and religious Zionist authors have described that escape, and even more so the sermon that the Belzer Rebbe’s brother R. Mordekhai held in Budapest shortly before it, as a moral stain. In that sermon, R. Mordekhai promised, in the name of the Rebbe, “calm and peace” to the Jews of Hungary—just a few months before the Nazi invasion of the country.¹⁸ In Hasidic collective memory, however, the Belzer Rebbe is admired as one of the extraordinary figures of the generation, his “miraculous” escape is taken as part of God’s particular providence upon him, and the sermon was ignored and/or quoted without the problematic paragraph. The main issue in the Hasidic descriptions of R. Aharon, however, is not this chapter of his life story, but his saintly personality and the course of his life as a rebbe—aspects almost completely ignored in scholarly research.

Although R. Aharon inherited his position from his father, Rebbe Yissokhor Ber of Belz (1854–1926), it was apparent from the outset that his approach was very different from his father’s, and to a large extent from the general spirit of the Belzer Hasidic dynasty. Previous Belzer rebbes had been, simultaneously, stringently orthodox in their religious behavior and attitude to religious law; steeped in the practical world; and thoroughly embroiled in Orthodox politics, where they advocated a zealous and ultra-conservative approach. R. Aharon, by

contrast, was a spiritual figure who preferred a moderate approach and sought to see the best in every Jew. He tended to concentrate on spiritual matters and found contact with the mundane world difficult.¹⁹

Immediately after assuming his position, R. Aharon made significant changes to the reception hours for Hasidim and for *kvitlekh*—the notes that individual Hasidim hand to their rebbe (usually accompanied by a payment of “redemption” money) so that the latter can intercede for them through prayer.²⁰ The changes introduced by R. Aharon led to the lengthening of the already considerable lines outside his home and to a reduction in the court’s income, which depended largely on donations.²¹ His Hasidim pressured the Rebbe, as in all probability did his family, for fear of the loss of an important source of income, and in response he extended the hours for reception of *kvitlekh*. Nevertheless, until the end of his life, entering his chambers with a note required a protracted wait, sometimes for several days. The Rebbe himself explained that he found it extremely difficult to receive *kvitlekh*. He was quoted as remarking: “It is easier to fell trees in the forest than to read a Jew’s *kvitl*.”²²

By the same token, as soon as he ascended his throne, R. Aharon began to hold his prayers later than the halakhic time—a conduct not to be taken for granted in a “rabbinic,” halakhically stringent dynasty such as Belz. His son Moshe, who was later murdered in the Holocaust, attributed this to the Nazis’ rise to power in Germany. More than once he has been reported to have said: “The wicked man [Hitler] mixed up Dad’s times.”²³ According to later testimonies, in the talk R. Aharon delivered during the first year of his tenure, he stated that thirteen years before a bad decree comes to effect, the *tzaddik* is notified it so that he be able to pray for its cancellation.²⁴ Thirteen years later World War II broke out. It might very well be that this prophecy was “reconstructed” *ex post facto*, but it certainly reflects R. Aharon’s image as a person whose ties with the upper worlds were not only closer than those of other *tzaddikim*, but also influenced his behavior.

The realm of Belz politics presents a contrasting picture of continuity—or so it seems at first glance. In the early years of his leadership, and particularly during the period before World War II, R. Aharon essentially maintained his predecessors’ political line. In 1928, he attended a meeting of Galician rabbis in Lwów intended to reinforce and ratify the underlying principles of *Machzikei Ha-Das*, an Orthodox political party over which Belz had seized control. A correspondent for the newspaper *Ha-Tsefirah* described the Rebbe’s conduct at the meeting thus: “The current Belzer Rebbe stays completely away from politics, and he was brought to the recent gathering of rabbis in Lwów by his followers against his will, like a puppet, in order to at least show the semblance of participating in the gathering.”²⁵ Thus it would seem that even when R. Aharon’s affinity for spiritual life

led him to withdraw from the practical world, the functionaries of his court pushed him to engage in mundane matters in order to maintain Belz's political influence.

Yet, somewhat ironically, the rebbe's intense spirituality created an aura of charisma that ultimately yielded political dividends far greater than those that could have been secured through direct political involvement. Testimonies portray R. Aharon as a man who observed unusual and mysterious personal practices. He ate just one modest meal a day, if at all, and slept for short periods that usually totaled no more than two hours a day. He devoted the vast majority of his time to worship and spiritual activity. He was particularly scrupulous concerning bodily purity, washing his hands many times a day, and sometimes several times an hour.²⁶ When the need arose to touch children beneath the age of bar mitzvah (and sometimes even adults), he did so through a special towel. Although he often tried to conceal the mystical aspects of his conduct, the rebbe sometimes hinted that certain acts or incidents were the result of the intervention of supernatural forces. For example, he was accustomed to closing the windows of his home to prevent the entry of the forces of Evil.²⁷ Once, during a *tish* (Hasidic gathering around the rebbe during ceremonial Sabbath and holiday meals), his chair suddenly tipped over without any visible cause, and the rebbe saw this as the action of these evil forces.²⁸

According to the descriptions of his assistants, R. Aharon spent much of his day in a state of *devekut*.²⁹ Arising in the morning, dressing himself, reciting the dawn blessings, laying tefillin, and praying through eating and drinking and on to retiring to his bed, usually late at night or just before morning—all took place with the most extreme severity and with *yibudim* (theurgical thoughts directed at the unification of divine forces) that could last many hours.³⁰ One of his assistants recalled that R. Aharon sometimes entered into an almost trancelike state: "This was worship of a sublimity that exceeds mortal comprehension; our Rebbe would shed and assume forms and reach a state that may be described as literally the shedding of corporeality, a form of ascent of the soul. . . . During this worship, our rebbe would sway fiercely, surging and storming like flames of fire, his eyes closed, and rivers of sweat dripping off him."³¹ In such states, the assistant added, the rebbe found it difficult to move from his desk even for the purpose of washing his hands.³² When he had to take his tefillin out of the bag he shivered, fearing their holiness.³³ Before retiring to bed, he would stand before the mezuzah at the entrance to his room—and then, a witness relates: "Our master would stand there and pray, his lips moving with awe, swaying, and all his bones reciting the prayer." Only thereafter, departing with an emphatic blessing of "good night" to the entire Jewish people, would he turn to sleep.³⁴

In the Land of Israel, R. Aharon acquired the status of “the tzaddik of the generation”—a tzaddik who is revered not only by his own followers but by all Hasidim, and even by Jews beyond the confines of Hasidism. According to many hearsay reports, the rebbe refused to hear anything bad about the Jews of the Land of Israel, and explained any sin that he saw or heard of as a misperception. The Hasidim relate that David Ben-Gurion himself sent the Hasidic politician Yitzhak Meir Levin to ask R. Aharon to pray for the victory of the Israel Defense Forces during the Sinai War (1956). While we might question this hearsay, the rebbe did actually spend many hours staring into the light of candles, and even refrained from blessing the wine for Shabbat due to his intense state of *devekut*.³⁵

For our purposes, it is irrelevant whether this last story is true or not. Regardless of how accurate such hearsay is, what it demonstrates is that many Hasidim perceived the greatest rebbe of the generation as embracing an approach that differed from that of his ancestors in Eastern Europe. The non-Zionist rebbe, whose father was a radical anti-Zionist and antisecular leader, found himself engaged in prayer for the soldiers of the Zionist state, showing affection to its secular residents, and involved in contact—albeit indirect—with its secular Zionist prime minister.

In this, R. Aharon was not a typical Hasidic leader, but neither was he altogether exceptional. His colleague R. Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam (1904–1995) of Sanz-Klausenburg, also a member of a staunch anti-Zionist dynasty, changed his views after the Holocaust, encouraged his Hasidim to immigrate to the young state, built a Hasidic neighborhood in Netanyah, and in 1959 made aliyah himself. His ties with Ben-Gurion were even closer than the Belzer Rebbe’s: The rebbe met with the prime minister at least once—even taking off his hat in his presence—and also with his successor, prime minister Levi Eshkol. He also sent letters to the two Israeli statesmen, not only with requests for old-style *shtadlanut* (intercessional, or “lobbying” activity) but also with advice on foreign affairs!³⁶ It hardly need be added that ties of this sort could not have been fathomed with Polish or Russian high-ranking statesmen before the war. These traditions, and their widespread reportage in Hasidic culture, suggest a growing feeling of being more or less “at home” in the Zionist state.

The other rebbe I wish to discuss in this context is one who is still among the living: Rebbe Ya’acov Aryeh Milikowsky, the Amshinover Rebbe. While the Belzer Rebbe headed one of the largest Hasidic groups in Galicia, and later the second-largest group in Israel, the number of those who consider themselves Amshinover Hasidim is very small—probably no more than a few dozen. Despite this, the admiration for their rebbe transcends communal boundaries, and it is probably safe to say that almost all Hasidim living today would admit that the

Amshinover Rebbe is an exceptional figure. Interestingly, Milikowsky was born to a non-Hasidic father and attended the eminently “Litvish” (Lithuanian, traditionalist but non-Hasidic) Brisk Yeshiva.³⁷ After his maternal grandfather died, however, the Hasidim urged him to accept the position of rebbe. After a protracted refusal, he eventually agreed to do so, though even then he refused to be referred to as “rebbe.” Milikowsky generally shows an extreme level of modesty and shies away from honor and publicity. The Amshinover Rebbe is also known for his unusual daily routine. His prayers are very protracted and are held at unconventional times. His approach to the other mitzvot also exceeds the standard bounds of the assigned time.³⁸ For example, he ends Shabbat on Tuesday morning, when he recites *Havdalah* loudly and enthusiastically. He lights the Hanukkah candles well after midnight.³⁹

Moreover, his devotion is apparent not only with regard to divine matters but also to human affairs. According to numerous testimonies, when people come to consult him—as they do en masse—he devotes himself to them completely, and gives the appearance of being completely detached from the passage of time and from any other worries or thoughts: he is utterly present with the person seeking his advice.⁴⁰ In one instance, Rabbi El’azar Menahem Shach, the powerful leader of the Litvish stream, sought to launch a fierce attack on the Amshinover Rebbe due to what he perceived as “un-halakhic” practice. He eventually decided to refrain from doing so. According to a story I heard from an informant (who wished to remain anonymous),⁴¹ the judges of the religious court of the Eidah Hareidis in Jerusalem also asked him to explain his tardy performance of the mitzvot, a practice that is contrary to the accepted Halakhah.⁴² According to this source, the judges expected to hear mystical and theological arguments in the spirit of Hasidism. In reality, they were surprised when the rebbe offered a simple halakhic justification. The Halakhah states that “he who is engaged in one religious duty is free from any other,”⁴³ as long as he is preoccupied by the first. When he—the rebbe—is with people who have asked for his advice, his head is preoccupied entirely with them, and accordingly he is exempt from the one commandment until he has freed his mind of the preoccupation with the other. Only then will he turn to performing the mitzvah that “waited” for him. I was told that the judges were astonished by this line of thought and found it difficult to find any counterargument.

As the two examples I have given demonstrate, hereditary leadership is not necessarily incompatible with personal charisma. Both these figures inherited their positions, one from his father, the other from his grandfather, both rebbes of the ordinary type, while they moved in much more powerful spiritual directions. By so doing, they gained a rare aura of charisma that goes beyond that of other rebbes. As such, they should be considered to have acquired their charisma

independently. Their mystical, often eccentric, behavior made them attractive to many Hasidim (and even non-Hasidim) who could not find such mystical qualities in their “official” rebbes. Such admiration usually did not engender defection from those latter rebbes, and so they could tolerate that admiration and sometimes even share it.

“New,” Nonpedigreed Tzaddikim

The second phenomenon that marks a notable exception to the hereditary model is that of the new rebbes—rebbes without a dynastic lineage—emerging within later Hasidism. The academic historiography of Hasidism has tended to overlook almost completely one of the most important centers of this movement: Hungary. If researchers considered later Hasidism to be of less interest, then Hungary was dominated—almost entirely and almost from the outset—by characteristics of “later Hasidism.” Most of its Hasidic courts emerged after 1815, when the mystical ideals began to wane. Also, the Hungarian rebbes were almost all rabbis. They preached traditional values of strict halakhic observance and Torah learning. At a certain stage, they adopted a militantly zealous approach that was antimodern and later sharply anti-Zionist. In a nutshell: Hungarian Hasidism was very different from the romantic, revolutionary, bold, and welcoming Hasidism that formed the focus of interest of the early scholars of the movement.

Yet precisely in a Hasidic setting where the status of rebbe was combined with the rabbinate, we find surprising manifestations of religious vitality. I have discussed some of these aspects elsewhere.⁴⁴ In this context I would like to focus on the aspect of leadership, and stress that the possibility of founding new Hasidic dynasties survived in Hungarian Hasidism until the present day, long after the gates had been closed to such developments in the rest of the Hasidic world. The model was simple: A local rabbi who proved to be gifted with charisma, passion in worship, and an ability to influence a given public would regularly begin to behave like a rebbe, gathering together his admirers in the congregation and effectively beginning to serve as their rebbe. In some cases this was an official process and at other times less so. Sometimes the congregation adopted *Nusah Sefarad* as the result of this change⁴⁵—the clearest hallmark of a Hasidic congregation—and in other cases it did not. But even when these hallmarks were not manifested in the founding rebbe, they often appeared under his son and successor, who already acted as a full-fledged rebbe and saw himself as part of a dynasty. Hungarian dynasties such as Puppa, Biksad, Erloy, and Dushinsky were all founded in this manner.⁴⁶

This pattern of development began in Hungary but continued in the new centers of the Hungarian-Jewish world, in Israel and the United States. Indeed, a

new Hasidic group has emerged very recently in a similar manner: the Ungvar group. R. Menashe Klein (1923–2011), a Hungarian rabbi and prolific halakhic authority, began to act as a rebbe in a relatively limited manner. After his death in 2011 two of his sons were officially nominated as rebbes in New York and Jerusalem.

Even more interesting is the phenomenon of rebbes nominated through semidemocratic elections. In most of the Hasidic groups that made use of this method the vote chose one of the scions of the dynasty. Such, for example, was the case in Slonim (1955) and Biala (1982). But in the group of the “Alte Karliner” (Old Karlin Hasidim) who discarded their rebbe in 1989 after he refused to be called Karliner Rebbe, the elections brought to power a member of the community who had only remote roots in the Karliner dynasty. This was Rebbe Aharon Rosenfeld (1926–2001), who was later called the Rebbe of Pinsk-Karlin. These elections were only semidemocratic, since the voters were only heads of families (males, of course), but still, they were secret and direct.⁴⁷ No doubt, they were more democratic than any previous procedure for rebbe nomination in the history of Hasidism. The fact that this happened in Israel, a young state that by that time had sustained more than four decades of vibrant democratic practice, is probably not coincidental.

Clearly, this phenomenon does not completely break the hereditary pattern, since these rebbes themselves are usually succeeded by their sons. Nevertheless, it certainly permits the emergence of new Hasidic centers on a nonhereditary basis. The fact that this “open-ended” pattern of leadership developed, of all places, in the most rigid stream of Hasidism might be indeed surprising, but we may hazard some possible explanations. Among them is the possibility that Hungarian Hasidism, particularly because of its conservatism, preserved certain patterns of early Hasidism that were discarded in other streams; also, it could afford more openness in several aspects than other less conservative streams, whose institutionalization came partly as response to threats from the outside. These reasons remained pertinent in the new centers to which Hungarian Hasidism migrated after World War II. The fact that this phenomenon had a very limited scope and the fact that it was known to the Hasidic world from the pre-war period made it the least challenging to the hereditary pattern of the three nonhereditary patterns discussed here.

Mashpi'im

I now come to the third phenomenon—that of the mashpi'im, or fervent preachers. In recent years (the late twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century), a new phenomenon has become increasingly common in Hasidic

life: spiritual leaders who are defined not as rebbes, but as mashpi'im.⁴⁸ The literal meaning of *mashpia'* in Hebrew is both "a person who bestows [bounty or the like]" and "a person who influences [others]." It originated from Habad Hasidism, where it referred to a local spiritual leader who strengthens the community's attachment to the study and practice of Hasidism. In its new sense, however, it refers to men who turn to the broader public, give exciting talks, take active part in ceremonial events, give blessings and advice, and enjoy great esteem. The secret of their charisma usually lies in their ability to fascinate audiences during public appearances, but in most cases it also extends to other manifestations of religious leadership. They are not considered rebbes because they do not take this title and do not expect their followers to attach to them "by soul, mind and spirit" (as the Hasidic phrase goes).

The most prominent such mashpia', Rabbi Zvi Mayer Zilberberg,⁴⁹ originally a Gerer Hasid, is already building a community that shows some of the hallmarks of a new Hasidic group. Since his years as a young yeshiva student and even today, he has enjoyed a close relationship and weekly meetings with the Amshinover Rebbe. The peak of his week is the "Third Meal" (*Se'udah Shlishit*) of Shabbat. As one of his followers describes it: "He has a weekly Shabbos seudah shelishis [Third Meal of the Sabbath] that lasts for hours at a very high level of *dveikus* [devekut]."⁵⁰ He also testifies that hundreds of people—haredi, Zionist religious, and even secular Jews—"come to bask in the unique *ruah* [spirit]" of his gatherings.⁵¹

Another famous mashpia', Rabbi Elimelekh (Meilech) Biderman, is moving in a similar direction. Biderman is a scion of the Lelov dynasty of rebbes, but never claimed the title and does not boast his great ancestors. He often takes part in mass events such as Lag ba-Omer or Purim assemblies, where he stands out not only by dint of his talks but also because of his joyous and enthusiastic temperament. Recently he was reported to have performed miracles.⁵²

Rabbi Yitzhok Meir Morgenstern,⁵³ a Gerer Hasid who studied kabbalistic and Hasidic literature and then became strongly influenced by the teachings of R. Nahman of Breslev, is less inclined than the first two to engage in public appearances and community leadership, but is also considered an admired mashpia'. Morgenstern is probably one of the most productive mashpi'im, and is arguably the most intellectually oriented among them. His books and booklets, titled *Yam Habokhma*, include not only Hasidic talks but also two volumes of halakhic responsa.

A leadership type similar to that of the Israeli mashpi'im exists in the United States: Rabbi Moshe Wolfson (b. 1925) is the leader of the community Emunas Yisroel, sometimes nicknamed the "Moonies." Wolfson came from a Litvish background, but was revealed as a powerful mashpia'. He, too, is not titled rebbe

and does not adopt rebbe-style manners.⁵⁴ And there are also many other, less well-known figures.⁵⁵

The fact that these individuals have not been declared rebbes enables them to attract Hasidim from other Hasidic groups. Since they do not go to another “rebbe,” these Hasidim are not perceived as deserters in their institutionalized groups and do not have to pay the accompanying social and economic price for their preferences. Criticism and mockery can occasionally be heard against these mashpi‘im, but to date the “institutional” rebbes have usually not declared war on them. Still, when Zilberberg started attracting “too many” Gerer Hasidim, the administration of the Ger court clarified that Gerer Hasidim could no longer go to hear him.

The phenomenon of the mashpi‘im does not yet have a second generation. However, it is very likely that the sons of most of these individuals will serve as full-fledged rebbes. If this prediction proves accurate, my comments about the new Hungarian Hasidic dynasties will also apply to the mashpi‘im: This phenomenon does not completely break the dynastic mold, since, after the initial founding generation, a dynasty emerges. Nevertheless, these phenomena mark a significant softening of this system. In the long run, they are the most intriguing challenge to the existing hereditary model, since, of all the three types of leadership examined here, the mashpi‘im are the furthest from the traditional rebbe model.

Conclusion and Perspective

We have seen three phenomena that are challenging the rigid dynastic structure of Hasidism and leaning toward the charismatic direction, even during the period of later Hasidism: the independent charisma of exceptional hereditary rebbes; the formation of new courts, mainly by charismatic Hungarian rabbis; and the development of a new leadership model in the form of charismatic mashpi‘im. In view of these, can we declare that the charismatic leadership pattern of early Hasidism actually lives on in later Hasidism? Or would it be more accurate to say that the radical spirit of early Hasidism never died? I would answer that latter question in the negative. In my opinion, it would be more accurate to conclude that Hasidism has certainly undergone changes, but that some of its radical spirit occasionally erupts again on its margins—and slightly more so in recent decades than in the past. I shall explain my position.

When the “heteronomous turn” occurred, and most wings of Hasidism abandoned the ideal of mystical devekut and turned to conservative and traditional values, its leaders sensed that they were deviating from the approach of the early tzaddikim.⁵⁶ Precisely because of their fundamental conservative

tendency, they needed to justify this change but also to give a *raison d'être* to the movement after it had effectively abandoned its central message. Part of this justification lay in the claim that different tzaddikim have different ways to worship the Creator, each according to “the root of his own soul.”⁵⁷ Each of these ways is merely a different channel for achieving *devekut*. *Devekut* itself was not taken in its experiential sense, but rather in an “ontological” sense (to use Jonathan Garb’s term), that is, in some “objective” level not necessarily reflected in the subjective feeling of the agent. Thus, *devekut* was denuded of its mystical character—mystical experience being retained, at most, as an ideal for a utopian era—and these different ways were adopted as “substitutes for mysticism.” I use the term “substitutes” not in order to belittle these values but on the contrary to emphasize that they were not completely detached from the original mystical ideal, in different ways that I have elaborated elsewhere.⁵⁸ However, I would note briefly that these “substitutes” include the ideal of learning Hasidic doctrine in Habad; the ideal of personal responsibility in the Pshiskhe dynasty; the value of splendor and *Malchus* (regal atmosphere) in the Ruzhin dynasty; the perception of constant doubt and reconciliation with divine fate in Izbica Hasidism—but also militant zealotry in Hungary and Galicia.⁵⁹ And there are many other examples.

These ideals satisfied many, and the Hasidim have lived as relatively strong communities on the basis of these values, and sometimes on the basis of more amorphous “substitutes.” Nevertheless, substitutes are only substitutes, and ultimately the original core is not completely lost. And here we come to the broader hypothesis that I would like to present.

When an essentially conservative movement undergoes change, it always experiences a certain sense of discomfort, creating a need to justify the change. Accordingly, even if its adherents accept the justifications and are convinced that change is essential due to urgent constraints, the original values continue to gurggle silently beneath the surface. This process is very reminiscent of the Freudian process of repression: On the conscious level everything is fine, but in the subconscious, forces wait for the right moment to spring forth. There is a vital difference, however, between the two. Whereas Freud’s subconscious erupts mainly at moments of weakness and distraction, in religious movements such as Hasidism we can anticipate a reverse situation. It is weakness that demands the “heteronomous turn” toward the solid rock of tradition, while a sense of power and self-confidence allows the reins to be loosened a little, permitting a *measure* of return to the “dangerous” spirit of the revolutionary generation. Only when the need for fierce defense dissipates a little, the Hasidim can afford the “luxury” of seeking the spiritual experience. Even then, it must be emphasized, these eruptions will be relatively restrained. They do not in any way approach the spirit of

early Hasidism, and they certainly do not threaten complete commitment to the Halakhah, nor even to the basic and accepted structure of authority in Hasidic society.

Other factors also helped these new phenomena advance. Hasidism in Israel is not the same as it was *inderheym* (in [the old East European] home), and the new setting has given room for new developments. In the young state of Israel, Hasidic leaders sought to preserve the Hasidic atmosphere of the past, but soon understood that continuity was not guaranteed. They then strove to build their communities around networks of communal institutions that supplied the needs of the Hasid, on the one hand, and created an unbreakable dependency between him and his community, on the other. Paradoxically, these communities were directly and indirectly supported by government funds. If the first generation of Israeli Hasidim joined these communities voluntarily, the next generations were born into them, and became increasingly dependent upon them. Some Hasidim ironically called this structure *kupat holim*—alluding to the Israeli “Medicare” services that, especially during the 1950s, were tied to political affiliation, membership in trade unions, and other such connections. It also alluded to the businesslike attitude of the Hasid to his community, in which one no longer attached oneself to a tzaddik “according to the root of his soul,” but rather engaged in a give-and-take relationship based on mutual interests. It would seem that, in the course of a few decades, the Hasidic communities attained unprecedented strength on the organizational level but discarded most of their pretensions to spiritual seeking.

It was against this complicated and multistage background that the three phenomena I describe in this chapter took shape. Hasidic rebbes who showed extraordinary charisma stood out as different and attained pan-Hasidic admiration. Hungarian (i.e., Hungarian-origin) communities managed to continue a pattern that already existed *inderheym*, and ab initio enabled the establishment of new Hasidic groups. And the mashpi'im shaped a new pattern of leadership, not confronting but rather circumventing the hereditary leaders of the time. All three represent some weakening of the hereditary model that hitherto was the core of the Hasidic concept of spiritual leadership, and stood at the center of no few Hasidic feuds.

Were the Hasidim influenced by the Western democratic environment in which their courts thrived after World War II? This possibility should not be excluded. Certainly, the Hasidim were part of the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) society, with its critical stance toward democracy, and shared in the haredi system of nondemocratic spiritual leadership.⁶⁰ But this criticism toward the democratic system was very often theoretical, and on the practical level the haredim do not actually wish to replace it with any other political system.⁶¹ Furthermore, Gadi

Sagiv has convincingly argued that the emergence of the *Yenuka* (child-rebbe) phenomenon in the nineteenth century—the nomination of child heirs to rebbes—was probably influenced by similar precedents in European royal courts of their time.⁶² If this phenomenon, which took the hereditary model to one of its extremes, could take place as result of external influence, why should something similar not happen in the opposite direction?

Another possible source of indirect influence may be the New Age trends of the late twentieth century and beyond. While the Belzer Rebbe was very far from anything that might have resembled New Age sensibility in his time, the Amshinover Rebbe has already shown, as we have seen, some respect and even affection toward one of the precursors of contemporary Jewish spirituality, R. Shlomo Carlebach.⁶³ Even though most of the Hasidim exhibit indifference to trends arising in secular and Zionist religious societies, they cannot really remain altogether indifferent. The fact that young Israelis—and similarly young American Jews—have an avid interest in their movement but are looking for “something different” must evoke some similar quest within the Hasidim themselves, and so awaken some of those dormant elements that had been lurking under the surface for so many years. Once again, I must emphasize: Hasidism has not gone through a substantial change, and its conservative character has assured that all these new waves will not menace the well-entrenched institutional structure of the movement. But small as they may be, changes have actually taken place.

The hypothesis I raised above, regarding the conservation of mystical energy in a dormant, tacit level until some stimulus evokes it again, offers a cohesive explanation for all three phenomena I have described. Hereditary rebbes with independent charisma emerge within the dynastic structure, and it is precisely their pedigree that enables them to develop independent charisma without damaging this structure. The new Hungarian Hasidic dynasties can afford to deviate slightly from the dynastic structure of authority precisely because they maintain an extreme Orthodox culture in other areas of life. And the mashpi'im have been able to flourish only after Hasidism managed to revive itself and regain its self-confidence, and after the non-Hasidic world no longer struggles against the movement, but instead engages in a romantic dialogue with it in the spirit of the New Age. Even then, the mashpi'im have declined to seize the full crown of the status of rebbes and refrain from any provocations toward the institutionalized rebbes. In other words, the spiritual ferment that had marked the birth of Hasidism in Eastern Europe but appeared to have degenerated is actually merely suppressed. From time to time it springs forth, on a nonthreatening scale, when it has the potential to flourish. In the past generation it has reemerged in Israel, and to a lesser extent in the United States. This resurgence raises once again at

least some small sparks from the great fire Hasidism lit in the hearts of its followers in its early days in Eastern Europe.

Notes

1. Menachem Friedman, *Ha-bevrah ba-haredit: Mekorot, megamot ve-tabalikkim* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1991), 70–87. By “society of scholars,” Friedman and others who followed in his footsteps refer to the social structure that developed in Israeli *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) society during the 1960s, in which most of the young married men do not go to work but continue their talmudic studies. This pattern is more typical of the Litvish (ultra-Orthodox but not Hasidic) sector but has been adopted to a great extent by many Hasidim as well.
2. These changes were described and analyzed in the recent Biale et al., *Hasidism: A New History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Marcin Wodzinski, *Hasidism: Key Questions* (New York: Oxford University Press 2018), 87–133.
3. For instance, Simon Dubnow, *Toldot ha-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1960), 37, and more. The year 1815 is considered by many to be a turning point in the history of Hasidism, to a large extent marking the end of early Hasidism and the beginning of later Hasidism. It ends a period of about three years (1812–1815) during which several of the great disciples of the Maggid R. Dov Ber of Mezeritch passed away. Also in that year, the Partition of Poland was given final approval by the Congress of Vienna, a political event that influenced the continued development of the movement.
4. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1:246–54, 2:1121–23; Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber—An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 301–7. For a survey of later developments of the concept, see Ingo Winkler, *Contemporary Leadership Theories* (Heidelberg: Physica Verlag, 2010), chap. 5, 32–46.
5. On the early Hasidic concept of the tzaddik, see Samuel H. Dresner, *The Zaddik—The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); Ada Rapoport-Albert, “God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship,” *History of Religions* 18, no. 4 (May 1979): 296–325. On the importance of pedigree in earlier and later Hasidism, see Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish-Jewish Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117–36.
6. David Assaf, *Derekh ba-malkhut: Rabbi Yisra’el me-Ruzhin u-mekomo be-toldot ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1997), 100–117, and the sources there; Gadi Sagiv, *Ha-shoshelet: Bet T’sernobil u-mekomo be-toldot ha-Hasidut* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2014), 89–103. For an analysis using sociological tools, see Steven Sharot, “Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 19, no. 4 (1980): 325–36.
7. Benjamin Brown, “Substitutes for Mysticism: A General Model for the Theological Development of Hasidism in the Nineteenth Century,” *History of Religions* 56, no. 3 (2017): 247–88.
8. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954), 347; Sharot, “Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma.”
9. Mendel Pickarz, *Hasidut Polin ben shete ba-milhamot uwi-gezerot Ta”Sh-TaSha”H (ba-Sho’ah)* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1990), 150–53; Jacob Katz, *Ha-halakhah ba-metsar: Mikhsbolim ‘al derekh ha-ortodoksyah be-bithavutah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 9–20; idem, “Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 2, ed. Peter Y. Medding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1986), 3–17.
10. Two others include Ya’akov Lifshitz and Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook. See Eitam Henkin, *Ta’arokh lefanai shulhan* (Jerusalem: Maggid Publishers, 2019), 336–40.
11. For a tzaddik’s interior conflict regarding these two commitments to the sacred and the mundane, see R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk, *No’am Elimelekh* (Lwów: n.p., 1788), *Be-shalah*, 74d–75a.
12. Mordecai Martin Buber, *Or ha-ganuz* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1977), 35 (this part of the introduction is not included in the English version of the book, *Tales of the Hasidim*); Raphael Mahler, *Ha-Hasidut veba-Haskalah* (Merhavayah: Sifriyat Po’alim 1961), 9; Raphael Mahler, “Mahloket Sanz-Sagidora:

Shete shitot ba-Hasidut ha-shoka'at," *Proceedings of the Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 2 (1969): 223–25; Pickarz, *Hasidut Polin*, 50, 181.

13. Benjamin Brown, "Unromanticized Hasidism: Mendel Pickarz's Path in the Study of Hasidism," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 27 (2014): 453–56.

14. Max Weber, "Äsketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus," in *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* I/9: *Schriften und Reden 1904–1911*, ed. Wolfgang Schluchter and Ursula Bube (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2014), 498–501.

15. Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 69–78, 155–58, 177–83.

16. Another example is the last Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), but for a variety of reasons he should be considered an exceptional case. In any case, the "list" of these two rebbes by no means presumes to be exhaustive.

17. Two unpublished works are noteworthy exceptions: Uri Kelet, "Belz le-ahar ha-Sho'ah: Beniyatah me-hadash shel Hasidut Belz le-ahar ha-Sho'ah (1944–1957)" (MA Thesis, Bar Ilan University, 2009); Ido Harari, "Kaparot Kol Yisra'el: Hanhagot ha-hasidit shel R. Aharon mi-Belz ve-havnayat ha-kharismah shel ha-korban" (MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012). The description below owes much to Harari's work.

18. See the debate on this event: Mendel Pickarz, "Gezerot Polin u-menuhah ve-shalvah li-yehude Hungaryah bi-derashah Belzait," *Kivunim* 11 (1981): 115–19; Nathan Urtner, "Al derashah hasidit Belza'it," *Kivunim* 14 (1982): 145–49; Pickarz, *Hasidut*; Eliezer Schweid, *Ben hurban li-yeshu'ah* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1994), 65–88; Esther Farbstein, *Hidden in Thunder* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2007), 1:86–97, and esp. at 108–16; Isaac (Tzahi) Hershkovitz, "This Enormous Offense to the Torah: New Discoveries About the Controversy over the Escape of the Rabbis from Budapest, 1943–1944," *Yad Vashem Studies* 37, no. 1 (2009): 109–36.

19. Many of the details cited below are based on testimonies offered by R. Aharon's Hasidim and admirers. Obviously such testimonies tend to be hagiographic. However, the fact that he is described in a similar way by different witnesses, that those descriptions are not in the common pattern of Hasidic descriptions of twentieth-century rebbes, and that they differ from the descriptions of R. Aharon's ancestors all strengthen the assumption that they contain at least a basic nucleus of truth.

20. Betzalel Landau and Nathan Urtner, *Ha-Rav ha-kadosh Mi-Belz* (Jerusalem: Or ha-hasidut, 1967), 22–23. The *kvitl* (pl.: *kvitlekhs*) includes the name of the Hasid, identified by his mother (for example: "Yitzhak, son of Sarah") and his needs (health, livelihood, and the like) and very often the names of other family members and their needs.

21. See, for instance, Aharon Perlov, *Bi-kedushato shel Aharon*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Author's publication, 2008), 66; Nathan Urtner, *Devar Hen* (Lod: Author's publication, 2006), 248.

22. Anonymous Author, *Sheba-simbah bi-me'ono* (Jerusalem: Yagdil Torah, 1993), 54; Yosef Hochhayzer et al., eds., *Tel Talpiyot* (Brooklyn, NY: Mekhon Shemen Rokeah, 2010), 319n155; Hayim Shlomo Friedman, *Be-tsilah di-mebemanutab* (Brooklyn, NY: Author's publication, ca. 2000), 52.

23. Aharon Perlov, *Bi-kedushato shel Aharon*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Author's publication, 2007), 192; Landau and Urtner, *Ha-Rav ha-kadosh mi-Belz*, 44; Yisra'el Klapholts, *Admore Belz*, vol. 4a (Bnei Brak: Mishor, 1989), 116. This tendency intensified in his last year. See Tzvi Zeev Friedman, *Zekhor yemot 'olam* (Jerusalem: Rose-Berger, n.d.), 162.

24. Hochhayzer et al., *Tel Talpiyot*, 89, and the sources there, at footnote 108. In other sources, though, he blamed his intestinal illness for the delay in prayers: Yitzhak Shlomo Unger, *Reshumim be-shimkha*, ed. Hayim Meir Ganz and Avraham Ferster (Ashdod: Ganz, 2007), 260.

25. Joseph Kleiner, "Hatsrot ha-rebbeyim be-Galitsiyah" [The courts of the rebbes in Galicia], *Ha-Tsefrirah*, February 1, 1928.

26. See sources at Perlov, *Bi-kedushato*, vol. 1, 105–6; *ibid.*, vol. 2, 118.

27. Friedman, *Zekhor yemot 'olam*, 97–98, 115.

28. *Ibid.*, 97.

29. For one out of many examples: "Twenty-four hours a day was our Master clinging and cleaving to upper worlds. Permanently was he altogether detached from all the vanities of this world, refraining from eating, drinking and sleeping, constantly possessed by deep thoughts, face aflame,

hovering altogether in heavenly, mystical worlds. Only his body was in this world, while his spirit dwelt high above." Ibid., 81.

30. Many sources for this are quoted by Harari, "Kaparot Kol Yisra'el," 67–70.

31. Yitzhak Segal Landau, *Ba-kodesh penimah* (Jerusalem: Author's publication, 2011), 52–53. Compare: Jonathan Garb, *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 27–45, 105–15.

32. Landau, *Ba-kodesh penimah*.

33. Moshe Menahem Taubenfeld, *Be-fikudekha asiha* (New Square, NY): Author's publication, 2005), 1:286.

34. Landau, *Ba-kodesh penimah*, 186.

35. Friedman, *Zekhor*, 160–61.

36. Pictures of the Klausenburger Rebbe, hat off, at a meeting with Ben-Gurion as well as copies of the letters are in my private collection.

37. Born out of the mitnagdic tradition, the Litvish path puts emphasis on Torah study and belittles the emotional elements of Jewish religion. Brisk is a yeshiva of particularly strong Litvish (Lithuanian) orientation and is also known for its unusual halakhic stringencies.

38. For the reaction of an amazed visitor, see this haredi internet forum: http://www.bhol.co.il/forums/topic.asp?topic_id=2151569&forum_id=771; for attempts to justify the Amshinover's conduct in halakhic terms, see another forum: <http://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/59137/halachic-justifications-for-the-amshinover-rebbe>

39. See "Halachic Justifications for the Amshinover Rebbe," Mi Yodeya website, <https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/59137/halachic-justifications-for-the-amshinover-rebbe>. R. Aharon of Belz lit the candles that late only in the last year of his life. Friedman, *Zekhor*, 162.

40. The Amshinover is known, among other things, for his advice on medical matters. He is also known for his affection toward the neo-Hasidic musician and spiritual leader Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994), from whom most of the Orthodox establishment kept its distance, even before the scandals that burst out after his death with regard to his behavior with his female followers.

41. In the era that preceded the internet revolution, the haredi press was subject to tight regulation and inspection, and other written media did not exist. Under that regulation, events that reflect interior division and disharmony (let alone crime and immodesty) were not published. Much of the information in that period was passed orally; these are indispensable testimonies that students of haredi society must collect and bring to light. In this case, some of my information includes details that the researcher gleaned from witnesses and others who were close to the events at their time.

42. The Eidah Hareidis is the umbrella organization of the radical anti-Zionist haredi groups, those that raised the banner of *bitbadlut* (approximately, isolationism) versus the state. They do not vote in national or even municipal elections and refuse to accept state funds for their educational institutions. Their most powerful institution is their court, the Badatz, which they view as the only legitimate religious court of Jerusalem, denying such legitimacy to the state rabbinic court, let alone the secular court system.

43. Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah, 25b.

44. See Benjamin Brown, "The Two Faces of Religious Radicalism: Orthodox Zealotry and 'Holy Sinning' in 19th Century Hasidism in Hungary and Galicia," *Journal of Religion* 93, no. 3 (2013): 341–74.

45. *Nusah Sefarad* is the Sephardic version of the Jewish prayer service, widely adopted by Hasidic Jews in lieu of the Ashkenazi or European Jewish rite normative for European Jewish communities. See Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (London: The Littman Library, 1993), 36–45.

46. Puppa Hasidism was founded by R. Yaakov Hizkiyah Grinwald (1882–1941), whose father was a prominent rabbi but not a rebbe. Biksad Hasidism was founded by R. Eliezer Fisch (1880–1944); among his remote ancestors we can find important rabbis but no Hasidic rebbes. Erloy Hasidism was founded by R. Yohanan Sofer (1923–2006). He had an illustrious lineage stretching back to the Hatam Sofer, but none of his ancestors served as rebbes. Finally, Dushinsky Hasidism was founded by R. Yisrael Moshe Dushinsky (1921–2003). His father was the rabbi of the ultra-Orthodox community of Jerusalem, but was not a rebbe.

47. Benjamin Brown, *Ki-sefinab mitaltelet: Hasidut Karlin ben 'aliyot u-mashberim* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 2018), 479–81.

48. This phenomenon has been thoroughly discussed by Jonathan Garb, “Mystical and Spiritual Discourse in the Contemporary Ashkenazi Haredi Worlds,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 17–36; idem, “Towards the Study of the Spiritual-Mystical Renaissance in the Contemporary Ashkenazi Haredi World in Israel,” *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival* (2011): 117–40. The popular press, too, has examined this phenomenon: Mendy Gruzman, “Ha-Admorim ha-hadashim,” *Makor Rishon: Shabbat Magazine*, April 9, 2015.

49. Garb, “Mystical and Spiritual Discourse,” 20–22; idem, *Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 121–22.

50. “Rabbi Tzvi Meir Zilberberg,” Torah Downloads, <https://torahdownloads.com/s-265-rabbi-tzvi-meir-zilberberg.html>. This website collects many of Zilberberg’s talks.

51. Ibid.

52. “Miracle by Rabbi Meilech,” Be-hadrei Haredim website, January 8, 2014, http://www.bhol.co.il/article_en.aspx?id=63457.

53. Garb, “Mystical and Spiritual Discourse,” 23–25; idem, *Yearnings of the Soul*, 117–23.

54. His sermons and teachings can be found online at the Emunas Yisroel website: <http://www.emunas.com/>.

55. Some of them are discussed and analyzed in Garb, “Mystical and Spiritual Discourse,” 19–26.

56. See Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, 50–80, 157–80; Iris Brown (Hoizman), “Rabbi Hayim mi-Sanz: Pesikato ha-hilkhatit ‘al reka’ hashkafat ‘olamo ve-etgare zemano” (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2004), 163–66.

57. For example, R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, *Me’or ‘enayim* (Slavuta: n.p., 1798), *Va-yetse*, 33a.

58. Thus, for example, actions that served as means for the mystical ideal or as its “side effects” now became the ideals themselves, and terms that were used by the early Hasidic masters as denoting various aspects of the mystical experience were now connected to nonmystical meanings, and were taken to denote moral virtues and traditional values. See Brown, “Substitutes for Mysticism,” 249.

59. Ibid., 255–85.

60. Benjamin Brown, *Haredim mi-“shilton ha-’am”: Bikoret haredit ‘al ha-demokratyah ba-Yisre’elit* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2012), 71–74.

61. Ibid., 111–18.

62. Gadi Sagiv, “Yenuka: ‘Al tsadikim-yeladim ba-hasidut,” *Tsiyon* 76, no. 2 (2011): 143.

63. See note 40 above.

CHAPTER 8

Connecting Poland and Palestine: The Organizational Model of He-Haluts

Rona Yona

This article takes a geographical approach to reflecting on the interaction between Israeli history and East European history. Following a growing interest in cross-border interactions in Jewish historiography, I focus on the relations between Jews in Mandatory Palestine and Eastern Europe.¹ Most scholars focus on the interaction between non-Jewish East Europeans and East European Jews, and assume that the latter carried the results to Palestine. I would like to explore instead the interaction between Jews in Eastern Europe and those in Mandatory Palestine, and to look at the opposite direction of influence, from Palestine to Eastern Europe. More specifically, I examine the construction of institutional connections between Zionists in Poland and Palestine in the inter-war period. This aspect has been largely ignored in East European Jewish history as well as the history of the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement in Palestine).

The study of Zionism tends to focus on Eastern Europe *or* Palestine. The historiography on Zionism in the Second Polish Republic has underestimated “external” influences, especially coming from Zionists in Palestine, although they played an increasingly important role in the 1930s.² Ezra Mendelsohn’s formative work on Zionism in Poland focused on the national Polish political sphere and on immigration to Palestine from a Polish Jewish perspective.³ Mendelsohn’s work revolutionized the study of Polish Jewry in the twentieth century by placing it in its Polish context. He looked at the ways in which relations with the state and with the non-Jewish environment shaped Jewish life and Zionism, opening the field from its inward-looking approach and from the subjective perspectives of the various Jewish players. The focus on Polish Jews and the Polish state left relations with other Jewish Diasporas largely untouched, favoring internal and local explanations for the development of Polish Zionism. However,

Zionism was a world Jewish organization, with dynamic centers in places like Vienna, London, New York, and Palestine. Although they were situated in different geopolitical, social, and economic contexts, these Jewish centers interacted in multiple ways that could at times have deep effects on the Jewish Diaspora and on Jewish politics. In the following pages, I look at the impact of the emerging Zionist center in Mandatory Palestine and of the international sphere of the Zionist Organization. I show that Zionist organizations in Poland *and* in Palestine created a shared transnational space that connected the two communities and explore how they did it.

Demographically, the Yishuv was composed of Jews who emigrated mostly from Eastern Europe, roughly 65 percent according to one estimate. They were followed by German-speaking Jews from Central Europe (19 percent) and smaller groups from the Middle East, Western Europe, and North America.⁴ After the creation of the State of Israel, British limitations on Jewish immigration were abolished, and large numbers of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and Europe came, primarily Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe.

How should we assess the various components of the East European legacy and their impact on Israeli history? My study shows that the roots of Israeli society and politics should be studied not only with respect to countries of origin, but also as a process of interaction between Jewish communities. The socialist Zionist case is a good example of the emergence of such a transnational space prior to the creation of a Jewish state. Tracing the formation of institutional connections between Poland and Palestine helps us overcome the divided historiography of Zionism in each place.

Nationalism and Immigration

One of the main characteristics of Jewish immigration to Palestine (aliyah) was that it originated from minority communities, and more specifically from a diaspora. In the late nineteenth century this diaspora's center of gravity shifted from Eastern Europe to the West (mainly the United States), where it would continue to exist as a minority. It was precisely the situation of being a minority that most Zionists aimed to change.

The supporters of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel faced the practical challenge of transforming the Jewish minority into a majority. Mass immigration to Palestine was a huge project, which required tremendous funds and an elaborate infrastructure, neither of which the Zionist Organization (ZO), established by Theodor Herzl in Basel in 1897, possessed. Zionists were a weak, stateless entity lacking a political and demographic center. In 1917, when the Russian Empire collapsed, political activity there for the first time became fully if briefly free. At the

same time, the British Empire issued the Balfour Declaration in support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. These major developments, enabled by World War I, were also hindered by it. In Eastern Europe, where most Jews lived, many were reduced to a struggle for sheer survival. In Palestine, the small Jewish population after the war numbered about 55,000, more like a small town than a small state.⁵

Between the world wars, some 350,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine and formed the demographic core of the future State of Israel. The largest cohort came from Poland, which provided over 40 percent of the immigrants, with some 140,000 arriving between 1919 and 1942.⁶ In order to examine the institutionalization of relations between Zionists in Poland and Palestine, this article focuses on the He-Haluts (Pioneer) organization in Poland, which was the largest Zionist immigration organization until the Holocaust.

He-Haluts and Zionism in Poland

With the fall of the tsarist regime, young Zionists in the Russian Empire who aspired to become pioneers in Palestine began to establish local groups. In Poland, which after 1915 was mostly under German occupation, activity began earlier. These young women and men, eighteen to twenty-five years old, drew on prewar Zionist ideas and were influenced by the upsurge of national and socialist enthusiasm across Eastern Europe. The roads to Palestine were closed during the war, so they began to train to become manual workers, a process called *hakhsharah*, or “training.” Training included learning Hebrew and sometimes living in communes, influenced by the October Revolution. The founders wanted He-Haluts to become a mass movement, and welcomed every Jewish man and woman who was young, single, and healthy, if they engaged in *hakhsharah*.⁷ Families with children were considered unfit for the hardship awaiting the pioneers in an undeveloped country like Palestine, notorious for the prevalence of malaria.

When Soviet restrictions tightened, the center of He-Haluts shifted from Russia and Ukraine to relatively free Poland, which had the largest Jewish population in Europe (over 3 million) and a flourishing Zionist movement. Zionist sentiments, combined with a backward economy and the Polish government’s increasingly anti-Semitic policies, drove many Jews to seek to emigrate.⁸ In the peak year of 1933, He-Haluts in Poland had over 50,000 active members (as compared to mere supporters during elections), and many more in other countries.⁹ For a brief moment, it was one of the largest Polish Jewish organizations.

Despite its unparalleled size, with hundreds of thousands of supporters, Polish Zionism did not become the center of the ZO.¹⁰ The relative weakness of Polish Zionism seems to have derived from two conflicting factors, in addition to the generally undeveloped economic and educational environment in Poland. Polish

Jewry had to establish itself according to the new borders of the Polish nation-state. On the one hand, it had to integrate populations from four distinct territories (the Polish partitions) into a single “Polish Jewry,” much as the new Polish state had to form a Polish identity for all its new citizens. These regions included Congress Poland (central Poland); Galicia to the south, which was previously under Austro-Hungarian rule; the Kresy (eastern borderlands) in today’s Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine; and formerly German territories to the northwest. Integration proved particularly difficult with regard to the large Jewish population of Galicia. In the case of Zionism it was never fully achieved, and three separate Zionist organizations continued to operate, one for East Galicia, one for West Galicia, and one for “Poland” (including Congress Poland, the formerly German territories, and the Kresy).

On the other hand, Polish Jewry was now separated from Russian Jewry, of which it had previously been a part. After relations between Poland and Soviet Russia deteriorated into war (1919–1921), a ceasefire sealed the border between the two countries. Polish and Russian Jews faced a complex situation, certainly in the case of Zionists, who sought to form a single national movement. This was true for those in Congress Poland and especially the eastern borderlands, which until 1917 had been part of the Russian Zionist movement.

As the Zionist center in Russia split up into separate territories and its leaders fled the USSR for Paris, Berlin, and London, Polish Zionists increased their independence vis-à-vis the ZO and its new leader, Chaim Weizmann. These relations, and their implications for both the ZO and Polish Zionism, remain to be researched. From 1923 to 1929, under the leadership of Yitzhak Gruenbaum, an intense conflict over the establishment of the Jewish Agency developed between Polish Zionists and the Zionist Executive in London, the British imperial capital where the high politics of Mandate Palestine were conducted. The tense relations between Polish Zionism and the ZO is demonstrated by the fact that Weizmann, the undisputed leader of the ZO and a native of a shtetl outside of Pinsk, now a Polish territory, never visited the Second Polish Republic, where his largest constituency resided. His loudest critic was Gruenbaum, who turned Polish Zionism into a champion for Jewish minority rights in Poland, becoming one of its main leaders. In the late 1920s, Gruenbaum’s political position declined, first within Polish Zionism and, by the end of the decade, in the Polish parliament, alongside the overall decline of the Polish parliament after the 1926 coup of Marshal Józef Piłsudski.¹¹

The case of He-Haluts was different. Although it was formed around the collapse of the Russian Empire, it did not develop into an independent Polish Jewish entity. On the contrary, under the socialist Zionist leadership, He-Haluts endeavored to maintain the unity of the dispersed parts of Russian Jewry in the

new nation-states of Eastern Europe and across the East European Jewish Diaspora in Palestine, Europe, and the Americas. The fact that socialist Zionism in Poland was not fully autonomous and had strong ties outside the country, especially with Palestine, was precisely the reason for its success in the mid-1930s, when aliyah became the focus of Polish Zionism.

Despite their different approaches, neither Gruenbaum nor socialist Zionism in Poland became the center of the Zionist movement after the breakdown of Russian Zionism in the USSR. The story of He-Haluts reveals how the new Zionist center was gradually emerging in Palestine, despite its comparatively tiny Jewish population, and how the new center constructed its authority.

He-Haluts in Poland: A Transnational Perspective

A look at the leadership of He-Haluts indicates how socialist Zionism in Poland interacted with the centers in Russia and Palestine. As early as 1921, the secretary of He-Haluts in Poland, Eliyahu Dobkin, was an “outsider,” a refugee from Soviet Belarus.¹² Born and raised in Bobruisk, which by 1921 was on the Soviet side of the new border, Dobkin had studied law in Kharkov in 1916 and fled to Poland in 1920 after becoming disillusioned with the Bolshevik revolution and appalled by the brutality of the new regime’s legal system, which he had served. In Warsaw he resumed his Zionist activity and quickly became a prominent figure in He-Haluts, part of a group of several hundred refugees from Russia and Ukraine who now dominated the Polish organization, with some 1,800 members (for numbers, see Figure 1 below).¹³ By 1923, the central committee of He-Haluts in Poland was composed of Dobkin, another member from Belarus, one from Odessa, and only one from Warsaw.¹⁴

A different example is Meir Bogdanovsky, head of the World Organization of He-Haluts, established in Berlin in 1923. Bogdanovsky was born in a Lithuanian shtetl near Volozhyn, whose renowned yeshiva he attended. He moved to Palestine in 1912 to study in the Hebrew teachers’ seminary and was recruited to the Ottoman army when World War I broke out. After the war he returned to Palestine, where he joined the newly established socialist Zionist party *Ahdut ha-‘avodah* (Labor Unity, previously *Poalei Tzion*) and the *Histadrut* (General Organization of Workers in the Land of Israel). He was sent as their envoy to Central and Eastern Europe, where pioneers on their way to Palestine had established centers.¹⁵ In 1924 he moved the World Center of He-Haluts to Warsaw. Bogdanovsky was the first envoy from Palestine. He marks the beginning of a process in which envoys from Palestine gradually replaced Soviet Jewish refugees in Poland as leaders of He-Haluts following the decline in emigration from the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Both Dobkin and Bogdanovsky later became important

second- and third-level activists in the Zionist labor movement in Palestine and the State of Israel.

Given the social composition of the leadership, it is not clear whether He-Haluts in Poland can indeed be described as “Polish.” Its leadership is better understood as a transnational network of socialist Zionist activists from Eastern Europe, who crossed borders as immigrants and envoys, serving as links between movements in different countries.

He-Haluts, like other socialist Zionist organizations, was shaped by a complex dynamic, which included three major developments: migration, the collapse of empires, and institutionalization. On the one hand, migration led to the dispersion of socialist Zionists from Eastern Europe to other countries, such as the United States, France, Germany, and Palestine. With the creation of new nation-states on the ruins of former multinational empires in Europe and the Middle East (the Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and German empires), the Jewish population of Eastern Europe was now further divided by new borders.¹⁶ In response to new borders and mass migration, Zionist activists from the former Russian Empire and Galicia sought to create international institutions that maintained their political, organizational, and cultural connections well after World War I, in new states like Poland, Mandatory Palestine, and other countries across the East European Jewish Diaspora.¹⁷ The transnational network they formed was further developed after peace was restored and borders stabilized in 1922. Most of them were young men who became active for decades, some of them until well after World War II and into the formative years of the State of Israel, and who therefore had a long-term impact during this very dramatic period in Jewish history.

The network they created involved complex relations during the interwar years, with people, ideas, practices, and resources moving among Poland, Russia, and Palestine, as well as Lithuania, Germany, the United States, and other countries. The international network of socialist Zionists was spread across more than twenty countries on five continents.¹⁸ It included different types of organizations, ranging from political parties to youth movements and cooperatives. He-Haluts in Poland exemplifies its story.¹⁹ It reveals a fascinating and paradoxical process in which the division of former empires in Europe and the Middle East into small nation-states, which was the result of nationalism, led to greater internationalization of Zionist organizations.

Emergence and Inherent Instability, 1917–1923

As noted above, He-Haluts emerged as a grassroots movement in Jewish communities across Eastern Europe after the fall of the Romanov dynasty. In the wake of that epochal event, activity erupted. The first task of the founders in

Russia was to consolidate the organization. They formed connections among local groups and created central institutions in order to facilitate emigration by providing information, guidance, and means. With the erection of new states in Eastern Europe at the end of the war, a separate national center was established in each. After the formal creation of the Second Polish Republic in November 1918, a separate Central Committee for Poland was formed in Warsaw in 1919.²⁰ This principle was maintained when Vilnius was annexed by Poland in 1922, and its separate pioneer center was incorporated by Warsaw. In Galicia, He-Haluts members established a separate autonomous organization in accordance with the practices of Galician Zionism.²¹ Throughout its existence, the Polish center remained rather weak, with the center in Warsaw largely a formality. He-Haluts had only a small following in central Poland, where Zionism was relatively thin, and maintained very limited connections with the core membership, which came primarily from remote branches in the eastern provinces of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine, where most members resided.

One of the features of Zionism in Poland, and the Diaspora in general, was extreme instability, which had two main causes. One was the enormous fluctuations in membership. During the brief periods of immigration to Palestine (1919–1921, 1924–1926, 1932–1935, commonly known as the Third, Fourth, and Fifth *Aliyot*), Zionist organizations in Poland grew rapidly. Each wave of immigration was larger than the former, attracting increasing numbers of young people to Zionist organizations (see Figure 1). Immigration created upsurges of Zionist enthusiasm and even hysteria, making it very popular for a short time, but in between was what one Zionist called “a cemetery”—years of indifference and even hostility, when other Jewish political movements came to the fore.²² During these periods Zionist activity drastically diminished and was confined to small circles of dedicated individuals, as many local branches and organizations disbanded.

The second reason for the inherently unstable nature of Zionism in the Diaspora was the turnover in membership caused by immigration to Palestine, especially of many devoted and competent members, which created a chronic shortage of leaders and activists. This tendency intensified during the interwar years. Instability was typical of other Zionist and Jewish movements in Poland as well, but was particularly extreme in the case of He-Haluts, which was devoted to fostering immigration to Palestine.

The escalation of violence between Poland and the Soviet Union into war in February 1919 had been a major blow to the nascent organization and had paralyzed it shortly after its founding congress convened in May 1919, as Soviet forces advanced on Warsaw (June–August 1920).²³ But even without the war, He-Haluts would have run into major difficulties. The new British rulers of

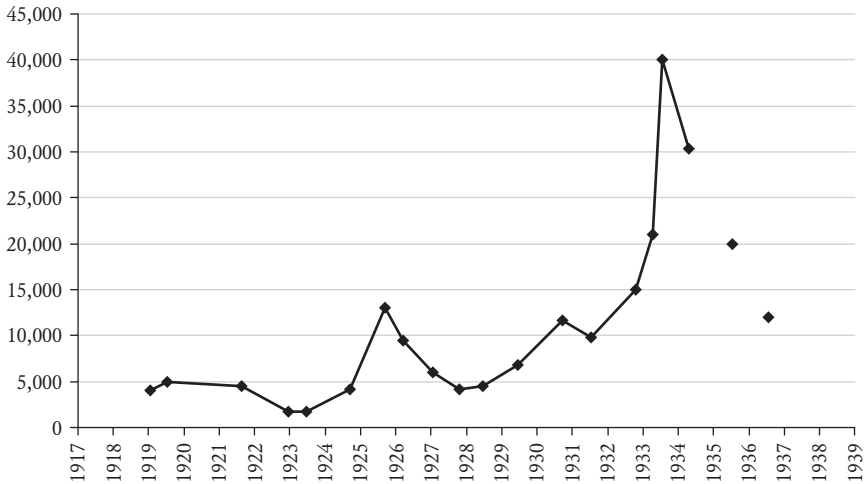


Figure 1. Membership, Hehalutz in Poland, 1919–1939

Palestine restricted the immigration of Jews without capital, and unemployment was increasing in the Yishuv's undeveloped economy.²⁴ In Poland, Zionists turned to securing Jewish civil rights and minority rights, and many local associations of He-Haluts disbanded. Local groups were weakened by the departure of active members and leaders to Palestine, making the success of the organization a cause for future failure. Other members were disillusioned with Zionism because of the poor prospects of finding work in Palestine, or devoted their time to the reconstruction of their communities.²⁵ The center in Warsaw barely operated and managed to survive largely thanks to the influx of members and activists from the Soviet Union who were stranded in Poland. Securing organizational continuity was a major concern of the leadership in times of decline.

He-Haluts Members in Palestine

At roughly the same time, an important episode took place in the Yishuv, now under British rule, which reveals the position of He-Haluts within the larger Labor Zionist camp. By 1920 there were hundreds of He-Haluts members in Palestine, and leaders proceeded as they did elsewhere: During September 19–20 they convened in Haifa and established “He-Haluts in the Land of Israel,” an organization intended to provide instruction and information to new arrivals, as well as to members abroad who were planning their trip to Palestine.²⁶

The formation of a separate organization demonstrates the conflicting trends between the newly arriving members of He-Haluts on the one hand, and the veteran leadership of the workers' parties (Ahdut ha-'avodah and Ha-Po'el ha-tsa'ir), which were established by previous immigrants from Eastern Europe, on the other. Members of He-Haluts set out to create an extension of their original East European association. The local activists, who had arrived around the time of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the decade preceding World War I, wanted the new immigrants to join the local institutions that they had already established. The earlier generation argued that their institutions were better adapted to local circumstances and to the hardships that the pioneers now faced, because they had been shaped by fifteen years of experience of the actual needs of Zionist workers in Palestine, and not by ideas and programs conceived in Europe. They would better serve the goal of creating a Zionist working class in Palestine by joining existing organizations.²⁷ When the Histadrut was established a few months later, in December 1920, as a unifying association for the various factions and immigrant groups, it took over the responsibilities of He-Haluts in Palestine, mainly absorbing new arrivals and dispatching information abroad.²⁸

The friction between the two cohorts dominated much of the labor camp in Palestine in the early 1920s. It was not just a generational confrontation, fueled by the new spirit brought by the youth who had endured war and revolution. It was also a question of leadership and geography—who were the leaders of socialist Zionism, and which experience mattered most, that of the Diaspora or of Palestine? In Palestine, most He-Haluts members gradually yielded to their older colleagues.²⁹ The fact that most He-Haluts leaders and members joined the existing organizations and institutions demonstrates the consolidation of a socialist Zionist leadership in Palestine. After the initial clash, the leadership in Palestine started to build itself as the leadership of the whole movement, transforming Palestine from a periphery or an extension of socialist Zionist circles in Eastern Europe to the new center of international socialist Zionism in the 1920s.

The World Organization of He-Haluts (1919–1925)

At the same time that the national centers of He-Haluts were being formed in each new nation-state, the founders of He-Haluts in Eastern Europe also began to seek ways to connect them by creating an umbrella organization. An international network was required in order to restore the unity that had been lost with the breakdown of the Russian Empire and the emigration of the first members to Palestine in 1919.

In fall 1919, a few months after a Central Committee of He-Haluts in Poland had been established in Warsaw (called the He-Haluts Center), a temporary executive of He-Haluts organizations across Eastern Europe was also established in the city. It represented the combined interests of He-Haluts members in the ZO, which opposed spontaneous immigration to Palestine in the midst of diplomatic uncertainty and political chaos. The young pioneers pressured the leadership of the ZO not to dampen the popular enthusiasm for immediate action.³⁰ They relied on the ZO for assistance with funds and visas during the risky journey to Palestine. In 1920 the temporary executive was transferred to Vienna (probably due to the outbreak of the Polish-Soviet War), which became a temporary hub, and in 1921 the first World Center was established there. However, it closed after a year as a result of the departure of its activists to Palestine.³¹

While the membership of He-Haluts rapidly declined in 1922–1923, urgent action was compelled by the forthcoming Zionist Congress. In 1923 the World Center was reestablished by Meir Bogdanovsky and others, this time in Berlin, a center of East European Jewish resettlement in the first half of the 1920s. After Vienna, Berlin served as a convenient intermediary between He-Haluts organizations in Eastern Europe and the new Zionist Executive formed in London. The recreation of the World Center was intended to secure the standing of He-Haluts in the ZO—now formally recognized as an advisory body by the British Mandate. He-Haluts sought to be the representative of all worker immigrants to Palestine.³² Many of the young pioneers were leaning toward socialism. They opposed the bourgeois policies of the Zionist leadership and demanded that the ZO take a more social approach by developing the immigration of Jewish workers.

The creation of the British Mandate of Palestine by the League of Nations in 1922, and the legal status it granted to the ZO, consolidated the ZO's position within the structure of the British Empire. Although the British government maintained full political control over Mandate Palestine, it yielded to the ZO some control over Jewish immigration. The ZO was now the official distributor of immigration permits to Jews, allocated by the British administration, as well as the main source of funding. The political arrangement between the ZO and the British Empire provided the umbrella under which the international network of He-Haluts was created. British policy regulated Jewish immigration to Palestine by restricting the entrance of "workers," meaning people without capital who were expected to make a living as wage earners, subject to fluctuations in the job market. Every six months the British Government of Palestine issued a new quota of permits, called "certificates," a principle that was maintained until 1937.³³ He-Haluts needed to secure its position within the ZO in order to

enjoy benefits in aliyah, namely permits and funding for the immigration of workers.³⁴

Under the guidance of Bogdanovsky, who was sent to Europe to aid the younger pioneers and to direct them according to the policies of the leadership in Palestine, the World Center of He-Haluts sought to gain control over immigration, and to become the sole representative of potential Jewish workers in Palestine.

The dissolution of the first World Center in Vienna had shown that institutional continuity in Europe could not rely on local members who aspired to emigrate but only on previous immigrants who returned to Europe as envoys from Palestine, devoting a few years of work to He-Haluts. Available sources do not disclose why Bogdanovsky left for Europe. He often complained about his loneliness in Berlin and about his exhaustion from working far from his colleagues. Other correspondences show that it was not easy to recruit envoys who would be willing to return to the Diaspora for long stays, unlike the shorter visits of the movement's leaders, which lasted a few weeks to several months.³⁵ Envoys were usually recruited from the third or fourth rank of activists. They were typically motivated by a commitment to the movement and by the need to reach out to supporters abroad. They served as a living connection between the dispersed parts of their movements. Bogdanovsky was somewhat older and more experienced than the members of He-Haluts, and intimately familiar with life in Palestine. He knew the people and the organizations there, knowledge that was crucial for coordinating activity between Eastern Europe and Palestine and for shaping a successful policy.

In 1924, emigration from Poland to Palestine suddenly resumed on an unprecedented scale (known as the Fourth Aliyah) due to a Polish economic crisis and the closing of immigration to the United States, where most immigrants had thus far chosen to go. Some 60,000 immigrants moved to Palestine in just two years. Bogdanovsky moved the World Center to Warsaw, the home of the largest pioneer movements, where it remained until 1939.

Recreating the Ideological Core, 1926–1928

The flow of thousands of He-Haluts members from Poland to Palestine in 1924–1926, reaching a peak of 12,500 members, created a dramatic increase in activity, only to collapse again in 1927 (see Figure 1). He-Haluts experienced rapid growth, but immigration drained it of its activists and aggravated its weakness. When immigration halted, there were no Soviet refugees to keep the organization going this time, and it nearly disbanded, as did other Polish Zionist associations. He-Haluts

maintained some activity thanks to the last Soviet émigrés and a handful of envoys from the Yishuv. It needed new leadership to survive.

The solution came from the new kibbutz movements in Palestine. Between 1926 and 1928, envoys from Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad (United Kibbutz Movement) transformed He-Haluts into an extension of the kibbutz movement in Palestine and consolidated their control over it throughout the 1930s.³⁶ This charismatic movement, numbering only a few hundred individuals, captured the imagination of the remaining Soviet émigrés active in He-Haluts in Poland. They projected a radical utopian vision of salvation for the Jewish people and humankind alike through communal living. The envoys were part of a delegation recruited by Bogdanovsky. In Poland they met the remaining members of a small and highly devoted socialist Zionist underground group from the Zhytomyr area in Soviet Ukraine called Dror (Freedom), who had arrived in Poland a few years earlier and became active in He-Haluts.³⁷ The Dror group was seeking a new leader and a new vision for its activity in Poland. They found it in the kibbutz movement and its charismatic leader, the thirty-eight-year-old Yitzhak Tabenkin, veteran of the 1905 revolution in Warsaw and head of Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad.

In 1927, Dror members and the kibbutz envoys initiated the establishment of a radical commune of workers, called the Klosova Kibbutz, in the remote Ukrainian village of Klesów in eastern Poland, a few miles from the Soviet border, and located five hundred kilometers east of Warsaw. There, a new model for pioneering was created, based on kibbutz life in a permanent commune. Due to the destruction of the He-Haluts archive in Warsaw in World War II, few documents from the kibbutz survived. However, these sources can be supplemented by memoirs collected from dozens of members who immigrated to Palestine.

The Klosova Kibbutz was first established by members from the nearby town of Sarny, who worked in a stone quarry in Klesów. The Center in Warsaw instructed pioneers to set up kibbutzim—communes of manual laborers—that were considered better for initiating them into pioneer life in communes in Palestine. Several groups in Poland complied, including the Sarny pioneers. The kibbutz disbanded after a few months when its founders left for Palestine at the end of the spring and summer training season. It was reestablished in the spring of 1925 and 1926, this time by new members from other towns in the region, who were mobilized by the regional committee. The Warsaw leadership allocated immigration certificates to the kibbutzim in order to encourage members to join them. The quarry was an exceptionally large employer in the rural and pre-industrialized eastern frontier of Poland, where He-Haluts was especially popular. The leadership chose the location to host groups of pioneers, who could train

there in demanding physical labor and communal living, hoping to instill in them a desire for both.³⁸

In the beginning of 1927, the He-Haluts headquarters in Warsaw decided to establish a permanent kibbutz in Klosova, one that would not disband at the end of every season. It would remain there through the winter, enabling a continuity of facilities as well as more stability in employment for the rotating membership that would fill in the spots of those who left. The central leadership provided Klosova indispensable help with funds, mobilizing activists and members from all across Poland, in places as far away as Kalisz, Bialystok, and Vilnius. The timing was terrible, as immigration to Palestine dwindled in the second half of 1926, coming to a complete halt in 1927, which resulted in massive reductions and closures of the organization's branches and kibbutzim. Soon the idea to form a permanent commune was modified: instead of a permanent place for training pioneers, it became a place where pioneers worked and lived continuously until they could immigrate to Palestine, instead of returning home after a few months of training as they had before.³⁹ Hakhsharah was transformed into the home of pioneers, young men and women awaiting kibbutz life in Palestine.

The commune leader was seventeen-year-old Benny Marshak from Smorgon (Smarhon in today's Belarus) in northeast Poland. He had been sent there by the leadership after graduating from the first He-Haluts seminar held in Warsaw, where local activists were trained. Marshak was a year or two younger than other local leaders, but his young age was not unusual. He was a war orphan who had witnessed the execution of his father by White Army soldiers for "collaboration" as the family migrated to the South, and later attended school in Odessa during the revolution. The family repatriated to Poland in 1924, where the restless and uprooted youth was seeking a purpose in life. He found it in the He-Haluts seminar, where he formed "a deep fatherly spiritual relation" with Tabenkin, which lasted until his death in 1975.⁴⁰

The seminar was conducted by Tabenkin and several Dror members from Ukraine. Tabenkin arrived in Poland to establish direct contact with He-Haluts and to persuade its members to join his kibbutz movement in Palestine. His trip was motivated by a power struggle over potential members inside the labor movement in Palestine, who competed for new recruits. In the second half of the 1920s each kibbutz movement had only a few hundred members, so that establishing direct contacts with He-Haluts in Poland could be a key to success and, ultimately, hegemony. Bogdanovsky and Dobkin regarded the envoys as a lifeline that would supply He-Haluts with activists and train new ones.

Young Benny Marshak was sent to Klosova infused with the ideas of Tabenkin and in fact already a devoted member of his kibbutz movement in Palestine, though still in Poland. Marshak transplanted the idea of the kibbutz into Poland

and helped create there cells of local supporters, turning pioneer training in Poland into extensions of the kibbutzim in Palestine. He spread a new radical ethos among He-Haluts members, a cult of labor. According to Tabenkin, hard manual labor was not just a means of building a Jewish homeland, but an end in itself, a path to personal and universal redemption. These “new Jews” would become part of a global progressive revolution led by the socialist camp, by creating a Jewish society without exploitation.⁴¹

Exporting the kibbutz model to Poland (and other countries) proved successful in reshaping the activist core of He-Haluts and generating renewed enthusiasm in energetic youth. The radical kibbutz ideology stirred a devotion that helped to ensure the commune’s continuity. What attracted these young, middle-class Jews in the eastern borderlands of Poland to communal life? Personal accounts of members from those years show the tremendous appeal it had for them. Some describe its totalizing character and the complete devotion to the collective as exhilarating. Others were fascinated by the radical vision, the promise embodied by words like “revolution,” “socialism,” and “a better world,” which echoed the dramatic events from across the Soviet border, and attracted their youthful spirit. Others still were pushed by a deep sense of despair and uncertainty following the destruction suffered by their families and communities in the war, a disillusionment with religion or with Poland, and a hope for a better future in a Jewish homeland, to which they would devote their zeal.⁴²

But their youthful devotion had also grave repercussions. The inexperienced youth adopted the kibbutz ideology in a superficial and often fanatical way, seeing hardship as a goal in itself. Indeed, the kibbutz model was unsuited to conditions in Poland, where it was only a temporary station on the way to Palestine. Polish kibbutzim were certainly lively, but the improvised communes of exhausted manual laborers were also quite unsanitary, with a constant flow of new members, inexperienced in hard manual work and communal living. The communes were highly unstable because the more experienced members regularly left, keeping income levels low, management poor, and members often hungry. Disease was rampant and proper medical treatment too expensive. Members lived in *hakhsharah* for periods ranging from several months to six or seven years, depending on immigration quotas. Many left due to the extremely tough living conditions, and new members had to be recruited regularly. Some argued that this way of life “corrupted” the body and mind. Moreover, the radical ethos nurtured by Klosowa was completely unsuitable for a mass movement. Statistics show that only a small portion of He-Haluts members adopted it. The rest were forced to comply if they wanted to immigrate and were alienated by it.⁴³

Still, affiliation with the kibbutzim in Palestine endowed He-Haluts with charisma and indispensable manpower (*envoys* and *adherents*), which succeeded in

recreating a new active core. Adherents of the kibbutz ideology formed a tight community of believers in socialist Zionism, like Hasidim following a rebbe. They formed a community on the margins of Polish Jewish society, in a small village far from the cultural and political centers in Warsaw, Lwów, or Vilna, or even from smaller local centers like Rovne, Kovel, and Pinsk. Klosova's anthem, titled "In No-Man's Land," expressed their detachment from the Polish surroundings. It was sung in Yiddish to the melody of a Russian anarchist hymn, beginning with the lines:

We have here no one
 We need here nothing
 We tore ourselves apart from the near and the far.⁴⁴

The members, who sang it routinely, identified with the "tomorrow" that they would build in Palestine by their hard labor.⁴⁵

The commune consolidated a group of pioneers economically and socially, by providing a steady income from their collective labor and creating a close-knit environment. It also enforced tighter control over the membership. The new model was gradually adopted by all pioneer organizations in Poland in the 1930s, from socialist (Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir and others) and middle-class (Ha-Noar ha-Tsioni) organizations to the religious (Mizrachi), anti-socialist and right-wing (Betar), and even non-Zionist Orthodox (Agudat Israel).

By the 1930s some of the youth trained in the kibbutzim were providing the backbone for the wider organization. I estimate that the activist core numbered between a few dozen and several hundred members at most in times of expansion, while the organization as a whole had a membership of tens of thousands.⁴⁶ The story of He-Haluts in Poland is essentially that of the interaction between radical enthusiasts and the wider membership that was not attracted to kibbutz life.

Political Mobilization and Rise to Power, 1933

The envoys did more than export the kibbutz way of life from Palestine and form cultural contacts. The influence of pioneers from Palestine over Polish pioneers went well beyond the transfer of ideas. They formed direct institutional ties that created a Palestine-led hierarchy and established the authority of the Yishuv leadership over its Polish counterpart. Since the late 1920s, the chief of He-Haluts in Poland was no longer elected by delegates from regional branches as before. He-Haluts stopped holding conventions after 1925, marking the weakening of local organizations and the decline of democracy.⁴⁷ The movements in Palestine

(the kibbutzim, the Histadrut, and the socialist parties) now appointed envoys instead. The leaders of He-Haluts were thus directly subject to their patrons in Palestine. He-Haluts continued to attract ever-larger numbers of members in times of immigration in the 1930s. But the mechanism of the envoys, intended to strengthen He-Haluts, also contributed in a way to its institutional waning.

The increased influence of envoys was not unique to He-Haluts. A similar process took place in the same years in Hashomer Hatzair, the largest Jewish youth movement in Poland, and to a lesser extent in the case of Betar.⁴⁸

The direct control over He-Haluts raises the question of whether Polish Zionist history was gradually being “detached” from its East European context. Clearly, the Palestinian factors should not be overstated, given the small size of the Yishuv and the political uncertainty concerning its future, especially with the outbreak of the Palestinian Arab Revolt in 1936. Local Polish and broader European factors, such as economic boycotts and anti-Semitism, continued to play a critical role in shaping Jewish emigration and Zionist culture. Still, the following case suggests both the intensity and structure of the Yishuv’s influence.

In 1933, Mapai leader David Ben-Gurion came to Warsaw to spearhead the European campaign for the upcoming Zionist Congress. Mapai was established in Palestine in 1930 as a union of the two major socialist Zionist parties, with the aim of becoming the dominant political force in the ZO.⁴⁹ Ben-Gurion came to Poland because it had the largest Zionist constituency, eventually constituting 60 percent of the votes in that election (40 percent in central and eastern Poland and 20 percent in the two Galicias).⁵⁰ The campaign was to determine the power struggle between the Zionist Right and Left, after the unexpected resignation of President Chaim Weizmann in 1931. In 1933, Zionism was on the rise again, thanks to a new immigration wave, the largest so far. The increased membership of the ZO raised the number of eligible voters (i.e., the membership) to the upcoming Zionist Congress to an unprecedented level of a little over half a million, with a total of 320,000 in the Polish state, roughly one in ten Jews.

Ben-Gurion devised a plan to win the elections by relying on the rapidly expanding He-Haluts. By April 1933 it had some 30,000 members, most of whom had joined in the last six months, and thousands more were joining every week with the coming of spring and a new immigration quota.⁵¹ This number may have been exaggerated, to make a stronger case for the political mobilization of He-Haluts.⁵²

Ben-Gurion’s plan was opposed by parts of the labor movement in Palestine, especially the kibbutzim, which controlled He-Haluts. Although they were part of the same camp, they had competing political visions. Tabenkin, for example, was worried that the masses that were joining the Zionist movement in the wake

of the world economic crisis and the political crisis created by the rise of Nazism and the radical right would diminish the power of the kibbutzim. Their immigration to Palestine would hinder efforts to shape a new Jewish society according to the utopian vision of the kibbutz movement.⁵³ His disciples in Poland were even more extreme in their exclusive approach to immigration, and demanded that priority be given to pioneers and potential kibbutz members. They stressed that pioneers were the most devoted segment in the Zionist camp in Palestine, ready for the toughest missions, while ignoring the fact that most people could or would not consider living in communes.⁵⁴

Even most He-Haluts members were reluctant to adopt this way of life. The attempts of the active core, trained in *hakhsharah* kibbutzim like Klosova to spread the radical kibbutz ideology to dozens of branches, were largely rejected by members in the years prior to the renewal of large-scale immigration.⁵⁵ This caused constant friction between the active core and the wider membership, who rejected the idea of adopting permanent kibbutz life if immigration was not imminent. This happened in Polesia, the Vilnius area, Vohlynia, and Podlasie, where He-Haluts was most popular. It was only when immigration dramatically increased in late 1932 that many members became willing to join *hakhsharah* as a means of reaching Palestine, where the majority left the kibbutz after their arrival. If the average member of He-Haluts had no desire to live in a commune, what would the larger Jewish public say? Could socialist Zionism ignore them altogether?

In a meeting in Warsaw held on April 19, 1933, Ben-Gurion attacked what he called the labor movement's lack of courage and vision, and its habit of concentrating its efforts on small circles, a less-than-subtle reference to the kibbutz envoys who controlled He-Haluts. At this meeting, which convened in the He-Haluts headquarters, it was decided to establish the headquarters of the European election campaign there. It was composed of some thirty envoys from Palestine, who had already been in Europe for a long time, along with Ben-Gurion and Chaim Shurer, another activist from former imperial Russia, who was sent to head the campaign in East Galicia.⁵⁶ "We should not delude ourselves," said Ben-Gurion, referring to the huge increase in He-Haluts membership. "The masses are not flocking to our ideology . . . , they are coming because they think that we are the channel to immigration. . . . And they will go to whoever controls immigration," he concluded, warning against the repercussions of losing the elections.⁵⁷

Ben-Gurion used the meeting to consolidate the Zionist Left in Europe into a single political camp and to gain support for his plan. The Zionist Left included over a dozen organizations, including political parties, youth movements, pioneer

organizations, and even a sports club.⁵⁸ In order to win the elections he needed to create a single political entity. For this purpose he formed an ad hoc list called the Labor Bloc, which included a wide coalition within which he could easily marginalize the heads of He-Haluts in Poland and the narrower interests of the kibbutzim. The protocol of the envoys' meeting shows how Ben-Gurion swayed the decisions in favor of the interests of the party and the wider labor movement. The small kibbutz movements in Palestine now numbered only five thousand people, a marginal power in the elections.⁵⁹ After the campaign gathered momentum, Ben-Gurion masterfully pressured them to recruit activists "to save the situation."⁶⁰

The kibbutz envoys were justifiably worried that neglecting all activities in favor of the elections would have an adverse effect on He-Haluts, but their reservations had no impact on the meeting.⁶¹ The meeting granted Ben-Gurion's wish to establish his political headquarters in He-Haluts offices in Warsaw, to place it under the direct control of the political bloc, and to devote He-Haluts and the youth movements in Poland exclusively to the election campaign. Every member of He-Haluts was obliged to become a member of the ZO, so that he or she could vote for the labor camp.

In the three months that followed, Ben-Gurion transformed He-Haluts in Poland into a political party, much to the dismay of the kibbutz envoys who were using it as a means for recruiting members for the kibbutzim. He had no significant Yiddish daily at his disposal that would enable him to reach a larger audience outside his camp and to consolidate public opinion around a united Labor Bloc, but only small and uninfluential factional periodicals. The existing popular dailies, *Haynt* and *Moment*, were controlled by the General Zionists and the Revisionists, respectively. He therefore used the Yiddish monthly of He-Haluts (*Yedies*) as his main platform for propaganda, turning it first into a political weekly and, as elections approached, into a more frequent publication, until it was replaced by a daily organ of the Zionist labor camp, *Dos Vort*. This was the first socialist Zionist daily in Poland, which was edited initially by Ben-Gurion and Zalman Rubashov (Shazar, later president of the State of Israel), who came from Palestine especially for this purpose.⁶² The new paper, which literally "swallowed" *Yedies*, marked the rapid and complete politicization of He-Haluts. The design of its masthead was borrowed from the elegant masthead of *Davar*, the daily paper of the Histadrut in Palestine (a modern graphic design based on medieval Ashkenazi script), which created a visual identity between the two papers, though the result in Yiddish was less attractive. The paper did not survive for long after the elections, when Ben-Gurion and Rubashov left Poland.⁶³

Another way in which He-Haluts was engaged in the elections was through a massive grassroots campaign to mobilize every member and attract new supporters. Support for Zionism in Poland existed mostly outside the big cities, and was particularly strong in hundreds of small towns. Ben-Gurion's strategy was to mobilize socialist Zionist supporters in every town by establishing local committees. He-Haluts branches, which by now numbered 650 in eastern and central Poland alone (not including Galicia), were the backbone of these committees, which managed the registration of new members and kept a count of supporters of the labor camp, thus securing their participation in the elections.⁶⁴ They also conducted appeals, political gatherings, and cultural events and distributed propaganda according to instructions from the headquarters in Warsaw.⁶⁵ This operation was orchestrated by Ben-Gurion through some fifty He-Haluts activists who were devoted solely to maintaining direct contact with local committees, distributing his instructions, and making sure that each branch complied.⁶⁶ Combined with the newspaper, the apparatus achieved the desired impact, generating strong local enthusiasm and support for the campaign.

The political mobilization of He-Haluts was so intense that even the Hebrew study pages that were distributed among the members contained phrases like "Have you already joined the Zionist Organization?" and instructed them to practice the conjugation of verbs with an example based on the term for the membership certificate, the *shekel*: *shokel*, *shokelet*, *shoklim*, *shoklot*, and so on.⁶⁷

In a remarkable shift, He-Haluts members became intensively engaged in political propaganda and over 90 percent were mobilized to vote for the Labor Bloc. According to my estimates they provided at least two-thirds of the Labor Bloc votes in central and eastern Poland, with some 70,000 voters identified as He-Haluts members or their friends and relatives, as compared to just 4,000 in the previous elections.⁶⁸ They delivered victory to Mapai and enabled its rise to power in the ZO. This success was repeated in later elections until the outbreak of World War II, using the same tools devised by Ben-Gurion in 1933.

For all its undisputed success, the campaign had only a temporary impact on He-Haluts. Once the turmoil was over and the victorious political envoys departed, He-Haluts returned to its everyday activities of branch meetings, Hebrew lessons, fundraising, and *hakhsharah*. The leaders of He-Haluts reverted to their previous priorities and focused on training members for *kibbutzim* in Palestine. They did not share the vision of the political leadership of Mapai, which sought to use the momentum of the elections for building a socialist Zionist mass movement in the Diaspora. Lacking cohorts of young and devoted activists who were willing to spend years abroad, the political leadership in Palestine had to rely on the *kibbutz* envoys, but was unable to impose its will on

them.⁶⁹ In light of their competing visions, both leadership factions maintained the status quo between them, with neither of them gaining full control.

Summary

Following the breakdown of empires into nation-states in Eastern and Central Europe after World War I, Zionism became more international, building bridges amid divided communities and immigrant concentrations. In this process, the Yishuv grew increasingly influential. Labor Zionism in particular displayed a dynamic and innovative approach to developing transnational institutions, assuming a dominant role in the process. He-Haluts was one of its leading models, perhaps its most successful, and became a key element in its rise to power in the ZO. Although much has been written on the influence of East European history on the development of Zionism, connecting the history of the Yishuv with that of Eastern Europe allows us to address the Yishuv's increasing influence in the lives of Zionists abroad.

My research show that during the interwar years, He-Haluts developed a transnational structure consisting of four interconnected layers, which subjected it to the leadership and authority of the labor movement in the Yishuv:

1. The rank and file of He-Haluts in Poland, consisting of young Polish Jews.
2. The active core that was recruited and trained in hakhsharah by envoys from kibbutzim in Palestine, becoming ardent supporters of the kibbutz movement in Palestine.
3. The Polish leadership in Warsaw that was composed of kibbutz envoys appointed by the leadership in the Yishuv.
4. The international level of the World Organization of He-Haluts, which oversaw the different national sections and was controlled by the political leadership of Mapai in Palestine.

Combined, these four layers fostered direct institutional connections between countries. He-Haluts developed a transnational network of activists, who served as a conduit between socialist Zionist centers in Eastern Europe and Palestine. They trained local activists for the wider membership and operated under the direct control of the political leadership in Palestine, which shaped its overall policy and provided financial and political resources, including immigration permits to Palestine.

This institutional structure operated within the geopolitical framework created by the ZO, where Labor Zionism competed for power and resources, and by

the British Empire, which granted it limited standing in the Mandate of Palestine and, crucially, the right to distribute immigration permits.

Relations among the four layers presented here were by no means smooth or harmonious. There were tensions and frictions between the active core and the membership over the communal model. There were tensions between the kibbutz movement and the party over goals and policies. But as long as immigration to Palestine was an option, their joint interests overcame the conflicts. The status quo ended with the destruction of European Jewry, which changed the Zionist map altogether. But these are topics for another study.

Notes

I would like to thank Taro Tsurumi, Ben Nathans, and Kenneth B. Moss for their comments, as well as my colleagues at the conference on “Mediating Israeli History and East European History” held at Saitama University, Tokyo, in January 2015.

1. Guy Miron, “Lashon, tarbut u-merhav: Etgare ha-historiyografyah ha-yehudit be-‘idan ha-tafniyot,” *Tsifyon* 76, no. 1 (2011): 63–93; Kenneth B. Moss, “East European Jewry, Nationalism and the Zionist Project: Introduction,” *Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008): 113–17; Moshe Rosman, “Jewish History Across Borders,” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 15–29. This approach is taken in the work of Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

2. This is less the case concerning the study of the imperial era, which elaborates on the relations between the Zionist movements in Central Europe and the Russian Empire. Joseph Goldstein, “The Beginnings of the Zionist Movement in Congress Poland: The Victory of the *Hasidim* over the Zionists?,” *Polin* 5 (1990): 114–30; Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Abad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), ch. 4.

3. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981). On He-Haluts, see Israel Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-haluts be-Polin, 1917–1929* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 19–20.

4. This figure includes 60 percent of the immigrants who arrived in 1919–1942 (41.5% from Poland, 9.2% from the USSR, 5.6% from Romania, 2.9% from Lithuania, 1.4% from Latvia). In addition, about 10 percent of the Jewish population in Palestine in 1942 had been residents before 1914, half of whom, according to my estimation, were either immigrants from Eastern Europe who had arrived in 1882–1914 or their descendants. See David Gurevich, Aron Gertz, and Roberto Bachi, *Ha-‘Aliyah, ha-yishuv veba-tenu’ab ha-tiv’it shel ha-ukhlusiyah be-Erets Yisra’el* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency Press, 1944), 43, 59.

5. *Ibid.*, 43.

6. *Ibid.*, 59. Other estimates are higher (47.9% in 1918–1938), but they include Jewish refugees from the Ukraine and USSR. Haim Barlas, “Ha-‘Aliyah veba-Misrad ha-Erets-Yisra’eli ha-merkazi,” in *Entsiklopedyah shel galuyot*, vol. 1, *Varshab* (Jerusalem: Entsiklopedyah shel galuyot, 1953), 432–34.

7. Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-haluts be-Polin, 1917–1929*, 22–118.

8. Ezra Mendelsohn, “Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?,” in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986), 130–39; Jerzy Tomaszewski, “Between the Social and the National: The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918–1939,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002): 55–70.

9. The peak membership of He-Haluts worldwide was around 90,000 in 1935. The movement was active primarily in Poland and Galicia (separately organized), as well as Romania, Lithuania,

Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, England, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, South Africa, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba. In 1935, 70 percent of members were in Eastern Europe, following a sharp increase in Germany with the rise of Nazism to power, but usually this figure was higher, with some 85 percent in Eastern Europe in 1933, for example. See Moshe Basok, ed., *Sefer be-haluts* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency Press, 1940), 415.

10. See, for example, Eli Tzur, "Ha-Tsiyonut be-Polin ha-'atsma'it," in *Ha-Tsiyonut le-ezoreba*, ed. Alon Gal (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2008), 1:156–80.

11. Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*. See also Jacek Walicki, *Ruch syjonistyczny w Polsce w latach 1926–1930* (Łódź: Ibidem, 2005), 199–290.

12. Eliyahu Dobkin (1898–1976) was elected as secretary at the second conference of the Polish He-Haluts in July 1921. He held this position until 1926. In 1933 he was appointed to the Zionist Executive, was head of the Department of Immigration in the Jewish Agency until 1951, and subsequently became head of the board of directors of Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal). Mordechai Naor, *Ha-Hotem ha-'asiri: Eliyahu Dobkin* (Mikveh Yisra'el: Yehuda Dekel Library, 2012), 9–45.

13. Oppenheim, *Tenu'at be-haluts be-Polin, 1917–1929*, 115.

14. Alongside Dobkin were Pinhas Rashis (1895–1978), born in the Polish town Kunów and raised in Odessa, who later became mayor of Petach Tikva; Israel Ritow (1895–1976), from the village Pohost near Minsk, leader of Tseirei Tsion in Yekaterinoslav (Dnipropetrovsk), who later became head of the Central Union of Cooperative Societies for over thirty years in Palestine and Israel; Yitzhak Szvum-Shvo (1899–1986), from Warsaw, a philosophy and law student at the University of Warsaw, who emigrated to Palestine in 1925 as a pioneer and later became legal counsel for the Histadrut. Zalman Yoeli, *Haluts yom yom: Pinbas Rashis, Pirke hayim ve-eru'e ha-teku'af* (Tel Aviv: Merkaz ha-shilton ha-mekomi, 1981), 47–53; David Tidhar, *Entsiklopedyah le-halutse ha-yishuv u-vonav* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat rishonim, 1947–1970), 4:2034.

15. Meir Bogdanovsky-Shely (1893–1983) was head of the World Organization of He-Haluts from 1923 to 1926. He was born in Golshany (Halšany, today in Belarus). He later became member of the editorial board of the *Davar* newspaper, and co-founded the Am Oved publishing house. After the establishment of Israel he worked at the Ministry of Justice. See his questionnaire, Lavon Institute for Labor Research, Tel Aviv, file IV-108-3 (hereafter LILR).

16. For Poland, see Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 52–65.

17. For example, David Horovitz (1899–1979) of Drohobych near Lwów in East Galicia later became the first governor of the Bank of Israel. Melech Neustadt/Najsztat-Noi (1895–1959) of Radomysl near Tarnów in West Galicia became secretary general of the World Union (Ichud) of socialist Zionism in 1934.

18. See note 9 for a list of He-Haluts organizations.

19. On the World Union of Poalei Tsion party in the imperial era, see Zvia Balshan, *Ibud mefulag: Ha-Berit ha-'olamit shel Mifleget po'ale Tsiyon 1907–1920* (Sede Boker: Ben-Gurion Research Institute, 2004).

20. The first national conference of He-Haluts in Poland was convened in Warsaw in May 1919, as reported in *He-Haluts* (newspaper), May 26, 1919.

21. In the case of He-Haluts these divisions were fueled by frictions within Labor Zionism, primarily between Hashomer Hatzair and the political leadership, which later evolved into rivalries between different kibbutz movements in Palestine, which sought to develop reservoirs of new members through their control of the different national sections of He-Haluts.

22. Ya'akov Rabinovitch, "Reshimot," *Ha-Po'el ha-Tsa'ir*, no. 27, August 29, 1919, 8–10.

23. See, for example, a report on activity in the Vilnius region. *He-Haluts* (newspaper, Vilnius), no. 2, Adar [March] 1922, 2.

24. On British immigration regulations in Palestine, see Moshe Lissak, "Aliyah, kelitah u-vinyan hevrah yehudit be-Erets Yisra'el bi-shenot ha-'esrim," in Moshe Lissak, Anita Shapira, and Gavriel

Cohen, eds., *Toldot ha-yishuv ha-yebudi be-Erets-Yisra'el me-az ha-'Aliyah ha-Rishonah: Tekufat ha-Mandat* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995), 2:190–280.

25. Eliyahu Dobkin, "Ha-'Aliyah ha-shelishit," in Basok, *Sefer be-haluts*, 63–66.

26. Eliyahu Dobkin, "Hathalat irguno ha-'olami shel he-Haluts," in *Me'asef* (Warsaw: He-Haluts, 1930), 177–78.

27. See, for example, Yosef Gorny, *Abdut ha-'avodah 1919–1930: Ha-Yesodot ha-ra'ayoniym veba-shitab ha-medinit* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1973), 35–40; Yonatan Shapira, *Abdut ha-'Avodah ba-historit: 'Osmato shel irgun politi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975), 18–76.

28. The generational conflict was between the associations and leaders of those known as the Second Aliyah (1904–1914) and those of the Third Aliyah (1919–1923). The leading organization formed by the new immigrants was Gdud ha-'avodah (Work Battalion), established in August 1920 by activists of He-Haluts from Russia and the local Ha-Shomer group, but it was also later replaced by the Histadrut. The founders of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa'ir, who arrived from Poland and Galicia, were more successful, forming a separate kibbutz movement in 1927. The ongoing tensions between Mapai and the kibbutz movements led to the political schism of Mapai in the 1940s. See, for example, Anita Shapira, *Berl* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 110–16.

29. With the exception of a group in the Gdud ha-'avodah centered on the leader Menahem Mendel Elkind, who returned to the Soviet Union. Anita Shapira, "Gedud ha-Avodah: A Dream That Failed," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 30 (1984): 62–76.

30. Oppenheim, *Tenu'at be-haluts be-Polin, 1917–1929*, 110.

31. The first world convention of He-Haluts took place on the eve of the Twelfth Zionist Congress in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), in the Czechoslovak Republic, on August 29–30, 1921, where a temporary central committee was elected. Dobkin, "Hathalat irguno ha-'olami shel he-haluts," 175–80.

32. See the correspondence between Bogdanovsky and Dobkin, Israel Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl (hereafter ILPA), file 4-14-1923-11.

33. Aviva Halamish, *Be-meruts kaful neged ha-zeman; Mediniyut ha-'aliyah ha-Ts'iyonit bi-shenot ha-sbeleshim* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2006), 4–26.

34. For an overview on the relations between Labor Zionism and the Zionist Executive under Weizmann's leadership, see Yosef Gorny, *Shutafut u-ma'avak: Haim Vaitsman u-tenu'at ha-po'alim be-Erets Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1976).

35. For a more detailed account of another envoy from those years, see Ahuvia Malkin, *Eliahu Golomb: Biography* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2007), 361, 368, 427–57. Golomb was a more senior figure then Bogdanovsky, and the first envoy to Poland, arriving in November 1923 for just six months. He came to recruit funds and supporters due to the harsh economic situation in Palestine.

36. Until 1927 Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad was known as Kibbutz Ein Harod, after the leading kibbutz in the organization, established in 1923. On its origins and developments, see Henry Near, *The Kibbutz: A History*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1992).

37. See Matityahu Mintz, *Hogrim u-mefatnim: Le-toldoteha shel haurat Dror be-Rusyah* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1983). Dobkin was now the head of the World Organization.

38. Haim Dan, ed., *Sefer Klosovab* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1978), 16–33.

39. *Ibid.*, 37–50.

40. Shlomo Shva, *Beni rats: Hayav ve-korotav shel Benjamin Marshak* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1981), 16–22.

41. See also Baruch Kaneri, *Tabenkin be-Erets Yisra'el* (Ramat Ef'al: Yad Tabenkin, 2003), 335–54, for Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad's perspective.

42. Dan, *Sefer Klosovab*, 56–78. A good example of this process in the 1905 generation can be found in Scott Ury, "The Revolution of 1905 and the Politics of Despair: Alienation, Friendship, Community," in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews: Studies in Honor of Jonathan Frankel*, ed. Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 96–110.

43. For more on Klosova and daily life there, see Rona Yona, "A Kibbutz in the Diaspora: The Pioneer Movement in Poland and the Klosova Kibbutz," *Journal of Israeli History* 31, no. 1 (2012): 9–43.

44. Dan, *Sefer Klosovab*, 34, 75–76.

45. Yona, “A Kibbutz in the Diaspora,” 27.

46. Protocol of the envoys’ meeting in Warsaw, April 19, 1933, ILPA, file 2-101-1933-13.

47. There were four conferences between 1919 and 1925, and only one after that, held in 1929, which was largely a formality designed to mark the partial incorporation of Hashomer Hatzair and Gordonia into He-Haluts, as prearranged by the leadership in Palestine. *Hablatot ve-ta’arikkim 5578–5595* [1918–1935] (Warsaw: He-Haluts, 1935). See also Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-haluts be-Polin, 1929–1939* (Sede Boker: Ha-merkaz le-moreshet Ben-Gurion, 1993), 369–409.

48. Eli Tzur, “Kolot rehokim: Shelihe ha-kibuts ha-artsy be-Polin,” *Israel* 23 (2016): 103–32; Daniel K. Heller, “The Rise of the Zionist Right: Polish Jews and the Betar Youth Movement, 1922–1935” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2012), 125–74.

49. See, for example, Yaacov Goldstein, *Miflegot Po’ale Erets Yisra’el* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1975), 137–40; Zeev Tsahor, *be-Hazon veba-heshbon* (Tel Aviv: Sifriyat po’alim, 1994), 77–122; Shabtai Tevet, *Kin’at David* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1977), 3:32–55.

50. The final number of voters in Poland exceeded previous estimates, which were also high. David Ben-Gurion, *Zikhronot* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1971), 1:540; Yaacov Shavit, “Erets Yisra’el u-Polin ke-ma’arakhah politit meshulevet,” *Medinab, mimshal vi-yebasim ben le’umiyim* 25 (1981): 148–60. For the results, see also *Haynt*, August 3, 1933, 2.

51. Protocol of the envoys’ meeting in Warsaw, April 19, 1933, ILPA, file 2-101-1933-13.

52. According to a census in April 1, 1933, there were over 18,000 members in 564 branches and some 4,000 in 186 hakhsharah kibbutzim, reaching a total of some 25,000 according to estimates that included those who were not counted by the census. *Yedies*, May 19, 1933.

53. Tevet, *Kin’at David*, 3:24–25, 40–41.

54. See, for example, Gershon Ostrovsky and Benny Marshak in the most comprehensive discussion of this issue, conducted by Ha-Kibbutz ha-me’uhad with Mapai leader Berl Katznelson, Protocols, November 24–25, 1933, Yad Tabenkin, Ha-Kibuts ha-me’uhad Archives, Ramat Ef’al, file 2-2/1/8.

55. See reports by activists, *Yedies*, December 25, 1931; January 28, 1932; March 17, 1932; *He-atid*, March 30, 1932.

56. Haim Shurer (1895–1968) was born in Obodovka, in the Vinnytsia district in Ukraine, studied in Kishinev and Odessa, and immigrated to Palestine in 1913. He was one of the secretaries of the united party, Mapai, among other things. Tidhar, *Entsiklopediyah le-haluts ba-yishuv*, 3:1124.

57. Protocol of the envoys’ meeting in Warsaw, April 19, 1933, ILPA, file 2-101-1933-13.

58. The list at first included He-Haluts, Poalei Tzion (Right), Ha-Poel (sports club), and the League for the Working Land of Israel. It was later joined by Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir, Gordonia, Frayhayt (Freedom, the Poalei Tzion youth movement), He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir (the He-Haluts youth movement), Rikuz Vitkin (affiliated with the moshav movement in Palestine), and Dat ve-’avodah (Religious Zionists affiliated with the Histadrut).

59. In all labor-affiliated kibbutzim. Henry Near, *Ha-Kibuts veba-bevrah: ha-Kibuts ha-me’uhad 1923–1933* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1984), 419.

60. See, for example, Ben-Gurion’s letters, May 12, 1933, Ben-Gurion Archive, Sede Boker; Ben-Gurion Diary, June 6, June 13, 1933, Ben-Gurion Archive.

61. See Feivish Bendori’s comments at the beginning and Gershon Ostrovsky’s comments toward the end of the discussion. Protocol of the envoys’ meeting in Warsaw, April 19, 1933.

62. Zalman Shazar (Rubashov, 1889–1974), third president of the State of Israel, born in Mir, in the Grodno region.

63. Repeated attempts to renew its publication were made before the 1935 elections, this time more successfully, and again in 1939. See Chaim Yaari, “Dos vort, dos naye vort, folksvort,” in *Itonut Yehudit she-haytah*, ed. Yehuda Gotthelf (Tel Aviv: World Federation of Jewish Journalists, 1973), 165–79.

64. See Ben-Gurion’s letters, April 22, 1933, and May 13, 15, and 16, 1933, Ben-Gurion Archive.

65. For local activity, see, for example, the minutes of the Bielsk Podlaski branch, located in the Bialystok region. YIVO Archives, New York, RG28, Bielsk Podlaski, file no. 1.

66. Ben-Gurion's letter, June 7, 1933, Ben-Gurion Archive.

67. See "Dapim le-'Ivrit," Level A, No. 2, June 2, 1933. The pages were distributed with the newspaper *Yedies*. LILR, file III-38-438-12.

68. My estimates are based on the last detailed reports collected by Ben-Gurion on the distribution of membership cards (shekels) in 514 towns out of a total of 620 He-Haluts branches, and 134 kibbutzim out of the existing 220, which reached 60,000. I estimate that the additional 100 branches and almost 100 kibbutzim contributed at least another 10,000 voters. Ben-Gurion Diary, July 3, 1933, Ben-Gurion Archive.

69. On the failure to regain influence over the active core and weaken the influence of the leadership of Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad on youth organizations in He-Haluts in Poland as well as in Palestine, see Shapira, *Berl*, 208–25.

PART III

FORMATIONS OF
POLITICAL CULTURE

CHAPTER 9

Israel's Polish Heritage

David Engel

Anyone wishing to consider the manner in which early twentieth-century East European Jewish nationalist movements left a legacy to the political thought and behavior of the State of Israel would do well to consider the following apparent anomaly: In 1921 approximately 400,000 Jews living in the territory of the new Polish Republic were members of the Zionist Organization. No other country in the world had a larger Zionist membership.¹ Nearly 40 percent of the delegates to the Fourteenth Zionist Congress in 1925 came from Poland, as did some 50 percent of Jewish immigrants to Palestine between the two world wars.² The numerical contribution of Polish Jewry to the world Zionist movement was thus considerably greater than its demographic weight among world Jewry (20 percent) or even European Jewry (35 percent). Yet the leading figures among Polish Zionists, the people that the members of the Zionist Organization from Poland entrusted to speak for them at the Zionist Congresses and in the other institutions of the Zionist movement—people like Yitzhak Gruenbaum, Apolinary Hartglas, Ozjasz Thon, Leon Reich, Ignacy Schwarzbart, Emil Sommerstein, Fiszel Rotenstreich, and Henryk Rosmarin—never reached the first ranks of the world Zionist leadership and never obtained a degree of power and influence within the world movement consistent with the numerical strength of the community that had made them its representatives.

Several factors appear to have contributed to this phenomenon. First was no doubt the socioeconomic makeup of the community of Zionists in Poland. Poverty was widespread among Polish Jewry during the interwar years, and an ever-increasing number of Jews and their communal institutions were dependent upon the support of wealthier Jewish communities overseas. Polish Jews could thus not be counted upon to make a significant financial contribution to the Zionist treasury, and in the Zionist Organization, as in many political bodies, influence depended largely upon money. Moreover, Polish Jews lived far from the

capitals of the world's great powers, meaning that the ability of Polish Zionist leaders to affect the foreign policy of Great Britain and other major European governments concerning the future of Palestine was limited. Those leaders were for the most part men of practical affairs, not of ideas; they contributed little to the development of Zionist thought. Their principal value to the world Zionist movement lay instead in the confidence that the particularly large reservoir of potential immigrants to Palestine from Poland placed in them. But as long as the Zionist Organization was actually able to bring only a small percentage of those potential immigrants to the incipient Jewish national home, Polish Jewry's weight in the movement was bound to be less than that of smaller Jewish communities that were endowed with more impressive financial, political, and intellectual resources.

Still, it appears that the roots of the phenomenon were not all quite so material. From its earliest moments the Zionist movement in Poland was separated from the worldwide Zionist leadership by a significant conceptual divide, one that stood to arouse mistrust in the intentions of Polish Zionists among Zionists from other countries. The clearest expression of that divide was the ongoing debate over what the Zionist argot termed *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work for the present) or *Landespolitik* (domestic politics). The central question in this debate was whether Zionists in a particular country should involve themselves in that country's domestic political arena for the purpose of promoting the physical security, material prosperity, legal standing, or cultural activity of the local Jewish population as a whole, or whether all of their attentions should be directed toward building and advancing the cause of the Jewish homeland in Palestine.³ Many of the leaders of the Zionist movement in Poland between the two world wars, including those who represented the movement in the Polish parliament, were among the most enthusiastic advocates of the former position.⁴ Indeed, during the 1920s *Landespolitik* became arguably the most notable distinguishing characteristic of Polish Zionism, especially within its largest faction, the General Zionists. But such advocacy put its advocates in Poland at odds with the leadership of the worldwide Zionist Organization, which gave first priority to the struggle for Palestine and preferred to entrust the more immediate needs and interests of diaspora Jewry to organizations not officially identified as Zionist.

The opposition between exponents of the two positions was fierce, its intensity far greater than what might have been expected had the debate involved no more than differences over tactics. In the end, it appears, the most prominent Zionists from Poland were shut out of influential positions in the worldwide Zionist movement largely because world Zionist Organization leaders perceived a danger in their stubborn commitment to *Gegenwartsarbeit*. Identifying the

source of that perception reveals some surprising insights into the Polish roots of Jewish nationalism and their resonance in contemporary Israel.

The Conceptual Divide: Imperial Roots

The conceptual divide between Polish General Zionists and the leaders of the worldwide movement first took root and grew during the transition from the Russian imperial framework, in which the idea of *Gegenwartsarbeit* arose, to the framework of the Polish nation-state, born on the ruins of the tsarist and Habsburg empires in 1918.

Zionist *Landespolitik* crystallized around the time of the 1905 revolution in Russia against the background of the increasingly vocal calls for democratization and decentralization of the empire to which the revolution gave encouragement. Those calls reflected a new constitutional notion, according to which Russia was conceived as a federation of sovereign national groups. The Third Conference of Russian Zionists, held in Helsingfors (Helsinki) in November 1906, gave explicit support to that notion by calling for “full democratization of the [Russian] regime according to the principles of parliamentary democracy, autonomy of the national territories . . . , guaranteed legal rights for all minority peoples . . . , [and] representation of all national minorities in federal, regional, and local elections.”⁵ The conference regarded the federal state as a suitable framework in which to put forth the basic Zionist demand that Jews be recognized as a nation among nations. Accordingly, the program it adopted included provisions for “full and unconditional [civic and national] rights to the Jewish population . . . , recognition of the Jewish people in Russia as a single political entity entitled to govern itself in matters of national culture, [convening of] a national assembly of Russian Jews . . . for the purpose of forming the basic structure of a national organization, [and] . . . the right to use the national language (Hebrew) and the spoken language (Yiddish) in schools, courts, and public life.”⁶ On the other hand, by identifying itself explicitly with the struggle to change the constitutional character of the Russian state and by seeking incorporation of the Jewish people as one of the future state’s constituting nationalities, the conference signaled a new direction in Russian Zionist political thought. Four years earlier, the Second Conference of Russian Zionists, meeting in Minsk in September 1902, had said nothing of a Zionist obligation to fight for even the civil rights of Jews in the Russian Empire, let alone for Jewish national autonomy within a polity reconstructed along democratic and federal lines. That same year, the so-called Zionist Popular Democratic Fraction—a faction within the world Zionist Organization composed largely of Jewish students from Russia, including such eventual pillars of the movement as Chaim Weizmann and Leo

Motzkin, who opposed what appeared to them the insufficient concern of the organization's founder, Theodor Herzl, for the cultural aspects of Jewish nationalism—had proclaimed that “the *complete* liberation . . . of the Jewish people can take place only through the establishment of a safe haven . . . in Palestine” and that “any step suggesting that Jews can be freed from external oppression in the countries of their dispersion . . . as part of the liberation of the dominant nation” was not only “worthless” but even “dangerous . . . to the national unity of the Jewish people . . . for raising false hopes and illusions.”⁷ Even during the height of the revolutionary ardor of 1905, after Tsar Nikolai II had promised to convene an advisory council of popular representatives and to introduce the principle of religious toleration, the Zionist leadership in Russia had declared that no matter how great their personal sympathy for the democratic winds blowing throughout the country, they did not wish Zionists to endorse them publicly. The struggle for Jewish rights in Russia, they determined, should be left to other parties and organizations.⁸

Some Russian Zionist leaders continued to express such sentiments even after Helsingfors. One of the movement's leading intellectual lights, Josef Klausner, academic and public affairs editor of the prestigious Hebrew monthly *Hashiloah*, criticized the Helsingfors Program bitterly, reminding his readers that “the most basic foundation of the [Zionist] view of the world is that the Jewish people requires a state of its own because it cannot develop as a proper nation outside of its land!” The Helsingfors resolutions, he charged, violated this fundamental Zionist principle, for Zionism regards the mononational state, not the multinational federation, as the ideal form of political organization. To his mind, converting the Russian Empire into a federation of national groups in which Jews would enjoy collective autonomy would be nothing more than a “palliative measure,” bringing only a “partial solution” to Jewish distress. He also pointed out that the Helsingfors program proposed that Jews take “a well-traveled road,” whereas “the entire power [of Zionism] lays in the unique path it, and only it, has set for itself, its rejection of the diaspora.” Hence, he reasoned, the new Russian Zionist platform was sure to result in a contraction of Zionist influence among Russian Jews.⁹

Klausner was correct to note the resemblance between the *Landespolitik* of the Helsingfors program and the ideological platforms of some rivals of the Zionists for the support of Russian Jews. As early as May 1901 the Jewish socialist Bund—The General Jewish Federation of Workers of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland—had asserted that “the Russian state, which is composed of many and various national groups, will need in the future to become a federation of nationalities, each possessing complete national autonomy independent of the territory each national group occupies.” In the same statement, the Bund had made it

clear that, as far as it was concerned, “the term ‘national group’ applies to the Jewish people.”¹⁰ In October 1905, as the revolution was reaching its apogee, the Bund’s Sixth Congress determined that “the future” of which it had spoken four years earlier had arrived—a situation that necessitated immediate introduction of “constitutional arrangements guaranteeing each nation,” including the Jews, “free cultural development” within a regime of “national-cultural autonomy” organized on an extraterritorial basis.¹¹ Only a few months earlier, the League for the Attainment of Equal Rights for the Jewish People in Russia (Soiuz dlia Dostizheniia Polnopraviiia Yevreiskogo Naroda v Rossii)—a group established in March 1905 that brought together representatives of liberal, socialist, religious, and nationalist Jewish streams from throughout the empire—had adopted a program calling for recognition of the Jews as a nation entitled to “national-cultural self-determination of every form, especially . . . freedom of language and of education in the schools.”¹² At its outset, this group had been influenced by the teaching of the Jewish historian and public activist Simon Dubnow, who held that ethnically neutral multinational states that granted a fair measure of self-rule to all of the various national groups that constituted them and refrained from interfering in their internal operations (as liberal regimes refrained from excessive interference with the freedom of individuals) offered a more just and stable political order than mononational states that granted a privileged position to one national group alone.¹³ Two years later, Dubnow founded his own party, the Folkspartey (People’s Party), which sought incorporation of the Jews in a Russian federation composed of a network of “national communes” (*Volksgemeinden*) operating local social, cultural, and economic institutions for the benefit of the particular national group that they represented and served.¹⁴ Hence it appears that at Helsingfors the Russian Zionists called for measures that were broadly popular within the internal Russian Jewish political arena during the first decade of the twentieth century. Klausner’s fear that the Helsingfors program might obscure the practical differences between Zionists and other groups calling for Jewish autonomy within a federated multinational state was not without basis.

But where Klausner predicted a decline in Zionist popularity as a result of this situation, most of his Zionist colleagues in Russia appear to have anticipated the opposite. The 1906 movement toward *Gegenwartsarbeit* was evidently meant to raise the Zionist profile on the Russian Jewish street. The “practical” orientation that had begun to gain ascendancy within the world Zionist Organization following Herzl’s death in 1904—an approach that favored the slow and deliberate development of Palestine’s economic infrastructure as a condition for receiving a mass influx of Jewish immigrants—made Zionism seem relatively less attractive than its competitors to many Russian Jews, for, contrary to the expectations Herzl’s appearance on the scene in the final decade of the nineteenth century

had aroused, it did not promise an imminent end to the tribulations of diaspora existence but postulated that those tribulations needed to continue for the foreseeable future. In 1905 the leaders of Russian Zionism began to notice that young Jews were defecting to the Zionists' rivals. They attributed this trend to their movement's inability to offer an immediate solution to the existential emergency many Jews were feeling.¹⁵ The revolutionary events of October 1905 had further exacerbated the situation from the Zionist perspective: The tsar's promises to permit free political expression and to empower the state Duma to confirm or reject all new proposed legislation raised hopes for a fundamental move away from autocracy and for elimination of the restrictions upon their liberties that Russian Jews had found so oppressive.¹⁶ In that climate many Jews became convinced that efforts in the general all-Russian political arena to democratize and to decentralize the empire were likely to yield a real improvement in their condition. The parties that were already prepared to make such efforts thus enjoyed an advantage over the Zionists, who until then had scoffed at political work inside Russia.¹⁷

Zionists faced an additional disadvantage as well. For several years Russian state officials had taken measures to encumber the dissemination of the Zionist message.¹⁸ Those encumbrances remained in force despite the tsar's October 1905 guarantees, which quickly proved empty.¹⁹ Under those conditions it was clear to the Russian Zionist leadership that without a radical change in the character of the Russian regime, their movement would be unable to recruit mass support. As a commentary published together with the Helsingfors program explained, "In the Diaspora, [Jewish] national organizations can develop only if the state recognizes them [as such]—something that can happen only to the extent that the state possesses a democratic structure."²⁰ Russian Zionists also understood that they were not in a position to produce the necessary change by themselves. They needed allies. They believed that they were most likely to find the required partners in the national movements of the empire's non-Russian nationalities, who, following the 1905 revolution and the convocation of the first Duma, had begun to prepare their own programs for reorganizing the state on a federal basis.²¹ Hence the commentary to the Helsingfors program called explicitly for "the Zionist masses . . . to join together with the liberation movements of the territorial peoples of Russia" with the goal of establishing a new constitutional order throughout the empire.²²

In the eyes of the Zionists who formulated the Helsingfors program, "the liberation movements of the territorial peoples of Russia" were federalist, not secessionist. One of the program's chief architects, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, emphasized that fact shortly following its adoption:

The connection between the condition of the Jews and the governing regime has been made quite clear in the bloodshed of recent years, but we have not yet sufficiently understood the connection between providing for our overall needs and the complete and thoroughgoing democratization and decentralization of the regime. Not much is needed to prove that Jews will be given the ability to organize their life as a group and to lead it according to their needs only once democracy has won a complete victory and the decentralization of the government has brought about recognition of the rights of all peoples living within the country's borders. And if the autonomy of the territorial peoples depends upon the triumph of democracy, how much more so does national autonomy for the Jews.²³

With this argument Gruenbaum and his associates hoped to rebut the objection of those who, like Klausner, doubted the tactical value of *Gegenwartsarbeit*. But Klausner had offered not only a tactical objection; he had raised a theoretical, principled one as well. In his view, the Helsingfors program had made an ideal of the federal, multinational state, whereas for Zionists a mononational, territorial state for the Jewish people was their movement's essential aim. One of Zionism's central tenets was that a people without a territory necessarily led an existence inferior to that of a people inhabiting its own land: The Zionist movement's entire purpose was to restore to the Jewish people its territorial existence, for only then could the Jewish people be truly equal to all others. The Helsingfors program was thus theoretically defensible only to the extent that it affirmed the right of a dispersed nation to come together and govern itself in a compact territory while simultaneously acknowledging its inferior constitutional status until it had done so.

It appears that the originators of the Helsingfors program accepted this theoretical obligation, for they did not envision that the Jews' collective status in the future democratic, decentralized Russia would be equal to that of its territorial peoples. Quite the contrary, the program explicitly underwrote a regime of *territorial* autonomy: The majority nations in the empire's various regions were expected to assume the reins of regional and local government, while "those national groups that are not located in [specific] regions" would enjoy "protection as a minority with national rights" by the overall state authorities.²⁴ As Gruenbaum recalled years later, this provision "gave expression to the recognition that the Jewish people in diaspora is but a scattered national minority among the nations that reside in their own lands, and because of this reality its national rights are limited," even though "this minority shares

interests in common with the other minorities and must participate together with them in the general struggle for the liberation of the enslaved peoples.”²⁵

In this fashion, proponents of *Gegenwartsarbeit* defended themselves against the criticism of their approach as a betrayal of Zionist first principles. Unfortunately for them, however, the collapse of the Russian autocracy in 1917 and the establishment of the Second Polish Republic less than two years later altered the political landscape fundamentally, in a way that cut the ground from under their defense.

The National State as National Property

The Second Polish Republic rested upon an unusual constitutional theory, one that figured the state as a sort of enterprise or corporation governed by the law of property. The theory was articulated most fully in a 1937 treatise on the relation between the concepts of “nation” and “state” in Polish legal thought, written by the influential and prolific scholar Olgierd Górka, professor of history at Warsaw University, who was known for a sympathetic attitude toward national and religious minorities.²⁶ Górka defined the state as an “overarching enterprise” (*nadprzesiębiorstwo*) whose reason for existence was “to fulfill . . . the changing goals of its owners.” In his words, “the source of authority is the ownership of the given state or the assumption of possession.”²⁷ Hence, according to Górka, the right to decide in political matters is no different than the right of a property owner to determine the disposition of his property. What distinguishes the state from other forms of property is, as he saw it, the collective character of the owners: modern states do not belong to individuals but to groups who exercise their ownership rights according to mutually agreed procedures.²⁸ Consequently he regarded the Second Polish Republic as “a form of human organization always led by an owner.”²⁹ The identity of the owner is clear: “Let us set ethical considerations aside . . . and look at the reality of our state squarely in the face. As with any well-run enterprise, we can neither be surprised at nor object to the fact that in the Polish state the one who has a compact and conscious majority of two thirds exercises his rights of possession in that enterprise. That person is the actual owner of the state. In this way we arrive at the thesis . . . that *the Polish nation is the true owner of the entire Polish state*.”³⁰

In other words, the Polish state could be compared to a corporation or joint-stock company, with its citizens the equivalent of shareholders. Individual citizens all hold equal shares in the state, but ownership rests with the group that controls the majority of stock. Because ethnic Poles comprised a permanent majority, the Polish state had to be considered the property of the Polish nation. All stockholders could express their views freely at corporate meetings, and all

could vote, but the majority always retained full control over the corporation's fundamental character and policies.

Górka offered this characterization as a description of Polish political theory and practice; he did not necessarily endorse it. Not all segments of the Polish community subscribed to the theory in full, but in practice many key figures in the Second Polish Republic took steps to give it concrete expression. The theory was reflected in a broad tendency among Polish political leaders to speak of the new state as "our home" or "our country" (where "our" signified ethnic Poles) while referring to citizens from other ethnic groups as "foreigners."³¹ At times it also manifested itself more concretely. For example, on March 4, 1919, some four months after the proclamation of Poland's independence, the Warsaw municipal and district commissioner, Franciszek Anusz, issued an "Instruction Regarding Foreigners" ordering "persons not belonging to the Polish national group and not possessing Polish citizenship (*osoby, nie należące do polskiej narodowości i nie posiadające obywatelstwa polskiego*) . . . to leave the city of Warsaw before March 15 of the present year, unless they obtain permission to remain in Warsaw prior to that date."³² The language of the order (especially its use of the conjunction "and" in defining the set of people to whom it applied) made it clear that citizens of the Polish Republic who did not belong to "the Polish national group" would be required to justify their presence in the city ("in view of the difficulties with the food supply that Warsaw is experiencing, and also in view of [the need] to maintain overall peace and security"), whereas individuals who belonged to that group were exempt from any such requirement.³³ In other words, citizens of Poland remained "foreigners," both rhetorically and legally, unless they were also ethnic Poles. Moreover, by justifying the distinction through reference to food shortages, the instruction suggested that citizens who were nonetheless "foreigners" had at most only a limited right to demand a share of state assistance or protection: Whenever essential goods and services were in short supply, the needs of ethnic Poles were to take priority over the needs of Polish citizens belonging to other nationalities. For the government of the Polish capital, that principle evidently trumped the promise of Poland's Proclamation of Independence of November 7, 1918, which declared that the Polish Republic would grant "full equality of political and civil rights to all citizens without regard to origin, religious confession, or national membership."³⁴ Evidently the government regarded Polish state resources as the common property of the ethnic Polish community; its duty was to manage that property for its owners' benefit. That end justified withholding resources even from state citizens who did not belong to the ethnic Polish majority.³⁵

Gruenbaum protested Anusz's instruction bitterly. In a speech to the Warsaw City Council on June 13, 1919, he noted, among other things, a fundamental

contradiction between the language of the order and the manner of its enforcement on one hand and the principle of civic equality on the other:

If Jews who are Polish citizens are required to prove that they have changed their place of residence legally and that they have been registered as permanent residents in the local registry," he argued, "then the same must be demanded of Poles . . . , for otherwise we shall at once introduce civil inequality and abandon the rule of equal rights for all citizens of the state, establishing a difference between citizens who belong to the governing national group and citizens who belong to the national groups that do not govern" (*stwierdza się różnicę między obywatelami panującąj narodowosci a obywatelami narodowosci niepanującąj*).³⁶

For emphasis he compared Poland's situation to that of the Ottoman Empire, which, he claimed, could serve only as a negative example for a state that wished to regard itself as modern and well-governed:

A Pole by nationality (*Polak z narodowosci*) . . . who was born, let us say, in America and came to Poland is a citizen of the Polish state. I think such a law existed in the Turkish state. . . . We can make a comparison to the Turkish law according to which every Muslim becomes a Turkish citizen the moment his foot touches Turkish soil. There the basis was religious; here is it ethnonational (*narodowosciowy*). But this proves that there is a difference between citizens: A person coming from Wilno faces no restrictions as long as he is a Pole.³⁷

At that moment, an unidentified voice broke into Gruenbaum's speech: "Because this is Poland!"³⁸ The interruption epitomized the gulf separating Polish and Jewish understandings of the nature of the Polish state. For those members of the City Council who turned a deaf ear to the Jewish leader's insistence that "the concept of a nation encompasses the collectivity of all citizens of a state (*pojęcie narodu jest pojęciem zbiorowosci wszystkich obywateli państwa*),"³⁹ it evidently went without saying that one of the Polish state's basic tasks was to offer ethnic Poles, both those living within the state's borders and those abroad, enhanced political status in comparison with that of the state's nonethnic Polish residents. They held firmly that being a citizen of the Polish Republic did not make a person a Pole. On the contrary, in their eyes it was not the function of the Polish state to shape a new identity for its inhabitants based upon membership in a common civic community; its task was rather to reflect and to reinforce the preexisting ethnic identity of its owners.

At the time of the Second Polish Republic's creation, that understanding dominated the state's political practice. Like the state's other nonethnic Polish minorities—most prominently Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, Russians, and Lithuanians—who, together with the Jews, made up approximately one third of its population, Jews were regarded as second-class citizens not only *de facto* but *de jure* as well; discrimination against them in many areas of life was considered legitimate, fully in keeping with the republic's conception of itself as a modern democracy. Such discrimination did not necessarily stem from xenophobic feelings or from disapproval of the behavior, real or imagined, of nonethnic Poles; rather it was rooted in the bedrock idea that the Polish state was the property of the ethnic Polish nation. According to that idea, people who could not claim membership in the ethnic Polish nation might enjoy certain benefits from the nation's property, but only if that enjoyment did not detract from the welfare of the owners. By extension, withholding benefits from nonowners in times of scarcity could not only be easily justified; it could actually be deemed a positive value, and anyone who protested against it could properly be stigmatized as subverting the republic's very foundations.⁴⁰

Gruenbaum's speech in the Warsaw City Council hinted at a Zionist strategy for confronting the potential effects of the republic's self-conception upon Jewish life. Because the Zionist panacea for all Jewish distress—mass immigration to Palestine—remained impractical, Polish Zionists were compelled to compete with all other Jewish political movements to find a way to defend the interests of Jews in their places of residence and to counteract the damage to their physical safety and economic well-being that accompanied the assertion of Polish national sovereignty.⁴¹ Many of them were unsure of their ability to do so successfully, perceiving a parallel to the situation their movement had faced in Russia at the time of the 1905 revolution. And just as the Helsingfors program had provided a guide for the unsure of its day, so did the basic constitutional idea it expressed appear to many Zionists to offer a solution to their present predicament. That idea challenged the notion that a single nation could rightfully assume sovereignty over a region inhabited by large numbers of members of more than one national group; it represented the state as a joint venture of all national groups present in a territory in significant numbers, whether the places of residence of those groups were concentrated or scattered. The same idea underlay the January 1919 demand of the Zionist Federation of Congress Poland (led by Gruenbaum) that "the Polish state will not be a pure national state, and nations besides the Poles will be incorporated within it." Only should that situation come to pass, the Zionist Federation warned, "will peace between the Poles and the Jews be established, a peace that is essential for them and for the welfare and development of the new state."⁴² Shortly thereafter, the Zionist Press Bureau in Warsaw published a

Polish translation of the Helsingfors program's central provisions as part of a brochure expressing the Zionist position regarding the desired constitutional structure of the Second Republic.⁴³ For their part, Zionists from the former Austrian and Prussian partitions that had been incorporated into the new Polish state also joined in the call for Poland to be constituted as a "state of [multiple] nationalities" (*państwo narodowosciowe*), demanding that a fundamental distinction be recognized between the concepts of "membership in a nation" (*narodowosc*) and "membership in a state" (*państwowosc*).⁴⁴ Josef Tenenbaum, one of the heads of the Zionist Federation of East Galicia, even addressed a lengthy memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference, arguing that "Poland must not be an imperialist nation-state but a state of free nationalities, a homeland for all of the peoples living under its flag, including the Jews."⁴⁵

But the strategy soon revealed an internal contradiction. Whereas in imperial Russia the idea of a "state of multiple nationalities" was offered as an alternative to a fundamentally antidemocratic regime and could thus be presented as a progressive demand fully consonant with basic Zionist values, in the new Poland it functioned as a challenge to a modern republic bearing little resemblance to the old Russian autocracy. The constitution of the Second Polish Republic, adopted on March 17, 1921, appeared to establish a regime that would score high according to any index of liberal democracy. It provided for a government responsible to parliament; separation of powers; equality of all citizens before the law "without regard to origin, religion, or national identity"; freedom of speech, religion, and assembly; the right to petition the government for redress of grievances; the right to fair trial; and direct elections conducted according to the principles of equal universal suffrage, secrecy, and proportionality. Moreover, the constitution took official recognition of the multiethnic character of Poland's population, promising unequivocally that all citizens would be free "to preserve their national identity, language, and character" within the framework of "autonomous societies of minorities."⁴⁶ Those provisions made it difficult for Zionist spokesmen to explain *in principle* why they regarded such a regime as equally objectionable and dangerous to their interests as the tyranny of the Russian tsar.

Apolinary Hartglas, one of the Zionist deputies elected to the first Polish Sejm, who had begun his Zionist career as a delegate to the Helsingfors Conference, tried to meet the challenge in a 1921 pamphlet setting forth what he saw as the new constitution's shortcomings. He maintained that even though "the constitution . . . bears all of the outward signs of a truly democratic document," it still "constitutes only a mold into which any content, democratic or reactionary, can be poured." In practice, he argued, "it does not guarantee the minorities any rights at all."⁴⁷ True, he admitted, "the paragraphs that deal with [the minorities] are arranged in such a way that, with good will and appropriate relative levels

of political power, it may be possible for legislation to be enacted on the basis of the constitution that will secure for us all that we deserve and all that we demand." But it was clear that he did not anticipate that the necessary goodwill and balance of power in the political arena would ever be achieved. The experience of the Second Republic's first three years had no doubt led him to believe that Polish Jews would never win recognition as rightful stakeholders in a state that defined itself as the nation-state of the Polish nation, let alone achieve a level of political power necessary for protecting their collective group interests.⁴⁸

Hartglas's colleague Gruenbaum expressed similar reservations:

[Poland will be] a constitutional republic . . . that will guarantee the future development of a Polish national state in which the Polish nation will dominate all of the other national groups in the state and will be able to force upon them its culture, language and way of life. The rights of the national minorities are likely to be recognized only to the most minimal extent, for show alone and with the hidden intention that, as the years go by, the energy [of the minorities] will dissipate and they will disappear altogether. The peoples that make up the national minorities will be placed under conditions that will weaken their ability to resist and will prepare them to surrender to the assimilatory pressures of Polish national influence. . . . Of course, the Jewish question remains without any solution. The demands of the Jews have not been met, even the demand for complete equality of rights. If [the Poles] so desire, and if they have the power to do so, they will interpret the clause stating that all citizens are equal before the law to mean that residents who declare themselves members of the Jewish nation will not be regarded as citizens and will not be able to enjoy equal rights. If they so desire, and if they have the power to do so, they will not consider the Jews a nation and will relate to them not in accordance with the clause governing national minorities but only with the clause governing religious and linguistic minorities, and they will deny Jewish communal organizations the rights of public institutions. . . . Everything remains in the air, without solution. Currently everything depends upon future legislation, upon the government's future policies, upon future administrative measures. The Constitution of 17 March has not settled the Jewish problem. [This failure] was symbolized when an amendment that the Jews proposed to the preamble, adumbrating the state's basic principles, was defeated. [The Constituent Sejm] refused to state that Poland would guarantee freedom of development for [all] national and religious groups. That fact alone is sufficient to justify the attitude of the Jewish deputies who voted against the Constitution. It

even demonstrates openly to the entire world that the Polish Republic offers no guarantee for national and religious groups to develop freely.⁴⁹

The objections of Hartglas and Gruenbaum advanced the theory that a liberal constitution, even one that provided on the surface for a decentralized regime guaranteeing collective minority rights, does not offer by itself a sufficient guarantee of a proper and just political order. Quite the contrary: They suggested a fundamental contradiction between such an order and the mononational state. In the view of these two prominent Jewish parliamentary deputies, a Polish nation-state that simultaneously is considered the property of the Polish nation and offers all citizens a fully democratic and egalitarian regime—one that does not distinguish between its citizens and belongs to all of the national groups that compose the state—is an illusion; it cannot be.

And yet, the Zionist movement had long regarded a *Jewish* national state that would be considered the property of the entire Jewish people as a thoroughly just political demand.⁵⁰ It was over the theoretical justice of the idea of a mononational state that the disagreement between proponents of Zionist *Landespolitik* in Poland and the mainstream of the world Zionist movement turned into a fundamental conceptual divide that could not be easily bridged. The demand of Gruenbaum, Hartglas, and their fellow advocates of *Gegenwartsarbeit* to constitute Poland as a multinational state was now more than the expression of a *practical* preference for that type of regime over an oppressive autocracy, as it had been during the time of the Russian Empire. In independent Poland it had become an expression of preference *in principle* for the multinational state and of denigration of the mononational state on *theoretical* grounds. Moreover, it quickly became clear that proponents of *Landespolitik* in independent Poland had abandoned the theoretical distinction that the Helsingfors program had made between territorial and nonterritorial national groups. When the leader of the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna—PPS), Ignacy Daszyński, proposed in May 1919 to grant national autonomy only to territorial minorities and specifically excluded Jews from the ranks of groups entitled to self-rule, Gruenbaum upbraided him, observing that his position did not comport with that of the Socialist International, “which recognizes a minority as national without reference to whether it possesses its own territory.”⁵¹ In opposition to Daszyński, Gruenbaum demanded that the status of Jews in the new Poland be the same as that of the state’s territorial minorities—a demand that the Helsingfors program had pointedly refrained from raising. Mainstream Zionists might have been concerned as well whether a multinational Poland that would offer Jews a “homeland” together with “all of the peoples living under its flag” (as Josef Tenenbaum had hinted to the Paris Peace Conference)⁵² would cause

independent observers to wonder why Jews needed an additional homeland in Palestine.

Hence, as practiced in the Second Polish Republic, Zionist *Landespolitik* conflicted with at least three sacred Zionist postulates: the justice of the mononational state, the centrality of territory in determining the political status and prerogatives of a national group, and the absolute necessity of a national home in Palestine as a guarantor of the Jewish people's continued existence. No wonder that Zionists from other parts of the world looked askance at Polish proponents of *Landespolitik* and worked to keep them at arm's length from positions of influence in the world Zionist movement.

Zionists and the State as National Property

This situation masked a profound irony, for it appears that, on the level of principle, most of the proponents of *Landespolitik* in Poland understood and even identified with the constitutional theory that found expression in the Second Republic. That identification was nourished, no doubt, by the desire of the architects of the Helsingfors program for cooperation with the Polish national movement. Their contacts with that movement during the decade immediately preceding World War I evidently prompted them to internalize certain values of the Polish movement, including the conception of the state as a form of property belonging collectively to the national group that comprised a majority of the residents of its territory. During those years Zionist spokesmen routinely referred to the Polish nation as the sole rightful "owner" of Poland and to Jews as "foreigners" lacking any proprietary right in the country.⁵³ In 1912 Hartglas himself proclaimed on the pages of Russia's leading Zionist weekly that in Poland, and especially in Warsaw, the Polish capital, the political rights of the Polish nation must take precedence over those of the Jews *as a matter of moral principle*.⁵⁴ Another leading Zionist publicist, Moshe Kleinman, backed his stance in the official Hebrew-language organ of the world Zionist Organization, deriving it from what he understood as Zionist first principles:

We have already protested elsewhere against the statement of one of our colleagues that "Poland is the country of the Jews and of the Poles."⁵⁵ If we Zionists maintain this position we will be cutting the ground out from under our own feet. . . . We will no longer have any claim to Palestine, even the right to settle it, because no matter how we look at it our work there involves displacing the residents who have been living there for a long time and relegating their national rights to a lesser order. . . . This argument [that Poland is a country of two nations] is altogether foreign

to the Zionist worldview, which rests upon the *historic right* possessed by every nation in its homeland and the *political right* that stems from the efforts at cultural creativity in which every nation engages in its historic homeland. If we rely upon our Zionist worldview there is no way that we can think that Poland is “the country of the Jews and the Poles.” . . . We Jewish nationalists must feel the great pain of another nation that has been uprooted from its land and admit the right of that nation to be a *primary* ruler in its country, its historic property. Electing deputies who are members of the nation is not only a matter of defending national interests; it is . . . a way of highlighting *the national property* (*havlatat ha-kinyan ha-le’umi*). . . . What is at stake here is a matter of absolute principle stemming from our own national sensibilities: *we must apply to others the same standards we would have applied to ourselves*. If we insist upon the right conferred by history . . . , and if we maintain that electing deputies to a parliament is a matter of *national identity that highlights the national property*, we are not entitled to insult . . . the feelings of any other nation, *even the feelings of a Polish nation that shows hostility toward us*. On the contrary, our ability to recognize the feelings and the pain of a subjugated nation places upon us the obligation to help the Poles preserve the Polish character of the Polish state and of the city of Warsaw.⁵⁶

Kleinman’s argument suggested, contrary to the position Gruenbaum and Hartglas would take later regarding the Second Polish Republic’s 1921 Constitution, that there was nothing *inherently* unjust or even illiberal in a mononational state. It implied further that whatever tensions Jews might be sensing with their Polish neighbors were primarily a result not of the Poles’ desire to assume ownership of their rightful “national property” and their (legitimate) insistence upon constitutional arrangements that would preserve that right but rather of a longstanding antipathy that they harbored toward Jews specifically.

Eventually those perceptions would help the Zionist movement confront claims raised against it by the Palestinian Arab national movement under the British Mandate that Jewish political hegemony must necessarily produce injustice toward the country’s non-Jewish inhabitants. A prominent example of the use Zionist leaders made of national property arguments in this context comes from a programmatic statement developed between 1929 and 1931 by David Ben-Gurion, the dominant political figure in Palestine’s Jewish community, concerning steps to be taken toward establishment of an independent regime in the British Mandatory territory. Ben-Gurion introduced the statement with a set of “general prefatory remarks”:

Palestine is intended for the Jewish people (*ba-'am ha-Yehudi*) and for the Arabs who live in it. The right of the Hebrew people (*ba-'am ha-'Ivri*)⁵⁷ is not conditional upon the consent of any party from outside [the country]. . . . International law recognizes the right of the Jewish people to reestablish its national home in Palestine. All inhabitants of the country, with no difference [among them], have full civil rights. . . . The opportunity for the free development of all citizens of the country must be guaranteed and unimpaired by the Hebrew national home. However, the current residents of the country by themselves have no right of ownership or dominion (*adnut*)⁵⁸ in it. The interests of the Jewish people ("the national home") and the interests of the residents may not interfere with one another.⁵⁹

Ben-Gurion did not avail himself of the analogy of the state to a joint-stock company and of citizens to stockholders that Górka would develop in 1937, but the similarities are patent. He conceived of the state to be created in Palestine as a type of property, to be owned collectively by the worldwide Jewish people, which, 13 million strong at the time, would control its political destiny, just as the owner of any property was free to dispose of it as he wished. The approximately 850,000 non-Jewish residents of Palestine would have a limited interest in the state, which the Jewish people, as owners, would be obligated to take into account in political decisions. Those non-Jewish residents would be free to express their views about those decisions and to use the instruments of the state to try to influence them. They would also be entitled to claim a share of state resources for the promotion of their individual and collective welfare. But proprietary rights and the right of dominion would be reserved for the Jewish nation.

The subsequent evolution of this conception in Zionist and Israeli political thought is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that the notion of what political theorists have termed "proprietary Zionism"—the idea that "the Jewish people has had the right of ownership of the Land of Israel, its outside and inside, its entire territory and its political institutions, since antiquity"⁶⁰—has rested at the foundation of Israeli political discourse since the state's founding. That notion may not have been borrowed directly from Polish constitutional theory, but that theory surely resonated with Zionist leaders. After all, most modern Western constitutional traditions have distinguished between the private law of property and the public law of the state.⁶¹ As a result, Zionists seeking to justify their demand for Jewish control of Palestine's governing institutions on the basis of the country's historic status as the Jewish people's patrimony needed a political theory that challenged the distinction. Polish political thought offered

them a useful model in this regard. Moreover, the basic terms of that thought were largely familiar to them by virtue of their personal East European backgrounds and the importance of the Polish national movement for their own cause. Their familiarity with the language of Polish politics no doubt increased during the years of the Second Republic, when Polish Jewry became the most important site of contest among the Zionist political parties for dominance in the world movement, and party leaders spent considerable time there courting votes.⁶² It thus appears more than coincidental that similar language appeared in Zionist programs for governing Palestine during those years.

One thing is certain, however: Those Polish Zionist leaders who, for domestic and internal Jewish political reasons, attempted to oppose the proprietary understanding of the *Polish* state *in principle* placed themselves at odds with a more far-reaching and fundamental Zionist interest. Consequently they would soon be excluded from the top echelons of the world Zionist movement despite the weight they carried with the Polish Zionist rank and file. Ironically, if their political theory left any imprint upon subsequent Israeli politics, it did so mainly as one of the catalysts for articulation of the contrary theory that the Zionist movement and the Israeli state would eventually adopt.

Notes

Portions of this article are taken from David Engel, "Ha-meser ha-kaful: Ha-Tsiyonut ha-kelalit be-Polin le-nokhah medinat ha-le'om," *Gal-'Ed* 20 (2006): 55–79. Others come from a lecture titled "On the Nature and Extent of Israel's East European Heritage," presented at the conference "Mediating Israeli History and East European History," Saitama University, Tokyo Station Collage, January 11–12, 2015. Still others were prepared especially for this piece.

1. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 184. To be sure, irregularities were noted in the recording of Zionist memberships; the actual number of true, ideologically committed Zionists was in all likelihood significantly lower. Nevertheless, it is clear that following World War I the Polish Republic became an especially fertile territory for Zionist recruitment activities. See also Adolf Boehm, *Die zionistische Bewegung* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1937), 2:500.

2. *Sbenaton statisti le-Yisra'el* 2 (1951): 27; Boehm, *Zionistische Bewegung*, 2:50.

3. On the development of the debate, see Boehm, *Zionistische Bewegung* 1:320–48.

4. As a result, that position was often called *Sejm-Zionismus* (Zionism of the Sejm [the lower house of the Polish parliament]), usually by its detractors. See Yitzhak Gruenbaum, *Ne'umim ba-seym ha-Polani* (Jerusalem, n.d.), 7.

5. All-Russian Zionist Conference, "The Helsingfors Program (1906)," in P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 423.

6. *Ibid.*

7. "Ha-tokhnit shel ha-Fraktsiyah ha-Tsiyonit-ammamit," in *Sefer Motskin: Ketavim u-ne'umim nivbarim, biyografyah ve-divre ba'arakbah*, ed. Alex Bein (Jerusalem: Zionist Executive, 1939), 55–57. On the Popular Democratic Fraction, see Israel Klausner, *Opozitsiyah le-Herzl* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1960), 174–86.

8. Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha-'itonut ha-Yehudit-Rusit be-reshit ha-me'ab ha-'esrim* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1978), 218.
9. Ha-Mashkif [Josef Klausner], "Hashkafah 'Ivrit," *Ha-shiloah* 16 (1907): 89.
10. *Din ve-heshbon shel ha-ve'idab ha-revi'it shel ha-Bund* (Jerusalem: Ha-Universitah ha-'Ivrit, 1970), 16.
11. Quoted in J. S. Hertz, *Di gesbikhte fun Bund* (New York: Unser Tsayt, 1966), 2:253–54.
12. Quoted in Simon Dubnow, *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism*, ed. K. S. Pinson (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958), 212.
13. *Ibid.*, 140–41.
14. *Ibid.*, 229–30.
15. Jonathan Frankel, *Nevu'ab u-folitikah: Sotsyalizm, le'umiyut vi-Yehude Rusyah 1862–1917* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1989), 188–89. See Klausner's observations on the situation: "After the Seventh [Zionist] Congress [in 1905] emphatically rejected territorialism and posited gradual practical work in Palestine as the foundation of Zionist activity . . . , long-term projects were undertaken aimed at acquiring Palestine for the entire [Jewish] nation. As a result it became necessary to adopt a patient attitude until the Zionist ideal came slowly to fruition. . . . Until that happens, how are the Jewish masses who have hitherto been devoted to the Zionist movement supposed to live? Many of the young Zionists, and even some of the older ones, have moved to the revolutionary parties or have simply given up on Zionism." Ha-Mashkif, "Hashkafah 'Ivrit," 88.
16. Eliyahu Feldman, *Yehude Rusyah bi-yeme ha-mahpekbah ha-rishonah veba-pogromim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 13–37.
17. The Bund appears to have enjoyed a particular advantage. See Frankel, *Nevu'ab u-folitikah*, 187–88.
18. Yitshak Maor, *Ha-tenu'ab ha-Tsiyonit be-Rusyah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 220–22.
19. *Ibid.*, 303–6.
20. *Evreiskaia zhizn'*, March 27, 1917.
21. On these programs, see V. Iu. Zorin et al., *Natsional'nyi vopros v gosudarstvennykh dumakh Rossii* (Moscow: Russkii Mir, 1999), 69–109. In theory, the Zionists were also prepared to consider the liberal and radical Russian political parties, especially the Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party, as possible political allies, but Russian liberals demonstrated an ambivalent attitude regarding the proper constitutional role of national groups in a democratic Russian state, leading to intermittent friction with Zionist circles. See also Yitshak Maor, *She'elat ha-Yehudim ba-tenu'ab ha-liberalit veba-mahpekbait be-Rusyah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1964), 68–74.
22. *Evreiskaia zhizn'*, March 27, 1917.
23. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Yesodot ha-mediniyut ha-le'umit shelanu," in *Dor be-mivhan* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1951), 80. The essay was written in 1907.
24. *Evreiskaia zhizn'*, March 27, 1917, 17.
25. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Ha-pegishot shel ha-'itonut ha-Tsiyonit—zikhronot," in *Dor be-mivhan*, 70. The words were written in 1936.
26. Among his various activities, Górka (1887–1955) had been involved in efforts to erect a mosque in Warsaw. A member of the liberal Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne) he headed the Division of National Minorities in the Information Ministry of the wartime Polish government-in-exile, where he played a key role in establishing the government's Council for Matters Relating to the Rescue of the Jewish Population in Poland in 1944. In Poland's postwar communist government he served as director of the Foreign Ministry's Bureau of Jewish Affairs from 1946 to 1947 and as consul-general in Jerusalem from 1947 through 1952. See David Engel, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 140–49; Zbigniew Romek, *Olgierd Górka: Historyk w służbie myśli propaństwowej (1908–1955)* (Warsaw: Wydawn. Nauk. Semper, 1997).
27. Olgierd Górka, *Naród a państwo jako zagadnienie Polski* (Warsaw: n.p., 1937), 66.
28. *Ibid.*, 73–78.

29. Ibid., 77.

30. Ibid., 98, emphasis in original.

31. Consider, for example, the statement by Wincenty Witos, leader of the largest party representing the Polish peasantry, Piast, from the rostrum of the Sejm on July 31, 1919, during the debate over ratification of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty concerning the rights of non-Polish minorities in the Polish state. Witos lambasted those provisions, arguing that they were liable to create a situation in which “foreigners will direct the affairs of our home.” Quoted from Shlomo Netzer, *Ma'avak Yehude Polin 'al zekhuyotehem ha-ezrahivot veba-mediniyot (1918–1922)* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1980), 159. Even public figures who were generally regarded as maintaining a friendly attitude toward the non-Polish minorities often used language that excluded them from “ownership” of the Polish state. Thus Polish Socialist Party member Tadeusz Hołowko, a close associate of Poland’s founding father and head of state, Józef Piłsudski, explained in 1922 that Poles need no longer fear Jewish interference in their political life “now that we have a state of our own.” Tadeusz Hołowko, *Kwestja narodowosciowa w Polsce* (Warsaw: Ksieg. Robotnicza, 1922), 45.

32. “Rozporządzenie w sprawie obywatelstwa polskiego,” March 4, 1919, in Biuro Prasowe Organizacji Sjonistycznej w Polsce, *Sprawa obywatelstwa polskiego* (Warsaw: Skł. gł. Komitet Centralny Organizacji Sjonistycznej w Polsce, 1921), 4. It was unclear who possessed “Polish citizenship” (*obywatelstwo polskie*), because at the time Poland had yet to adopt a citizenship law.

33. Ibid. The following day Anusz explained, in response to a question from the Warsaw Yiddish-language newspaper *Der Moment*, that “the purpose of the instruction is to free Warsaw of the undesirable elements who have come to Warsaw during recent months, mainly from Russia, who have never lived in Poland and who do nothing but damage to the city by increasing the number of mouths to be fed and to the state by their anti-Polish activity.” He insisted that the order would be applied “without distinction of religion.” Nevertheless, he noted that whereas “Poles will need to prove that they belong to the Polish national group [*az zey geberen tsu der poylisher natsionalitet*], the people from other national groups will have to explain for what purpose they came here.” “Di yetstige lage in Varshe: Ver iz an oyslender (A gesprekh mit’n oysergevehnlikher komisar H. Anusz),” *Der Moment*, March 5, 1919, 5.

34. “Manifest Tymczasowego Rządu Ludowego Republiki Polskiej,” November 7, 1918, in *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej: Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1982), 431.

35. Legal theoreticians have identified a fundamental quality of “property” as the right of the property owner to prevent others from using or enjoying it. See Morris Raphael Cohen, “Property and Sovereignty,” *Cornell Law Quarterly* 13 (1927–28): 64.

36. “Przemówienie rad. Grynbaua na plenarnem posiedzeniu Rady Miejskiej m. st. Warszawy z dn. 13 czerwca 1919 r.,” in Biuro Prasowe Organizacji Sjonistycznej w Polsce, *Sprawa obywatelstwa polskiego*, 19.

37. At the time of Gruenbaum’s speech, in June 1919, Wilno had not yet been incorporated within the borders of the Polish state. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. One prominent Polish intellectual and political figure who approved openly of anti-Jewish discrimination on moral grounds was the historian Franciszek Bujak of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, who was also active in the Piast Party (see above, note 31). In an English-language memorandum prepared for use by the delegation of the Polish National Committee to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 he stated that “the Polish people could not for ever continue to quietly look at others taking their place in certain functions, as this would cost them too dear and they have become aware that this, in the long run, would reduce them to dependence on a foreign element and cripple them economically and politically.” He looked with favor upon the establishment of Polish producers’ cooperatives, which he described as “the great enemy of the Jews in Poland.” “It cannot be denied,” he wrote, “that this tendency towards social and economical development of the Polish nation is in a way detrimental to the Jews and therefore undesirable and disagreeable [*sic*] for them, but it is inevitable.”

He also believed it "not only lawful, but also morally acceptable." As he put it, "In these days it would be unthinkable to prevent the people or the government from patronizing these economical associations . . . or to expect the authorities to hamper this modern action. . . . Poland cannot . . . guarantee [the Jews] their position in trade and in the organization of credit . . . , as this would mean recurring to compulsion against her own citizens. . . . All this . . . cannot be regarded as antisemitism or boycott [sic], although usually called so by the Jews." Franciszek Bujak, *The Jewish Question in Poland* (Paris: Impr. Levé, 1919), 45–47. On the other hand, Olgierd Górka, for one, doubted the efficacy of discrimination, although he neither defended nor attacked it morally. See Górka, *Naród a państwo*, 207ff.

41. On the limited immigration opportunities in the years following World War I, see Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 110–20, 223–31. For a description of the damage to various aspects of Jewish life, see Netzer, *Ma'avak Yehude Polin*, 104–45.

42. "Memorandum of the Zionist Organization in Poland on the Jewish Question in Poland," January 19, 1919, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, A127/128, 34, 40.

43. "Rezolucja w sprawie platformy politycznej, przyjęta w grudniu 1906 r. na 3 Zjeździe delegatów ogólnorozyjskiej organizacji sjonistycznej w Helsingforsie," in I. Grünbaum, ed., *Materiały w sprawie Żydowskiej w Polsce: Żydzi jako mniejszość narodowa* (Warsaw: Biuro Prasowe Organizacji Sjonistycznej w Polsce, 1919), 82–83.

44. "Memoriał Żydowskiej Rady Ludowej w Poznaniu, dotyczący żądań żydów poznańskich," in Grünbaum, *Materiały w sprawie Żydowskiej w Polsce*, 93–97; N. M. Gelber, "Judaeco-Polonia," *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, August 10, 1919, 458; Leon Reich, "La situation des Juifs en Pologne et leurs revendications," in Comité des Délégations Juives auprès de la Conférence de la Paix, *Les droits nationaux des Juifs en Europe Orientale: Recueil d'études* (Paris: Impr. Beresniak & fils, 1919), 36–49.

45. Josef Tenenbaum, *La question juive en Pologne* (Paris: Impr. Beresniak & fils, 1919), 29.

46. *Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 17 marca 1921 r.* (Lwów: Książnica-Atlas, 1927).

47. Apolinary Hartglas, "Di natsionale un religieze minderhaytn in unzer konstitutsye," in *Di poylishe konstitutsye un di iden-frage* (Warsaw: Idisher natsyonaler seym klub bay dem tsaytvayligen idishen natsyonal-rat, 1921), 38, 41.

48. The constitution was issued in the name of "the Polish nation" (*Naród Polski*), in which "sovereignty" (*władza zwierzchnia*) was invested; the principal institutions of government were defined as "organs of the *Naród*." At the time of the constitution's adoption, *Naród Polski* was generally understood as an ethnic term, not coterminous with the population of the Polish state. See *Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 17 marca 1921 r.*

Hartglas and his fellow Zionists were especially concerned by the Polish government's refusal to recognize the Polish citizenship of tens of thousands of Jews who had been born outside of the territory included in the new state but who had lived most of their lives within those boundaries, especially since ethnic Poles in the same situation were generally recognized as Polish citizens without question. See, for example, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Mi-tokh milhamah li-zekhuyot le'umiyot," in *Milhamot Yehude Polanyah* (Jerusalem: Haverim, 1941), 86–92.

49. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, "Ha-hukah ha-Polanit u-she'el ha-Yehudim," in *Milhamot Yehude Polanyah*, 128–29, 140–41.

50. This observation does not mean that all Zionists at all times regarded a monoethnic Jewish nation-state in Palestine as the movement's sole acceptable aim. On the contrary, under various circumstances Zionists were prepared to consider various constitutional options for Palestine, including a multiethnic state or a federation of national groups. On those options, see Israel Bartal, "Me-'Erets ha-kodesh' le-erets historit: 'Otonomizm' Tsiyoni be-reshit ha-me'ah ha-esrim," in *Erets Yisra'el be-bagut ha-Yehudit ba-me'ah ha-esrim*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2005), 273–90. It does mean, however, that the Zionists did not doubt the theoretical possibility of establishing a Jewish nation-state in Palestine in conformity with liberal democratic principles.

51. "Przemówienie posła Grünbauma podczas rozprawy nad deklaracją konstytucyjną, wygłoszone na 37 posiedzeniu Sejmu z dn. 13 maja 1919 r.," in Grünbaum, *Materiały w sprawie Żydowskiej w Polsce*, 30, 32. See also Netzer, *Ma'avak Yehude Polin*, 256.

52. See Tenenbaum, *La question juive en Pologne*, 29.

53. For examples, see David Engel, “Ha-she’elah ha-Polanit vecha-tenu’ah ha-Tsiyonit: ha-viku’ah ‘al ha-shilton ha-atsmi be-are Polin ha-kongresa’it, 1910–1911,” *Gal-Ed* 13 (1993): 78–81 (Hebrew pagination).

54. A. Gart[gl]as, “Pered vyborami v Varshave,” *Rassvet*, September 16, 1912, 13. Hartglas’s observation was prompted by the prospect that, in the upcoming elections to the Fourth Imperial Duma, the rules governing franchise would create a situation in which most of the votes in Warsaw would be cast by Jews. Hartglas maintained that Jews must not exploit this situation to return a Jewish deputy to the Duma. Warsaw, he explained, had been allotted only a single deputy, and to his mind it was unthinkable that the sole representative of “Poland’s capital, its very heart, in which two thirds of the inhabitants are Poles,” would not be an ethnic Pole. Not all Zionists in Poland and Russia agreed with him; see, for example, N[ahum] S[okolow], “He’arot politiyot,” *Ha-tsefirah*, November 3/16, 1912. Still, it appears that Hartglas’s position was not only the dominant one among Zionists in Poland but the one favored by the Zionist Organization as a whole. For the attitude of the world Zionist Organization, see “‘Al ha-mitspeh—Ko’ah u-mishpat,” *Ha-Olam*, September 3, 1912; “Hamitspeh—ha-behirot be-Polin,” *Ha-Olam*, October 22, 1912.

55. The reference is to Vladimir Jabotinsky, who wrote in 1910 that “in Poland there are two nations, and the cities of Poland . . . belong to both peoples equally.” Quoted in Engel, “Ha-she’elah ha-Polanit,” 73 (Hebrew pagination).

56. Moshe Kleinman, “Hishamru lakhem!,” *Ha-Olam*, August 15/28, 1912. All emphases in original.

57. In this document Ben-Gurion appears to have used this locution as a synonym for “Jewish nation.” Some Zionists preferred it as a designation for the territorial nation in the process of being (re)established in Palestine, in contrast to the diasporic Jewish nation that it would eventually replace.

58. The Hebrew *adnut* is used to describe the relation of a feudal overlord to his domain.

59. David Ben-Gurion, “Hanahot li-kevi’at mishtar mamlakhti be-E[rets] Y[isra’el],” *Ha-Po’el ha-Tsa’ir* 1931, no. 22, http://benyehuda.org/ben_gurion/anaxnu31.html. On the evolution of the statement, see Yosef Gorny, *From Binational Society to Jewish State: Federal Concepts in Zionist Political Thought, 1920–1990, and the Jewish People* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 69–73.

60. Chaim Gans, *A Political Theory for the Jewish People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 59.

61. Cohen, “Property and Sovereignty.”

62. This theme is ably explicated in Rona Yona, “Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim: Halutsiyut u-le’umiyut ‘amamit bi-tenu’at he-Haluts be-Polin ben milhamot ha-‘olam” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2014).

CHAPTER 10

Violence as Political Experience Among Jewish Youth in Interwar Poland

Kamil Kijek

Kto ma dzisiaj mocne pięści / Temu w życiu się poszczęści

(Who has strong fists today / Will have a lucky life some day)

—Ad for chocolates in the Polish Jewish daily

Nasz Przegląd, October 1, 1937

Political Modernism and Violence

The Polish Jewish sociologist Aleksander Hertz, known to wider audiences for his postwar *The Jews in Polish Culture*, began his career in sociology in interwar Poland. At the time, both as a liberal and as a Jew, he observed with horror two main features of the new antiliberal political culture that had begun to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the 1930s. These were authoritarian forms of collectivism that crushed the rights and freedoms of the individual and believed in the need for a “radical” and “total” transformation of reality. Writing in 1934 in one of the leading Polish intellectual magazines, Hertz aptly demonstrated how social antagonisms, though permanent features of human social life, were now being transformed by contemporary political culture (“philosophy of life and deed”) into an absolute condition for achieving “real” progress, which would become the radical break from the existing reality. He saw these tendencies as idealizing radical deeds in general and political violence in particular: Turmoil came to be regarded as a condition necessary to bring about a new and better world; political violence gained the status of an unconditional value.¹ Hertz saw these features of contemporary political culture on both the radical right and the radical left. Both, according to him,

were characterized by “revolutionary mysticism.” Radical nationalists, fascists, as well as Communists and revolutionary socialists were living in anticipation of an inevitable apocalypse, an anticipation that had only been strengthened by the catastrophe of World War I. These movements embodied forms of “chiliasitic” beliefs, where a radically better “tomorrow” could not come about without a “Judgment Day” that was to be preceded by a great catastrophe.²

In keeping with Hertz’s intuitions, a range of more recent scholarship on European political culture in the 1930s points us to the shared “radical political modernism” of both ends of the political spectrum—a Left and Right (including their many fellow travelers) who preached parallel visions of radical modernization through socialist, national, or racial revolution.³ Political violence was deeply connected to the cult of individual and collective physical strength. As Jerzy Jedlicki has demonstrated, the interwar obsession with youth organizations, the emphasis on physical vigor, and the inculcation of fervent nationalist or revolutionary beliefs were all deeply rooted in the older *fin-de-siècle* sense that European civilization was suffering from spiritual and physical “degeneration.”⁴ Thus, as with other features of interwar radical political modernism, the cult of strength likewise had deeper nineteenth-century roots. This cult was another indispensable element of political modernism.⁵ Given their absolute character, conflicts regarding which version of the brave new world was to be pursued—conflicts that had divided not only nations and states, but also permeated their societies—could not be peacefully resolved. Stanley G. Payne, who sees the first half of the twentieth century as a state of permanent “civil war,” writes: “The blood lust of the revolutionary civil war stems from the apocalyptic nature of such contests, specifically the attempt on each side to create a new society, not merely a separate political order, purged of antagonistic elements.”⁶ The political enemy was seen here as an absolute metaphysical evil that had to be purged. The discourses of the radical right and left had a highly dehumanizing character. Their rage and subsequent violence were to be directed against the enemies of the new order, which had a purifying character and an independent, noninstrumental value.⁷ In the case of the interwar period, the ideologies of the radical right most often identified these enemies with the Jews—a point also made by Hertz at the time. The radical right visions of the Polish “future,” seen as fundamentally different from the degenerate present, required deeds against the symptom of this degeneration—the Jews.⁸

Much ink has been spilled on the enormous impact of anti-Semitism on the conditions of Jewish life in interwar Poland.⁹ William Hagen and Roman Wapiński, among other scholars, have noted that the most radical versions of anti-Semitism, as part of the radical political culture of the time, were especially attractive to Polish youth.¹⁰ It was mainly representatives of this generation who

took part in the wave of anti-Jewish violence that swept across Poland's universities, large cities, small towns, and villages in the 1930s. In this context, much historical scholarship and historical memory have tended to approach Poland's Jewish youth and indeed the entire Jewish community primarily as objects of anti-Semitic ideology and praxis or in light of futile responses to anti-Semitism by their political leaders.¹¹ And, indeed, in the decades preceding and during the Holocaust, Jews became the greatest victim of radical European political modernism. But they were its victim not only in terms of prejudice and the physical and spiritual harm it caused. Radical political ideologies attracted young Jews no less than their non-Jewish neighbors.¹² And the political and anti-Semitic violence of the 1930s affected the Polish Jewish community not only "externally" but also "internally," leaving a mark on its consciousness and behavior.

The goal of this chapter is to analyze the impact of the main features of radical political modernism and violence on the political culture of Jewish youth in interwar Poland. How did violence both as a direct physical experience and as an ideological symbol affect the youngest generation of Polish Jews before the Holocaust? What was the relationship between patterns of socialization and the cultural experience of interwar Jewish youth, if acculturation was one of the main features of this experience, along with exposure to symbolic and physical violence? My main thesis is that violence not only affected "the material," "physical," and "external" conditions of Jewish life, but also became an internal element of interwar political Jewish culture.

An analysis of the place of violence in the political culture of Jewish youth in the 1930s should not relativize the unique character of anti-Jewish violence, as it was derived from the special place that Jews held in right-wing mythologies of the time. My intention is not to prove the "parallelism" or "equality" of anti-Jewish and Jewish violence and, by doing so, to relativize the place of anti-Semitism in the reality of interwar Poland, as has been done by some historians.¹³ What I present below is an analysis of the political consciousness of Jews as a specific minority group—a minority that symbolized evil and a degeneration of their contemporary reality for representatives of the majority; a minority whose members were accused, among many other things, of a lack of honor and physical strength and of being cowardly in their struggle with the majority; a minority whose youngest generation, through an all-encompassing process of acculturation, had internalized the culture of their non-Jewish surroundings and was forced to "protest" these accusations with the same categories of the oppressive majority culture.

Arguably one of the best sources for research on the social experiences and political culture of the generation of Polish Jews that came to adulthood in the 1930s consists of the autobiographies of Jewish youth written for a series of three

contests held by Vilna's Jewish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in 1932, 1934, and 1939.¹⁴ The writings of these young Jews are also a fascinating source attesting to the important role of different forms of violence in their social experience. By juxtaposing this source with other archival, press, and memorial materials, I try to define the role that violence and its modernist images played in the political culture of the Jewish youth of interwar Poland.

Catastrophe: World War I and the Wars of 1918–1921 as Formative Experiences

World War I brought destruction and millions of deaths. But across many European milieus, it did not weaken but only strengthened the radical modernist consciousness, especially among those inculcated with the prewar right-wing sensibility epitomized by the slogan of Italian futurist Filippo Marinetti: "War, the only hygiene of the world." The German Freikorps and the Italian *fasci* were spectacular manifestations of a Europe-wide phenomenon: the consecration of political violence as a key to the regeneration of the modern self and society. As a Freikorps veteran recalled in 1930: "People told us that War was over. That made us laugh. We ourselves are the War. Its flame burns strongly in us."¹⁵

World War I and the subsequent Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik wars that ended only in 1921 were a different kind of social and political experience for Polish Jews. The years of World War I were a time of dreadful anti-Jewish persecutions by the Russian army and harsh economic measures and starvation brought about by the German occupation of Polish lands from 1915 to 1918.¹⁶ In addition, the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik wars brought anti-Jewish pogroms in their wake and riots in many Polish cities and towns, including Lviv, Vilnius, Kielce, Pinsk, Częstochowa, Białystok, Przemyśl, Siedlce, and in rural areas of Galicia.¹⁷ Even after all the wars were over, the election of the first Polish president Gabriel Narutowicz in December 1922 and his immediate murder by a right-wing fanatic, under the accusation that he had been "elected by the Jews," brought anti-Jewish violence to the streets of Warsaw.¹⁸ These events arguably had the strongest formative impact on the youngest generation, whose early childhood fell during those years. Among the many effects of these experiences was a strengthening of the process of secularization and a radicalization of political tendencies among Jewish youth.¹⁹

Next to hunger and flight from war, the terrifying contact with soldiers of the fighting armies and exposure to their violence were the most vivid childhood memory of war for Jewish youth who participated in the YIVO autobiographical contest.²⁰ One of the most pronounced features of these memories was a conviction

of the weakness and helplessness of the Jewish nation vis à vis the brutality of war and violence. In their autobiographies, young Jews both explicitly and implicitly accused the generations of their parents and grandparents of failure to understand the war and hence an inability to defend themselves from its calamities. In addition, according to many young Jews, war had proven the anomaly of traditional Jewish norms and values, deemed useless in a world of brutal violence. The war memories of Jewish youth, presented below, were undoubtedly also mediated by their political consciousness and the sociopolitical climate of the 1930s when they were written.

"M. Sheinberg," "Feygeles," and "Yesh" remembered the hunger of war and the constant fear brought into their communities with each passing army, stressing the fact that no one around them understood the motives and actions of the soldiers whose presence brought fear.²¹ We can also find motifs of the absolute helplessness of the traditional Jewish world toward violence in the autobiography of "Etonis," a young Orthodox Jew and future graduate of the famous Baranowicze and Raduń yeshivot: "Then a sudden, strong blast, like a clap of thunder, shattered the calm. Immediately afterward, there was a long mournful whistle, and after that, as though flying behind it, came a second terrible blast that rattled the window panes. People panicked. It was artillery fire. People ran amok, not knowing where to go. . . . The men gathered and recited psalms together. I joined in, repeating those psalms I knew by heart. This recitation was so heartfelt, so intense, so full of pleading, that even now I can remember how it felt."²²

As a teenager, Hanna Jakubowicz, daughter of a religious Zionist party "Mizrachi" (denoting both "eastern" and an acronym for the Hebrew terms meaning "spiritual center") activist from Płock in Central Poland, experienced the execution of Rabbi Shapira, who was accused by the Polish military of treason during the Polish-Soviet War in 1920. Describing the traumatic event, she strongly criticized the fatalist stance of the older generation, whose only reaction was cries and prayers. She had strongly argued over this fatalism and lack of action of the older generations with her father: "'Ok,' I had answered calmly. 'Please, Father, tell me, do you not behave like a child? When David is being hit, he cries because it hurts him. . . . Is it any help for you to always remind us of our calamities? Today is Tisha B'Av, we are supposed to fast, because Jerusalem was destroyed so many years ago, but why are you not rebuilding it? Believe me, crying is right for children.'²³ What was characteristic of many of the autobiographies (of both secular and religious authors, rich and poor, and of many political shades) was helplessness and the absence of any Jewish means of reacting to the brutal violence.²⁴ The surrounding world was described as defined

by an all-encompassing chaos. The answer to this chaos was the modernist dream of a new world and a dream of Jewish strength desperately needed in the current one.

Acculturation and Violence in the Daily Lives of Jewish Youth

Political parties and their youth organizations, so popular among the young Jews of interwar Poland, were, for many, safe islands of an emerging new world amid the chaos and violence of contemporary society. But these groups were ultimately unable to shield young people from the influence of such violence. Perhaps the most ambivalent influence was exerted on them by Polish state schools. First of all, these institutions were agents of Polish acculturation, which became the generational experience of Jews in the Second Republic. Their influence was also related to another central feature of the social experience of young Jews and their political modernism: their appraisal of the power and strength of rhetorical, and sometimes even physical, violence.

In the 1920s, 60 percent and, in the 1930s, 80 percent of young Jews studied in Polish state schools.²⁵ Private Jewish schools, whether Orthodox or secular, had, to a different extent, also followed the state curriculum and taught Polish culture and, with it, the symbols of Polish nationalism in classes on Polish history, geography, literature, and so-called state lessons.²⁶ In addition, almost all young Jews were subject to the influence of the Polish language through participation in modern mass culture—on a much more universal scale than was the case for previous generations socialized in very different conditions under tsarist Russia or the Habsburg Empire. An important outcome of this process was a phenomenon that can be labeled a “symbolic dimension of acculturation,” that is, the deep internalization of Polish cultural and specifically nationalist symbols that went hand-in-hand with a fervent, modern Jewish nationalism. One author of a YIVO autobiography described it in the following way: “In public school, we were told to love Poland, we were taught to live and die for it. Something like a feeling of jealousy awoke in me. Why could we, Jews, not have our own country? . . . Thoughts about Palestine did not awaken in me because of scholarly dissertations, books or propaganda—oh no! They were created as a reaction to the love for Poland that we were taught in public school.”²⁷ These kinds of feelings even characterized young Bundists, one of whom wrote the following in Yiddish: “I have just finished reading *The Deluge* [in Polish, *Potop*—a famous novel by Polish national writer Henryk Sienkiewicz]. Sienkiewicz awakens the heroism of the Poles. He calls [on them] to fight for an independent Poland. His hero, Babinicz, knows what great power lies dormant in the Poles.

Sienkiewicz says this and provides the arms with which one can fight to liberate Poland.”²⁸

At the same time, the Polish state, as a new form of universal social contact between Jews and Christians, also universalized the Jewish experience of anti-Semitism. Its direct experience was felt by most young Jews, not through the spectacular and well-known pogroms of the 1930s, but in daily life, through remarks, comments, and sometimes also physical attacks by their school peers, and, not infrequently, by a similar stance or lack of reaction on the part of the teachers. In her important study of the different responses toward modern anti-Semitism by German and East European Jewries before 1914, Shulamit Volkov drew a deep dividing line between them. Acculturated German Jewry experienced anti-Semitism in a much more psychologically harmful way, “internally,” as threatening the very foundations of its identity. East European Jewry may have been much more exposed to physical harm, but its cultural separation, ethnic distinctiveness, and newly developed modern nationalism protected it from this internal, psychological experience of anti-Semitism.²⁹ All the differences between the Jewish “East” and “West” notwithstanding, in the case of the interwar period and interwar Poland in particular, Volkov’s division does not hold. Anti-Semitism was felt precisely in the “internal” sense, as something that attacked the core of the cultural identity of Polish Jews. It emanated from their classmates and teachers and from the nation whose culture and history this youth was taught to love and admire. Ludwik Stöckel, brought up in the social circles of the acculturated Jewish financial elite of Galicia, described the influence of the anti-Semitic Polish radical right on his high school peers and teachers:

By now our Catholic classmates had all but openly adopted the ideology of the right-wing hoodlums who were on the loose in Lwów at the time. . . . An explosion occurred during one of our discussions of a report. We were discussing the Jewish question. The author of the paper and the discussion panelists, most of whom were Jews, emphasized that the assimilation of the Jews was impossible and offered no solution to the Jewish problem. . . . During the discussion, one of the “greens,” as we called the Endecks, openly stated that the only way to deal with us was to wield a club.³⁰

Later on, Ludwik Stöckel experienced the most brutal, direct forms of physical violence as a Jewish student at Lwów University. He was indignant both about the violence itself and the acceptance of it by police forces and state authorities.³¹ Stöckel came from an acculturated bourgeois Jewish family for whom Polish culture represented an intimate culture of his own. The great change

introduced by the interwar Polish state and its institutions was the fact that now acculturation and the “internal” and “personal” impact of anti-Semitism became part of the general social experience of Jewish youth, including those who came from economically disadvantaged social classes or from religious Orthodoxy. “Gitman G.,” who matriculated to a general state public school from a *sza-basówka*, a special type of state school for Jewish children, wrote the following: “Jewish children were divided between two fourth-grade classes and had a tough life with their new colleagues. They were all anti-Semites. . . . There were some among us who complained about the behavior of Christian children to the teachers, but [the teachers] would not react.”³²

For many young Jews, as for “M.S.,” a central part of state school experiences was not only anti-Semitic slurs, but physical violence: “The anti-Semitic teachers arrived. Their greatest joy was to torment Jewish pupils. I remember how many times I was beaten with a belt while lying on top of a desk by Catholic friends, who followed the teacher’s orders. During breaks, I was constantly looking for a good corner to hide from the fists of Catholic pupils. When classes were over, a few strong ‘shaygetzim’ were usually waiting for us in front of the gate, who hit us with fists, sometimes armed with wooden knuckle busters.”³³

Through a process of acculturation, Polish culture became an important “mirror” that young Jews used to view themselves and the situation of Jewish nationalism. Also, it played an unexpected role that affected how they experienced the anti-Semitic rhetoric and anti-Jewish violence that intensified in the last decade of interwar Poland. Acculturation made them much more sensitized to various anti-Semitic slurs about Jewish cowardice and weakness, which became a central feature of modern anti-Jewish discourse in at least the last two centuries.³⁴ The modernist consciousness and radical political affiliations of a large part of Jewish youth called for a response: counterviolence, a manifestation of Jewish strength, and a denial of anti-Semitic stereotypes. In taking up such a response, Jews would also manifest the negation of the values and the stance of the older generations, to whom they easily attributed characteristics such as weakness and passivity.

Counterviolence and the Dream of Strength

In the case of Polish Jewish youth, a pan-European ideology of modernist filiar-chy—a critical narrative regarding the failure of the older generations intertwined with the positive valorization of youth as the only guarantor of a better future—combined with experiences of discrimination, a lack of prospects for the future, and the presence of anti-Semitism to bring about exceptional politicization. As Ezra Mendelsohn, among many other scholars, has argued, it was in

political parties and youth movements that youth sought “order” and “discipline” in a world most often described at the time as full of chaos, social conflicts, and political fragmentation (perhaps especially strong in the Jewish case). It was here that young Jews were searching for another central value: “strength.” Modern Jewish politics of the 1930s provided numerous places and symbols where this value could be located, such as in the militant right-wing Zionist Betar, in images of the proletariat marching in Moscow’s Red Square, in the symbol of the *haluts* rebuilding and defending the Jewish Yishuv in the Land of Israel, or in the physically strong, healthy Bundist worker fighting for equality and socialism in Poland.³⁵ All of these very different political affiliations were manifestations of the Jewish dream of strength, expressed in forms organized along military lines of Jewish self-defense that opposed anti-Semitic violence by physical means and negated the stereotype of Jewish weakness.

One of the YIVO contest participants, who grew up in Warsaw in an acculturated upper-class family and who came to sympathize with the Communists as an adolescent, had more than once experienced violence carried out by right-wing militias. Her autobiography shows how profoundly she had internalized the modernist image of physical Jewish weakness, while also being driven by an urge to deny it and repay anti-Semitic violence in kind:

There was a time when I was very occupied by thinking about how all of these people, with hunched backs, bent necks, sneered at and hated, could be transformed into the graceful, simple and free. . . . I do not exaggerate when I say that I experienced—actually I also experience it today—a feeling of pain when I see how poorly developed physically the children of Jewish workers and artisans are. How can one breathe the air of Hitlerism when the lungs are so weak and the chests so narrow? How can one stab with a knife at the powerful shoulders of Nara [slang expression for a Polish radical nationalist] when he cannot even reach them with his hand!?

These popular feelings among young people associated with various political camps can be found in many other sources. Observations made by visitors from abroad are very interesting in this respect, especially those from various *shlibim* (emissaries) who came to Poland from Palestine/Land of Israel. One of them was Yitzhak Ben-Ami, who visited Kielce voivodship (province) in November 1937. Kielce was a region where three of the seven most publicized pogroms of 1935–1937 had taken place, in Odrzywół, Przytyk, and Częstochowa. Ben-Ami came looking for *maapalim*, or volunteers for illegal emigration to Land of Israel. During a meeting with the Betar branch in Częstochowa, its activists described to Ben

Ami how they were being attacked in the city streets and how right-wing fighting squads tried to symbolically humiliate the Jews by forcing them to walk on the “Jewish” side of the sidewalk. Betarists deliberately walked on the other side, ready for brawls with Polish Endeks. It was no coincidence that Ben-Ami’s recruitment took place precisely in areas heavily affected by anti-Jewish violence.³⁷ The recruitment was conducted among youth engaged in the physical negation of the symbols of Jewish weakness. This was the case in Częstochowa, which, according to government sources from 1933, contained one of the most radical cells of the National Democratic movement, whose young members were characterized by the most violent anti-Semitism and included armed paramilitary groups that excelled in attacking the Jews. Unsurprisingly, the young radical nationalists indicated members of Betar as special targets of their attacks. Jews dressed in military uniforms were an unbearable sight for radical Polish anti-Semites.³⁸

Similar events took place in other parts of Poland. In his memoirs, Yosef Cohen described his *bakhsharab* (pioneer training) experience in Kowel Kibbutz, located in the eastern borderlands of the country. In the 1930s, the community of the kibbutz lived in constant anticipation of attacks and prepared its own self-defense group. At one point, its members eagerly awaited an attack by Polish right-wingers as an opportunity to prove their Jewish strength. After a successful action in revenge for beating up a member of the kibbutz, Cohen concluded characteristically: “The Polish hooligans did not understand where we came from and what was happening. How could it be that Jewish boys can beat up the Poles?”³⁹

It was a combination of acculturation, Polish cultural intimacy, and close cultural relations with Poles that stood behind the urge for a specific response to Polish anti-Semitism. To a large extent, this phenomenon was a generational one. It can clearly be seen when examining the case of the most publicized pogrom that took place in Poland in the 1930s—the Przytyk pogrom of March 9, 1936. There, following a many-months-long campaign of anti-Jewish violence, after a Polish right-wing skirmish with the police and attacks on Jews trading in the market, a Jewish self-defense counterattack followed. A member of the Jewish self-defense group shot a peasant visiting the market, which resulted in a violent riot, the killing of Shmuel and Haya Minkowski, and the wounding of three of their children and dozens of other Jewish inhabitants and visitors to Przytyk.⁴⁰

It is important to note that the main sources used in research to date on anti-Jewish violence in the last decade of interwar Poland and Jewish reactions are the Jewish and Polish dailies. And, in the middle of the 1930s, during the

peak of anti-Jewish violence, the press was heavily subject to state censorship. Some Jewish editors were prosecuted, while the dailies and periodicals were threatened with closure for daring to report on anti-Jewish violence.⁴¹ In the 1930s, it was particularly hard to write about such “politically incorrect” phenomena as acts of Jewish physical self-defense. Here, continuing research needs to turn its attention to personal Jewish materials, memoirs, and documents created before the Holocaust, as well as archival materials and documentation created by the state authorities that were not intended for consumption by the wider public.

The nationwide and worldwide publicity generated by the tragic events in Przytyk and the daring stance of Jewish self-defense groups that actively responded to the attackers (using stones, clubs, and guns) was utilized especially by the socialist Bund.⁴² It was one of the rare cases when Jewish self-defense activity broke through the barriers of censorship and reached the attention of the wider Jewish and non-Jewish public. In direct contradiction to the legend of the Bund as the only party to organize physical resistance to anti-Jewish violence in the last years of interwar Poland, the activists of the self-defense group in Przytyk were not Bundists; indeed, they were affiliated with a wide range of movements that opposed the Bund. They were Revisionists, left-wing Zionists, religious Zionists (such as Shmuel Haskel Lasko, a member of “Mizrachi” party, who shot and killed Jan Wiesniak, who probably belonged to the anti-Semitic rioters), and former or active Communists. Another important characteristic of this generation was that some had already served and received training as conscripts in the Polish military.⁴³ Thus, it is the “generational,” not the “party,” dimension that allows us to understand the Jewish stance in Przytyk. In fact, during the wave of anti-Jewish violence in Kielce province—which was consciously organized by right-wing radicals beginning in 1931 and reached its peak in the second half of 1935 and the beginning of 1936, just before the Przytyk pogrom—none of the Jewish political parties active in the area, including the Bund, was engaged in anything close to organizing a Jewish self-defense.⁴⁴ This had already been organized in Przytyk in November 1935 by young people coming from various parties and movements, who were acting against the strategy and even knowledge of the older elites. The latter petitioned the authorities (the local *starosta*, or district governor, in Radom, as well as the Kielce *wojewoda*, or province governor) and the police with regard to the weakness of the official response to the anti-Jewish violence. Meanwhile, youth prepared to fight for “Jewish honor.”⁴⁵

During the pogrom itself, there were of course exceptions, and older people also took up the fight, as was the case with sixty-eight-year-old Leyzer Feldberg

and a few others.⁴⁶ But the preparation, organization, armament, and conspiracy of the self-defense was a generational phenomenon. During the June 1936 trial of peasants and Jews arraigned in the aftermath of the Przytyk events, press correspondents underlined the generational differences and the bold, confrontational stance of some of the young men accused before the judge, and especially vis-à-vis the lawyers who had defended the Polish peasants, all of whom were members of the anti-Semitic National Democratic Party. It is important to note that National Democratic lawyers did everything in their power to humiliate the accused Jews and to present them in a negative light by using the cruelest anti-Semitic stereotypes. A left-wing Zionist correspondent for *Dos naye vort* took notice of how the ironic and haughty answers of one of the young accused Jews had deeply annoyed the nationalist lawyers (headed by Kazimierz Kowalski, one of the most radical anti-Semites of the era, leader of the National Democratic Party in Łódź and later, in 1939, in all of Poland). Yankev Lestchinsky, who attended the June 1936 Przytyk trial, noted with satisfaction that the young generation, in opposition to their parents, “did not let anyone spit in their faces.” Writing about Shmuel Haskel Lasko, he continued: “He was the representative of a generation whose fathers and grandfathers had never heard about guns, about shooting or about rifles. And now, this kind of boy [a yeshiva student wearing a kapote] is armed and ready to fight for himself, for his parents, for his brothers and sisters.”⁴⁷ Among the accused Jews, the older generation adopted a more humble and fearful stance toward the prosecutor and the National Democratic lawyers, who seemed to observe the intimidation of the former with great satisfaction.⁴⁸ As with right-wing youth militias singling out Betar for their attacks, it was the fact of Jewish resistance expressed in attributes of “strength,” “honor,” and “physical violence” that anti-Semitic activists wanted to deny at any cost.

In terms of connections between generational patterns and relations of such values as “Jewish honor,” “strength,” and “counterviolence,” of particular interest is the fact that from the late nineteenth century onward, Jewish nationalists universally condemned the “assimilation” process taking place within European Jewish society. One of its many alleged vices was the assumption that it caused the weakening of Jewish pride and, consequently, undermined responses to anti-Semitism. The examples presented above show that, at least in the 1930s, the situation was different. Also, one may note that during the anti-Semitic occurrences at Polish universities, which occurred frequently throughout the 1930s, Jewish students (on average, the most acculturated cohort among young Jews) were the most consistent group to physically respond to anti-Semitic attackers.⁴⁹ Even Lestchinsky, whose Jewish nationalism inclined him to special dislike of

Jewish “assimilationists,” did not shy away from admitting that the Warsaw self-defense groups created in the summer of 1934 “defend[ed] Jewish honor” with “non-Jewish means, clubs and knives.”⁵⁰

Of course, it was not only acculturation that compelled organized calls for a response to anti-Jewish violence. One of the main factors was the specific *Zeitgeist* of the 1930s, with radical political modernism at its core. In his recent research, Daniel K. Heller has shown how much the political climate of the 1930s in general and Polish radical anti-Semitism in particular had affected even the famous “alliance” between Vladimir Jabotinsky and his Revisionist movement with the Polish government in the last years of the Polish Second Republic. The Warsaw branch of the more radical Revisionist youth movement Betar went so far as to question the division that Jabotinsky, the leader of the movement to whom they had pledged allegiance, drew between the “anti-Semitism of the people” (derived from xenophobic ideology, that is, genuine anti-Jewish hatred) and the “anti-Semitism of facts” (derived from objective facts, that is, the pathology of Poland’s social structure). Young Betarists claimed, against Jabotinsky, that the former form of anti-Semitism was dominant in Poland and indeed permitted by the Polish government. After the Przytyk events, young Betarists called for an active physical defense of Jewish honor, which went against the Revisionist-Polish government agreements. To some extent, they were inspired to take such a stance by *shlibim* from the Land of Israel/Palestine, who came from the most radical nationalist group active there, the self-proclaimed *biry-onim* (hooligans).⁵¹ However, Warsaw Betarists, like their more cautious colleagues from Kraców, cherished the symbols of Polish nationalism. Members of Betar, like the rest of their generation, were subject to the symbolic dimension of Polish acculturation, which affected their will to respond physically to acts of anti-Jewish violence.

The Jewish counterviolence described above can be analyzed not only as a form of physical resistance but also as a symbolic one. It was a specific form of communication between, on the one hand, anti-Semites trying not only materially and physically but also symbolically to destroy Jews, the legitimacy of their place in Poland, and the validity of their morality and honor—and, on the other hand, Jewish youth trying to defend these values. This kind of “communication” required a particular cultural intimacy and closeness, thinking and acting driven by the same categories of social thought and action, which were provided by the radical modernism of the 1930s. Undoubtedly, this specific dialogue was not a parallel one, and it was not represented equally on both sides. The anti-Jewish violence of the 1930s and Jewish youth resistance to it were forms of violence represented by a quantitatively and symbolically defined majority on the offensive

side and a minority that sought to defend itself by interconnected physical and symbolic means.

Violence, Discipline, and Political Mobilization

Generational differences in the political consciousness of Polish Jewry resulted in serious tensions and conflicts within Jewish politics. In an article in the leading Polish Jewish daily, *Haynt*, one of Polish Jewry's preeminent leaders, General Zionist Yehoshua Thon, criticized the entire young generation of his era (Jewish and non-Jewish) as a "generation of iron," which had abandoned rationalism for unreflective activism and advocacy of violence as a solution to the problems of the contemporary world.⁵² But Thon's attitude to political modernism and violence, especially their combined potential for the political mobilization of the youngest generation of the Jewish nation, was much more ambiguous than this piece suggested. After the Przytyk pogrom, Thon wrote in another piece for *Haynt*: "A few more Przytyks would put an end to the pogroms and the shame associated with them."⁵³ He had in mind the proud stance of Jewish self-defense. Lestchinsky saw Jewish self-defense not mainly as a factor that could really diminish anti-Semitic violence, but a test of national subjectivity and unity, crucial for the survival of the nation in these hard times. Further, he viewed the readiness to organize and take part in Jewish self-defense as a litmus test for true or false Jewish nationalism, true or false commitment to the Jewish people. He harshly attacked the "rabbis," Jewish members of the Polish parliament, and the Jewish bourgeoisie for restraining Jewish self-defense activities, catering to the government, demoralizing the Jewish people, and "wanting to keep the Jewish nation weak."⁵⁴

In the 1930s, the Zionist movement in Poland stepped away from its 1920s strategy of fighting for the national rights of the Jews in Poland and concentrated on preparing and organizing for aliyah, or Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel. Starting in 1936 and the time of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, which made emigration of Polish Jews much more difficult, it added military training to its hakhsharah activities in Poland. It also established cooperation with the Polish government in training the future fighters of the Haganah (the clandestine Jewish military organization in Palestine) as well as in buying arms from the Poles. One explicit demand Polish authorities made of their partners in the Haganah and Irgun (a splinter military organization affiliated with the Revisionist movement) was a pledge that graduates of military training would leave Poland immediately and would not engage in any Jewish self-defense activities in Poland.⁵⁵ Jewish military organizations took pains to inform their Jewish recruits in Poland of this agreement and yet also advertised military training as an answer to

the anti-Jewish violence that was taking place in the country. According to Yosef Rabinowitz, a *shaliach* of the United Kibbutz movement, the first organized program of military training for the Haganah held in Poland (in the spring of 1934 at the Grochow preparatory kibbutz) was framed in terms of the situation of the Jews in Poland. Its organizers addressed a growing feeling of insecurity among Polish Jews and an increased number of attacks on them. In the words of its declaration: "Self-defense in Eretz Israel is a part of self-defense in the Diaspora."⁵⁶ Another memoirist, Yosef Cohen, recalled conceiving of his military training in 1936–1937 during *hakhsharah* to be as much a response to German Nazism and the situation in Poland as to events in Palestine in 1936.⁵⁷ This information is confirmed by Yehuda Arazi (Tenenbaum), who supervised Haganah military training in the country. According to him, training organizers took advantage of the atmosphere among Polish Jews in the aftermath of the Przytyk pogrom. Kept secret from Polish authorities was the fact that at the end of training in the Zielonka camp, Haganah instructors also taught Jewish self-defense in Poland and even held additional training of these Jewish self-defense groups in Warsaw. Pogroms and attacks on kibbutzim in Poland, Arazi observed, were one of the most important factors raising the interest of Polish Jews in seeking military training.⁵⁸

Ultimately, from its beginning and even more after 1938, Haganah military training in Poland was oriented first and foremost to the problems and needs of the Haganah in Palestine.⁵⁹ Jewish self-defense in Poland was not a priority of Haganah or Irgun training activities. Nevertheless, these organizations made use of fears of violence on Poland's streets and of an image of Jewish strength to attract volunteers for their activities.

The image and symbolic manifestations of "Jewish strength" were at least as important as real participation in organizing Jewish self-defense. This is clearly demonstrated by the case of the socialist Bund. As mentioned before, it was the Bund that, beginning in 1936, achieved the greatest success in presenting itself as the main defender of the Jews against anti-Semitism and violence. And, indeed, the *Ordener-grupe*, the militia of the Bund, had eighty regular members at the time, plus an additional four to five hundred men in its irregular worker self-defense units, in Warsaw alone.⁶⁰ They engaged in fights with Polish right-wingers either independently or by joining the fighting squads of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS) during the May 1 demonstrations, participating in retaliation actions against the ONR (*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, or National Radical Camp, a fascist, radical, anti-Semitic splinter group in the Polish nationalist camp) for its bombing attacks on Jewish institutions, and the like.⁶¹ But, in the majority of cases, Bundist self-defense groups defended party members and activities, not the Jewish population in general. The

Bund did not organize or lead Jewish self-defense actions in Przytyk or during any other major pogroms in Poland.⁶² The rise of the Bund's popularity in the elections of 1936 and 1938–1939 came primarily from the specific use the Bund made of these events in its political appeals and communications. The Bund thrived on its symbolic strategy, using in its appeals images of collective strength, mass power, and physical power that resonated powerfully with the mindset of modernist youth. In the public gatherings and demonstrations organized by the Bund, planned down to the last detail in the 1930s, self-defense groups played a central role. They functioned less as a defense organization and more as a symbolic embodiment of Jewish strength.

The Bund, like other parties of the Jewish Left, accused the Revisionist Betar of fascist tendencies. Grounds for this accusation could be found in the outspoken militarism of Betar and the central place of violence in its ideology. But one can argue that, expressed in a different form, this symbolic violence also played a profound role in the public appeal of the Bund itself. The fact that this was clear as day to the youngest generation of Jewish socialists is telling. "Tsukunft-shturem," self-defense groups of the Bundist youth movement, were organized on the example of the militia of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, the *Schutzbund*, and, as in the case of the former, they shared many characteristics of a paramilitary group. One of the main characteristics was their carefully designed military-style uniform. As Lucjan Blit, the head of *Tsukunft-shturem*, testified, uniforms were crucial in strengthening the public appeal of the group. They were crucial in manifesting Jewish strength: "I suppose the most memorable actions of the *Tsukunft-shturem* were always in the great May Day demonstrations. They were very elegant and rather a reassuring group, marching nicely, and sure of themselves. And people probably thought that they represented much more physical strength than they actually did. But it was very important for the morale not only of the youth, but, I think, probably of the Jews in Warsaw. This was a very bad time. . . . And here was a group marching very proudly and unafraid."⁶³

According to Emanuel Nowogrodzki, one of the main Bundist leaders in interwar Poland, these kinds of public demonstrations organized by the party, with a central place for self-defense groups and their legendary leaders, "were an occasion for the Bund to publically show its strength."⁶⁴ Bernard Goldstein, the head of the Warsaw "Ordener-grupe" and himself the focus of one such heroic "cult," remembered the May 1 Bundist demonstrations in the following way: "A strong group of Ordener marched at the front, girded with red sashes with the name 'Bund' on them. Strong young men, specially selected one by one. . . . The center of the procession was occupied by *Tsukunft*. Besides the red banners, each of their circles had its own fighting banner. . . . They were all carried together,

behind the main banner of Tsukunft, four in a row, across the entire width of the street. . . . One hundred flags created a mighty, breathtaking impression.”⁶⁵

That these manifestations of power were well planned, organized, and performed during the municipal elections proved decisive in bringing so many new voters to the Bund. During the December 18, 1938, elections in Warsaw—as in the municipal elections in Łódź held two years earlier, where door-to-door visits were coordinated to agitate locals to vote—the Bund also organized militia patrols that walked Jewish voters to and from their place of voting in order to increase their feeling of safety.⁶⁶ Bundist appeal grew mainly because of its symbolic dimension, deeply grounded in the culture of radical political modernism, and it is no wonder that it spoke especially to the youngest generation. In his interview with Leonard Rowe, Blit revealed that his generation saw Ordener-grupe activities, their symbolic dimension in particular, as rather outdated. The youth organized in Tsukunft-shturem believed in uniforms (blue shirts, red ties, beret, and an officer-style leather belt), modern fighting organization, and training: “The younger generation was more open, proud, and eager to assert itself. In thought and action, the youth were more assertive, eager to shout to the world *mir zenen do!*—‘We are here!’ . . . They wanted a younger-thinking defense force. A defense organization, they believed, must be structured to be more modern, professional, and scientific—in other words, a paramilitary organization [involving] visible, demonstrative force, perhaps even with some ritual and pomp.”⁶⁷

This kind of radically modernist political imagination, with collective strength and violence at its center, also stood to a large extent behind the rapid growth in popularity of the Revisionist youth movement, Betar. Max Nordau’s idea of “Muskel-Juden” (muscular Jews) was forged before 1914. But its appeal was greatly strengthened by the cultural and political revolution of World War I and the years following it. Jabotinsky’s idea of “the unique *Volksgeist* of each nation, determined by genetic and biological disposition,” with the Jewish character in turn pivoting on deeply hidden characteristics of the biblical Samson, gained special popularity among Jewish youth growing up in interwar Poland. If, in its political communication, the Bund flirted with militarism (while at the same time the official ideology of the party denied this fact), the Revisionist movement elevated it to the center of its banners.⁶⁸ Revisionist youth, mainly in the form of Betar, took it a few steps further, and, in doing so, worried older leaders, including Jabotinsky himself.⁶⁹ Menahem Begin, at the time a Polish Revisionist youth leader, appealed (in Polish) to the young new potential followers of the movement by telling them about the one and only way of rebuilding Jewish honor, “held in contempt by every hooligan.” There was no room for compromise. National honor could only be rebuilt by means of radical collective discipline, unconditional unification of the Jewish nation in its fight for the creation

of a Jewish state, with heroism and self-sacrifice as the core values of Jewish youth.⁷⁰ Many Revisionist slogans, such as the “struggle,” “order,” and “discipline,” were taken from the arsenal of Polish nationalism. Again, it is no coincidence that this was a strategy of political communication that was especially effective in gaining the interest of Jewish youth.⁷¹

This specific mixture of symbols of Polish nationalism, a belief in Jewish uniqueness, an apotheosis of collectivism, and, finally, the conviction that the contemporary world was defined by all-encompassing violence is found in the YIVO autobiography of a young member of Betar. “Refleg” called on the Jewish nation to unite and create a “powerful state” based “on strong discipline (or rather cohesion),” using a famous slogan of the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, “Razem, młodzi przyjaciele” (Together, young friends!).⁷² In another part, he expressed his desire to fight for the full national emancipation of the Jews: “Give me the wings, the golden wings—I will rise to the heights like lightning—I will fly in the skies and forget the greyness. . . . Look how in the East Your sun is rising—lighting the gloom of your Ghetto—to the future full of light leads our march—so let us unite our strength—to proudly fight for our common fate—and then we will resist stubbornly and heroically—all the evil that is against us.”⁷³ Throughout his autobiography, “Refleg” expressed the belief that power and violence were the most important factors defining the relations between the nations of the world, that “terror” defined the culture and civilization of the time.⁷⁴

These characteristics of the young generation’s political consciousness and the political culture that stood behind it also played an important role in shaping the choices of many of those who joined the ranks of the Communist movement in the 1930s. One of Communism’s strongest appeals derived from the strength emanating from the Soviet Union. Here, direct potential for physical violence was less important than the modernist image of Soviet power, the power to transform reality, root and branch. But potential for violence and for revolutionary change were the strongly interconnected features of the same political culture of radical modernism. In the case of “Bronka,” the acculturated daughter of an upper-class Jewish family from Warsaw whose autobiography we encountered earlier, sympathies toward the Communist movement derived largely from the sense that it seemed to be the only barrier strong enough to resist the “air of Hitlerism” and the “powerful shoulders” of anti-Semitic radicals. The eradication of centuries of anti-Jewish hatred no less than the overcoming of the terrible living conditions of the working class demanded a “new world,” and many believed that this could only be achieved through the power of the Soviet state and the Communist movement. “Yud-Gimel” was an activist in the Bundist Tsukunft

who was initially repelled by Communism for its “bloodshed” in the Soviet Union and “hooligan attacks” on socialists in Poland. At the same time, she came to see a deep discrepancy between the Bundist rhetoric of the “new human” and the Bund’s weakness in real life. She was drawn to the Communist movement mainly on account of its image of strength.⁷⁵ Communism was especially attractive to Jewish youth coming from the lowest strata of society, from the homes of unskilled manual laborers, the unemployed, or those without any particular profession—people held in low regard within the traditional Jewish system of stratification, faced with discrimination and anti-Semitism, and enjoying slim chances for social mobility. This was the case of Abraham Rotfarb, whose autobiography explained his attraction to Communism by its “consequential, fearless and mighty fight for justice.” The “strength” of this movement was what appealed to him most.⁷⁶ Likewise, “Greyno,” an active member of the Polish Communist Party, closed his autobiography with a fiery political declaration:

I have felt the pain of dozens of people—shabby, half-naked, barefoot—men, women, and children. I saw the hunger in their eyes; I saw it eat away at their still-young bodies—emaciated, bones protruding under the flesh, covered with dirt and grime. This mass of people, the true sign of our era, cries out in the streets. . . . And above it all, above the desolation and chaos, stands a tall, sturdy watchtower that illuminates the world around it with knowledge, culture, and progress. This is the Soviet Union, the only country in the world that belongs to the workers and peasants. The Soviet Union shows us, teaches us: See how people can and should live, when workers and peasants come to power!⁷⁷

It seems that, for many young Jews, the experience of communal weakness and of the lack of possibilities to respond to anti-Jewish attacks and sentiment played an important role in shaping a positive stance toward the Soviet Union and Communism.

The ideal of Jewish physical strength as the main or only solution to ongoing anti-Jewish violence was also present in Jewish social and cultural life outside of the narrowly defined sphere of politics. One of these spheres was in sports, the popularity of which skyrocketed among the young Jewish generation of interwar Poland.⁷⁸ In an article that highly idealized Jewish youth, Moshe Kligsberg paid particular attention to the ideological declarations of the Bund, of which he was a very active member before 1939. He claimed that Jewish socialists, while believing in the importance of a “strong, healthy body,” held boxing in utter

contempt as a violent and individualistic sport.⁷⁹ But, according to other scholars, in the 1930s the Bundist Morgenshtern sowed doubt regarding such claims of the unsocialist character of boxing by establishing a few boxing sections in Bundist clubs.⁸⁰ Boxing was particularly strong in the Poalei Tsion Shtern, a sports organization of another Jewish socialist (albeit also Zionist) organization, no less than in the nonsocialist Zionist Maccabi. Likewise, the Labor Zionist Palestinian sport organization Ha-Poel in Poland went under the name of Kraft (strength).⁸¹ Lestchinsky explained the phenomenon of 100,000 young Polish Jews who joined sports clubs in the 1930s in terms of a “new type of Jew, who knew were to strike if necessary, who would not let anyone spit in his porridge, and certainly not in his face.”⁸²

Violence as an Internal Factor of Jewish Political Life

The political culture of young Jews made them ready to engage in violence themselves. Perhaps the most tragic effect of these developments was the fact that the wave of anti-Jewish excesses did nothing to diminish a parallel wave of internal political violence within the community. This intracommunal violence was driven by deep political conflicts, which did not fade in the dramatic situation of the 1930s. As one autobiography contestant wrote about the situation in his shtetl: “In our shtetl, we talk more about breaking up party meetings than about meetings themselves. Each one became something like a football game, each interruption was like a goal we scored.”⁸³ One may hypothesize that, besides factional and party-driven rivalries, internal Jewish political violence could sometimes function as a form of compensation. Jews had no chance in fighting the non-Jewish majority or successfully resisting the anti-Semitism of many of its members. It was easier to manifest strength and heroism in the political struggle of Jewish infighting. Some of this eagerness to fight, to show one’s individual and collective strength, stemmed from an internalization of the image of Jewish weakness and the urge to negate it. In addition, as in all modernist violence, it was a kind of symbolic compensation for the inability to fulfill the modernist aspiration to a radical transformation of reality. Thus, for example, at the peak of anti-Jewish violence in Kielce voivodship, just prior to the Odrzywół and Przytyk pogroms, the Bund branch in Częstochowa urged its members to disrupt an upcoming speech by Vladimir Jabotinsky in the town.⁸⁴

The YIVO autobiographies provide ample evidence that it was the young generation that most often succumbed to the most radical forms of internal Jewish political rivalry, and inevitably to forms of physical aggression and violence. Of course, the spirit of confrontation with one’s ideological foes

was often encouraged by members of the older generations. One of the best-known cases of this is Jabotinsky's call, "*Yo, brekhn*," in 1932,⁸⁵ followed by David Ben-Gurion's reply to confront "the Jewish fascist," which provoked clashes between right- and left-wing Zionists not only in Palestine but also in the Diaspora. In October 1934, card-carrying Revisionists and Labor Zionists were surprised by the sudden "peace" concluded by their leaders. Police reports on the activities of Jewish parties in Kielce voivodship from April 1935 noted that the Ben-Gurion-Jabotinsky agreement was condemned by some two hundred left-wing Zionists in a gathering of the League for Working Palestine in Kielce.⁸⁶ "Mendel Man," who grew up in Płońsk (the hometown of Ben-Gurion), described how, in November 1934, he took to the streets with activists of Poalei Tsion Left to protest the "scheming of Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky" and the "common front of Poalei Tsion Right, Jabotinsky, and his fascists."⁸⁷ "Binyomin R.," a left-wing Zionist, author of the above quote regarding the breaking up of Revisionist gatherings in his shtetl as a form of sport, described attacks on shops owned by political foes, especially fights between Revisionists and members of He-Haluts.⁸⁸ He also described politically driven fights in a Bielsk-Podlaski synagogue during the holiday of Yom Kippur. The fight was provoked by placing a Revisionist donations box for Keren Tel-Hai (the Revisionist fund-raising program for Revisionist activity in Palestine) in the synagogue, which aroused an equal level of fury among left-wing Zionists and religiously Orthodox members.⁸⁹ The Communist author "Kola," who studied in the Vilna TsYShO school, recalled that political debates did not always end with heated discussions, but that defending his Communist views sometimes required the use of his fists.⁹⁰ The Bund self-defense groups mentioned above, today famous mostly for their activities against anti-Semitic attacks, did not cut their teeth in post-1918 Poland on battles with anti-Semites, but rather with their hated Communist rivals. Bundist-Communist fighting in interwar Poland started after the final breach in negotiations between the Bund and the Comintern in 1922, and with the establishment of a pro-Communist splinter group of the Bund, Kombund. The Communists that Bundist militants fought against were most often of Jewish background. It was these fights with "fists, knives, and guns" that led to the "professionalization" (so to speak) of Jewish self-defense. Many of the Communist fighters were recruited from the poorest Jewish districts of Warsaw. At one point, they did not hesitate in attacking a Bundist children's home in Miedzeszyn.⁹¹ Yehuda Kelner, whose memoirs are included in the *yizkor bukh* (memorial book) of Szczecbrzeszyn, recalled the following: "I remember, on every Shabbes, on one side there was a group of Bundists walking and singing their anthem 'Di Shvue' and on the other Zionists singing their songs. When these groups met, they quickly

separated like two enemy armies. . . . That is what life of the youth looked like. The older generation could not understand the new spirit of the age and had cut itself off from the new currents."⁹²

Conclusion

Research on patterns of interwar criminality shows that, on average, Polish Jews committed fewer violent crimes than Polish Christian citizens.⁹³ It is safe to say that the Jewish community of interwar Poland, and its political and everyday cultures, was less affected by the surrounding ideological and physical violence of the period. There is also no doubt that manifestations of collective physical strength and counterviolence were not the dominant features of Jewish political culture in Poland in the dire situation of the 1930s. Other reactions, both individual and organized, were no less important, including legal and illegal emigration, economic self-help, growing interest in the developing Yishuv in Palestine, participation in the still relatively democratic world of local politics, and much more. Certainly, violence did not suddenly assume a dominant place in Jewish social behavior of the 1930s. But, it undoubtedly gained symbolic status and claimed an important place in the political ideology, images, and rituals of the time. A precedent for such a revaluation of violence in modern East European Jewish history can be found in the period immediately before and during the "first" Russian Revolution in 1903–1906, when massive anti-Jewish violence resulted in hundreds of deaths and inspired the organization of Jewish self-defense and calls for Jewish power and strength.⁹⁴ But what amounted to a short revolutionary eruption three decades earlier in the 1930s took shape within a more modern "nationally oriented state," which allowed a much greater degree of freedom and scope for political party activism, the ongoing secularization of a large part of the Jewish community, and a rapidly developing modern Jewish and non-Jewish mass culture. Here, violence, as both social experience and symbol, became a stable feature of the life experience of Jewish youth in the 1930s—the only generation to grow up in the modern Polish state prior to the Holocaust.

The Jewish community, the most prominent ethnic victim of radical European modernism, was nevertheless subject to radical modernism's influence in a way that affected its own political culture. European youth were particularly prone to this influence, and young Jews were no different in this respect from their non-Jewish peers. What made Jewish youth unique, however, was the fact that Jews represented a special national group marked by radical anti-Semitism, which regarded Jews as the major reason behind the economic, social, cultural, and political crisis of the time. Further, the growing acculturation of Jewish youth led them to experience anti-Semitism more deeply and powerfully, and

thus to react to it in novel ways. As an example, let us turn one last time to the YIVO autobiographies. One author, "Drori," described his trip to Łódź in order to meet with the military recruitment committee. He was traveling by train and shared a compartment with Christian recruits. One of them asked "Drori" if he was afraid to fight, because it was a well-known fact that cowardice was a common Jewish trait. "Drori," a young Zionist from Częstochowa, was able to answer them in fluent Polish, using the examples and cultural symbols shared by his Christian peers. He discussed the many successes of Jewish boxers in his hometown and brought up the latest sports news, including the famous victory of an American Jewish boxer over his Italian opponent, Primo Carnera, among others.⁹⁵

The valorization of individual and collective physical strength and counter-violence by Polish Jewish youth should be understood as a form of symbolic resistance by a minority cast as weak and unheroic by the culture of the majority group. It was the only form of constant daily struggle that was possible in those hard times. It was a struggle for the appropriation of symbols so often denied to Jews, which were simultaneously made dear to them through acculturation and the cultural hegemony of the Polish majority, supported by a nationally oriented state.⁹⁶ This ambiguous influence of violence and political modernism on Jewish life before the Holocaust is yet to be thoroughly studied. What ought to be of further interest to scholars is its post-1939 meaning and function, during the destruction of European Jewry, and the extent to which these factors influenced the internal and external politics of the Yishuv in Palestine, before and during the creation of the State of Israel.

Notes

1. Aleksander Hertz, "Swoi przeciwko obcym," *Wiedza i Życie* 6 (1934); idem, "Mistyka rewolucyjna," *Droga* 2 (1930), quoted in Hertz, *Socjologia nieprzedawniona. Wybór publicystyki* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1992), 158–59, 359–62.

2. Hertz, "Mistyka rewolucyjna," quoted in *Socjologia nieprzedawniona*, 348–49, 353–59.

3. Stanley G. Payne, *Civil War in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8–12, 70, 86, 225.

4. Jerzy Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniały. Lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2000), 211–12, 229, 246–47.

5. Payne, *Civil War in Europe*, 18, 98–100, 148.

6. Ibid., 149.

7. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of the Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 153.

8. Hertz, "Swoi przeciwko obcym"; idem, "Sprawa antysemityzmu," *Wiedza i Życie* 10 (1934), in *Socjologia nieprzedawniona*, 160, 390–410.

9. See, especially, Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College, 1997); Alina Cała, *Żyd- wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Wydawnictwo Nisza, 2012), 325–418; Joanna B.

Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 69–130.

10. William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (June 1996): 354, 360–61, 378; Roman Wapiński, *Pokolenia Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), 249–50.

11. Melzer, *No Way Out*; Celia S. Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland Between the Two World Wars* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1994), 77–139; Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin: Mouton, 1983), 342–46, 359–61.

12. Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 120–21; Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 261–62.

13. Jan Marek Chodakiewicz, *Żydzi i Polacy 1918–1955. Współistnienie—Zagłada—Komunizm* (Warsaw: Fronda, 2002), 78–96; Piotr Gontarczyk, *Pogrom? Zajścia polsko-żydowskie w Przytyku 9 marca 1936 r. Mity, fakty, dokumenty* (Biała Podlaska: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rekonwista, 2000).

14. This fascinating source has received a considerable amount of academic attention that analyzes both the content and context of its creation. See, especially, Ido Bassok, "Li-she'elat 'erkan ha-histori shel otobiyografiyot bene no'ar me-osef YIVO," *Mada'e Yabadut* 44 (5767 [2007]): 137–64; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Coming of Age in the Thirties: Max Weinreich, Edward Sapir and Jewish Social Science," *YIVO Annual* 23 (1996): 1–103; Kamil Kijek, "Max Weinreich, Assimilation and the Social Politics of Jewish Nation-Building," *East European Jewish Affairs* 41, nos. 1–2 (2011): 25–55.

15. Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 146–47, 330.

16. Konrad Zieliński, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie na ziemiach Królestwa Polskiego w latach pierwszej wojny światowej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie—Sklódowskiej, 2005), 139; Piotr Wróbel "Przed odzyskaniem niepodległości," in *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce*, ed. Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 1993), 108–33.

17. Alexander V. Prusin, "'The Stimulus Qualities' of a Scapegoat: The Etiology of Anti-Jewish Violence in Eastern Poland, 1918–1920," *Simon Dubnow Institut Yearbook* 4 (2005): 243–51; Piotr Wróbel, "The Kaddish Years: Anti-Jewish Violence in East Central Europe, 1918–1921," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 4 (2005): 219–22; Paweł Korzec, "Anti-Semitism in Poland as an Intellectual, Social, and Political Movement," in *Studies on Polish Jewry 1919–1939: The Interplay of Social, Economic and Political Factors in Struggle of a Minority for Its Existence*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (New York: YIVO, 1974), 49–65.

18. For the best and most recent account of the murder of Narutowicz and its consequences, see Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

19. Ido Bassok, "Ne'urim ve-'erkhe ne'urim bi-tenu'at ha-no'ar ha-Polani she-ben ha-milhamot," *Kiyum ve-shever*, vol. 2, ed. Israel Bartal and Israel Gutman (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2001), 573, 593, 597.

20. Moses Kligsborg, "Child and Adolescent Behavior Under Stress: An Analytical Topical Guide to a Collection of Autobiographies of Jewish Young Men and Women in Poland (1932–1939)," report, 1965, in possession of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 13–14.

21. YIVO Archives, New York (hereafter, YA), Research Group (RG) 4, Autobiography #3702, 1–2; Autobiography #3718, 5–6; Autobiography #3735, 1–2.

22. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3845, quoted in Jeffrey Shandler et al., eds., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Polish Before the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 7.

23. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3580, quoted in Alina Cała, ed., *Ostatnie pokolenie. Autobiografie polskiej młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego ze zbiorów YIVO* (Warsaw: Sic!, 2003), 130–31.

24. Another central feature of Jewish youth memories related to 1918–1921 was a profound disillusionment with the newly established Polish state, whose first years brought discrimination and violence instead of freedom and equality. For more on Jewish youth accounts of war as an experience of violence, chaos, Jewish weakness, and the hostility of the Polish state, see Kamil Kijek, "Naród

słabych i skrzywdzonych'. Wojny i rewolucja lat 1914–1921 w pamięci młodzieży żydowskiej okresu międzywojennego," *Studia Judaica* 1, no. 34 (2015): 85–104; Moyshe Kliglsberg, "Di yidishe yugend bavegung in Poyln tsvishn beyde velt milkhomes," in Fishman, *Studies on Polish Jewry 1919–1939*, 149–51.

25. *Sprawy Narodowosciowe* 2 (1929): 298; Stanisław Mauersberger, *Szkolnictwo Powszechne dla mniejszosc inarodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Wrocław: "Ossolineum," 1968), 163–64; Shimon Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 31; Gershon Bacon, "National Revival Ongoing Acculturation—Jewish Education in Interwar Poland," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 1 (2002): 73.

26. Sabina Levin, "Observations on the State as a Factor in the History of Private Jewish Elementary Schooling in the Second Polish Republic," *Gal-Ed* 18 (2002): 65–66.

27. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3816, quoted in Cała, *Ostatnie Pokolenie*, 381.

28. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3749, 45.

29. Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 20–32.

30. Here the author refers to young members of the National Party, the popular Endecja, the strongest right-wing opposition party in Poland at the time. This party was especially popular among Catholic university and high school students and was characterized by radical anti-Semitism. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3675, quoted in Shandler et al., *Awakening Lives*, 182.

31. *Ibid.*, 187–88.

32. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3543, 21.

33. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3732, 8–9.

34. Elliot Horowitz, "They Fought Because They Were Fighters and They Fought Because They Were Jews: Violence and Construction of Modern Jewish Identity," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 18 (2002): 23–25.

35. Ezra Mendelsohn, "Reflections on East European Jewish Politics in the Twentieth Century," *YIVO Annual* 20 (1991): 29–33.

36. The Polish-language autobiography of "Bronka" held by the YIVO Archives was lost during the war. Alina Cała received a copy from the author, quoted in Cała, *Ostatnie Pokolenie*, 64.

37. Yitzhak Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun* (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1982), 134.

38. Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (hereafter, APK), RG: Urząd Wojewódzki Kielecki I (hereafter, UWK I), 20495, 333, 373, 382 (reports of local authorities from 17.VII, 19.VII and 30.VII, 1933).

39. Yosef Cohen, *Zikbronot mi-yeme bakhsbarah* (Tel Aviv: Bet Lohame ha-Geta'ot, 1984), 86.

40. For a highly biased monograph of events in Przytyk, which ignores a campaign many months long of deliberate violence carried out in the countryside by the radical right prior to a pogrom, see Gontarczyk, *Pogrom?* For other accounts, see Jolanta Żyndul, "If Not a Pogrom, Then What?," *Polin* 17 (2004): 385–91; Adam Penkalla, "The 'Przytyk Incidents' of March 9, 1936, in Archival Documents," *Polin* 5 (1990), 327–59; Joshua Rothenberg, "The Przytyk Pogrom [March 9, 1936]," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 16, no. 2 (1986): 29–46. For evidence of a rather different genesis of these events than that given by Gontarczyk, underlining the activities of young members of the National Party as the main reason for anti-Jewish violence in Przytyk and other places in the area, see Kamil Kijek, "Zanim stał się Przytyk. Ruch narodowy a geneza zajsć antyżydowskich w wojewódzkie kieleckim w latach 1931–1935," *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 14 (2018): 45–79.

41. Adam Kopciowski, *Wos hert zich in der prowinc?: prasa żydowska na Lubelszczyźnie i jej największy dziennik 'Lubliner Tugblat'* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2015), 270–73; Yaacov Lestchinsky, *'Erev burban* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral- farband fun poylishe yidn in Argentina, 1951), 115–16.

42. See Robert Moses Shapiro, "The Polish Kehillah Elections of 1936: A Revolution Re-examined," *Polin* 8 (1994): 209, 216–21; Daniel Blatman, "The Bund in Poland, 1935–39," *Polin* 9 (1996): 61–66, 78–81. For the "symbolic appropriation" of the Przytyk pogrom by the Bund, see, for example, *Naye folkstsaytung*, March 16, 1936, 2.

43. David Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Przytyk* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Yotzei Pshitik, 1973), 109–10, 126, 128, 158–59, 163, 174–78, 183.

44. See, for example, Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter, AAN), RG: Urząd Wojewódzki Kielecki (hereafter, UWK, 1918–1939) 1378, 267/ II-t. 14: 1936, 13, 23, 253; AAN, UWK 1378, 267/ II-t. 13: 1935–1936, k. 1147

45. Shtokfish, *Sefer Przytyk*, 110, 158, 202, 240; AAN, UWK 1378, 267/ II-t. 14: 1936, 21; APK, UWK I, 20706, 175.

46. Shtokfish, *Sefer Przytyk*, 159, 163, 197–202, 235.

47. Ibid., 174. It is worth mentioning here that the experiences of one of the accused members of the Przytyk self-defense group, Yaacov Kirshenzweig, were similar to those described in the YIVO autobiographies discussed above. Kirshenzweig was expelled from the state school a few years prior to the pogrom for “breaking the bones of anti-Semitic hooligans” in the school. Ibid., 109.

48. See, for example, *Dos naye vort*, June 2, 1936, 2; see also *Nasz Przegląd*, June 5, 1936, 5. It is worth noting that while the youth organized self-defense groups in a few areas of the Kielce voivodship, dozens of Jewish reports of anti-Semitic attacks made to police and authorities came almost entirely from representatives of the older generation. See, for example, AAN, UWK 1378, 267/ II-t.—t. 14: 1936, k. 21.

49. See, for example, the parliamentary interpellation of Yitzhak Gruenbaum regarding the outburst of anti-Jewish violence at Warsaw University in November 1931, quoted in Jerzy Tomaszewski, “Dokumenty o zaburzeniach antysemitycznych na uniwersytecie warszawskim na jesieni 1931 r.,” *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, nos. 3–4 (1997): 183–84.

50. Although, in general, Jewish nationalists like Lestchinsky tended to see acculturation and assimilation as breeding passivity and self-abnegation, here he admitted that acculturation could bring also higher readiness for counterviolence. Lestchinsky, *’Erev hurban*, 113.

51. Daniel K. Heller, “Między obroną a atakiem: Syjonisci rewizjonisci wobec przemocy antyżydowskiej w latach trzydziestych,” *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2, no. 258 (2016): 407–29.

52. Yehoshua Thon, “Di yugend un mir,” *Haynt*, January 1, 1932, 5

53. Yehoshua Thon, “Przytyk als a moshl,” *Haynt*, June 19, 1936, quoted in Melzer, *No Way Out*, 56.

54. Lestchinsky, *’Erev hurban*, 111, 117–18.

55. Yehuda Slutzky, ed., *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1964), 999–1000; Yehudah Arazi, *Be-ruah se’arab. Perakim me-bayav u-mif’alo shel Yehudah Arazi* (Jerusalem: Muzeon Tsahal, 1966), 33.

56. Sara Segal and Arieh Pilkow, eds., *Be-shadmot Grochov* (Tel Aviv: Kibuts Lohame ha-Ge’aot, 1976), 194, 196. I would like to thank Rona Yona for providing me with this source.

57. Cohen, *Zikbronot mi-yeme bakhsbarab*, 83, 87.

58. Arazi, *Be-ruah se’arab*, 33–34; Cohen, *Zikbronot mi-yeme bakhsbarab*, 85.

59. Slutzky, *Sefer toldot*, 1000–1002. For the Revisionist military cooperation with the Polish government at the time, see Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath*, 192–198; Laurence Weinbaum, *The New Zionist Organization and the Polish Government, 1936–1939* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1993).

60. Gertrude Pickhan, “Gegen den Strom”: *Der Allgemeine Jüdische Arbeiterbund “Bund” in Polen 1918–1939* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), 301–2.

61. Bernard Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund* (New York: Farlag Unser tsayt, 1960), 297–301, 315–18; Leonard Rowe, “Jewish Self-Defense: A Response to Violence,” in Fishman, *Studies on Polish Jewry*, 118–23.

62. Actions undertaken by the Bund after the pogroms in Mińsk Mazowiecki (June 1, 1936) and Brześć (May 13, 1937) cannot be construed as self-defense against pogroms. In both places, Ordenergrupe activists, together with their allies from the Polish Socialist Party, mobilized only after the pogroms had taken place. Their presence might be deemed an effort to avert a second wave of anti-Jewish violence or simply to reinforce their image as the true defenders of the Jewish population. See Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund*, 293–96, 304–10.

63. Rowe, “Jewish Self-Defense,” 147.

64. Emanuel Nowogródzki, *Żydowska Partia Robotnicza Bund w Polsce 1915–1939* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2005), 244. For the English version of the book, see Emanuel Nowogródzki, *The Jewish Labor Bund in Poland, 1915–1939: From Its Emergence as an Independent Political Party Until the Beginning of World War II* (Rockville, MD: Shengold Publishers, 2001).
65. Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund*, 214–15. The same strategy of political communication was performed at the time by the Polish Socialist Party. See, for example, AAN, UWK 1378, 267/ I-t.13, 46.
66. Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund*, 323–25; Rowe, “Jewish Self-Defense,” 125–26.
67. Rowe, “Jewish Self-Defense,” 143–44.
68. Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 210, 216–30; quotation at 210. See also Włodzimierz Żabotyński, *Ideologia Bejtaru. Zarzys Bejtarego światopoglądu* (Lwów: Komenda Okręgowa Bejtaru dla Małopolski wschodniej, 1934).
69. For a new and fascinating study of this phenomenon, see Daniel K. Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).
70. Menachem Begin, *Jedyna Droga* (Warsaw: Komendanacz. Brith Trumpeldor w Polsce, 1936), 4, 10–16. Quotation at 14.
71. Yaacov Shavit, “Politics and Messianism: The Zionist Revisionist Movement and Polish Political Culture,” *Studies in Zionism* 6, no. 2 (1985), 229–46; Joseph Heller, “Jabotinsky's Use of National Myths in Political Struggles,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 12, *Literary Strategies: Jewish Texts and Contexts*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 194.
72. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3505, 63–64. Vladimir Jabotinsky used phrases from the same poem by Mickiewicz, “Oda do Młodości” (An Ode to Youth), in letters to young members of the Polish Betar, see Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925–1948* (London: F. Cass, 1988), 23.
73. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3505, 66–67.
74. *Ibid.*, 54–55, 62.
75. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3666, 53–54.
76. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3598, quoted in Cała, *Ostatnie Pokolenie*, 114.
77. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3690, quoted in Shandler et al., *Awakening Lives*, 111.
78. Bassok, “Ne’urim ve-erkhe ne’urim,” 575.
79. Kligsberg, “Di yidishe yugend bavegung,” 177–78, 195.
80. Roni Gechtman, “Socialist Mass Politics Through Sport: The Bund’s Morgenshtern in Poland, 1926–1939,” *Journal of Sports History* 26, no. 2 (1999): 338. See also Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counter-culture in Interwar Poland* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 53–54. The same is also confirmed in Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund*, 129.
81. Diethelm Blecking, “Marxism Versus Muscular Judaism: Jewish Sport in Poland,” in *Sport and Physical Education in Jewish History*, ed. George Eisen, Haim Kaufman, and Manfred Lammer (Netanya: Wingate Institute, 2003), 49–51.
82. Lestchinsky, *Erev hurban*, 116–17.
83. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3542, 5. For a similar account in the case of Przytyk, see Shtokfish, *Sefer Przytyk*, 127.
84. AAN, UWK 1378, 267/II- t. 13: 1935, k. 263.
85. See Vladimir Jabotinsky, “Yo, brekhn,” *Haynt*, November 4, 1932, 9.
86. AAN, UWK 1378, 267/II- t. 13: 1935, 715.
87. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3802, [additional materials], 10.
88. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3542, 17, 19.
89. *Ibid.*, 48.
90. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3629, 23–25.
91. Goldstein, *Tsvantsig yor in Varshever Bund*, 41–48, 121–27, 161–66. Frequent fights between Bundists and Communists are also mentioned by Moshe Kligsberg in “Di yidishe yugend bavegung,” 202–4.

92. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, Adam Kopciowski, and Wojciech Trzciński, eds., *Tam był kiedyś mój dom: Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2009), 262.

93. Liebman Hersch, "Jewish and Non-Jewish Criminality in Poland, 1932–1937," *YIVO Bleter* 20 (1942): 140–41, 144.

94. See, especially, Shlomo Lambroza, "Jewish Self-Defense During the Russian Pogroms of 1903–1906," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 23, no. 2, (1981): 123–34; Vladimir Levin, "Preventing Pogroms: Patterns in Jewish Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Russia," in *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, ed. Jonathan Dekel-Chen et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 99–103.

95. YA, RG 4, Autobiography #3681, 59–61. For a convergent explanation of the popularity of boxing among American Jews of the time, see Horowitz, "They Fought Because," 25–26, 32–34; idem, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 203–5.

96. This perspective draws theoretical inspiration from, among others, James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), vii, xv–xvii, 37–38, 315–17, 325–26, 335–38.

CHAPTER 11

From Zionism as Ideology to the Yishuv as Fact: Polish Jewish Reorientations Toward Palestine Within and Beyond Zionism, 1927–1932

Kenneth B. Moss

It is no surprise that throughout the 1920s, Poland's leading Zionist daily newspaper, *Haynt*, devoted exhaustive attention to the Yishuv, Zionism's Jewish-national community-in-the-making in Palestine. Less self-explanatory is why Polish Jewry's most widely read *non*-Zionist Yiddish newspaper, *Der Moment*, devoted nearly as much attention to the Yishuv over that same period.¹ Some of that coverage sounded critical notes, but, overall, it was marked by sympathetic and detailed attention to every aspect of the Yishuv's trajectory, from political mobilizations to institutional achievements to everyday experience. In tone, scope, and constancy, *Der Moment's* coverage resonated with a sensibility that we would normally consider specifically and essentially Zionist: the view that the Yishuv was not just another Jewish community but a unique Jewish-national endeavor that deserved special attention from Jews in general.²

As the editors of papers like *Der Moment* knew—and helped to ensure—keen interest among Polish Jews in the life of the Yishuv came to extend well beyond Poland's Zionist subcultures in the 1920s. In dialogue with a growing body of scholarship that speaks to this phenomenon,³ the current chapter seeks to sharpen our understanding of the character and significance for Polish Jewish political culture of such engagement with the Yishuv. Ranging across disparate sectors of Poland's ideologically and socioculturally fractured Jewish community, I examine a variety of engagements with the Yishuv as special site of Jewish life, more and more of which took shape beyond the bounds of Zionist (or

anti-Zionist) ideology. In a forthcoming monograph on Polish Jewish political culture in the 1930s, I examine this phenomenon in the tumultuous years of the Fifth Aliyah, 1932–1935, when Britain's unexpected reopening of Palestine to Jewish mass settlement at an unprecedented level drove the Yishuv to the very center of Polish Jewish life and thought.⁴ Here, I focus on an earlier and less defined moment: the years between the Fourth and Fifth *aliyot*, roughly 1928–1932.

Within Zionist historiography, these years are generally treated (reasonably) as years of severe crisis. In 1926, the Fourth Aliyah of 1924–1925, the first mass cross-class emigration of Polish Jews to Palestine, ended in economic crisis for the Yishuv, particularly in the rapidly expanding urban centers where many Polish Jewish immigrants had settled.⁵ Over 1927–1928, the suddenly tiny number of Jews arriving in Palestine (some 5,000) was outweighed by the number who left, mostly recent immigrants from Poland.⁶ Many of the latter aired their disillusionment back in Poland to substantial public attention. The number of Polish Jews who bought membership in the Zionist movement fell from 110,000 in 1925 to 10,670 a year later.⁷ Although the Yishuv's economic fortunes began to recover in 1928, the burst of unprecedented ethnic violence that convulsed Palestine in August 1929 raised the specter of Yishuv vulnerability. Consequent British moves to restrict Jewish immigration and land purchase cast further doubt on its viability.⁸ Anti-Zionists confidently announced the death of the movement.⁹

Moreover, the same period saw the rapid decline of Zionism as an organized political force *within* Poland. Less than a decade earlier, Zionism had emerged as the strongest Jewish political movement in Poland and in most other new East European states, where masses of Jews suddenly found themselves participants in democratic polities shot through with ethnonational tensions. But Polish Zionism's efforts to win a meaningful political voice for Polish Jews proved unsuccessful by mid-decade, and the more general erosion of parliamentary democracy after Pilsudski's 1926 coup d'état further undermined any serious investment of hopes in organized Zionist political activity.¹⁰

However, as this chapter helps to show, beneath the tumult of this multifaceted crisis, the Yishuv remained—in some cases *became*—a point of special interest in diverse sectors of Polish Jewish life. Several factors fed—and diversified—interest in the Yishuv even in this era. First, despite the substantial exodus of disappointed immigrants after 1925, most of the tens of thousands of Polish Jews who settled in Palestine during the early 1920s remained and began to establish new lives in the period under discussion.¹¹ The social and ideological diversity of that immigrant pool, coupled with its sheer size, meant that from 1925 on, tens and probably hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews suddenly had relatives or friends in Palestine. The stage was set for masses of Polish Jews to

develop ties to Jewish Palestine independent of their relationship to Zionism. Even as the Yishuv faced short-term crises, this potential for wider and more varied sorts of direct relationships between masses of Polish Jews and the Yishuv began to be actualized through massive personal correspondence, the movement of persons back and forth between these two not-so-distant sites, and the accelerating circulation of information largely unregulated by Zionist institutions.¹²

Second, the period in question was one of crisis for Jews not only in Palestine but also in Poland. Beginning in 1928, Poland began its long slide into an economic depression that devastated the small-mercantile and artisanal sectors where Polish Jews were concentrated. On the political front, this period saw a burgeoning of virulently anti-Jewish discourse and new openness to violence on the Polish right. Importantly, this was coupled with ominous signs (in the eyes of at least some Polish Jews) that the new Sanacja regime, though formally opposed to anti-Semitism, would be unwilling or unable to challenge ever more mainstream calls to drive Jews out of Poland's economy, society, polity, and culture.¹³ So too, this same period saw the rapid fading of hopes that Polish Jews would find communal protection from the postwar international order.¹⁴ Of course, a sense of threat to one's own personal future or even to Polish Jewry as a whole did not dictate a reorientation toward the Yishuv. But it did feed growing interest in alternatives to the present order, and thus served to goad new, renewed, or intensified interest in the Yishuv just as it did disproportionate Polish Jewish interest in emigration.¹⁵

Finally, the continued consolidation of the Yishuv under the aegis of Zionism cemented and gave shape to these ambient currents of Polish Jewish interest. Despite the travails that beset Jewish life in Palestine in the late 1920s (perhaps at times because of them), many of the institutional and cultural experiments that constituted Zionism in the Yishuv thickened and stabilized.¹⁶ At the same time, a growing majority within Palestine's socially and ideologically diverse Jewish community bound itself more closely to the institutions of the Zionist project, especially after the violence of 1929, which took aim at Jews regardless of their relationship to Zionism.¹⁷ Thus, amid the crises, the Yishuv as a new kind of Jewish national community in the making became increasingly socially real—an institutional-cultural-social *fact* bearing on ever-widening realms of everyday life and consciousness for Palestine's growing Jewish population. In turn, the aforementioned private correspondence, personal visits, and the massive press attention ensured that representations of this unique Jewish community would be relayed to widening circles of Polish Jews too.

The present chapter helps to clarify the character and impact of these various vectors on Polish Jewish engagement within the Yishuv, but that sort of

measurement is not my primary concern. Rather, my primary interest is in the changing *content* of Polish Jewish orientations toward the Yishuv and how these bear on our larger history of Jewish *political* culture and consciousness in the interwar period. I begin by investigating relations to the Yishuv among the *most* committed members of Poland's Zionist subculture—relations that struck informed observers as different from more classical sorts of Zionist ideology. Second, I trace some changing relationships to the Yishuv among *non-Zionists*, some indeed embedded in *anti-Zionist* frameworks both secular and religious. Finally, I examine variants of what many contemporaries represented as a striking bifurcation within this whole suite of evolving relations to the Yishuv and the Zionist project. On the one hand, contemporaries noted an ever more myth-suffused attraction to the Yishuv imagined as a site of preternatural Jewish-national creative possibility (twinned with the equally potent trope of the “impossibility” of Jewish attainment in Poland). Yet on other hand, these same contemporaries discovered—and struggled to define—what seemed to them a very different kind of engagement with the Yishuv in Zionist and non-Zionist circles alike. This latter form was marked by hunger for accurate understanding of the Yishuv, indifference or skepticism toward Zionist ideology and myth, and (yet) deep interest in the possibilities that the Yishuv might actually offer to Jews individually and collectively.

In tracing these crystallizing relations to the Yishuv, I seek to develop two main lines of argument. First, I want to enrich and also challenge our historiography of Zionism in Eastern Europe. By illuminating the many-sidedness of grassroots engagement with the Yishuv across the crises of the late 1920s, and suggesting how this was tied both to the taking-root of the Polish Jewish immigration of 1924–1925 and to the continued consolidation of the Yishuv itself, I offer an account of Zionism's (or rather, the Yishuv's) expanding resonance in interwar Jewish Eastern Europe that complicates a narrative of a post-World War I Zionist ascent cut short by crisis. Here I am both arguing with Ezra Mendelsohn's classic work and taking up his suggestion at the close of his famous *Zionism in Poland* that “the collapse of the fourth aliyah and the return of so many olim to Poland made things worse in the short run, but in the long run, paradoxically, these two circumstances were to pave the way for the rebuilding of the movement.”¹⁸ At the least, my analysis reveals several ways in which Zionism's significance in the political consciousness of interwar East European Jews was substantially greater than histories focused on movement membership and ideological investment can capture.

Second, through an analysis that highlights convergences between changing views of the Yishuv (and also of *Poland*) in Zionist circles and well beyond the Zionist camp, I argue for the distinctiveness and significance of what seems to

me a largely unremarked event in interwar East European Jewish political culture: the consolidation of a diffuse but urgent drive among Polish Jews of all sorts to grapple with whether and how the Yishuv as a real and unique Jewish social and political space might offer very different life chances for Jews than Poland (or Europe) did, would, or could. In the text that follows, I highlight especially diverse cases where this grappling took place in terms little regulated by Zionist *or* anti-Zionist discourses and mythologies. In so doing, I join a wave of recent work focused on new forms of interwar Polish Jewish political consciousness that took shape outside the ideological and institutional siloes of the established Zionist, diasporist, Orthodox, and assimilationist camps.¹⁹ At the same time, particularly in the last section of this chapter, I diverge from the tendency of much of this same new work to focus on mythic thinking and intense ideological commitment as chief common denominators of Polish Jewish political culture in the 1930s, particularly among youth.²⁰ I do not dispute the power of such tendencies in every camp, including among Zionists; indeed, the first part of this chapter focuses on the growing centrality of a mythic sense of Yishuv vitality within Zionist bastions. Yet the last section highlights forms of political judgment in Polish Jewish life marked by ideological *under*-determination, skepticism about promises of transformation and redemption, a painful drive to gain some real understanding of the factors bearing on one's own situation, and a chastened sense of what political reflection and action could and could not offer, given the objective circumstances.²¹

The argument that follows is exploratory, not exhaustive. My goal is to begin to reconstruct some kinds of emerging relations to the Yishuv that either seemed new and interesting to *contemporaries* or that simply seem to me to demand more analysis than they have heretofore received; it is *not* my goal here to measure the social weight of these phenomena with any accuracy (though I adduce indexical sources where I can) nor to clarify their relationship to the whole field of existing relations to Zionism in Polish Jewish life, including the much more familiar stances of ideologically coherent embrace or rejection. Further, in focusing on emerging relations to the Yishuv over the whole period between the Fourth and Fifth Aliyot, I sideline questions of growth versus declension over time. This is not just a methodological choice but reflects my sense that those relations were less shaped by dramatic events in the 1927–1932 period than by the quotidian workings of the Yishuv's concretization and visibility alongside those of the deepening problems of Polish Jewish everyday life. The one possible exception is the impact of the burst of intercommunal violence in Palestine in August 1929 and the impact thereof on Palestine's Jews. Widely covered in Poland's Jewish press, the violence whipped up a huge burst of popular sympathy with the Yishuv that clearly stretched well beyond Zionist circles, as attested by the visible presence

and voice of large numbers of ultra-Orthodox Jews in the public demonstrations that broke out across Jewish Poland.²² On the other hand, many participant-observers, including Zionists, felt that the bloody spectacle of Jewish vulnerability in Palestine actually served to undermine Polish Jewish faith in the Yishuv's viability among non-Zionists and Zionists alike. The kibbutz-movement emissary Loveh Levitah grimly concluded in a late 1929 letter to his comrades: "All of our fears that the large popular movement that awoke with the 'events' in the Land of Israel won't find a way to become something enduring and won't become a real effective force . . . have been realized. . . . On the one hand, the interest in what is happening in the Land of Israel and fear for the fate of the Yishuv has grown to embrace masses of the people, but on the other hand, faith in the Land of Israel, its building-up and its future, has not only not grown, but has withered."²³

Ultimately, it is not clear to me whether the latter impact was more substantial than the former, and how prolonged the effects of this "withering" were.²⁴ Arguably, the fact that nothing like such spectacular violence recurred in Palestine thereafter (until 1936) allowed the quotidian factors feeding interest in the Yishuv to reassert themselves. Conversely, perhaps the persistence of harsh British restrictions on Jewish immigration in the years that followed had a more devastating effect on interest than 1929, as youth interested in aliyah saw realization of their hopes endlessly postponed.²⁵ What is clear, however, is that large numbers and a widening variety of Polish Jews engaged with the Yishuv after 1929 too, in the ways and for the reasons I have already sketched.

Of course, we should not lose sight of the possibility that events like 1929 might have shaped not only the extent of engagement with the Yishuv but also its content, the stated concern of this analysis. From Levitah's perspective, what demanded analysis was the "withering" of faith, which he discovered not only among the newly awakened "masses" but also among long-committed Zionists. Levitah perceived two lines of doubt general to Polish Jewish discourse after August. First, he wrote, Polish Jews were "simply afraid" for Jews in Palestine—convinced by the recent events that there was "no security in that land for life or property," and convinced that the Arab community of Palestine consisted of barbaric enemies with whom one could not treat. Second, Levitah also reported that Polish Jews were vectoring on an account of events centering on British policy that served to undermine hopes for Zionism's success: "It has become deeply established in Jewish brains here . . . that England was the organizer of the attacks and that she has a desire and an interest in fostering more such in the future. . . . This way of thinking generally leads in most cases to a lack of faith in the possibility of continuing our efforts in the Land, and in smaller measure leads to the empty and superficial sensibilities of the Revisionists."²⁶

Yet if Levitah the socialist Zionist emphasized this worrisome structure of doubt, it seems that the representations he identified as the causes of the disillusionment could also *deepen* a gut-level identification with the Yishuv and Zionism (in a way that Communist or Bundist accounts of 1929 as a product of Zionist-cum-colonial provocation did not). As Levitah recognized, convictions of British perfidy could also feed a turn to a more confrontational Zionist political posture—for instance, to Revisionism, which especially in Poland presented itself as a movement that would brook no compromise with anti-Jewish policy in the Mandate (even though, as Yaacov Shavit has noted, official Revisionism staked its grand hopes for mass Jewish colonization on the British “coming around” to imperial reason).²⁷ At a Revisionist rally in Tomaszów-Mazowiecki on October 7, speakers addressing a crowd of some three hundred placed some of the blame for the bloody events on mainstream Zionism’s “blind belie[f]” in the English.²⁸ This was certainly a different sort of Zionism than the one Levitah favored, but undoubtedly a Zionism nonetheless.²⁹

No less apposite for introducing the discussion is a third provocative suggestion in Levitah’s letter regarding the role of Polish Jews’ sense of home, self, and place in determining the effects of the 1929 violence on their relations to the Zionist project. “One Jew, a provincial intellectual, said to me with real pain: ‘The most terrible thing for us during the “disturbances” was not the fallen in themselves—we got used to that—but above all the feeling of shame vis-à-vis the Poles, because, behold, even in our own land [i.e., Palestine/the Land of Israel] they can’t stand us.’ I encountered this insulting and painful feeling among many Jews here.”³⁰ In other words, these interlocutors experienced the violent rejection of Jewish presence by Palestinian Arabs in relation to a worrying sense that their Polish fellow-citizens shared the feeling that Jews were intolerable. Polish Jewish relations to the Yishuv and the Zionist project in Palestine were thickly entangled with perceptions of their own situation in Poland. This insight reminds us that there were enduring and deepening factors making for Polish Jewish interest in the Yishuv in a specifically *political* vein—the central concern of the present essay’s final section.

“Addicted to Thoughts About Palestine”: Yishuvism Among Zionist Youth

Zionist emissaries (*shlibim*) of every variety traversed Poland between 1928 and 1932 seeking to mobilize diaspora Zionist elements—and also simply to understand them. A number of these observer-activists made special note of a new kind and intensity of engagement with the Yishuv among Polish Zionists. Notably, these observers registered essentially identical phenomena despite their sharply

opposing versions of Zionism, which ranged from the conservative wing of General Zionism to the committed socialist wing of the kibbutz movement.

Particularly striking for these participant-observers was the sense of a new kind of intimate relationship to the Yishuv taking shape among Zionist youth, especially in the crown jewel of diaspora Hebraism, the Tarbut Hebrew school system. Many observers—and students—charged that the Tarbut schools were failing to inculcate the linguistic fluency and commitment to Hebraism central to their purpose.³¹ The veteran Zionist Alter Druyanov (b. 1870), who traversed Poland for six months in late 1931 and early 1932 as a representative (and information gatherer) for the Jewish National Fund, came away agreeing with that sober assessment by and large.³² But another aspect of these Tarbut schools impressed and intrigued him. Any discussion of Jewish life in Palestine, he reported, aroused tremendous excitement among Tarbut school students. When he described to younger students in the Tarbut schools how children celebrated the Jewish holidays in Palestine, “all of their bones said: ‘more.’” His more adult accounts of the progress of the Yishuv for students in the Tarbut gymnasias drew rapt attention and a flood of questions. Nor was this apparent only to outsiders: A Tarbut school principal complained to Druyanov that the students “were addicted to thoughts about Palestine [*Palesbtinah*].”³³

Not only the intensity but also the character of this relationship struck Druyanov as new, and he captured the difference by counterposing this phenomenon to his own youthful path to Zionism. Whereas his generation had grown up relating to the Land of Israel through a weave of “prayers, Biblical passages, [religious] laws” on the one hand and a mix of half-articulated “longings” and “intimations” regarding a place with “no name and no form,” for the generation of Polish Jews coming of age in the 1930s, the Land of Israel was “a living mother . . . a living hope with a manifest name [*shem meforash*] and a manifest form.”³⁴

Here, then, was full-fledged Yishuvist myth: an exalted sense that the Yishuv was a fundamentally different kind of world for Jews than the one they inhabited. Sources written by other observers from a very different end of the Zionist spectrum sound similar notes. Two years before Druyanov’s visit, in April 1929, the kibbutz activist Nahum Benari had written a note of rebuke to his comrades at Kibbutz Ein Harod following visits to Tarbut schools in Hrubieszów and Brisk. The students—in this case “children of working parents and the laboring sector”—had written letters to Yishuv schools, but received no answer. Disturbed by the indifference of Yishuv schoolchildren to such letters, which might lead to “alienation” and “Levantinism,” Benari was also struck by the same phenomenon that would later impress Druyanov, the intense longing of Tarbut students for contact with real Yishuv Jews: “It is difficult for us to imagine with what excitement and great love they speak here in the schools about the children of the Land of Israel.”³⁵

In 1931, another He-Haluts *shaliach*, P. Bendori, remarked on another sort of intense connection to the Yishuv—in this case, a connection felt by the so-called *yordim*, Jews who had tried to settle in Palestine but then returned (descended) to the Diaspora. There were many *yordim* in Poland by this time, and their disillusionment, which many voiced publicly, played a major role in sowing doubt about Zionist prospects among Polish Jewry.³⁶ Perhaps for that reason, He-Haluts activists were also especially struck when such individuals returned to Zionism, which seems to have happened fairly widely and was already noted as early as 1929.³⁷ Per Bendori in 1931: “It’s worth noting a highly characteristic phenomenon: In nearly every town and city you find *yordim* from the Land, who returned due to illness or weakness and despair, and despite all that they have been possessed by the Land-of-Israel ‘dybbuk,’ and you find them in He-Haluts and in the parties, working intensely with devotion and commitment. It seems that there is something in the Land-of-Israel reality that also ‘poisons’ these traitors and these people with weakened spirits.”³⁸

This heightened excitement, verging on mythic thinking, regarding the Yishuv could also be found among adult Zionists. Druyanov’s experience of numerous talks before audiences of small-town *stam-tzionim* (General Zionists) suggested a felt need among Polish Jewish Zionists for vicarious contact with the vitality of the Yishuv.³⁹ The exact status of this need is complicated, both because (as I noted) Druyanov’s extra-empirical agenda was to defend the “*stam-tzionim*” of Poland against the contumely of fellow Yishuv Zionists, and because—as we see below—he discerned a very different kind of interest in the Yishuv at work in the same circles. But others elaborated on the same phenomenon. In January 1933, a Zionist activist named Leah Vidrovits wrote to Druyanov regarding her work for Keren ha-Yesod among middle-class Jews in Romania: “This year has been a year of economic and spiritual crisis in the diaspora—a hard year for our work despite the sparkling situation in the Land of Israel. But nevertheless, masses of people come to listen. It’s been my lot to give talks in many places this year—in synagogues in the men’s section (only once did I have to speak in the women’s gallery). And I can’t communicate [to you] how exalted is the mood of those who gather from every part of the people [when they] hear the good word from the Land of Israel.”⁴⁰

Engagement with the Yishuv Beyond Zionism and Anti-Zionism

The varieties of Zionism and of anti-Zionism have received vast and precise attention from scholars. By contrast, “non-Zionism” is often simply a residual category. But many kinds of interest in the Yishuv could flourish well outside the

decisive terms of Zionist or anti-Zionist ideology. Indeed, surprising forms of engagement could be found even in sites generally hostile to Zionism. The Yiddishist educator and children's writer Helena Khatskels was a significant figure in Yiddishist circles, first in independent Lithuania (where, in Kovne/Kaunas, she helped run the widely admired "Kinder-hoyz" orphanage), and then in Vilna. She was also identified with the revolutionary left, participating openly in Communist politics in the early 1920s.⁴¹ In the late 1920s, Khatskels became a central figure in Yiddishist childrens' literature. Month after month she offered readers of the Vilna children's magazine *Grininke beymelekh* and the more advanced *Der Khaver* engaging essays on the natural sciences and informative "country-encyclopedia" essays about life around the world.

It is in this context that readers of *Der Khaver* encountered a peculiar piece by Khatskels in April 1931. There, she introduced a series of letters from several young Palestinian Jewish correspondents about "the tragic events that took place in the Land of Israel in 1929" and their impact on the correspondents' lives at the Ben Shemen Youth Village, the pioneering orphanage-cum-agricultural boarding school founded in 1927 by the progressive German Jewish Zionist educator Siegfried Lehmann.⁴² Khatskels's introduction to the letters was by no means a Zionist narrative, but neither was it the sort of exposé of Zionism's ostensible fecklessness, weakness, and worse that generally characterized writing on Palestine by figures of her political stripe. Insofar as Khatskels had a political message, it was that direct Jewish-Palestinian rapprochement was possible within the framework of a shared humanity and that this—rather than, say, Jewish strength—was the only path forward. Thus, Khatskels described how "humane Arabs" in the villages prevailed upon their more "benighted and agitated" neighbors to refrain from attacking Ben Shemen not only because "it is no kind of courage to attack children" but also because of the friendly relations that a local Jewish doctor and the Ben Shemen staff had cultivated with them.⁴³

For our purposes, what is remarkable about Khatskels's piece is not its political argument but precisely the virtual absence thereof in favor of a sympathetic and indeed attractive treatment of the lives of the Jewish children at Ben Shemen. Having first informed readers that the 180 children of Ben Shemen had "their own working farm—fields, gardens, orchards and livestock," Khatskels ends her remarks by reassuring them that Ben Shemen was once again flourishing:

In sending these letters along, the teacher Khayim S. writes that relations with the Arabs in Ben Shemen are now once again friendly.

Work on the farm is going well—the cow-shed has been enlarged, the [garden] beds have been improved, and a rain-machine has been installed—a pipe that sprays the garden and the orchard like a misting rain.

Equally striking, Khatskels presents the children of Ben Shemen not as victims of intolerant Hebraism—the usual account in Yiddishist writings on Palestine—but as happily linked to the Yiddish-secular world of her Vilna readers: “When they receive a copy of *Grininke bey melekh* or *Der Khaver*, they gather together in a shady spot and read; particularly the children who came from the Kovne Kinderhoyz [see below] rejoice to receive the journals. For them, they are always a welcome greeting from home.”⁴⁴

Nor was this warm piece about an appealing slice of the Yishuv a one-time event. That same year, Khatskels made a five-week visit to Palestine and produced—under the imprint of Vilna’s Yiddishist educational network—a booklet about her experience for mature young readers.⁴⁵ It begins:

It is good to visit distant foreign lands, to see new people and an altogether different lifestyle than that we have at home. It is interesting to marvel at plants, birds, animals that one has never seen.

When you travel alone and you are surrounded by completely unfamiliar people who speak in a foreign tongue, you feel lonely, sometimes sad, especially in the first days; but by the same token you feel happy when you choose to travel to a distant land knowing that dear friends are waiting for you there.

This opening faithfully captures the book’s overall character: studied distance from any hint of extra-personal or exceptional interest in “the Land of Israel” alongside a consistently warm description of a place made less “foreign” by the fact of close personal ties.

Khatskels’s deepening engagement with Ben Shemen was not in the first instance a turn toward embracing Zionism.⁴⁶ Rather, the reference to “dear friends” suggests the key actuating factor of her changing relationship: her personal-professional connections to Ben Shemen’s founder Lehmann. This connection dated back a decade, to the unlikely collaboration in Kovne between the Communist Yiddishist Khatskels and the Zionist Lehmann. Bonding over a sense of responsibility to the Jewish war orphans of Kovne, they worked together at the aforementioned Kovne Kinder-hoyz.⁴⁷ When Lehmann founded his Youth Village in Ben Shemen, it was with the help of a dozen orphans from the Kinder-hoyz, and understood to be a direct outgrowth of his Kovne experiment. In short, Khatskels and Lehmann’s shared commitments to vulnerable Jewish youth had given them a personal-cum-professional connection that transcended the truly bitter political struggles between the movements with which they affiliated.

Khatskels’s case suggests how a thickening web of personal ties between Jews in Eastern Europe and growing numbers of friends, family, and colleagues in the

Yishuv could create new possibilities of sympathy with the Yishuv as a real place. Still more interestingly, it shows how such sympathy could blossom into something extrapersonal and in a certain sense political even if it never came to be a Zionism: Here, a point of contact born of personal ties blossomed into admiration for the Ben Shemen experiment and indeed for key aspects of the project of communal-agrarian self-reinvention that stood at the center of so many variants of Zionism.⁴⁸

Khatskels's case is of course distinctive in its particulars. But there is much evidence to suggest that it partook of a larger phenomenon—that as growing numbers of Jews made a new life in Palestine in the 1920s, their communications to friends and family back home meant that much larger numbers of Polish Jews gained (intentionally or not) a new, intimate access to the Yishuv. This could, moreover, function as an independent factor over and against their ideological predispositions regarding Zionism's claims.

Thus, the first mass settlement of Polish Jewish immigrants in Palestine in 1924–1925 naturally gave rise to a massive universe of personal correspondence, and although we cannot measure the collective impact of such a largely irrecoverable unarchived mass, it is clear that, at least in many cases, the letters of those who chose to stay in Palestine did much to make the Yishuv a new kind of reality and possibility for a diverse cross-section of Polish Jewry spilling well beyond Zionist ideological frameworks. This is richly attested to in Marcin Kula's interpretive history and excerpting of some 445 personal letters sent between 1926 and 1939 from a Warsaw Jewish family to their son/brother Moniek, who had emigrated to Palestine in 1925 at age twenty-six. Although we have only the Poland-to-Palestine side of the correspondence, those letters exemplify how an emigrant's reports about his life in Palestine—and the very fact of his building a life and family there (he soon married and a son was born in 1932, and thus his setting down of roots is exactly coterminous with our time frame)—rendered Jewish life in Palestine more familiar, concrete, and affectively and intellectually important for a Polish Jewish family that had entered the mid-1920s harboring a range of attitudes toward Zionism. Moniek's father related to his son's choice through a fairly thick weave of common-denominator romantic pro-Zionism; himself a small businessman of uncertain fortunes, he was pleased that Moniek found work as a road paver (an icon of Zionist manual labor since the Third Aliyah), and was eager for Moniek and his younger brother Noniek to marry Yishuv-raised girls unmarred by "diaspora psychology." But Moniek's letters also rendered the Yishuv interesting and important to his brother Dolek, despite the fact that the latter was "not an enthusiast of the Zionist project." By 1926, Dolek hoped to visit Palestine "for 4–6 weeks" if he could find the money. That same

year, studying at the Warsaw Polytechnic, he imagined how a large commercial hoist he had designed for a school project might be used in Haifa's port. In late 1928 he told Moniek that his letters offered a departure from "this gray everyday life and bring some light to our dark apartment." The 1930s saw Dolek's ties to Palestine grow more ramified via his young wife's family.⁴⁹

Personally mediated contact with Palestinian Jewish life was not confined to letters. Numerous newly minted Palestinian Jews visited Poland for various reasons in the years following the Fourth Aliyah. Famously, some came as *shlibim* of various Zionist movements. Although these *shlibim* liked to describe themselves as a brave minority standing against a sea of indifference and fatal diaspora passivity, their letters back to Palestine suggest a very different phenomenon. An informal side task of *shlibim* from the United Kibbutz movement was to bring personal greetings from comrades to their families in Poland and report back. In April 1930, the aforementioned Levitah reported on visits with families of Ein Harod members and his efforts to explain a bit about the "*takblis* [practical sense] of this strange undertaking." Levitah had visited the parents of Malts in Będzin and Tsvi's mother in Semyatitsh; had talked with Mints's mother and his sisters, including one Golda, who was a member of He-Haluts and seemed very promising; and had visited Tzar's mother and siblings in Trestiny. He was off to visit his grandfather in Novogrodek for "the holy Passover holiday" (*dem heylikn peysekh*), and a few others from Ein Harod were there too. If the use of Yiddish in the Hebrew letter gives the phrase an air of gentle mockery, more apposite is the fact that several young representatives of Palestine's most extreme version of Zionism's effort to create the "New Jew" were heading home to celebrate traditional Judaism's key festival of collective fate with their families, in that bastion of traditional Judaism, Novogrodek, no less. Multiplied across Poland's Passover dinner tables, it seems fair to assume that this intimate encounter with Palestine's newest "New Jews"—including Levitah, a deeply charismatic figure by all accounts—went some way toward making the Yishuv's new ways of life more understandable to the older generation and more concrete for siblings and friends. In Goniądz, Levitah had a long talk with "Luria's grandmother," who was "nice and loves Shlomke very much. His sister is waiting for a chance to make aliyah."⁵⁰

Nor were the *shlibim* the only ones to return for visits, and the more numerous visits of family members and friends for nonideological reasons also served to normalize the Yishuv and thicken Polish Jewish ties to it. In 1928, the mother of the aforementioned Moniek wrote to introduce him remotely to another *oleh* she had met in Warsaw, one Honigfeld, who "lives in Tel Aviv and has a jewelry shop there." Said Honigfeld returned to Tel Aviv with a card from the family and

Moniek's contact information. A year later Moniek's father reported that his son's "colleague Gothelf and also Grynbaum's son" had arrived in Warsaw; they came by the shop to buy boots. Moreover, networks of these sorts of personal Poland-to-Palestine connections grew ever thicker over time. As Kula notes, some Jewish families like Moniek's lived in an environment in which emigration to Palestine became a common occurrence after 1924. This created a positive feedback loop: an ever-expanding network of contacts in Palestine thickened personal ties, which in turn oriented Polish Jews still further toward the Yishuv as a reality—and possibility. In December 1932, Moniek's father wrote to inform him that "the brother-in-law of Moyshe Kuropatski from Lublin, a Gerer Hasid with a lot of capital, is preparing for a trip to Israel" and that "Blas's younger brother" was coming to study at "the Mikve Yisrael agricultural school"; if the former piece of information testifies to networks that kept Polish Jews informed of other Polish Jews' engagement with Palestine, the latter testifies to deepening familiarity with the possibilities that Palestine might offer—if not for oneself, then for the next generation.⁵¹

Importantly, though, direct contact was not the only way that a new relationship to the Yishuv could take shape in this period, and Khatskels's was not the only case where such relationships flourished even in bastions of anti-Zionism. One of the autobiographies written for Vilna's YIVO Institute offers a case of how a gut-level socialist idealism plus a tinge of romantic interest in "*Erets Yisroel*" could provoke a growing interest in the Yishuv and ultimately aliyah, even in an environment hostile to both. By the time the author of autobiography #152 submitted his life history in July 1934, he had embraced agrarianist Zionism and was on the cusp of leaving for Palestine.⁵² Yet much evidence in the text shows that Ben-Tikvah had come to He-Haluts-style Zionism in the late 1920s and early 1930s not only outside any Zionist framework but indeed from within one of Poland's most robustly *anti-Zionist* environments, Vilna's organized Yiddishist-diasporist scene. Raised by an impoverished family from which he received no strong ideological formation, Ben-Tikvah was beaten so badly by a teacher at a traditional Talmud Torah that his parents transferred him to Vilna's pioneering (and affordable) Yiddishist Mefitsei Haskole School.⁵³ Ben-Tikvah arrived circa 1928, at a time when the school was becoming still more uncompromising in its diasporist-socialist-Yiddishist commitments.⁵⁴ Not coincidentally, the intensely Yiddishist-diasporist (and vaguely socialist) scouting organization "Bin," founded a year earlier, had just opened its school chapter, and Ben-Tikvah became an enthusiastic member.⁵⁵ His autobiography describes with undimmed gratitude Bin's transformative provision of "that which we lacked," a proper way of "living-together, character, relations between peers. . . . Throwing myself with body and soul into the organization," he also spent the

summer at the newly founded Bin camp “as ‘Bin’ commanded.”⁵⁶ Had things remained thus, Ben-Tikvah would have exemplified the aspirations of Vilna Yiddishism; indeed, when Ben-Tikvah wrote the autobiography in 1934, Yiddish was still the only language in which he had any fluency, his few references to cultural consumption in the autobiography point to the impact of his belated but intense Yiddishist education, and he had absorbed the general socialist sensibility preached both in Bin and in the Yiddishist school.

Yet amid all this, the young Ben-Tikvah developed “a sympathy for the building up of *Erets Yisroel*.” That this was not some sort of sudden conversion is evident from multiple facts related in nonpolemical fashion and haphazardly scattered throughout the autobiography. Thus, Ben-Tikvah did not register any intrinsic tension in his first efforts “to bring a bit of *erets-yisroeldikayt* [Land-of-Israel-ism] into Bin,” undertaken before he had to leave school to seek work.⁵⁷ That this “sympathy” to “Land of Israel work” was as yet little informed by any sort of coherent Zionist commitment is evident too from the gradualness with which he moved from the diasporist to the Zionist camp: He remained in Bin for some time and even became one of five hardy souls who took part in a half-year Bin agrarian-commune experiment outside Vilna in summer and autumn 1931.⁵⁸ Indeed, it seems that it was ideological pressure from his *comrades* within Bin that moved him to leave: “The Land of Israel and I were [both] *treyff* for them; of necessity I was pushed to distance myself from them.”⁵⁹

Thus, a vague Yishuvism that had taken shape outside any discernible Zionist context persisted through several years of intense involvement in diasporist activism and, when circumstances changed, provided the point of connection through which Ben-Tikvah could—with no discernible cognitive dissonance—transpose his socialist-agrarianist ideals and desire for a new life into the most far-reaching form of pioneering Zionism. We cannot reconstruct precisely the factors that nurtured Ben-Tikvah’s early “Land-of-Israel-ism.” But what seems clear is that his initial reorientation to the Yishuv took place without substantial mediation by organized Zionism in any form—in Ben-Tikvah’s quite detailed autobiography there is no hint of any substantial engagement with Zionist organizations (prior to his joining of He-Haluts circa 1933, of course) or even influential pro-Zionist teachers or peers. We are left to posit as the most reasonable explanation that circulation of accounts of life in Palestine was so pervasive that they even reached an impoverished boy whose education took place in resolutely anti-Zionist settings. As we shall see, other sources attest to this phenomenon.

The cases of Khatskels and the families of young Jewish emigrants from Poland to Palestine suggest the power of personal networks to produce sympathetic ties to the Yishuv as a real society in a manner that simply bypassed

ideological dispositions regarding Zionist ideas. The case of Ben-Tikvah, conversely, suggests the surprising capacity of information (or perhaps simply rumors) about the Yishuv to inspire interest even among people without ties to any of Poland's Zionist subcultures, indeed even in redoubts of ramified anti-Zionism.

Other sources point us to a third distinct constellation of new attitudes toward the Yishuv as distinct from Zionism emerging in Poland's formally anti- or non-Zionist *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) communities. During his six months in Poland, the aforementioned Druyanov made some effort to include in his research "all of the circles: the youth, the Revisionists, the General Zionists, the *haredim*, etc."⁶⁰ In both published and unpublished observations, Druyanov recorded his sense of urgent interest among Orthodox youth in the Zionist project in Palestine, and remarked a striking twofold character to this development. First, Druyanov captured this shift in terms of the reorientation it had imposed on the Orthodox political party Agudat Israel: "The Zionist youth and even the ultra-Orthodox [*haredi*] [youth] are distancing themselves because of [the Agudah's] relationship to the Land of Israel." This was compelling the organization to take a more positive stance toward Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. Druyanov then drew a second distinction, which resonates with other sources adduced throughout the current essay: What alienated said Orthodox youth from the Agudah was "its relationship to the Land of Israel—not to Zionism."⁶¹

Assuming it was not pure fantasy, what did this distinction mean? In the section that follows, I revisit other sources bearing on Orthodox Jewry that both lend weight to Druyanov's perceptions of a shift and shed light on the content of the distinction for Orthodox young people—and for other Polish Jews. But at this juncture, lest we miss the proverbial forest for the trees, we should also note a fourth and arguably a far more fundamental, seemingly straightforward, dimension of rising interest in the Yishuv born outside Zionist ideological frameworks: interest in the Yishuv as a *by-product* of ever-deepening economic crisis and darkening personal circumstances in Poland. It seems clear that, as the Depression wore on, especially in smaller towns where the Jewish commercial sector collapsed, interest in the possibility of getting one's *children* to Palestine began to spread beyond Zionist ranks even before the reopening of Palestine in 1932 made such hopes somewhat realistic. One observer writing from Kovel in July 1930 noted that it had come to seem that "every Jewish household is prepared to send its sons and daughters to the Land of Israel whether out of desire or of necessity."⁶² Perhaps the distinction Druyanov pinpointed among Orthodox youth was fed by the same brute desperation, manifesting in Orthodox ranks

a more general shift among many Polish Jews toward the sense that the Yishuv offered a better *individual* future than Poland? In short, is the main story of Polish Jewish reorientation toward the Yishuv from the late 1920s really a simple story of general emigrationism, driven by a straightforward sense that the Yishuv might be a better choice than Poland for a Jewish individual seeking to make a decent future for him- or herself—"better" in terms no different from any "bourgeois-individualist" quest for a life affording some possibility of self-development, safety, and satisfaction?

Incipient Palestinism and the Chastened Political Imagination

This last section takes up that question by asking: What was the relationship of this last kind of practical reorientation to the larger history of Polish Jewish attitudes toward Zionism, and to Polish Jewish political culture and thought more generally? One easy answer might be that there *isn't* any relationship—that this last sort of Yishuvism was not an "ism" of any sort but merely an individual *economic* calculus that there were better possibilities than Poland, and that Palestine was one such.⁶³ On that view, it might follow that this whole family of reorientations toward the Yishuv falls outside Jewish political and intellectual history, belonging rather to the history of migrants driven by practical calculi.⁶⁴

But to read this last family of sensibilities as cleanly calculative and economic misses two important factors. First, the *durative* process of judging the situation in the Yishuv in relation to one's own situation in Poland confronted actors with plenty of spurs toward thinking beyond purely personal and narrowly calculative concerns toward the larger questions of the Jewish political condition, to which the Yishuv embodied one answer. That is, while one waited and hoped for a "certificate," it would have been difficult *not* to think, at least at some junctures, about what one's future in Poland was likely to be and whether it could be bettered by changing one's condition radically. It would have been hard *not* to think about the actual likely impact of what seemed to many to be rising anti-Semitism in Poland as in the rest of Europe, or about the seemingly abstract yet suddenly profoundly concrete question of how economic crisis and political crisis were intertwined. For instance, would anti-Semitism dissipate when the Depression ended, or were Polish Jews living through a process that would worsen their political situation in ways that could not easily be undone? Second, in reorienting toward the Yishuv for reasons however practical, substantial numbers of such people also inevitably entered into a process of *thinking about the claims made for and by the Yishuv* by Zionism(s) and by its opponents.

In this last section, I examine a series of sources that attest to both of these sorts of trajectories toward reflection and judgment. We may begin by remaining, briefly, in the world of Polish Orthodoxy. Writing in November 1929 about how Poland's deepening Depression was calling into question the Bund's theory that Polish Jews would be integrated into a general Polish industrial proletariat, the journalist Rachel Faygenberg bore witness to a discussion on the train from Warsaw to Otwock: "A young man, wearing a *kashketl*, grew heated amongst his Jewish listeners and did a bit of accounting: If the Bund's war for Jewish proletarianization continues to bear fruit at the current rate as heretofore, it will take (given the number of Jews in Poland) 46,000 years. And couldn't a Jewish majority in Palestine also be achieved in the course of 46,000 years?"⁶⁵ Thus, a manifestly Hasidic young man (whom we may presume to have been in discussion with a crowd that included other Hasidim, given that Otwock was a resort town especially frequented by Warsaw Hasidim) expressed his skepticism about Bundist class analysis by invoking the key Zionist argument for how the Yishuv was actually going to become a majoritarian Jewish society.⁶⁶

Whatever we are to make of this source exactly, other sources from deep within the Hasidic world also attest to the emergence over the course of the 1920s of forms of judgment linking an individual's view of Jewish settlement in Palestine to worldly assessment of the Jewish condition in Poland. In 1924, one K. A. Frenkl, a devoted Hasid of Haim Tenenboym of Warsaw, chose to make aliyah. Years later, he revisited his motivation for aliyah in hagiographic memoirs about the rebbe. The hagiographic goal was to celebrate the late rebbe's ostensibly positive stance toward Jewish settlement in Palestine, but Frenkl's *en passant* account of his own motivations is matter-of-fact and striking: "I began to reveal to [the rebbe] the story of my long-in-the-making yearning for the Land of Israel, because life among the wicked Poles had become unendurable to me."⁶⁷ Though there is some reason to think that Orthodoxy sometimes provided psychic armor against taking anti-Semitism to heart, here we see how an Orthodox young person too could feel anti-Semitism deeply and be spurred to think about Palestine in worldly political terms.⁶⁸

What is notable about both of these instances, for my purposes, is how both of them step outside what was by then a well-elaborated and encompassing haredi discourse about Zionism, the Yishuv, and Jewish life in Poland that treated all three in thickly theological terms, insisted that the relationship of the individual traditional Jew to all three had to be determined by faith and obedience to traditional authority, and rejected any form of worldly judgment about Zionist claims regarding Diaspora, Palestine, and Jewish politics.⁶⁹ This chapter cannot

establish how extensive the “fugitive” sorts of worldly political judgment that I flag here were among Orthodox Jews. But a third source, from the very beginning of the interwar period, lends further support to the line of argument I am suggesting. In a 1921 eulogy to mark the death of Moshe Eliyahu Halperin, a leading figure in Polish Orthodoxy, the younger Hasidic leader and Agudah activist Yitshok-Zelig Morgenshtern (the Sokolover Rebbe) took the opportunity to warn Hasidic youth against the seductions of Zionism. What is striking is not this interdiction, nor even the fact that he felt compelled to reiterate it (in the context of private admissions among Orthodox leaders that many haredi youth were drawn to Zionism at this juncture).⁷⁰ More notable is that he too stepped outside the antipolitical terms of haredi discourse to acknowledge at some length “the natural national feeling of a people for its land” and “the fact that the era demands that we rapidly attain for ourselves a shelter from the violent storm.” The Sokolover’s readiness to openly sound these worldly, presentist political claims was strikingly out of keeping with the quietistic rhetoric with which most other Polish haredi leaders described the travails of the era and also out of keeping with the carefully apolitical rhetoric with which those leaders did sometimes justify Jewish settlement in Palestine.⁷¹ This strongly suggests that his hand had been forced at least to some degree: that new kinds of relationships to the Yishuv, to the nation-state, and to nationalism as such were spreading among a wide enough swath of Orthodox youth that they could no longer simply be ignored.⁷²

In all three of these cases we find ways of thinking about Palestine and Poland that took shape at a distance from any investment in Zionist myths of transformative Jewish rebirth but nevertheless involved *political* judgment about the Zionist project in relation to Jewish prospects in Poland, the significance of anti-Semitism, the nation-state, or the postwar global order.

If such forms of thinking could take shape in the ambit of Orthodoxy, with all its intellectual-theological and institutional resources for resisting secular forms of political thought, it is no surprise that we find still-clearer and richer variations of the same when we return our gaze to more secular milieus. Of greatest interest in this regard is He-Haluts and its associated youth movement, He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir, because even in this moment of Palestine’s closure, He-Haluts served as framework in which thousands of young Polish Jews, drawn from every conceivable background and with quite various prior relations to Zionism, enacted an aspiration to leave Poland for the Yishuv. In turn, He-Haluts and He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir local branches (*snifim*) and training kibbutzim constituted spaces in which members were allowed and compelled to elaborate the terms of that aspiration. Beginning as early as late 1928, substantial numbers of

Polish Jewish young people began to flow into He-Haluts spontaneously, with no guidance from any sort of organized Zionism. A sense of the scale and the accompanying surprise can be found in a typical letter from a He-Haluts *shlihim* in early 1930: "Stop delaying! Send *shlibim*! We used to doubt that we had 10,000 members in Poland, now it's over and rising."⁷³ Furthermore, the membership came from a wide array of class and cultural-educational backgrounds. Some came from what the *shlibim* called "laboring" backgrounds, "the masses," or even "the street": "This time there has come to us youth from the masses [*no'ar ham-oni*], working[-class youth], who will in my opinion be a blessing for the Land, but they lack education and especially Zionist-socialist education."⁷⁴ Others, conversely, were clearly middle class, including considerable numbers from Polish-language or Polish-aspirational backgrounds; in the eastern town of Pruzhene, a substantial number of the 130 members of the He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir in 1930 were students in the Adam Mickiewicz Polish Gymnasium.⁷⁵ Finally, as all observers recognized, many of these new members had had little or no previous engagement with *any* Zionist or Hebraist political, cultural, or educational movement: "New people have come this time, and they have neither written Torah nor oral Torah."⁷⁶ Of the 130 He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir members in Pruzhene, about 30 percent knew Hebrew (meaning, broadly, that they came from within the thickly Zionist subculture), but the rest knew little and some needed remedial work "even in elementary matters" on He-Haluts "concepts and connections with the movement."⁷⁷ A census of Polish He-Haluts in July 1931 found that 41.37 percent of its 9,862 members had not previously been involved in any Zionist youth organization.⁷⁸

These sociological factors point to an important distinction: In investigating political thinking within He-Haluts and He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir, we investigate *not* a distinct Zionist subculture (as in the converse case of Tarbut school populations) but a diverse cross-section of Polish Jewish youth from across all cultural and social spectra. He-Haluts even in the pre-Fifth Aliyah period was *both* a Zionist subculture site akin to the Tarbut students examined previously in this chapter *and* a site full of the sorts of diverse (previously) non-Zionist elements we encountered thereafter.

What was the thinking of these young people regarding the Yishuv? Here we may draw, with due care, on the substantial archive of reports filed by He-Haluts *shlibim*. In late 1930, the twenty-seven-year-old kibbutz-movement activist Haim Ben-Asher traversed Poland's northeastern region from Smorgon to Kletsk on Poland's border with Soviet Byelorussia to Pruzhene, southeast of Bialystok. His task was to visit some of the numerous newly emergent branch organizations of He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir and to report back. The reports he sent back were marked by a more judicious eye than many other *shlibim* commanded and displayed a keen

awareness of great variety among these *snifim*, the impossibility of any easy generalizations: “Just as the faces of people are never alike, thus too our branches.” In turn, he also recognized what may have been the key source of this variation: that these were spontaneously emergent branches with little or in some cases no input from He-Haluts or any other movement.⁷⁹

In Lebedevo, he encountered the sort of *snif* that his movement hoped to find: all thirteen members all knew Hebrew, and its leader, Tsukerman, was “a girl of very clear ability.” But Lebedevo was altogether an exception. In Smorgon, he found “a *snif* of very simple and uneducated [youth], a few individuals who know Hebrew.” In Kletsk, the local He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir—“the main youth group in the town”—was drawn from the “laboring [classes] and from the street” and Hebrew was not studied. In Turef, He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir was the only pioneer organization in town; the leadership was enthusiastic but ignorant of things that Ben-Asher deemed basic to informed Zionism and socialism. In Stołpce, he found twenty-eight members, most between the ages of fifteen and sixteen, almost all of whom were “workers,” with only three students among them. Finally, in Pruzhene, he found a more complicated situation, as noted above. With some 130 members and growing, Pruzhene’s He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir was the largest in the area and rivaled its long-established Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir pioneering group. Here Ben-Asher noted the aforementioned dramatic bifurcation in the cultural-ideological-educational backgrounds of the membership: Some 30 percent knew Hebrew and led the organization’s “cultural work” with “tireless devotion,” but many of the others lacked even the most basic grounding in He-Haluts -related concepts. This was particularly true of a sizeable contingent that had come to He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir not from the Tarbut school, which had some 80 students in 1930–1931, but from the local Polish gymnasium, which had an equal number of Jews (out of a total student body of 287 that year).⁸⁰

Had Ben-Asher’s reports stopped at this crudely binary division between *snifim* where the members fit a recognizably Zionist-Hebraist mold and *snifim* where they did not, they would simply serve as further evidence of the degree to which young people without Zionist backgrounds were beginning to flow en masse into Zionist frameworks. But having engaged in intense discussion with these young people—in Pruzhene, for example, he spent two days and nights meeting with the adolescent rank and file, conducted intense discussions with the organizations’ leadership cadres, and took part in a large “general gathering of the youth”—Ben-Asher captured some contours of a more complex political culture taking shape. His reports offer a portrait of a He-Haluts scene in which searching intellectual engagement with the sociopolitical realities of the Yishuv, of Poland, and with the problems and possibilities presented by both, was widespread and at the same time substantially unmoored from the myths and traditions of

Zionism in any form. Two overlapping but distinct constellations of phenomena merit particular attention.

First, Ben-Asher recorded a marked gap between serious engagement in matters of political argument and notable *disinterest* in the cultural and psychic recasting so central to the socialist Zionist project in general and the program of Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad in particular. The movement's approved Zionist political writings ("Grinboym, Preuss, Benari") were read, "discussions on all sorts of contemporary issues" were held, and the local leadership cadre, "also immerses itself in political economy by Bogdanov and the history of socialism." However, Ben-Asher noted, in direct contrast, "there has been no literature [*sifrut*] of any sort in the cultural work program. Just once, four months ago, they organized a literary trial around 'Bontshe Shvayg.'"⁸¹

Ben-Asher gestured toward explaining this indifference to the cultural dimension of the Zionist revolution as a product in some measure of the bifurcated sociological makeup of the movement noted above. But his detailed comments on the depth and content of the *political* engagement that coexisted with this cultural indifference demonstrate that this was *not* a situation in which there was a sharp demographic distinction between full-fledged Zionist commitment among the movement-raised young people and an unreflective emigrationism among those who had come from the outside. Only in a few cases did he perceive a purely pragmatic "emigrationism" at work; thus, in Linov, he remarked darkly, some of the *halutsim* had been moved by the emigration of several locals to somewhere other than Palestine to ask whether it made sense to remain in He-Haluts. But generally, Ben-Asher seems to have been impressed by a seriousness of intent and purpose that he found among most of the "knowledgeable" and "ignorant" alike. He praised the ignorant Smorgon *snif* for "trying to maintain itself and recogniz[ing] its power [potential]." His assessment of the Kletsk group was still more variegated: looking beyond the shared "outsider" character of the whole of the organization, he judged the three leaders of the *snif* quite variously: one was a typical "small-town Pioneer girl," though she tried to do her job appropriately; one (a boy) aroused in Ben-Asher deep doubts; and the third (a second girl) inspired his admiration.

Second, Ben-Asher's reports reveal a local Zionist youth scene in which a myth-infused relationship to the Yishuv and its achievements seems largely absent (or silent) in favor of urgent critical inquiry regarding the realities and potentialities of the Yishuv and Poland alike. The young man who *headed* the Pruzhene branch of He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir was himself gripped by doubts—worrying "a bit too much," as Ben-Asher saw it, about whether He-Haluts was too focused on emigration to Palestine and too little concerned with "the reality and activity in the Diaspora." At an open meeting of the organization, Ben-Asher

was confronted with penetrating critical questions about the realism of the kibbutz collectivist ideal. Did Ben-Asher himself think he would live his whole life in the kibbutz? Young women in particular confronted him with questions about the “insecurity of family life” in the kibbutz environment. Another interlocutor pressed him to address corruption in kibbutz life as reflected in the use of private money by individuals and the securing of extra work hours to meet individual needs through personal connections (notably, this question was based not only on “rumors” but also on “letters”—attesting again that by 1930, Polish Jews had sources of direct information about life in Palestine that were not under the control of any party or movement). Finally, participants in a general meeting of the youth—it is unclear whether this refers specifically to Zionist youth or (as in other places that Ben-Asher visited) a meeting open to the whole of the local youth—pressed Ben-Asher on “the political situation that is taking shape.” One young woman, a member of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir, asked whether under current conditions it made sense to join a training kibbutz. A young man who had left Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir “began to argue for an idea . . . of adjusting the pioneering movement to work in the Diaspora, and to direct the ‘cultural’ activity to that end in a period of lack of aliyah [possibilities].”

Still sharper questions arose in Ben-Asher’s visit to a group of ten members of the Shahariah training kibbutz stationed in nearby Ludin. To his comrades, Ben-Asher reported his sense of a merely practical “emigrationist” Zionism at work—hints that members would leave if an aliyah certificate was not forthcoming, and the like. But he also recorded an uncomfortable exchange that pointed in a very different direction: “In the conversation, there was a need for elementary conceptual clarification regarding the right of the Hebrew worker to work in the Jewish economy in the Land. There were comrades who saw in the conquest of labor a contradiction to the socialist conscience, an illegitimate taking away of another’s livelihood, etc.” Ben-Asher seems not to have noticed the contradiction between his allegation of nonideological “escapist” Zionism in the Ludin group and the evidence he himself provided of the members’ moral-political struggle with a problem at the heart of the socialist Zionist project: the fact that in order to realize its ideal of a Jewish people regenerated as a “working nation,” the champions of this ideal felt compelled to demand that Zionist institutions and indeed Jewish entrepreneurs in Palestine hire only Jewish laborers.⁸²

A different experience in nearby Kletsk bespoke a larger intellectual ferment and seriousness in the local youth culture. The entirety of the town’s He-Haluts Ha-tsa’ir chapter had gone over to Frayhayt, a late-emerging movement in Poland that provided a space for young people who were committed to Zionism but wanted the movement to focus with equal intensity on the general socialist and Jewish-national political struggles in Poland.⁸³ While such group “conversions”

sometimes seem to have been largely matters of fashion or personality holding sway over unsophisticated young people, Ben-Asher's account of Kletsk youth indicates that there, as in Pruzhene, substantial numbers of young people strove seriously to understand their politics. Ben-Asher reported an open meeting in the town in which the He-Haluts youth he characterized as "from the street" debated with both Bundist Tsukunft youth on the one hand and members of the Revisionist Zionist Betar about matters of Zionism, socialism, and Jewish settlement in Palestine.⁸⁴

Thus, amid the dizzying variety of He-Haluts ha-tsa'ir local cultures that Ben-Asher experienced on the ground, we can discern a substantial and sociologically variegated population of young people whose affiliation with a Zionist organization meant *neither* a full-fledged ideological investment in a vision of Jewish self-reinvention along socialist, secular, and Hebraist lines *nor* a simple, unthinking search for exit, but an acute and searching political engagement with the real situation and prospects in the Yishuv in relation to those in Poland. Importantly, reports by a half dozen other *shlibim*, filed both before Ben-Asher's and after, offer accounts of He-Haluts and Zionist youth culture on the ground that—while they differ in categories of description, in emphasis, and in level of detail—repeatedly registered phenomena akin to those that Ben-Asher described. These include forms of engagement with the Zionist project that were neither "properly" Zionist nor merely emigrationist; that were neither properly ideologically committed nor the unthinking affiliation of those who joined this or that youth movement for social reasons; and that were actively indifferent to core concerns of the Zionist vision and tradition yet deeply engaged in questions that bore on Jewish society building in Palestine. Like Ben-Asher, these *shlibim* reported with surprise and a deepening sense of the unfamiliar.⁸⁵ Several other instances from the 1928–1932 period, less defined than Ben-Asher's yet clearly resonant with it, might be adduced.

In 1929, a year before Ben-Asher traversed the northeast borderlands, two core members of Ein Harod who preceded him as *shlibim* wrestled with how to understand the motivations and character of the large number of "newcomers" they too found already flowing into He-Haluts. The aforementioned Loveh Levitah, embarking across the northeast on the first leg in a four-month trip across the whole of Poland, found that among those "streaming" into He-Haluts were "former 'Reds'" and also young people with no political or intellectual background at all who were shockingly ignorant not only of Zionism, Hebrew, and the kibbutz movement but also socialism and modern thought and culture as such. But while he was moved at times to dismiss some of the latter types as mere "*tsertifikatnikim*, those who are joining He-Haluts just to get a certificate [for aliyah]," in other cases he found—and struggled to articulate—that many of these young people formerly

distant from Zionism were turning to He-Haluts with complex sets of intentions and intellectual demands.⁸⁶ His colleague, the aforementioned Nahum Benari, made the same point more definitively in optimistic if worried comments on the youth “primarily from laboring backgrounds” who were coming “with neither written Torah nor oral Torah” to He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir: “This youth is not satisfied with song and dance alone—if it has come He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir, it is because something else is driving it. That is, in this domain there is notable competition between the various camps on the Jewish street (the youth of the Bund, the Communists, others). And there is restless seeking and uncertainty in the soul of the youth and they are looking for a different kind of sustenance.”⁸⁷

What was the relationship of these “newcomers” to the Yishuv particularly? Levitah’s report suggested a youth distant not only from any well-developed version of Zionism but also from any mythic and celebratory discourse about the Yishuv: “There is no need to expand on how totally lacking is the knowledge of the Land [i.e., of Zionist settlement and the Yishuv in Palestine] and of the [Zionist] Labor movement. . . . They draw their knowledge of the Land from *Haynt*, *Der Moment*, and the *Folktsaytung*.” Especially striking here is the third reference: the *Folktsaytung* was a Bundist party organ relentlessly committed to exposing the Yishuv’s failure(s). That even it could serve as a source to arouse interest in Palestine points us back to our analysis of Ben-Tikvah’s case. More to the point here, there is no way to imagine the *Folktsaytung* as fostering a mythic relationship to Palestine—quite the contrary. Although young *halutsim* were ignorant by Levitah’s lights, they were by his own admission reading about the Yishuv, and drawing conclusions from their reading that certainly contravened the intentions of the writers. They were thinking about the Yishuv, however haltingly, outside the terms of both Zionism and its opponents, and in ways little touched by any sort of Zionist-curated myth yet nonetheless compelling enough to orient them toward aliyah.⁸⁸

Like Ben-Asher, Levitah also found plenty of informed and lively critical inquiry in some (though not others) of the He-Haluts settings he encountered. While he deemed the *halutsim* of Kielce and Siedlce a shallow bunch more interested in polemical violence than actual issues, a He-Haluts meeting he attended in nearby Będzin impressed him. His lecture provoked intelligent challenges both by members of Gordonia from the voluntarist-socialist “right” (worried about the growing danger of “class politics” in “working Eretz-Yisrael”) and from members of Ha-Shomer ha-tsa’ir to Levitah’s left (particularly concerned with the newly bloody Arab-Jewish conflict and the inclusion of Arab workers in the labor movement).⁸⁹

Levitah was also struck by the intense preoccupation with the political situation of the Yishuv that he encountered in another site as well. While in Siedlce,

he gave a talk in a Tarbut school, that bastion of informed, committed Zionism. The response was not, as in the case at the He-Haluts meeting he attended in the same town, polemical, ill informed, and unserious. Rather, it was disquieting for the opposite reason: in response to his talk, which presumably offered a programmatic account of the new Jewish community and self being built by the United Kibbutz movement, the students wanted only to talk politics. "Behold, most of the questions [were] political (as go the adults, so too the children) about the Arabs, the [events of August], future relations, etc."⁹⁰

This last aspect of Levitah's experience brings into focus a further point worth underscoring. In this last section of the chapter, concerned with exploring new kinds of relationships to the Yishuv marked by critical engagement with rather than investment in Zionist myth and certitude, I have focused heretofore on actors mostly *distant* from immersive Zionism. But Levitah's side note about the Siedlce Hebrew school suggests that the kind of critical and nonmythic engagement with the Yishuv I have been exploring could also be found at the heart of Polish Zionism's *most* ideologically and institutionally robust environments. So too, the aforementioned Druyanov was also struck not only by the new kind of intense mythic Yishuvism he found in provincial Zionist circles but also by the simultaneous presence in those same circles of a much more critical inquiry. Reflecting on his lectures before audiences of small-town General Zionists (*stam-tsiyonim*), he underscored that alongside their desire for some exalting encounter with the Yishuv's achievements, they also hungered for accurate information: "Especially good if the emissary knows the ins and outs of all aspects of life in the Land of Israel even if these are not relevant to his task. They will ask advice of him and he must offer a correct answer."⁹¹ Druyanov found this duality even more pronounced among Tarbut students. Even as he described the myth-permeated sense of the Yishuv as vital antipode to Polish "Exile" described above—a "romanticism" in which the Yishuv (or the Land) "was a living ideal, from which [flows] power and strength to struggle in the Diaspora as well, from which [flows] the ennoblement and hallowing of [Jewish identity] in the Exile too"—he also noted a much more analytical hunger. Echoing the experience of Levitah (from whom he was divided by a vast and fraught ideological distance), Druyanov noted that the questions posed to him by the Tarbut gymnasium students were "sometimes naïve" but "sometimes sharp and penetrating to such a degree that it was difficult for me to respond."⁹²

Druyanov wrote at a moment when Zionist hopes for a reopening of Palestine to mass Jewish settlement seemed to have been dashed once again. He could not know that late in that same year, in autumn 1932, the Yishuv would be reopened far beyond expectations. And when the Yishuv was reopened to Jewish immigration at unprecedented levels, the sort of open-eyed wrestling with the

Yishuv's real political, material, and personal potentials and limits in relation to those of Poland that I have been describing phenomenologically in this section became a stance that could seem pressing for substantial numbers of Polish Jews.

Of course, in the Fifth Aliyah years too there would remain plenty of opportunity for more traditional myth-laden relations to the Zionist project to take root, as manifest in the gauzy romanticism exemplified by this letter from the Polnits He-Haluts branch: "Our *lokal* is beautifully decorated with various pictures that in lively colors tell of life and creation in the Land of Israel."⁹³ But in that same 1932–1935 period, Levitah's, Ben-Asher's, and Druyanov's surprising 1928–1932 experience of facing sharp, informed questions about Jewish life in Palestine would be reported over and over by new Zionist emissaries. Newspapers would intersperse real information about the Yishuv and how to make a life there amid the mythologizing coverage of vitalization and national creativity.⁹⁴ People distant from and even hostile to Zionism, like the Yiddishist scholar-activist and founder of Bin, Max Weinreich, would find themselves thinking about the Yishuv in relation to the wages of dispersion and the benefits of ethnic concentration in a dangerous world. Growing numbers of Polish Jews would begin to negotiate a relationship to the Yishuv *neither* from within the framework of coherent Zionist ideals *nor* the counterideals of diasporism, assimilationism, or Orthodoxy, but out of an emerging conviction—inchoate, but not unthinking—that the Yishuv might be an alternative space of Jewish life fundamentally different from Polish or indeed diasporic existence in potentially decisive ways. They would ask whether the Yishuv might offer the best life chances for Jews under current conditions and should be a central factor in the normal Polish Jew's own considerations about how to try to shape his or her future. And, for some, reflection on the Yishuv would become a pivot for rethinking the Jewish condition itself: Among both Zionists and diasporists, some would articulate a striking separation between the politics of ideology and identity so central to East European Jewish modernity and a chastened political reason denuded of grand visions of self- and world-remaking—and would insist that the time had come to put aside the conflicts of the former for the sober judgment of the latter. However inchoate and internally fissured, this was nevertheless a line of new Jewish political thought in the making.⁹⁵

Notes

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1. Based on parallel searches (July 11, 2017) of Yiddish/Hebrew-letter search terms “Erets,” “Palestine,” “Yisroel,” and “Yishuv” in *Haynt* and *Moment* for the period 1921–1930 on the two databases that can yield quantitative data on Yiddish press coverage, the Historical Jewish Press database (<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/default.aspx>) and the Indeks tsu der yidisher periodik (<http://yiddish-periodicals.huji.ac.il/>). The difference between full-text searching (HJP) and title keyword searching (IYP) yields wildly different numbers of “hits” (some 6,000 “results” for *Haynt* and over 4,000 for *Moment* in HJP; 1,360 versus 1,000 in IYP). However, the key quantitative datum is the fairly consistent ratio of *Haynt* to *Moment* coverage—3:2 and 4:3, respectively.

2. Thus, the Palestine reportage of *Moment*’s contributor Rokhl Faygenberg (Rahel Faygenberg-Imri), who herself grew increasingly aligned with Zionism in this period, focused on everyday life with special interest in the lives of Jewish women and the “new Jewish woman.” See “La’G ba-Omer vanderung: shtrikhn funem alt-nayem erets-yisroel,” *Moment* May 20, 1927; “Di doktorke fun Hebron,” *Moment*, July 1, 1927. From the mid-1920s, *Moment* also had a regular correspondent in Tel Aviv, Yehudah Leyb Vohlman, a veteran Hebrew-Yiddish journalist who immigrated to Palestine in 1925 and published weekly or even twice-weekly pieces on Jewish life there, many under the regular rubric “Vos ikh her un ze in erets-yisroel.” Topics in April–June of 1928 included May Day in Tel Aviv (*Moment*, May 13), “The Extraordinary Pace of Orange-Orchard Planting In the Land of Israel” (May 18), a “Protest-meeting Across the Whole Land of Israel Against the Politics of the [Mandate] Regime” (June 15), and that year’s Passover celebrations “in Our Land” (April 29).

3. Ezra Mendelsohn’s *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) was pioneering in this regard; other older works that attend to this relationship in innovative ways include Yisrael Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-Haluts be-Polin 1929–1939* (Sde Boker: Universitat Ben-Gurion, 1993); Mendel Piekartz, *Hasidut Polin ben sbete ha-milhamot uve-gezerot Ta”Sh-TaSba”H* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1997), ch. 9. More recently, this relationship has been taken up as a central focus of two book-length studies: Rona Yona, “Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim” (PhD diss., University of Tel Aviv, 2013), soon to be a book (and see Chapter 8 by Yona in the present volume); and Irith Cherniavsky, *Be-or shinehem: ‘Al ‘aliyatam shel Yehude Polin lifne ha-Sho’ah* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2015), perhaps the first book-length study built around this relationship.

4. See my forthcoming book *An Unchosen People: Jewish Political Reckoning in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021).

5. Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, “Immigration, Urbanization and Crisis: The Process of Jewish Colonization in Palestine During the 1920s,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 12 (1971): 53–55. How much of a crisis it was is a matter of debate; econometrician Jacob Metzer deems it an “economic downturn.” See Jacob Metzer, *The Divided Economy of Mandatory Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 77; and idem, “Jewish Immigration to Palestine in the Long 1920s,” *Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008): 239.

6. Carmi and Rosenfeld, “Immigration,” 54; Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 112.

7. Yisrael Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-Haluts be-Polin (1917–1929)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 387n69.

8. Hasia Diner and Gennady Estraiikh, “Introduction,” in *1929: Mapping the Jewish World*, ed. Hasia Diner and Gennady Estraiikh (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 6; Anita Shapira, *Land and Power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 173–75, 392n10; Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), ch. 3; and see below.

9. Oppenheim, *Tenu’at be-Haluts be-Polin (1917–1929)*, 390–94; Jacek Walicki, *Ruch Syjonistyczny w Polsce w latach 1926–1930* (Łódź: Ibidem, 2005), 99–108; Liebman Hersh, *Di aliye un yeride*

(*aynvanderung un oysvanderung fun Palestine*) (Warsaw: Farlag arbiter emigratsye-byuro/"Di velt," 1927); Avrom Golomb, "Tsiénizm un palestínizm," *Fraye sbrifn farn yidisbn sotsyalistisbn gedank* 7–8 (March 1930): 199–204.

10. Ezra Mendelsohn, "Zionist Success and Zionist Failure," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 177–79. Here, however, we should note Ezra Mendelsohn's intriguing suggestion that the erosion of hopes invested in Zionist politics in Poland did not necessarily intensify doubts about the Zionist project in Palestine, and that, indeed, for some Polish Zionists, that erosion of local hopes could serve to intensify their Yishuv orientation. Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years 1915–1926* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 330–32. I return to this argument below.

11. Paul Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy from the Foundation of the State Through the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17: "Notwithstanding . . . an economic crisis in 1926–1928, the Fourth Aliya did much to strengthen the towns, further industrial development, and increase the Jewish labor supply in the villages. Some 80,000 Jews came to Palestine during the Fourth Aliya; about a quarter of them left."

12. For one rich exemplification of this through the case of one such post-Fourth Aliyah family correspondence, see Marcin Kula, *Autoportret rodziny X* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007). My thanks to Kamil Kijek for bringing my attention to this book and for his insightful comments regarding its significance; I return to it below.

13. For one of numerous examples, see Samuel Hirszhorn, "Kwestja żydowska w Polsce w r. 1929," *Nasz Przegląd*, January 1, 1930. For scholarly perspectives, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Between the Social and the National—The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918–1939," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 62–63; Kamil Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu: Świadomość, kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017), 250–53 and sources cited therein.

14. David Engel, "Jewish Diplomacy at a Crossroads," in Diner and Estraiikh, 1929, 27–35.

15. Kenneth B. Moss, "Thinking with Restriction," *East European Jewish Affairs* 44, nos. 2–3 (December 2014): 206.

16. To take one example that will resonate in the analysis that follows: the economic crisis of 1926–1927 caused plenty of material damage to the fledgling Ha-Kibbutz ha-me'uhad movement centered at Ein Harod. But its vision of mass Jewish settlement, class restratification, and Jewish self-reinvention via voluntaristic communism underwent a many-sided consolidation. This included its establishment of a special connection to the He-Haluts movement for the training of Zionist "pioneer youth" in the Diaspora, which in turn would come to play an ever more central role in mediating relationships to the Yishuv among many thousands of Polish Jewish youth from 1928 on. Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement* (1992; Oxford: Littman, 2007), 1:170–71 as against 145–48, 150–51, 159. See also, in this volume, Chapter 8 by Rona Yona and Chapter 5 by Ziva Galili.

17. Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1929* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015), xi.

18. Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland*, 332.

19. Among others: Cherniavsky, *Be-or shinehem*; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*; Yona, "Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim"; and Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jaborinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017). Although the latter two are focused on specifically Zionist youth movements—He-Haluts and Betar, respectively—they interpret the explosive growth of those movements in the early 1930s primarily in terms of newly emergent political cultures and identity quandaries among a new generation of Polish Jewish youth more than as moves made within the established space of Zionist ideological traditions and debates.

20. I read Kijek, Yona, and Heller as converging on a powerful new account of Polish Jewish youth culture in the 1930s as a culture permeated by fantasies of self- and world-transformation in the hot-house environment of wrenching economic collapse (Yona) and the intolerable psychic-cum-political impasse experienced by a generation ever more deeply Polonized but ever more aware of the gap between

that felt Polishness and their reception by (other) Poles (Kijek and Heller). This of course is only one element of their rich and wide-ranging arguments.

21. Thus, I am both following Kijek and Yona and with regard to this first dimension and arguing with their emphases in regard to the second. Cherniavsky, *Be-'or shinehem*, 49–79, is also attentive to mythic formulations about Palestine, particularly in the Polish Jewish press, but at the same time she highlights instances of the kind of critical-deliberative sensibility that interests me here.

In response to a helpful comment by participants at a 2019 seminar at the University of Chicago, I also think this argument about the emergence of a ideologically and sentimentally underdetermined Polish Jewish relationship to Palestine may offer both a useful development and a productive critique of the category of “national indifference”—ideological distance on the part of historical actors themselves from “positive” ideological and mythic forms of the nationalisms on offer or imposed around them—as elaborated with particular clarity in Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 93–119. Zahra’s essay issued a twofold call (97–98) for the category of national indifference to be pushed from the margins to the center of East European historiography (on the convincing grounds that it was in fact a large-scale phenomenon albeit hard to see and count) and for the phenomenon itself to be properly historicized, which means above all to appreciate its variety. The analysis of Polish Jewish thinking about the Yishuv outside the terms of Zionism carried out in the current essay seems to me precisely such a historicization. But it is one that marks the *limits*, for the population under study in this particular era, of anything that might be called *indifference* to the nation. In this case, I argue, distance from the sentimental and ideological claims of Zionism coexisted with a *growing* sense of the need to think about how one might do better to join—or might *have* to join—a national project and an effectively new nation-in-the-making as a condition of attaining decent life chances.

22. “Di idishe prese in poyln vegen di tragishe geshehenishen in E’Y,” *Haynt*, August 29, 1929; Eliyahu Dobkin to Eliyahu, Frumkin, and Halpern, September 5, 1929, Collection of the Vaadat hu”l ha-Kibuts ha-me’uhad (hereafter, VHKM), kh. 2–12, m. 2, t. 4, Archive of Ha-Kibuts ha-me’uhad at Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Ef’al, Israel; Urząd wojewódzki w Łodzi, wydział bezp.publicznego, “Sprawozdanie miesięczne nr. 29, z dnia 1-go September 1929 r,” Łódź, September 6, 1929 Urząd Wojewódzki Łódzki (1918–1939) Collection, zespół 166, syg. 2507d, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (hereafter, APL); accessed digitally at the archives of the United States Holocaust Museum, Washington, DC. My thanks to Dr. Zofia Trebącz for helping me comb through these reports.

23. Loveh Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, December 23, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/2/4.

24. In an earlier version of the present chapter, I assayed such an analysis, but removed it here for reasons of space in proportion to the fairly limited insights I was able to derive from my sources.

25. Yona, “Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim,” 175–83, esp. 182.

26. Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, December 23, 1929.

27. Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925–1948* (New York: Frank Cass, 1988), 182–92, 204ff.

28. Urząd wojewódzki w Łodzi, wydział bezp.publ., “Sprawozdanie miesięczne nr. 31,” Łódź, October 12, 1929, 166:2507d, APL.

29. See now Heller, *Jabotinsky’s Children*.

30. Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, December 23, 1929.

31. Kamil Kijek, “Was It Possible to Avoid ‘Hebrew Assimilation’?,” *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 105–41.

32. Alter Druyanov, “Rishme ha-derekh” (a travel notebook), Druyanov Collection A10, f. 9, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter, CZA), Jerusalem, 3–4.

33. Alter Druyanov, *Tsiyonut be-Polanyab* (Tel Aviv: Masada, 1932–1933), 64–65. Druyanov’s reports on his visit to Poland were received at the time as a rare defense of Polish Jews and Polish Zionism in a climate of despairing attacks on Polish Zionism’s fecklessness by other visitors from the Yishuv, most infamously the Zionist “national poet” (and Druyanov’s close associate) Chaim Nahman Bialik. But Druyanov was by no means starry-eyed; he too found much about Polish Zionism’s situation

depressing, sobering, even revolting, and this was especially true with regard to Zionist *youth*. “Rishme,” 5–9. His balanced assessments—which he also recorded in a notebook of impressions (cited here) substantially but not utterly different from what he eventually published—can thus be treated seriously as sociological observation.

34. Druyanov, *Tsiyonut*, 64–65.

35. Nahum [Benari] to kibbutz secretariat, April 23, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/2/4.

36. Oppenheim, *Tenu'at be-Halutz be-Polin (1917–1929)*, 390–97.

37. Duvdavani to Shoshana, April 27, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2/12/2/4.

38. P. Bendori to Histadrut executive, January 28, 1931, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

39. Druyanov, “Rishme,” 12–13, 16–17, CZA A10/9.

40. Vidrovits to Druyanov, January 22, 1933 (Podoloy, Rumania), CZA A10/27/2.

41. During her years in independent Lithuania she affiliated with the Communist “Workers’ List #5.” See her 1922 speech as cited in “2ter Kehiles Tsuzamenfor,” *Nays* (Kovne) February 23, 1922: “We look to the East, because the greatest and most beautiful ideals of humanity are bound up with it.”

42. Ben Shemen would later become famous as a starting point for such members of Israel’s political and cultural elite as Yigal Allon, Shulamit Aloni, Shimon Peres, and Dan Ben-Amotz, and as a fraught site of Jewish-Palestinian memory struggles for the connection of some of its students to the violence and expulsion Jewish forces directed against Lydda/Lod’s Palestinian population in 1948. For a recent overview of Lehmann’s project and Ben Shemen’s history, see Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 101ff.

43. “Briv fun Palestine mit a forvort fun Helene Khatskels,” *Der Khaver* (Vilna) 7, no. 17 (April 1931): 331–32. In fact, why Ben Shemen was not targeted is considerably more complicated than this humane portrait suggests: Hillel Cohen recounts that the police official for the Ramla area, an Egyptian Copt, proactively “assembled the leaders of the surrounding Arab villages[,] warned them against attacking their Jewish neighbors,” and took the *mukhtar* of one village “hostage to prevent an attack on the youth village.” Cohen, *Year Zero*, 30.

44. “Briv fun Palestine,” 332.

45. Helene Khatskels, *In erets-yisroel (rayze-ayndrukhn)* (Vilna: Farlag Naye yidishe folksshul, 1931).

46. Cf. Kerstin Hoge, “Don’t Mention the Language War!,” *Slavic Almanach* 13, no. 2 (January 2007): 146–69. Hoge’s piece is to my knowledge the first and only other work to take up Khatskels’s Palestine writings and includes attention to writing I have not yet seen. Her essay is devoted primarily to arguing that Khatskels’s travelogues’ silence regarding Hebrew and the whole question of the Hebrew-Yiddish language war should be read as a kind of polemical Yiddishist erasure of Zionism’s Hebraist endeavor (see Hoge 158ff). I do not fully understand how that reading squares with Khatskels’s warm treatment of all other aspects of life at Ben Shemen in the rest of this text and the 1931 text. In a larger sense, Hoge reads Khatskels’s attitudes toward Palestine’s (new) Jews as largely sympathetic and surprisingly open to Zionist representations of health, vitality, and rootedness (Hoge, 155–57); in this respect, her analysis and mine correspond up to a point.

47. Y. Lubinsky, “Dos kinder-hoyz in Kovne,” *Shriftn far psikhologye un pedagogik* 1 (1933): 443–50.

48. It is also notable that at this same juncture Khatskels showed special interest in the pages of *Der Khaver* in Jewish agricultural settlement in Soviet Crimea, the other site of Jewish experimentation with large-scale agrarian-communal settlement; this suggests that her interest in Ben Shemen and Palestine may have tended in a more than purely personal direction. It is also worth considering how much Khatskels’s affirming descriptions of children making a new life, complete with fascinating animals, interesting engagements with natural science, and time for reading under shady bowers might have appealed to young readers in the cramped and impoverished Jewish neighborhoods of Vilna, Lodz, Warsaw, or any number of declining smaller towns—and how powerfully, therefore, the very fact that this new life was taking shape in Palestine might have resonated.

49. Kula, *Autoportret*, 9, 16, 325, 327, 328, 331, 334.

50. Levitah to Dear Comrades/Friends, April 8, 1930, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/7/2.

51. Kula, *Autoportret*, 341–42.

52. Ben-Tikvah, autobiography, processed July 9, 1934, Record Group 4, f. 3623, YIVO Institute Archives, New York.

53. *Ibid.*, 19–21.

54. Yisrael Klausner, *Vilnah Yerushalayim de'Lita: Dorot abaronim 1881–1939* (Tel Aviv: Bet Lohame ha-Geta'ot, 1983), 2:617.

55. See the “10 Commandments” of the Bin organization, in *Binishe lider* (Vilne: Vilner ‘Bin’, 1932), 20.

56. Ben-Tikvah, 22–23.

57. *Ibid.*, 23.

58. *Ibid.* Compare with Dr. Max Weinreich, “Ver zenen mir—vos viln mir,” in *Binishe lider*, 14–15.

59. Ben-Tikvah, 25.

60. Ha-lishkah ha-reshit KKL to Druyanov, January 27, 1932, CZA A-10/19.

61. Druyanov, “Rishme,” CZA A10/9, 13–14.

62. [Unclear] to “Heads of He-Haluts ha-tsa’ir in Kovel (Shurah, Aharon, Zeev),” July 22, 1930, VHKM Collection 2-12/2/7.

63. For such a move, see the Bundist analysis of the “careerism” of “bourgeois” youth in He-Haluts in Moyshe Kligsberg, *Yugnt-psikhologye un sotsyalistishe dertsung* (Warsaw: Kultur-Lige, 1938), 284ff.

64. Thanks to Maud Mandel of Brown University for unpacking this set of questions in her formal comments following a lecture presentation.

65. Rakhel Faygnberg, “Prisat shalom mi-Polin,” *Davar* (Tel Aviv), November 3, 1929.

66. The young man’s distinctive hat marks him as a Hasid. On Otwock as a Hasidic sanatorium center, see Ben-Zion Gold, *The Life of Jews in Poland Before the Holocaust* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 111–14.

67. K. L. Frenkel, *Be-ohole tsadikim* (Tel Aviv, 1967), 382.

68. See the 1934 declaration in a YIVO autobiography by a haredi young man active in the Agudah and with no discernible connection to Zionism that the “constant abuse” directed toward him by “NaRa youth” has “awoken” in him a readiness to “travel to Eretz Yisrael without hesitation.” Autobiography 3680, available in Ido Bassok, *‘Alilot ne’urim* (Tel Aviv: Beit Shalom Aleichem/Shazar/Tel Aviv University, 2011), 130.

69. Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, chs. 8–9, esp. 213ff.

70. Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, 233–34, citing a 1922 letter by followers of the Gerer Rebbe in Warsaw: “It was a hard war because it was as though the entire community had been seized by a convulsion. . . . and from the camp of the haredim were lost thousands of souls every day and they joined [the Zionists], and thus we were compelled to save the religion and to lay still greater emphasis on the Fund for the Land of Israel.” See also Avraham Zemba, “Metivta’ be-Varshah,” in *Mosadot Torah be-Eropah be-vinyanam uve-hurbanam*, ed. Shmuel Mirski (New York: Hotsa’at ‘Ogen, 1956), 364.

71. Here I follow Piekarz, who takes sources by Hasidic leaders registering Zionist sympathies and a sense of political crisis as *exceptions* to the generally united front of the Hasidic leadership’s continued opposition to both stances—exceptions that both exemplify the availability of alternative ways of thinking in Orthodox circles and, in Piekarz’s view, register “seismically,” as it were, some deeper but otherwise largely invisible reorientations among Polish haredi Jews. Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, 245–50. Of course, Orthodox theological and pastoral discourse did not necessarily deny that the situation of Polish Jews was by and large getting markedly worse; but whether one framed this as a divinely appointed rebuke to the wayward commensurate in severity with the extent of the straying or as signs of the imminent messianic advent, the prescription was still heightened piety and repentance. For variant instances of the former stance, see R. Meir Simkhe Kohen, *Mesbekh hokhmah* (Riga, 1926–27), excerpted in Moshe Prager, ed., *Le-or ha-emunah* (New York: ha-Makhon le-heker be’ayot ha-Yahadut ha-haredit, 1958), 21–23; and R. Haim Oyzer Gordzenski, preface to *Abi’ezer*, v. 1, in *ibid.*, 26. For the latter stance, see the late 1920s writings of the Hofets Haim in *ibid.*, 1–12.

72. Yitshok Zelig *shalit'a* mi-Sokolov, letter #2, in *Ma'amarim u-mikhtavim* (Warsaw: M. Kopitah, 1925/26), 22. Piekarz's summary of the letter (in Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*) pinpoints these important rhetorical loci, but it seems to me that he misreads the Sokolover Rebbe's stance as much more harmonizing vis-à-vis Zionism than is warranted by the text. It should be acknowledged that the Sokolover would later come to be seen in Orthodox circles as unusually supportive of Jewish settlement in Palestine; indeed his father, the Admor of Pilov, was strongly supportive of Hibbat Zion in the 1880s—a stance roundly rejected by the Gerer Rebbe, to whom he was close, along with most of the rest of Poland's rebbes at the time. Gershon Greenberg, "Orthodox Jewish Thought in the Wake of the Holocaust," in *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (London: Berghahn Books, 2001), 319; Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, 215n24. But it strains credulity to imagine that the letter in question was simply a stalking horse for a hidden pro-Palestine agenda; after all, the clear message of the text was that Hasidic youth were forbidden to cooperate with Zionism, however attractive. Notably, there is a parallel sensibility at work in another of the Sokolover Rebbe's texts from the same period, a pastoral letter that offered dire warning to Hasidic youth against the "poison" of secular art-literature, coupled with a careful delineation of the legitimacy of suitably Orthodox versions thereof—another acknowledgment that an ideological sea change had already begun among Orthodox youth and that this could not be undone, only guided and hedged around. Yitshok Zelig *shalit'a* mi-Sokolov, letter #1 ("Mikhtav le-Agudat Tse'ire-emune-Yisra'el be-Varshah 'al devar ha-sifrut ha-haredit") in *Ma'amarim u-mikhtavim*, 3–15.

73. Duvdevani to Kibbutz Secratariat, [March 26?] 1930, VHKM 2-12/2/7.

74. Duvdevani to Shoshana, April 27, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2/12/2/4. See also Nahum [Benari] to kibbutz secretariat, 23 April 23, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2/12/2/4; "Mikhtavim shel Hayim Ben-Asher, sheli'ah ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad be-Polin (1930–1931)" [typed document collating several letters], subsection "Ha'atakah le-mazkirut ha-kibuts," Novaredok, December 9 [possibly September 12] [1930], Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

75. "Mikhtavim shel Hayim Ben-Asher," Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

76. Duvdevani to Shoshana, April 27, 1929, and Nahum Benari to Eliezer Galili, March 27, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2/12/2/4.

77. "Mikhtavim shel Hayim Ben-Asher," Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

78. Oppenheim, *He-Haluts 1929–1939*, 47. See also Yona, "Nihiyeh kulanu halutsim," 177.

79. "Mikhtavim shel Hayim Ben-Asher," Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

80. *Pinkes fun der shtot Pruzhene* (Pruzana: "Pinkos," 1930), 295.

81. And of course a literary trial of Bontshe Shvayg, the infamous exemplar of the ostensible unresisting passivity of the Jewish working masses indelibly portrayed in the eponymous 1894 story by Y. L. Peretz, was itself more a political-ideological performance of He-Haluts's critique of East European Jewry than a cultural activity per se. Professor Israel Bartal told me some years ago that Bontshe Shvayg trials and discussions were a familiar feature of socialist Zionist youth activism, and indeed references to the work are scattered throughout *shlibim* reports.

82. "Mikhtavim shel Hayim Ben-Asher," Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/3/1.

83. *Mitn ponem tsu zikh* (Warsaw: "Frayhayt," 1935), 7–46.

84. On He-Haluts-Frayhayt in Kletsk particularly, see Eliyahu Fish, "Ha-Tenu'ah ha-halutsit," in *Pinkas Kletsk* (Tel-Aviv: Irgun Yot'se Kletsk be-Yisra'el, 1959); Fish's account is not detailed but broadly supports Ben-Asher's.

85. See my discussions of Yishuvism, Palestinism, and the politics of exit during the Fifth Aliyah period in my forthcoming *An Unchosen People*.

86. Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, December 23, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/2/4.

87. Benari to Galili, March 27, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2/12/2/4.

88. Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, December 23, 1929, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/2/4.

89. Levitah to Dear Friends/Comrades, March 19, 1930, Yad Tabenkin, VHKM 2-12/2/7.

90. Ibid.

91. Druyanov, "Rishme," 12.

92. Druyanov, *Tiyonut*, 65, 64.

93. Original Yiddish letter reproduced in a He-Haluts-Warsaw collation of reports, date unclear but probably 1934, 9 (internal pagination), RG 28, Poland Collection, f. 418, YIVO Archive.

94. Irith Cherniavsky, “‘Aliyat Yehude Polin bi-shenot ha-sheloshim shel ha-me’ah ha-esrim” (PhD diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010), 80–81, 94

95. I take these arguments up in my forthcoming *An Unchosen People*.

CHAPTER 12

Hero Shtetls: Reading Civil War Self-Defense in the Yishuv

Mihály Kálmán

וואכט שוין אויף וואס שנעלער, ברידער,	<i>Wake up now quickly,</i>
	<i>brothers,</i>
שוין גענוג געלוימטע זיין.	<i>Enough being paralyzed.</i>
מיט מכבי-גייסט און לידער	<i>With Maccabee spirit and</i>
	<i>songs,</i>
אין דער זעלבסטשויץ טרעט אריין.	<i>Join the self-defense.</i>
—Yankev Rakhlis, “Ershter lid” (First Song), Kiev, 1919	

Zionist historians in Mandatory Palestine and, later, Israel developed a counter-memory that—to varying extents, and hardly monolithically—served to underpin Zionism’s political project.¹ One of the more significant innovations of what can broadly be called the Zionist grand narrative posited proximity to the Land of Israel and the bond between people and the land as the yardstick by which Jewish nationhood was measured. Such interpretations of Jewish history frequently lumped together and often repudiated eighteen centuries of Jewish life in exile, branding it as an era of passivity, defined by religiosity and persecution. At the same time, these narratives also negated the possibility of active Jewish self-defense in the Diaspora. Passive resistance or martyrdom was depicted as the uppermost limit of the Jewish response to violence and was juxtaposed with the heroism of those who died in and for the purported Jewish homeland.²

Zionism looked for heroes in Jewish antiquity to be emulated as models in the present and the future. Figures of Jewish fighters for independence from the first and second centuries CE were elevated to the status of national heroes; the tragedy of their defeats and deaths was turned into an inspirational example of

struggle for Jewish statehood. The ancient Hebrew heroes' metaphorical descendant, the "New Hebrew" man—speaking Hebrew, and knowing, working, and fighting for the Land of Israel—was held up as the new ideal type, representing the continuity between Jewish heroism in antiquity and the present, after the passivity of exile.³

As several scholars have noted, the Zionist project's reliance on the negation of exile as a hegemonic narrative served to Orientalize and exclude non-Ashkenazi groups from the historically defined body politic of the Yishuv and Israel, with tangible implications for the groups' respective social positions. The more established Ashkenazim thereby turned into gatekeepers of the Yishuv's symbolic, political, and socioeconomic stratification, anxiously guarding this order from newcomers and groups with less social capital.⁴ *Mutatis mutandis*, it is possible to detect a similar mechanism of intracommunal demarcation in the representations of Third Aliyah immigrants and exilic heroism. As we shall see, the new immigrants were, by and large, classified as bearers of the victimhood defining exilic Jewish history, and even when self-defense veterans put forth narratives to the contrary, these were often dismissed as inferior, at best lingering on the margins of—if not outright excluded from—Zionist hagiographies of Jewish heroism.

The building of historiographic monuments to the new heroes of the Yishuv began in earnest in 1911, when a volume dedicated to eight Jews killed between 1890 and 1911 in fights against Arabs appeared. One of the contributors, the Poalei Tzion leader Yaakov Zerubavel, composed a militant prose poem for the volume, proposing a strict differentiation between the value of dying in Palestine and dying in the Diaspora. Emphasizing the passivity and weakness of diaspora Jewry, he contrasted it to the active struggle of Jews in Palestine, reminiscent of that of ancient Jewish heroes, and having a clear purpose: the establishment of a Jewish state.⁵

The first towering hero figure of the Yishuv, however, was Josef Trumpeldor, a hero of the Russo-Japanese War, who went on to organize the Zion Mule Corps of the British Army with the Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky, and was later active in setting up Jewish paramilitary units in both revolutionary Russia and in Palestine. In the Zionist grand narrative of Jewish heroism, his death in 1920 while defending a remote settlement in the Upper Galilee symbolized the beginning of a liminal phase lasting until the Holocaust, during which the Yishuv definitively broke with the passivity of the exile.⁶ A deluge of obituaries, eulogies, and children's stories began to appear immediately after Trumpeldor's death, often portraying him as a Jewish hero reappearing from antiquity. Tel Hai became a site of pilgrimage, and the day of the battle—the eleventh of Adar—a day of commemoration, the rootedness of the

emerging myth in both space and time fostering the emergence of commemorative rituals.⁷

Tel Hai quickly overshadowed Trumpeldor's earlier feats, which appeared as mere background to the fateful day of his death on and for a piece of Jewish land. However, references to his activities in Russia did appear in the press and in published works. In 1921, for instance, *Kuntres* published an article on Trumpeldor's activities in Russia, noting that although his "far-fetched dream" of marching through the Caucasus to Palestine rang strangely to the ears of Jewish youth captivated by the Russian revolutionary fervor of the day, he nevertheless managed to convince some that instead of listening to the "voices of joy heralding imminent redemption," it was a worthier goal to prepare for conquering and working "the Land."⁸ The following year, a collection of articles and documents on Trumpeldor's oeuvre included his letters on the plan to set up a Jewish Legion in Russia.⁹ Former members of He-Haluts—the Zionist agricultural youth movement led by him in Russia—and members of his First Joint Jewish Detachment would also mention his involvement in Jewish self-defense in Russia.¹⁰ Underlining the liminal position of Tel Hai between exile and modern Jewish heroism, former members of the Joint Detachment and of the All-Russian Union of Jewish Soldiers published memoirs covering Trumpeldor's military endeavors in Russia.¹¹

The figure of Trumpeldor, the cultivation of the memory of his life and death, sheds light on the obstacles self-defense veterans of the Third Aliyah faced when attempting to inject their narratives into the emerging ethos of the Yishuv and Zionism. While the transplantation by the Second Aliyah of the deep imprints left by pogroms and self-defense has been explored by a number of scholars, much less is known about the case of the Third Aliyah.¹² In what follows, I aim to explore how the experiences of former self-defense members were represented and received in the Yishuv and Israel, and analyze the efforts to integrate them into the narrative of Jewish heroism. In addition, I provide an overview of the influence of interpersonal networks formed in Russia on the development of Jewish paramilitarism in Palestine.

Revolution of the Mind

The sense of a sea change in the exilic Jewish psyche, and the concomitant turn toward armed resistance, was common among members of the Second Aliyah.¹³ The purportedly unopposed slaughter of some forty Jews in Kishinev in April 1903 and the resistance during the Gomel pogrom in the fall of that year emerged as turning points, followed by the mushrooming of self-defense units in 1905–1906. The mentalities of self-defense activists, revolutionaries, workers, students, and

youth were deeply affected by the experience and news of the armed struggle against the *pogromshchiki*, leading many to perceive self-defense as a return to the Jewish community, disillusioned by what they saw as the lack of support on the part of the revolutionary movement and the complicity of the state.¹⁴

The memorialization of self-defense in the case of the Second Aliyah generation, aided by the firmly established temporal and spatial loci of turning points in Kishinev and Gomel, was less available to the self-defense veterans of the Third Aliyah. The scale of bloodshed and destruction in the Russian Civil War, resulting in an absolute number of victims hitherto unprecedented in Jewish history, also did much to drown the news and memories of self-defense. Thus, the propagation of stories about self-defense in Mandatory Palestine began as an uphill battle, going against the grain of accepted truths and popular perceptions about the Civil War pogroms. During and after the Holocaust, however, the inclusion of Civil War self-defense into the narrative of Jewish heroism received more institutional support, and this continued after the establishment of the State of Israel, when stories of self-defense veterans began to be collected systematically.

The categorical exclusion of the possibility of active resistance and acts of heroism in exile became a source of tension in Palestine between self-defense veterans and other Third Aliyah immigrants on the one hand, and more established Yishuv residents on the other. The self-confidence and sense of honor of self-defense veterans encountered at best a commiserating and at worst a disdainful attitude toward their experiences by the Yishuv. In order to map out the mentalities of the veterans, let us first examine how activists of units that took part in the most successful phase of self-defense, the fight against “banditism” in late 1920 to 1923, saw themselves and the significance of their contribution to Jewish history and Jewish life in Ukraine.

By late 1920, a network of local Jewish paramilitary units eventually encompassing about fifty localities and boasting nearly fifteen thousand members emerged in central Ukraine, the area hit hardest by pogroms. The units drafted local Jews, levied taxes on inhabitants, guarded settlements, and operated against insurgent bands, essentially fulfilling quasi-state functions. Soviet military and civilian authorities, struggling to reestablish state power in the rebellious countryside, cooperated with, relied on, and legalized Jewish paramilitaries, as Jews were seen as more trustworthy than non-Jewish locals on account of sharing enemies with the Soviet state.¹⁵

When the self-defense network began publishing a journal in July 1922—titled *Samooborona* (Self-defense)—the inaugural issue contained a number of articles commenting on the historical significance of self-defense. In one, entitled

"Revolution of the Mind," the author described millennia-old persecutions to which Jews were subjected amid their voluntary inward-turning isolation through religion. Throughout the period of exile, the occasional heroes were burnt at the stake or massacred by Crusaders, and were "the heroes of death . . . and not heroes of active struggle." Rejecting the turning points of Kishinev and Gomel, the author argued that even the pogroms of the past three decades had not brought about a genuine transformation of Jewish behavior, and it "seemed that the broad Jewish masses were doomed to an eternal passive condition, that the great spirit of struggle died in them." Then, however, came the year 1917 and the Revolution:

In the sea of Jewish blood, in the ocean of Jewish tears a great revolution also occurred in the psychology of the Jewish masses of the shtetls and cities of Ukraine. The bent backs were straightened, the downcast gazes flared up with the fire of revenge and struggle, the extinguished soul stood in waiting. For two years, Jewish life surrendered to the flood of and the robbing by large and small bands until, finally, the Jewish youth itself took to rifles. The infamous Jewish cowardice disappeared, the Jewish hand turned into steel and the slogan went around in the shtetls "IF WE ARE NOT FOR OURSELVES, WHO WILL BE FOR US?" . . . And this revolutionary slogan, signaling a great breakthrough in the psychology of the masses, soon encompassed the broad masses of Jewry in the localities most threatened by banditism. The great historical significance of self-defense consists of that enormous psychological breakthrough, in that indeed spiritual revolution that took place among the broad masses of the people. This will be one of the brightest pages of Jewish history, the history of great active struggle for honor, life, and the achievements of the people. The glorious triumphs of self-defense units in the three years of their existence will be that wellspring of living and active energy from which the creative energies of the masses of people will be drawn for further active struggle for a better future for peaceful laboring life.¹⁶

Thus, the article remained true to the Zionist interpretation of Jewish life in exile as one of persecution, and occasional passive resistance. However, the author then lionized the Jewish self-defense of the late Civil War years as a veritable break with millennia-old passivity, locating the beginning of a new era of active Jewish heroism in the shtetls of Ukraine rather than the settlements of Palestine. Another article in the issue titled "Then and Now" went even further, linking the bloodline of ancient Jewish heroes to the new ones in Ukraine:¹⁷

The eternal fugitive has unbent its crooked back. The ever-wretched coward has become emboldened, the blind has regained sight, and with weapon in hand stood at his self-defense. The mad fright has disappeared from the eye of the ever-persecuted beast. In it, there appeared the small sparkles of long-forgotten heroic prowess. The yawning veins have been filled with fresh blood, the muscles of the Jewish self-defense-warrior have been strengthened. . . . No more will the blood of defenseless Jewish “lambs” flow. The glow of fires has disappeared. The moaning of murdered, tormented, raped victims is not heard any more. Watchfully and vigilantly do self-defense members guard their hearths and families, to the fright of the enemy bandits. With tightly closed ranks, with grabbed rifles in hand do the Jewish heroes guard their self-defense front. Honor and praise to them, who write a golden page in our millennia-long history.¹⁸

Similar to the articles in *Samoo borona*, self-defense activists often emphasized the monumental psychological volte-face engendered by the horrific pogroms. They describe an awakening, in the face of mass killings and lack of state authority, to the fact that self-defense was the only means of survival, and to the redemptive, empowering nature of violence. When turning for help to the World Jewish Aid Congress in late 1921 or early 1922, Yankev Rakhlis, the Plenipotentiary of Self-Defense in Ukraine, described this phenomenon as a “breakthrough in the psychology of shtetl Jewry,” who understood that hiding means certain death, and thus instead of dying as “contemptible cowards and lambs” chose to “declare a ruthless war against Ukrainian banditism and with their heroic death put a stop to further bloody fights.”¹⁹ In his memoirs as well, Rakhlis noted that the Jews of Ukraine were “as if bewitched or paralyzed” by the overwhelming horrors that befell them, and were “killed like sheep.” Initially they resorted to hiding, a tool “which they had inherited from their fathers and grandfathers.” Evoking familial imagery to underline his generation’s break with the immediate Jewish past and ties to ancient Jewish heroes, Rakhlis continued:

However, suddenly a new breeze of awakening blows at the jelled Jewish community [*yishev*] in Ukraine and drives out the shocked living dead from their shelter. Over the streets of the defenseless Jewish shtetls suddenly begins to hover a new spirit of self-defense, and shapes a mighty movement. *Im en ani li, mi li?* [If I am not for myself, who will be for me?] . . . Suddenly, the hunchbacked shoulders of the Jewish masses evened out, and in their eyes the extinguished spark of the past Maccabees [appeared], they forgot their fears and went to fight with weapon in

hand against the bloodthirsty antisemites. . . . From the last bloody darkness of the last Jewish pogroms in Ukraine a bright beam of Jewish self-defense has begun to shine.²⁰

Boasting of the systematically organized self-defense that saved hundreds of shtetls, Rakhlis remarked that this was no less than a “colossal mass movement, about which one could, and no doubt will, write whole volumes.” In his view, the self-defense movement’s “great historic service” was not only the change it brought to the psyche of Jews, compelling them to resist rather than hide, but also that it thereby enriched Jewish history “with a row of heroes.”²¹ Indeed, by positing Jewish self-defense activists in Ukraine as the successor of Maccabees, Rakhlis narratively incorporated them into the ranks of Jewish heroes—supposedly inaccessible to exilic fighters. Acclaiming the role of self-defense in rebuilding shtetls, Rakhlis expressed hope that “when all historical materials from that time will be published, then for the first time it will become clear and evident how the Jewish self-defense in Ukraine protected hundreds of Jewish shtetls from bloody pogroms, thereby saving thousands of Jewish lives.”²²

In a similar vein—combining praise of historic mission, psychological volte-face, and of self-defense members qua ancient Jewish heroes—the correspondent of the *Forverts* in Ukraine described how Jewish refugees who had fled from Mokraia Kaligorka to Shpola returned in August 1922, accompanied by a parade of hundreds of self-defense members, and led by an orchestra blowing trumpets “like the sons of Israel in the Land of Canaan, so that the Gentiles tremble. . . . Earlier, it was the Jews who used to fear that they would be brought to slaughter, ran to the Gentiles to hide them, roamed the streets with shrieks; now Gentiles experience the same horror.”²³

To be sure, some retrospectively disagreed with the foregoing evaluations, perhaps as a result of decades of immersion in a Zionist narrative that excluded exilic heroism from the history of Jewish heroism. To be sure, it is also likely that the former feats of self-defense in Ukraine might have been eclipsed in the minds of veterans by Israel’s War of Independence. Interviewed in May 1956, the journalist Dan Pines, former member of He-Haluts and the Ekaterinoslav self-defense unit, stated that “it is not possible to speak of a ‘self-defense movement’ in Ukraine,” as only a few localities excelled in resistance.²⁴ In 1949, Nahum Shadmi, who had fought in the Odessa self-defense, recalled that ever since hearing about self-defense as a child during the pogroms of 1903–1906 it was his dream “to be strong, muscular, not to be afraid of pogromshchiki and to beat with a heavy stick in your hand.” However, even though he became a self-defense member and had a chance to punish pogromshchiki, he felt that “as a human being and as a Jew I remained humiliated,” and longed to emigrate “to get rid of this

accursed feeling of ridiculed and persecuted existence.”²⁵ Not content with a temporary sense of security, he was convinced that “the Jew in the Diaspora has no standing, and everything has to be done in order to find a way for him to be rooted in a Jewish homeland.”²⁶ Demarcating self-defense in exile from that in “the Land,” Shadmi recalled that he had “thought already in the Diaspora that the issue of self-defense in Palestine is completely different. I could not explain it at that time, but I knew for sure that we are dealing with a mighty, large, and rich issue that blends the pioneering spirit’s devotion to building with the readiness to defend.”²⁷

In 1950, similar sentiments were expressed by Yitzhak Sadeh, formerly a volunteer in Trumpeldor’s Joint Detachment and later a Red Army commander. Acknowledging that Jews had served successfully in various armies, that self-defense in Russia was “the first independent Jewish military activity,” and that Hashomer had its origins in the Gomel self-defense group, Sadeh at the same time categorically stated that “the Jewish people in the Diaspora did not have its own military history. . . . The *Jewish* military history in modern times is written only in Palestine. . . . Even self-defense in Russia, whose influence was substantial on the lives of Jews in the Diaspora, on supporting national and human consciousness, did not ‘make history’; such a thing happened only in Palestine.”²⁸

The Yishuv Pogrom Survivors, and Self-Defense Veterans

Similar to earlier violent encounters with Arabs, when in 1920–1921 attacks against Jews took place in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tel Hai, Rehovot, Petah Tikva, Hadera, and other towns and cities, the Jewish press in the Yishuv was rife with articles comparing them to East European pogroms in general and Kishinev in particular. Anti-Jewish violence in the Yishuv appeared to undermine Zionism’s claim of being able to ensure the safety of Jews. Adding to the validity of such comparisons was the attitude of the British authorities, who not only failed to prevent anti-Jewish violence but arrested members of Jewish self-defense units.²⁹ Nahum Shadmi, a former member of the Odessa Jewish Combat League (*Druzhina*), experienced a resurgence of traumatic memories when he was recruited to the Haganah by the prominent veteran of 1905–1906 self-defense groups (and mother of Yitzhak Rabin) Roza Kohen.³⁰ A new immigrant living in an immigrants’ home in Haifa, Shadmi was called to the administrative office, where he and two Haganah members listened as Kohen described the recent attacks in detail, after which she invited him to join the Haganah. Shadmi recalls being shocked, wondering if “the pogroms and the helplessness we knew in Russia continue to haunt us even here, in our land?” He agreed to join at once and, since he had combat experience, Kohen appointed him commander.³¹

The resurfacing of memories of pogroms amid violent attacks against Jews in Palestine likely contributed to the emergence of the conflict of perceptions between self-defense veterans and earlier immigrants. While the Third Aliyah came to be perceived as a youthful, pioneering, activist component of the Yishuv, at the time of their arrival its members were seen quite differently. The Jewish press in Palestine reported regularly on the pogroms, often publishing accounts received from Ukraine.³² These frequently described in gory detail the sadistic methods of the pogromshchiki and the torments and slaughter of Jews, propelling the issue of pogroms into the public scene. New immigrants both spread news of the bloody events in Ukraine and themselves became the subjects of press reports that routinely described them as hapless refugees fleeing the pogroms.³³

The putative psychological and physical frailty of pogrom survivors worked against them: While civic organizations in the Yishuv reacted with an outpouring of solidarity, protesting against pogroms and raising funds for victims, the Zionist leadership worked tirelessly to stem the tide of immigration, forfeiting the Zionist maxim that Palestine would act as a safe haven for Jews. Wary of the economic consequences of mass immigration, chairman of the Zionist Executive Nahum Sokolow and president of the World Zionist Organization Chaim Weizmann ignored demands from others in the Yishuv to open the gates of the country, and lobbied successfully to decrease the immigration quota from eighty thousand to a mere one thousand. Weizmann in particular was opposed to admitting pogrom survivors, whom he considered useless for the purpose of developing the country; thus, immigration bureaus outside of Palestine were instructed to examine the physical and mental state of immigrant hopefuls—as well as their Zionist convictions and sense of self-respect.³⁴

While news about the pogroms regularly appeared on the pages of the Yishuv press, reports on self-defense in Ukraine were few and far between—and also often belated and incorrect.³⁵ Even when they were more accurate, however, journalistic accounts were often hardly conducive to shaping a favorable image of self-defense in Ukraine. *Doar ha-yom* covered the arrest and execution of the Odessan self-defense commander Averbukh by the Bolsheviks.³⁶ Similarly, the Ahdut ha-avoda party's journal *Kuntres* reprinted articles from the Odessan *Evreiskaia mysl'* on the fallen self-defense commanders of Odessa and Golovanevsk—both killed off duty.³⁷ The same journal also reprinted an article from the *Forverts* on Jewish units in the Red Army and the defense of Orinin, where a combined Jewish-Red unit defeated a much larger Cossack unit, only to learn about a week later that the troops had returned and attacked the town.³⁸ Similarly, in a 1921 volume dedicated to Yosef Haim Brenner, killed during the Jaffa riots earlier that year, a veteran of the Second Aliyah reported on the victories of self-defense groups in Ukraine in 1919—and on their demise in the face of regular military

units they were unable to withstand. As the author claimed, many Jews showed only passive resistance, submitting to their fate without even trying to hide from pogromshchiki, and in some cases exhausted self-defense units also surrendered instead of putting up a fight.³⁹

Unlike in the United States, the Jewish press in Palestine seems to have fallen silent about Jewish self-defense; after the riots of 1920–1921, the Yishuv was preoccupied with “licking its wounds,” and paid little attention to the troubles of Jews in Ukraine, where the waves of pogroms subsided.⁴⁰ In addition, the narrative of diasporic heroism fit uneasily with the Zionist master narrative of the day, and thus the triumphs of self-defense units against bands of pogromshchiki between late 1920 and the end of 1923 remained unmentioned. Interest in the pogroms flared up after the assassination of Symon Petliura by Scholem Schwarzbard in May 1926, and it was in this context that the history of Gorodishche—and one of the most favorable treatments of self-defense—appeared in the Yishuv press.⁴¹ The anonymous article described how the Boguslav self-defense unit halted a raging pogrom in Gorodishche in September 1920, prompting survivors to crawl out from hiding, who then “kissed the rifles of the self-defense, of the Jewish heroes who rushed like angels from heaven to save their brethren.” The article underlined the significance of the “heroes of Boguslav” as a model for self-defense units that sprung up in Ukraine, even “in small shtetls, in which there were Jewish youth, in whose veins the blood of Bar Kokhba and Judah Maccabee flowed.” In addition to linking Jewish heroism in Ukraine and ancient Israel, the author also pointed to the purposefulness of acts of heroism, arguing that had it not been for the self-defense units, there would have been three times as many victims. However, the article nuanced the heroic image of exilic Jewish youth by remarking that although they flocked to self-defense units willingly, many were “stooped, having just left the yeshiva and the Gemara, frail and weak,” and had to be turned away.⁴²

Former self-defense activists who took pride in risking their lives to defend their communities found a gaping disconnect between their own self-perception and the Yishuv’s image of their immediate past. Thus, the personal motives of the newcomers to boost their social standing on account of their combat experience were combined with a newfound urge to eulogize self-defense in order to inscribe it into the consciousness and collective memory of the Yishuv—and into the Zionist master narrative—by offering a counternarrative to the image of defenseless Diaspora Jewry and to that of weakling pogrom refugees. Their efforts were likely also spurred on by immigrants of the Third Aliyah—and He-Haluts members in particular—investing large effort into propaganda and education devoted to shaping the image of a pioneering aliyah, and indeed leaving

a deep imprint on both popular imagination and historiography.⁴³ Self-defense veterans, for their part, did not want to be left out. By staking a claim to heroism, former self-defense activists were not only intent on elevating themselves to a position within the history of Jewish heroism, but often even suggested that—contrary to a Zionist narrative of negating the exile—the horrors they had faced and the level of fearlessness and self-sacrifice they had exhibited dwarfed the experiences of the Yishuv with Arab violence.

Due in part to this attitude, self-defense in the Diaspora became the subject of some debate within the Haganah itself, especially surrounding the self-defense unit in Boguslav, which by 1921 had become one of the largest units, with more than a thousand men, and the center of the self-defense network. Apart from the aforementioned 1926 article, the episode of saving Gorodishche was also published by Alter Druyanov in the 1923 issue of his ethnographical journal *Reshumot*—published first in Odessa and then in Tel Aviv—which included an account of a Boguslav self-defense activist.⁴⁴ A point of pride and a turning point in the history of self-defense, the story of Boguslav or Gorodishche does not seem to have been well known in the Yishuv, although it was publicized in the French and American Jewish press.⁴⁵ It was also immortalized in 1921 by Peretz Markish's dirge *Di kupe* (The mound).⁴⁶

The journal of the Tel Aviv Haganah branch, *Al ha-mishmar* (On guard), was published in 1927–1928 and carried a number of articles devoted to self-defense in Ukraine. The handwritten publication was passed around among Haganah members, read at secret gatherings, and also sent to the Haifa and Jerusalem branches.⁴⁷ Given that almost all of the issues of the publication seem to have included articles on self-defense in Ukraine, it is fair to assume that a conscious editorial policy, combined with the presence of self-defense veterans in the Haganah and their desire to share their stories, came together to form the journal's mission to educate Haganah activists about exilic self-defense during the Civil War.⁴⁸

Al ha-mishmar's second issue reprinted a story from the *Forverts* on the saving of Gorodishche.⁴⁹ The next issue included a long article by a young Jew from Boguslav, who as a child had witnessed the heroic fight of the self-defense unit of his hometown against a multi-thousand-strong band of insurgents in April 1920.⁵⁰ A reader's letter published in response to these articles sheds light on the ignorance of the Yishuv public—including those potentially most interested—about self-defense in the Diaspora, but also on the readiness to bend their perceptions in light of new information. The Haganah member writing to the newspaper expressed his surprise over the fact that the name of Boguslav—a city he had first heard about from *Al ha-mishmar*—appeared in nearly all issues of the journal. As he wrote:

I heard with interest about these cases, and my heart is joyful on account of their heroism. But deep below all of this, pain and scorn have penetrated my soul. . . . On the territory of all of large Ukraine there are hundreds of Jewish locales, cities and villages with Jewish residents, and in all these localities the soil of Ukraine absorbed Jewish blood, spilt without any resistance. . . . The daughters of Israel fell without protest, entire communities were burnt down . . . the sons of Israel went like sheep to the slaughter, and there has not arisen a hero . . . to awaken the weaklings and organize them to defend themselves. A writing of shame was put on our backs, and on the backs of the entire Jewish people: cowards, weaklings, good-for-nothings. Then rose the heroes of Boguslav, and proved that there is still a great brave heart among us, heroism nests in us, and we will repay blood with blood. [But t]he heroism of the people of Boguslav highlighted even more our deficiency, the crookedness of our soul, our servility. Hundreds of communities were slaughtered, and only Boguslav defended itself! And to our long chain: Modiin, Jerusalem, Betar, Masada, and Tel Hai another strong link was attached: Boguslav.⁵¹

The stories of heroism brought the author to include Boguslav among the row of cities, ancient and modern, that provided the narrative linkage of Jewish heroism between antiquity and the present. Thereby, he subverted—or at least modified—the Zionist master narrative, weaving exilic Jewish heroism into the imaginary thread stretching between ancient and contemporary Jewish heroism in Palestine, placing the activists of the Boguslav unit on a par with Bar Kokhba as well as Trumpeldor. Since the focus on Boguslav led him—and likely many others—to believe that this town was a singular case, the journal continued to publish recollections on Civil War self-defense, in order to establish diasporic heroism as a manifestation of Jewish heroism worthy of attention, acknowledgment, and even admiration.⁵² Self-defense veterans, however, were also intent on addressing a broader Yishuv public—beyond the Haganah—with their stories of heroism.

Public Remembrance

As Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan observe, after World War I, familial mourning was often extended to the fictive, adoptive, functional kin of veterans associations and other public communities. These, in turn, acted as agents of remembrance, upon which public and national commemorations drew, thereby incorporating individual experiences through the filter of civil society.⁵³ Throughout Europe, Jewish veteran organizations set similar goals, serving as an avenue for publicizing veterans' stories.⁵⁴ Self-defense veterans arriving in Palestine,

however, could lay no claim to having defended the Land of Israel, and sought legitimacy in touting their defense of Jews in the Diaspora, ascribing a historic significance to self-defense as a vehicle of a Jewish revolution replacing passivity with active heroism. Due to the lack of a formal organization of self-defense veterans, the publication of histories of self-defense during the Civil War was initially the result of individual efforts by former participants.

In Palestine, cultural Zionists in particular engaged in compiling anthologies, selecting and arranging materials to serve the national narrative, their works defined by “dialectical thought patterns in which the desire for destruction and erasure coexisted with the demand for continuity and rehabilitation.”⁵⁵ Occasionally, early anthologies also included episodes from the history of Civil War self-defense. Later, publications of political parties with origins in Russia became the fora in which such memoirs appeared, followed by compilations on the history of Jewish heroism and resistance, as well as *yizkor* books—memorial volumes commemorating communities destroyed in the Holocaust. As has been noted, the tradition of commemoration booklets dedicated to fallen soldiers survived into the period of statehood, but not all heroes were equal: Recent immigrants with less social capital were often forgotten.⁵⁶ By extension, it is hardly surprising that it took time and effort to make the recent past of self-defense veterans of the Third Aliyah known and recognized.

Throughout the 1920s, a number of works were published on the pogroms, most notably Eliezer David Rozental’s and Alter Druyanov’s long enumerations of anti-Jewish violence, which included the Gorodishche episode and described a number of other self-defense units, most notably that of Bershad, defeated in 1919. While these authors included sections on such major centers of self-defense as Zlatopol, Smela, Korsun, and Cherkassy, the role of these towns in the self-defense network went unmentioned.⁵⁷ Rozental went on to publish three volumes on the pogroms under the title *Megilat ha-tevah* (Massacre scroll), of which the first appeared in 1927 and the second in 1929.⁵⁸ Also in 1929, Avraham Asher Finshtein published a book titled *Megilat puranuyot* (Pogrom scroll) on the pogroms in Pinsk and its vicinity.⁵⁹ Rozental’s books—particularly the third volume published in 1930—included a number of descriptions of self-defense units, such as those in Golovanevsk, Khabno, and Tetiev.⁶⁰ However, apart from Khabno, these were yet again units defeated for good in 1919, which were not part of the self-defense network.

In 1929, the first significant work on Jewish self-defense in Ukraine was published in Tel Aviv: the memoirs of the Aharon Rozental, commander of the famed Boguslav self-defense unit.⁶¹ Epitomizing the liminal position between Russia and Palestine, between the “Old Jew” and the “New Hebrew,” Rozental wrote his memoirs in Yiddish, and the manuscript was then translated into Hebrew,

with the title demonstratively referring to “Hebrew defense” instead of the usual “Jewish self-defense.”⁶² In the foreword of what the author and the editor hoped was to become the first volume in an entire series of books on self-defense in Ukraine, they justified the endeavor of keeping the memory of Jewish heroism in the Diaspora alive, and consciously juxtaposed their work with those of authors writing in the lachrymose tradition about the pogroms. “Books about pogroms have been written by the dozen in Israel, but the bright page in this story of horrors—the page of Hebrew defense [*haganah ivrit*—remained closed and sealed,” began the foreword. In the view of the authors: “The main goal of the massacre scrolls [*megilot ha-tevah*—clearly referring to Rozental’s work bearing that title] was to denounce in front of humanity the criminal acts and horrors of the murderers and pogromshchiki, and leave them as a memorial for the shame of the world. But our honor and the honor of the many fallen demands from us to also make visible all the activities of resistance to pogroms and violence, the heroic acts and self-sacrifice in these cases, on the part of organized groups and individuals from [the community of] Israel in various places.”⁶³

The book might have put to shame many a Haganah member as it described the development of the Boguslav unit from a poorly armed night guard into a well-organized self-defense unit with hundreds of members, resisting the attacks of even multiple-thousand-strong armed formations, and defending the Jews of nearby localities. Rozental also described to his readers how the Boguslav unit—similarly to other self-defense units in Ukraine—took up quasi-state functions such as taxation, jurisdiction, administration—and, of course, conscription. As Rozental emphasized, the city was seen as a “Jewish republic,” both by its own inhabitants and by those of the surrounding localities. While self-declared village or city republics were not an uncommon phenomenon during the Civil War in Ukraine, Rozental no doubt was also mindful of the significance of this episode as one pointing to the linkage between Jewish militancy, power, and sovereignty that he and other former self-defense activists had already managed to create in exile.⁶⁴

The book received praise in the Histadrut’s newspaper, *Davar*, the most widely read periodical in Palestine at the time. As the reviewer wrote, it was high time to pay due attention to self-defense, a phenomenon that “attests to the tectonic change that had taken place in the mood, proves clearly that the Jewish man stopped stretching out his neck in despair to be slaughtered, that is, he turned into a real man.” Writing just a few months after the August 1929 riots, the reviewer considered self-defense to be “a factor of recovery, helping to change values, guiding the Jewish public on the path of glorious heroism, and repairing their soul from the defect of permanent fear.” Thus, he advised readers to immerse themselves in this retelling of the past, and use it as an instructional material for the future, thereby presenting Boguslav as a model for the Yishuv.⁶⁵

Another Ukrainian town that was to become a focal point of the self-defense narrative in the Yishuv was the Podolian town of Bershad. With a tradition of self-defense stretching back to 1905, the Jews of Bershad were quick to organize self-defense in the revolutionary year of 1917, and successfully protected the town from pogroms until February 1919, when a Cossack unit captured the city with the help of the Ukrainian police forces that had until then cooperated with the Jewish self-defense unit. Memoirs of Bershad appeared in the 1923 *Reshumot* volume, with one of the two written by Yaakov Midrashi, a former Bershad self-defense member and later author of popular books on the Yishuv.⁶⁶ During the tense spring of 1929, in the pages of *Davar*, Midrashi sang the praises of the heroic commander of the unit, Moshe Dubrovinskii, killed during an attack that had taken place ten years earlier.⁶⁷

In 1935, the association of former Bershad residents in Palestine published an entire booklet by Midrashi devoted to the self-defense unit of the town. In the foreword and later in the book, Midrashi expressed his fear that with the uprooting of Jewish institutions in the Soviet Union, the “millennia-old chain” would be cut off, and there would be nothing to tie Soviet Jews to their forebears or to the Yishuv.⁶⁸ As in the reader’s letter to *Al ha-mishmar* about Boguslav, quoted above, Midrashi proposed to include his own hometown among the ranks of Jewish “hero cities.” Midrashi also described in vivid detail the death of a poor war veteran and self-defense member, identified only as “David the shoemaker,” who made a last stand despite seeing that the militia had fled and the self-defense unit was overrun. “Soldiers do not retreat!” he shouted to his fleeing comrades-in-arms, shooting relentlessly from the machine gun until he collapsed, shot dozens of times.⁶⁹ Along with mass-circulation of stories identifying Trumpeldor by his first name to accentuate his resemblance to ancient Jewish heroes (“Yosef the hero,” “Yosef the Galilean”), and Tel Hai as the origin of the principle “a place once settled, cannot be abandoned,” the parallel with “David the shoemaker” defending his home shtetl in Ukraine to his last breath must have been unmistakable to the Yishuv readership.⁷⁰

Finding a Niche

In the years during and after the Holocaust, the hypercritical attitude of Jewish youth in Palestine toward the Diaspora reached unprecedented proportions, and concomitantly the Soviet fighter—and occasionally even the Cossack—surfaced as examples to follow. Concerned about the lack of familiarity with Jewish history in the long centuries of exile and the total break with the diasporic Jewish past they feared it would engender, Zionist educators exerted considerable efforts to single out heroic chapters of Jewish life outside of the Land of Israel.⁷¹ The

compendia that were published to shed light on Jewish heroism in many cases attempted to encompass two millennia of history, and consequently they devoted relatively scant attention to self-defense in Russia and Ukraine. Nevertheless, a number of such stories found their way into these anthologies.

For about two decades after World War II, heroism and resistance to the Holocaust as a subject of Israeli collective memory and education overshadowed discussions of the Holocaust itself.⁷² In parallel, stories of Civil War self-defense groups, such as those of Jewish heroes, parties, and localities, also made significant inroads into the histories of various diasporic groups. As was the case with individual self-defense members writing about their experiences, the parties and residents of certain localities no doubt hoped to enhance their social capital by commemorating their and their forebears' heroism in the recent past.

The two most significant texts that were included in compendia of heroism were Rozental's and Midrashi's memoirs, referred to as prime examples of histories of Jewish heroism in a survey of Jewish self-defense published shortly after the beginning of World War II.⁷³ Around the same time, the most notable publication within the genre of heroism anthologies, Israel Heylperin's *Sefer ha-gevurah* (The book of heroism), was published with the stated goal of serving as a counterweight to publications on anti-Jewish violence stretching back centuries or millennia—just as Rozental's and Midrashi's memoirs were intended as a corrective to the pogrom volumes.⁷⁴ Published in 1950, the third volume of *Sefer ha-gevurah* was devoted entirely to self-defense and the pogroms of 1903–1906, and, in the introduction, Heylperin noted the personal continuities between the Gomel unit and other self-defense groups on the one hand and the Bar Giora association on the other.⁷⁵ Following in the footsteps of Heylperin, the poet and Palmach activist Gilad Zerubavel published two editions of a literary collection devoted to Jewish heroism. In the first, he reprinted an account from *Reshumot* on the heroic self-defense commander of Bershad, and in the second edition added an excerpt of Mordekhai Ben-Ami's reminiscences on the first self-defense unit in Odessa in 1881, as well as an account of the self-defense unit of Shpola from the Civil War period.⁷⁶ Thus, the stories of Civil War self-defense activists began seeping into general histories of Jewish heroism. Nevertheless, the evaluation of diasporic heroism was far from undisputed.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, prominent historians, including Ben-Tzion Dinur and Yehuda Slutzky, began gathering documents and conducting interviews in preparation for compiling an official history of the Haganah and a definitive account of Jewish self-defense through the ages. The work appeared between 1954 and 1972 in eight hefty tomes—about 4,500 pages—under the title *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah* (The book of the history of the Haganah/Defense), with Dinur as the main editor. Despite Dinur's avowed insistence on

breaking with the diasporic past, his scholarship often held up groups of diaspora Jewry marginalized in historiography as “precursors of national redemption.”⁷⁷ In addition, Dinur’s historiographic paradigm all but equated historical and national consciousness, and considered history to be the prime instrument of nation building.⁷⁸ As a result, unlike most Zionist histories at the time, the work accorded significance to the continuities between Jewish combat experience in the Diaspora and the Yishuv.⁷⁹ In his introduction to the first volume, Dinur even posited that it was the pogroms of the 1880s and the makeshift self-defense organizations countering them that engendered a “diasporic revolt” of Zionism and armed resistance.⁸⁰

Slutzky’s introduction to the volume covering the period of the Third Aliyah was a testimony to his ambivalent assessment of the heroism immigrants to the Yishuv had shown while still in the Diaspora, a struggle between—but also the amalgamation of—a lachrymose concept of diaspora Jewry and a nod to the immanence of Zionist vitality and continuity beyond the Land of Israel. Conceding that, apart from pogroms, fighting in World War I and the Civil War also served as the defining experiences for the Third Aliyah, Slutzky at the same time suggests that self-defense during the Civil War failed to salvage Jewish life in the Diaspora, thereby providing an impetus toward Zionism. He wrote: “Great was the pain, and even greater the shame, and from this feeling of pain and shame emerged the will to escape the land of bloodshed and dedicate all their life forces to creating a shelter for the people, where such horrors would not be repeated. The experience of war inculcated in the Third Aliyah a spirit of military and occupation . . . and in their hearts the realization took shape that the Land, ultimately, will be conquered only by war.”⁸¹

In the chapter devoted to Civil War self-defense, Slutzky devoted relatively little space to the most successful period of self-defense groups, but included references to its parastatal nature, mentioning such feats as mandatory conscription to self-defense units, military success against bands of insurgents from late 1920, and serving as the only force defending shtetls.⁸² In his conclusion, however, Slutzky drew a clear line between self-defense in the Diaspora and Palestine. Although he noted that, contrary to popular belief—internalized by members of the Third Aliyah as well—cowardice was not characteristic of Jews as a whole, he argued:

It [cowardice] was the fruit of its [the Jewish people’s] uprootedness from the soil of the motherland, and as it [the Jewish people] returned to the motherland, thus returned and awoke in it the spirit of ancient heroism. . . . A new generation of Jewry arose then, a generation forged in the fire of war, and in the fire of pogroms, and from among the sons of

this generation the Haganah was built in those years. No doubt the failure of the attempt to form in Russia a Jewish self-defense organized on a countrywide scale and the helplessness shown by Jews in cities and shtetls brought hundreds and thousands to a Zionist-pioneering decision. . . . The thousands of immigrants and pioneers who came from Ukraine brought with them the horrors and shame of the pogroms that were like a burning fire in their souls. The will to erase this shame and ensure that it will not be repeated in Palestine was one of the strongest psychological factors that awakened the youth to dedicate all their time and energy to develop the Haganah in Palestine. To the tradition of “Hashomer” and the “Jewish Battalions,” and to the memory of Tel Hai and self-defense in Jerusalem there were added the bitter memories from the country of blood and pogroms.⁸³

Tying together firmly the Land and heroism, for Slutzky the void between ancient and contemporary Jewish heroism was filled with “horrors and shame . . . blood and pogroms,” such a legacy left no room for heroism through diasporic self-defense. That is to say, the prior service of immigrants to the Yishuv in militaries or self-defense units was of no historical significance per se, possessing merely practical value by equipping the Third Aliyah generation with military training. However, only to the extent that combat experience could be put in the service of the Zionist project did it hold value. For their part, the immigrants were ascribed the image of a grieving, shame-stricken multitude, thus excluding the possibility that, notwithstanding their decision to emigrate to Palestine, they might have emerged from the bloodshed in the Diaspora with a sense of empowerment and victory. To Slutzky, such sentiments could hardly have been located outside the progression of Zionism from diasporic helplessness—or at best futile struggle—toward a land resonant with ancient Jewish heroism, harnessing the military abilities of the immigrants to a historic purpose.

Around the same time that documents were being collected for the *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, the Association for Research on the History of Jews in Russia and Ukraine (Agudah le-heker toldot Yehude Rusyah ve-Ukrainah, or Altira) began gathering documentation on Russian Jewry, with the intent of publishing memoirs, documents, and research articles in their journal, titled *He-Avar* (The past), issued with the help of the Ministry of Education and Culture between 1952 and 1976.⁸⁴ Acknowledging the cultural and political legacy of Russian Jewry within Israel in the programmatic article of the first issue, the association urged every Jewish immigrant from Russia and Ukraine to contribute materials to a comprehensive history of Russian and Ukrainian Jewry.⁸⁵

Already in the second issue, the association put out a call in order to gather accounts and documents on self-defense, and also published leaflets for this purpose. The six signatories of the call included self-defense veterans Yaakov Goldburt from Ekaterinoslav, Yehoshua Albinger from Odessa, Yaakov Midrashi from Bershad, and Yeshayahu Klinov from Golovanevsk, all of whom published or were to publish their accounts in various forums.⁸⁶ Praising self-defense for preventing even more human and material casualties through their self-sacrifice, the signatories argued that the stories of heroism were “a bright page in the history of Russian and Ukrainian Jewry. . . . It is our national duty to collect and concentrate all the historical material, oral and written . . . in order to compile a book of Jewish self-defense in Russia and Ukraine, . . . which was the basis for the organization of the Haganah forces in the period of the Third Aliyah in our country.”⁸⁷ However, the book was never published, and it was only in 1970 that *He-Avar* dedicated an issue to Civil War self-defense. Edited by Slutzky, the introduction to the issue spelled out the need to memorialize “the forgotten heroes . . . to save their names from oblivion,” at the same time adding that “self-defense in Ukraine did not and could not do much, but there was in it a sort of salvaging of Jewish honor.”⁸⁸ The status of heroes was thus accorded to self-defense activists, and their purpose was defined as defending Jewish honor—in stark contrast to what Slutzky had written fifteen years earlier about the generation that knew and brought with it “pain and shame.” Slutzky’s change of heart might have been the result of addressing an audience interested in Russian Jewry, or of a closer familiarity with the history of self-defense, but it is equally plausible that the broadening of the concept of resistance to the Holocaust that developed during these years also contributed retrospectively to his reevaluation of self-defense units’ claim to diasporic heroism.

In the early state period, an additional type of outlet for public commemorations of self-defense was found in party and organizational histories. In a 1947 book on the socialist Zionist youth movement Tseirei Tsion, the poet and Zionist activist Abraham Levinson, who had spent time in Russia during the Civil War, extolled the party’s involvement in self-defense.⁸⁹ However, underscoring the difference between the purposefulness of armed struggle in exile and in the Land of Israel, in a 1950 volume devoted to the thirtieth anniversary of Tel Hai, Levinson praised “scattered fragments of heroism” of Jewish self-defense, which in his retelling led to the realization of the historic dream to live on the “land of our forefathers, in which the warriors of the people and its defenders lived, fought, and fell.”⁹⁰ In 1945 and 1955 the Tseirei Tsion’s Russian bureau published two volumes on the party’s history. While in the first volume only an article on Cherkassy mentioned self-defense,⁹¹ the 1955 volume included an entire section

devoted to self-defense in Ukraine. The editor prefaced the section by noting that dozens of self-defense groups operated in Ukraine during the Civil War, and their members—Zionists of all sorts—sacrificed themselves to save Jewish communities and defend Jewish honor. He hoped that this section of the book would fill a void “in the scroll of heroism of Jewish youth in that bloodbath, a scroll that has not yet been written in its entirety.”⁹² One of the pieces included an episode highlighting how self-defense could adorn the history of the party. The author, a Tseirei Tsion member and self-defense activist in Khmelnik, convinced the Jewish community not to allow the self-defense unit to be turned into a Red unit, despite the demands of local Bolsheviks and a Red commander, who were supported by the General Zionists and Poalei Tsion.⁹³

In other works on groups to which self-defense veterans belonged, editorial intentions remain unclear. For instance, a two-volume, 950-page edition of a book about the Third Aliya, published in 1964 and edited by Yehudah Erez, contains only passing references to self-defense during the Civil War.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, an anthology by the socialist Zionist party published a year earlier and edited by the same Yehudah Erez—a Red soldier during the Civil War—included a number of memoirs about some of the strongest units of the self-defense network, with one author remarking on the “great fermentation of Jewish youth who preferred to die a hero’s death in fighting pogromshchiki to being brought like sheep to the slaughter.”⁹⁵

In the 1950s, Israel Trivush, organizer and deputy chairman of the Odessa self-defense group of 1905 and leader of the Zionist organization and member of the City Duma in Civil War Odessa, published a series of articles on the history of Odessan self-defense in the Revisionist newspaper *Herut*. Just two years after the establishment of the State of Israel, he was one of the first to directly link self-defense in Ukraine to the genesis of the Israeli Defense Forces. As he wrote, “The defense [or the Haganah] in the Land of Israel was not something detached from the realities of Jewry in the Diaspora, but blood from the blood and flesh from the flesh of the Jewish masses in Russia, with Odessa at its head.”⁹⁶ Although Odessa had served as an inspiration and hub for self-defense activities for much of the Civil War, Trivush seems to have been the first to publish more substantially about the Odessa Jewish Combat Druzhina. As we shall see, it was no accident that he did so in a Revisionist organ, given how the legacy of the Druzhina made itself felt at particular junctures.

Apart from works about organizations and parties, publications about localities also acted as important platforms. As we have seen, Midrashi’s booklet on the Bershad unit appearing in 1935 was one of the earliest self-defense memoirs published by a community of immigrants sharing a hometown in Ukraine. In another early case of locality-based inclusion, a former self-defense member published

his memoirs on the Lutsk unit in *Yalkut Vohlin* (Anthology of Volhynia), a journal dedicated to publishing memoirs and documents from Volhynia.⁹⁷ Between the 1950s and the 1970s, *yizkor* books commemorating communities destroyed by the Holocaust proliferated, and many of them included memoirs on self-defense during the Civil War.⁹⁸ Because these books were published approximately forty to sixty years after the outbreak of World War I, which had halted Jewish emigration, it is likely that many of the *yizkor* books' editors made aliyah during or after the Civil War, and had either personally witnessed the activities of self-defense units or at least learned about them at the time. This, in turn, might have contributed to their willingness to include the memoirs of self-defense veterans in the collections.⁹⁹

Personal Networks and the Legacy of Self-Defense

Following the British occupation of Palestine, a debate regarding the continued existence of the Jewish Battalions of the British Army erupted in the Yishuv. While Jabotinsky became the foremost proponent of organizing the battalions into a regular Jewish army, the mainstream of the labor movement expressed aversion to militarism, and instead envisioned a popular militia as the appropriate form for the Yishuv's armed forces.¹⁰⁰ This fault line continued to define the disagreements between Labor and Revisionist Zionists' attitudes toward militarism and the use of force in the interwar years. In this context, self-defense veterans, on the one hand, became vehicles of transmitting a tradition of paramilitarism from the (former) Pale to Palestine, which stood in opposition to regularization. On the other hand, veterans' preferences for forms of military organization were often bifurcated in accordance with their political sympathies. A number of veterans of the Odessa Druzhina, for example, signed on eagerly to Jabotinsky's idea of a regular, standing army complete with military symbols and rituals.

Haganah activists welcomed the Third Aliyah, seeing it as the "main human reservoir" of the organization.¹⁰¹ In contrast to his former comrades-in-arms discussed below, Yohanan Ratner, a commander of the Odessa Druzhina, did not side with Jabotinsky's militarism. Instead, he became one of most prominent theoreticians of the Haganah and the first leader of its National Command in 1938. In his numerous presentations on military theory, he often evoked his experiences in Russia: Speaking at a seminar of the United Kibbutz Movement in August 1937, Ratner argued that although there was no countrywide self-defense in Russia, the units of some larger towns compared favorably to the Haganah, which—unlike the Druzhina—conducted its training clandestinely, and therefore with limited efficacy.¹⁰² Shaped by his experience with urban warfare in

Odessa, Ratner nevertheless considered it essential to break with certain aspects of self-defense in Russia; rather than defending houses or city quarters, he proposed that the Haganah be trained for fighting on a battlefield.¹⁰³

Outlining the development of the Revisionist Irgun paramilitary in May 1944, Ratner pointed out that the organization fed on three distinct traditions: the Jewish Battalions and paramilitaries in Palestine, the Russian self-defense, and the Red Army. Representatives of the latter lineage, Ratner stated, “brought with them unorthodox methods,” based on their experience of the Civil War, and also shaped the development of the Haganah.¹⁰⁴ While praising former members of the Jewish Battalions for their meticulousness and practicality, Ratner pointed out that those “educated in Eastern Europe, and in particular in the Russian Civil War, or in Polish or Russian self-defense organizations . . . were much more dependent in their former lives as military men on military improvisation.”¹⁰⁵

In his memoir, Ratner suggested that the flexibility, off-the-cuff informality, and democratic spirit of the Haganah were derived from the wellspring of self-defense in Russia. While extolling the deep-rooted military thinking and the respect for traditions and values inculcated by the British Army, he also noted that it was precisely these qualities that often prevented its veterans from employing creative vision and adapting to the tasks at hand. Veterans of the Russian Civil War, on the other hand, had lost respect for regular armies, turning into experts of improvisation and derring-do. In Ratner’s view, Yitzhak Sadeh served as the main medium for transplanting this tradition to a circle of pupils who rose to great fame, such as Yigal Allon, Shimon Avidan-Givati, Moshe Dayan, and Yitzhak Rabin. As a veteran of both the tsarist army and Jewish self-defense, Ratner himself felt an affinity with both groups.¹⁰⁶

Ratner’s unflinching interest in military theory acquired in the Russian Imperial Army became a factor in perpetuating the link to Russia.¹⁰⁷ According to Nahum Shadmi—Ratner’s former comrade-in-arms in the Odessa Druzhina—during an advanced Haganah training course in early 1934 Ratner lectured on military strategy, and the participants spent entire nights reading Russian military literature, translating it into Hebrew, and pondering its possible adaptations to and applications in local conditions. During the same course—demonstrating the aversion to formalities underlined by Ratner—Shadmi passionately argued to Haganah commanders against formation training and drills, suggesting that they concentrate solely on field exercises.¹⁰⁸

While Ratner spoke French, English, German, and Russian and was an ardent student of military theory in these languages, it was Yitzhak Sadeh who excelled in shaping tactics on the ground, establishing the *nodedet* patrol unit,

the FO"Sh (*pelugot sadeh*, Field Companies, or Sadeh's Companies), and the Palmach (*pelugot mahats*, Shock Troops) elite force. True to the tradition of self-defense and partisan warfare, in his book on the innovations of the Palmach, Sadeh criticized doctrinaire, unimaginative approaches to and blind borrowing of military methods. Instead, he propagated the application of mobile, versatile, partisan-like tactics.¹⁰⁹ As he frequently recounted, he had practiced and internalized this approach while serving as a commander in the Red Army near Pskov in early 1918.¹¹⁰ Yigal Allon, a prominent Haganah and Palmach commander, and later Israeli politician, recalled that Sadeh often spoke about Russia, and his trainees clung to his words in admiration, as his "tales about Hashomer, Trumpeldor, the World War, the Civil War in Russia and about the Labour Battalion acquired new relevance, and they felt themselves as links in a *long and wonderful chain*."¹¹¹

While former affiliations with organizations and parties, or sharing a hometown with other immigrants, helped the inclusion of self-defense stories in various publications, the preservation of interpersonal ties based on the shared experience of self-defense in Russia also shaped the career paths of numerous self-defense veterans. As John Horne and Robert Gerwarth observe in their seminal study of paramilitarism in interwar Europe, veterans of armed forces, amid conditions of imperial collapse and ethnic conflict, became the driving forces behind paramilitary organizations. Often fueled by veterans' sense of defeat or shame, as well as by their need to carve out avenues for social advancement, the comradery that they had forged in the trenches survived and was remobilized into paramilitary organizations after the war.¹¹² Similar processes can be observed both with regard to the Haganah and the Irgun.

A former member of the Odessa Druzhina, Avraham Berman, was recruited in the following way: traveling by train from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 1922, he was noticed by the Jerusalem Haganah commander Zekharyah Urieli (Zekhar), himself a former self-defense activist. When Urieli saw that Berman was reading a book in Russian, he struck up conversation, and as he found out that Berman had also been a self-defense activist, recruited him to the Haganah.¹¹³ Avraham Ben-Ziv, another former *druzhinnik* and later member of the Odessa Group, joined the Haganah, and in January 1925 he signed up for its first officers' course in Haifa. Graduating with distinction, he was put in charge of a unit, and between 1925 and 1929 sat on the Admissions Committee of the Haifa Haganah.¹¹⁴ Zeev Brodski, a former self-defense activist in a village near Kishinev, joined the Haganah for some time in 1923, and reapplied in Haifa in 1926, during the tenure of Ben-Ziv on the Admission Committee. He was admitted despite the initial resistance of Yaakov Pat, the Haifa Haganah commander, who warned him of the

dangers of serving in the Haganah, but Brodski managed to convince Pat that this was nothing new for him.¹¹⁵ Some self-defense activists obtained letters of reference praising their military talents and self-sacrifice before departing to Palestine, as did the Boguslav and Odessa commanders, Rozental and Yankelevich, and the founder and committee chairman of the Zlatopol unit, Itskhak-Zelig Medvedovskii.¹¹⁶

The most salient example of the significance of personal connections was the Odessa Group of Revisionist-leaning former members of the Odessa Druzhina. Writing in the Paris *Rassvet* (edited by Jabotinsky) in 1924, Grigorii Vainshtein, the industrialist-philanthropist benefactor of the Odessa Druzhina, praised the unit's singular achievements in instilling discipline and organization into the practice of self-defense, and sided openly with Jabotinsky's preference for a legal military organization. "One can hardly find in the history of Russian Jewry," he wrote, "a better yardstick for evaluating the development of the Jewish sense of justice (*pravosoznanie*) and sense of self-worth than the evolution of self-defense. . . . The Druzhina *forced* [everyone] to reckon with it as a bearer of the idea of equality of men and a guardian of the inalienable right to life. And in this lies its main and beneficial role in the history of the autoemancipation of Jewry."¹¹⁷ Noting the "enormous significance—moral and practical—of even sporadic self-defense," Vainshtein at the same time pointed out that it was the Druzhina's "'militarism' [*voenshchina*] [that] played the decisive role when it came to combating pogroms. . . . An enormous role in this was played, of course, by that suggestive impression made on the masses of the people by symbols of uniforms, and in general everything that reminds one of an open and official organization."¹¹⁸

Along with Vainshtein and Jabotinsky, many former *druzhinniki* shared an admiration for militarism and military symbolism. One of them, Nahum Shadmi, was introduced in 1919 to fellow *druzhinnik* Avraham Tehomi, at the time Jabotinsky's liaison between Odessa and the Crimea. Their comrades in the Druzhina also included Eliyahu Ben Horin and Avraham Ben-Ziv. Following their emigration to Palestine in the early 1920s, this group of former comrades-in-arms came to be referred to as the Odessa Group, and according to Shadmi, they were all inclined to follow the Revisionist line.¹¹⁹ As Tehomi recalled, they corresponded with each other and also held meetings between 1924 and 1928.¹²⁰ The group retained a spirit of activism and camaraderie forged in Odessa, and were intent in leaving their imprint on the Yishuv, be it in the sphere of settlement, military, or labor activities.¹²¹

Along with the former *druzhinnik* Ben-Ziv, a number of Odessa Group members graduated from the Haganah's first officer training course in 1925, and

rose quickly in the ranks. Tehomi became deputy commander of the Jerusalem Area, and in 1929 was put in charge of the city. He and fellow Odessa Group member Avraham Krichevskii were instrumental in implementing the changes based on the lessons learnt during the 1921 attacks and in Odessa: A strong and disciplined underground organization was developed, weapons were bought, and trainings were held in the city's neighborhoods. In addition, Tehomi and his "Haganah Center" unit conducted harsh punitive operations against Arabs.

Not content with what he considered to be the all-too-incremental development and all-too-pacifist stance of the Haganah, Tehomi reasoned that a countrywide military organization had to be formed, and "instead of discipline stemming from understanding, dedication, and camaraderie, there is a need for discipline based also on ranks and military rules." Thus, around this time he suggested that Jabotinsky form another self-defense organization. Being opposed to illegal organizations, Jabotinsky refused, despite repeated requests by Tehomi and Ben Horin, who insisted that the Haganah was unable to provide countrywide defense, and that its opposition to militarism was also a source of weakness.¹²²

After the 1929 disturbances claimed dozens of Jewish lives—most prominently as a result of massacres in Hebron, Safed, and Jerusalem—the Revisionist, activist criticism of the labor movement and the Haganah grew stronger, including advocating the use of violence against Arabs.¹²³ In 1931, after months of tension between his circle and the Haganah leadership over methods and political orientation, Tehomi broke with the Haganah, and went on to establish the Haganah B (or Etzel, or Irgun).¹²⁴ The fracturing of the nationwide military organization of the Haganah was blamed on the Odessa Group. Notably, however, when writing to Slutzky in 1955 as part of the preparations for compiling the *Sefer Toldot ha-Haganah*, Tehomi claimed that the Odessa Group was no more than "a group of friends with a common past," and the split in the Haganah could not be attributed to it, as they did not even have a clear program, nor did they adhere to a common line.¹²⁵

Their Revisionist political inclinations no doubt influenced the Odessa Group's preference for the disciplined, formal military organization advocated by Jabotinsky, but not all druzhinniki signed up to these ideas. As we have seen, Shadmi, the Odessa Group's former member, came out strongly against military-style training methods. Although Shadmi immigrated to Palestine with the help of an Odessan circle of "legionnaires"—followers of Jabotinsky—he refused to join them in Palestine. At the same time, he did become part of the Odessa Group, and the influence of his Odessa years remained crucial to him. As he wrote: "A thought took shape in me already in Odessa, and having proven true, it defined

my life trajectory from then on: the occupation of labor, the occupation of the land, agricultural settlements, and the creation of a rectified Jewish society are in need of permanent protection.”¹²⁶

Conclusion

Just as German Jewish veterans became a sub-subculture of German Jews in the interwar era, with limited claim to service and heroism, so too did veterans of anti-pogrom self-defense units come to occupy a marginal position in the Yishuv's social and historiographic classification of fighters.¹²⁷ Having carried out their deeds in exile and in the service of exilic Jews, their life stories fit uneasily with the Zionist grand narrative.

Initially, information about self-defense was scarcely available to the Yishuv audience, and hence former self-defense activists were lumped together with the mass of oft-deplored pogrom refugees. While self-defense veterans' stories were available to the reading public in the 1920s and 1930s, and in some cases found receptive audiences, particularly within the Haganah, on the whole they were eclipsed by the narrative of pogrom violence. As occurred with post-Holocaust memorialization and historiography in Israel, there was a temporal lag between public interest in victimhood and public interest in resistance. When it came to the Holocaust, issues of resistance and heroism initially overshadowed that of victimhood. By contrast, the burgeoning literature devoted to the pogroms in the interwar era almost without exception skimmed over the topic of self-defense, instead meticulously documenting the suffering of pogrom victims as captured in the recollections of survivors, many of whom ended up in the Yishuv.

Moreover, in line with the classifications of heroism prevalent in the Zionist historiography of the day, historians' public evaluations of self-defense often downplayed its significance, portraying it merely as a sort of dress rehearsal for fighting in (and for) the Land—a *Gegenwartsarbeit* of sorts, rather than active heroism of the old-new type. After the Holocaust, however, came somewhat more flexibility in the criteria for classifying heroism. Moreover, the integration of veterans into Yishuv society, as well as their affiliations with certain groups of fellow immigrants—former fellow members of parties and youth organizations, or associations of immigrants from a given locality—allowed them to publicly commemorate their stories. Later—in contrast to early accounts of pogroms—editors of anthologies on Jewish heroism, of party histories, and of *yizkor* books also increasingly subscribed to the view that the episode of Civil War self-defense was worthy of at least preservation, if not veneration.

Self-defense veterans of the Third Aliyah followed divergent military and—relatedly—political trajectories. Although some rejected the significance of Civil

War self-defense for Jewish history or for the history of Jewish militarism, most continued to view it as a milestone for both—and a defining life experience. For the majority, their identities and military training rested on the tumultuous years following the Russian Revolution, and in order to sustain this legacy, they were eager to remind fellow members of the Yishuv that not only had Jewish heroism existed outside of the Land, but the Yishuv paramilitaries would do well to learn from it. Their efforts often bore fruit, transmitting a tradition of Jewish paramilitarism from the Pale to Palestine.

Notes

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Note to epigraph: Yankev Rakhlis, *Di yidishe zelbstshuts in Ukraine: In di shoyderlekhe teg fun Petlyure'n un farsheydene pogrom-bandes* (New York: n.p., 1926), 46.

1. On the diverging views and historiographical *oeuvre* of this group, see, for example, David N. Myers, “Was There a ‘Jerusalem School’? An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University,” in *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*, ed. Jonathan Frankel, Studies in Contemporary Jewry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 66–92; Yitzhak Conforti, “Alternative Voices in Zionist Historiography,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no. 1 (2005): 1–12.

2. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14–20; Israel Bartal, “The Ingathering of Traditions: Zionism’s Anthology Projects,” *Prooftexts* 17, no. 1 (1997): 83–87.

3. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 22–33.

4. See, for example, ‘Amnon Raz-Kakotskin, “Galut be-tokh ribonut: Le-vikoret ‘shelilat ha-galut’ ba-tarbut ha-Yisre’elit,” *Te’oryah u-vikoret* 4 (1993): 23–55; and idem, “Galut be-tokh ribonut: Le-vikoret ‘shelilat ha-galut’ ba-tarbut ha-Yisre’elit: Helek sheni,” *Te’oryah u-vikoret* 4 (1994): 113–32; Gabriel Piterberg, “Domestic Orientalism: The Representation of ‘Oriental’ Jews in Zionist/Israeli Historiography,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 2 (1996): 125–45; Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), esp. 106–60.

5. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*, Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 72–74; Emmanuel Siwan, “Private Pain and Public Remembrance in Israel,” in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 186–89; Jonathan Frankel, “The ‘Yizkor’ Book of 1911: A Note on National Myths in the Second Aliya,” in *Crisis, Revolution and Russian Jews*, ed. Jonathan Frankel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 191, 209–10.

6. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 33–34, 43–47.

7. *Ibid.*, 41–43, 45–46, 84–89, 138–44; Shapira, *Land and Power*, 98–101.

8. David Kohen, “Bahurim,” *Kuntres* 72, February 13, 1921, 9; republished as David Kohen, “Bahurim,” in *Moresbet Tel-Hai*, ed. Gershon Rivlin (Tel Aviv: Ma’arakhot, 1948), 192.

9. Ch. Fridman, “He-Haluts,” in *Me-haye Yosef Trumpeldor: Kovets mikhtavim ve-kit’e reshimot*, ed. Menahem Poznanski (Tel Aviv: ‘Ahdut, 1922), 201–2.

10. See, for example, two articles, the first published on the eve of and the second on the Day of Tel Hai, both republished in collections on the He-Haluts and Tel Hai: Yitshak Kanivski, “Me-reshit

tenu'at he-haluts be-Rusyah," *Davar* 841, March 2, 1928, 3; Ruvim Rubinshtein, "Ha-'Azkarah harishonah," *Davar* 1455, March 11, 1930, 3; republished as Yitshak Kanivski, "Me-reshit tenu'at he-Haluts," in *Me'asef tenu'at be-Haluts*, ed. He-Haluts Varshah (Merkaz histadrut he-Haluts ha-'olamit—ha-Lishkah ha rashit shel ha-Keren ha-Kayemet le-Yisra'el, 1930), 101–2; Yitshak Kaniv (Kanivski), "Ha-Yamim ha-rishonim shel he-Haluts be-Rusyah," in *Ha-'Aliyah ba-shelishit*, ed. Yehudah 'Erez, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1964), 1:107–11; Ruvim Rubinshtein, "Yisud ha-Haganah be-Petrograd," in *Moresbet Tel-Hai*, ed. Gershon Rivlin (Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot, 1948), 188–89. Rubinshtein's piece was originally published in Berlin: Ruvim Rubinshtein, "Trumpel'dor v dni revoliutsii (otryvki iz vospominanii)," in *Zbizn' Iosifa Trumpel'dora: Vospominaniia*, ed. David Belotserkovskii (Berlin: n.p., 1924), 119–30, of which pp. 122–26 were republished. See also a reference to the Jewish Legion planned by Trumpeldor in an article by Ben-Gurion: "Tziyonut chalutzit 'o rewizyonistit," *Davar* 2329, January 16, 1933, 2. On Trumpeldor's detachment, see, for example, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Gak, *Iosif Trumpel'dor—chelovek-legenda* (Tel Aviv: Aleksandr Gak, 2006), 54–58. See also my article, Mihaly Kalman, "The Second Judah Maccabee: Joseph Trumpeldor and the Jewish Legion in Russia," in *Jewish Studies at the Central European University*, ed. Carsten Wilke, András Kovács, and Michael L. Miller (Budapest: Central European University, 2017), 8:97–115.

11. Rubinshtein, "Yisud ha-haganah," 188–89; Zalman Gordin, "Trumpeldor ba-haganah ha-'atsmit be-Rusyah," in Rivlin, *Moresbet Tel-Hai*, 189–92. For the texts from which Gordin's article was excerpted, see Gordin manuscript on the process of "ethnicization" of the Russian Army, IDF Archive, Kiryat Ono (hereafter, IDFA) 50/2011/28/6-7; Interview with Zalman Gordin, Haganah Historical Archive, Tel Aviv (hereafter, HHA) 13.2/8-9; Zalman Gordin, "Evreiskie svodnye otriady," *Izvestiia Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Sionistkoi Narodnoi Organizatsii Tseire-Tsion* 11–12 (15–16) (January 28, 1918): 17–18; idem, "Hit'argenut ha-hayalim ha-yehudim be-reshit ha-mahpekhhah ha-rusit," *He-'Avar* 15 (1968): 93–94.

12. See, for example, Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 368–70, 382–83, 394–95; Frankel, "The 'Yizkor' Book of 1911," 197–98; Shapira, *Land and Power*, 69–71; Gur Alroey, "The Russian Terror in Palestine: The Bar Giora and Ha-Shomer Associations, 1907–20," in *Bounded Mind and Soul: Russia and Israel, 1870–2010*, ed. Brian Horowitz and Shai Ginsburg (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2013), 33–56, esp. 33, 53–54. Originally published in Hebrew as Gur Alroey, "Mesharte ha-moshava 'o rodanim gase ruah? Me'ah shanah le-'Agudat ha-shomer—perspektivah historit," *Katedrah* 133 (Tishri 2010): 77–104.

13. Notably, the journalist and political activist Moshe Kats, who was involved in self-defense during the years of the second pogrom waves and spent 1917–1920 in Ukraine, titled his memoirs on self-defense in 1903–1906 *The Generation That Lost Its Fear*. See Moyshe Kats, *A dor, vos hot farloyr'n di moyre: Bleter zikhbroynes fun arum 1905* [A Generation That Lost Its Fear: Memories from Around 1905] (New York: Moyshe Kats yubiley-komitet, 1956); Moyshe Kats, *The Generation That Lost Its Fear: A Memoir of Jewish Self-Defense and Revolutionary Activism in Tsarist Russia*, trans. Lyber Katz (New York: Blue Thread Communications, 2012).

14. Shapira, *Land and Power*, 36–40; Inna Shtakser, "Structure of Feeling and Radical Identity Among Working-Class Jewish Youth During the 1905 Revolution" (PhD Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 189–221; idem, "Self-Defense as an Emotional Experience: The Anti-Jewish Pogroms of 1905–1907 and Working-Class Jewish Militants," *Revolutionary Russia* 22, no. 2 (2009): 153–79; idem, *The Making of Jewish Revolutionaries in the Pale of Settlement: Community and Identity During the Russian Revolution and Its Immediate Aftermath, 1905–1907* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 131–49; Shlomo Lambroza, "Jewish Self-Defense during the Russian Pogroms of 1903–1906," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 23 (1981): 128, 131, 133; idem, "The Pogrom Movement in Tsarist Russia, 1903–1906" (PhD Diss., Rutgers University, 1981), 234–37, 243, 252–53; Yig'el Lapidus, "Haganah 'atzmit be-Rusyah (1871–1906): Reka'ah, mashm'utah, toldot hitgabshutah, u-fe'ulah be-'itor ha-pogromim" (MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2001), 80–82, 92–95; Boris Tarnopolski, "Ha-Pogrom be-Homel bi-shenat 1903: Mikreh mivhan shel ha-yehasim ben Yehudim le-Rusim bi-tehum ha-moshav" (MA Thesis, University of Haifa, 2007), 106–9.

15. There is almost no published secondary literature on the topic; for a rare—and short—exception, see Viktor Ivanovich Gusev and Volodymyr Pavlovych Horshkov, “KP(b)U, evseksiia ta evreis’ka samooborona v Ukraini: Turbota pro klasovu chystotu chy pro zhyttia liudei? (1920–21 rr.),” in *Evreis’ka istoriia ta kul’tura v Ukraini: Materialy konferentsii Kyiv 2–5 veresnia 1996*, ed. Gelii Lukhymovych Aronov (Kyiv: Instytut iudaiky, 1997), 38–39. See also my dissertation, Mihaly Kalman, “Hero Shtetls: Jewish Armed Self-Defense from the Pale to Palestine, 1917–1970,” (Harvard University, 2017), chs. 5–7.

16. “Revolutsiia dukha,” *Samooborona* 1 (July 1922): 1–2. The only extant copies I was able to locate are in the YIVO Archive, New York, RG80/27/2179–2191ob = 2192–2235 = 2237–2259. According to a memoir of a socialist Zionist self-defense activist, his fellow party member in charge of the party’s cultural and propaganda activities also edited a journal titled *Golos samooborony* (The voice of self-defense). It is likely that the journal in question was in fact *Samooborona*. Lavon Institute Archive, Tel Aviv, VII/22/47/10, published as Ben-Tziyon Yitzhar, “Ha-Haganah be-Tarashs’a,” in *Sefer Tz”S: Le-korat ha-Miflagab ha-Tsiyonit-Sotsyalistit u-Verit No’ar Ts. S. bi-Verit ha-Mo’atsot*, ed. Yehudah ’Erez (Tel Aviv: ’Am ’Oved, 1963), 329.

17. On the significance of blood, cementing ancient and modern Jewish heroes, and of both to the land, see Shapira, *Land and Power*, 73–74.

18. “Prezhde i teper,” *Samooborona* 1 (July 1922): 2–3.

19. Memorandum No. 1 to the Plenipotentiary of the All-World Jewish Aid Conference by the Plenipotentiary of Self-Defense in Ukraine, Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, P-10a/VII/2/3/1.

20. Rakhlis, *Di yidishe zeltstshuts*, 6–7, 12. Note that the phrase “If I am not for myself . . .” appears in *Samooborona* articles quoted above, alongside other parallels with this text. The author of the article might well have been Rakhlis himself.

21. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

22. *Ibid.*, 32.

23. A. Kiyever, “A brif fun Ukraine,” *Forverts*, October 21, 1922, 8.

24. Interview with Dan Pines, HHA 112.8/3.

25. Interview with Nahum Shadmi, HHA 59.11/1.

26. Interview with Nahum Shadmi, HHA 66.2/6.

27. Interview with Nahum Shadmi, HHA 59.11/2. Similarly, the former He-Haluts member David Benari concluded that “there was a strong relation between the self-defense and the Haganah, which had learnt much from the experience of the organization in the Diaspora, even if the difference between the two was great and fateful, as was the difference between the Diaspora and the Homeland.” David Ben’ari, “Mi-Haganah ‘atzmit la-Haganah,” in *Sefer Yagur: 40 shanab la-’aliyah ‘al ha karka’*, ed. Ze’ev Rimon (Tel Aviv: Meshek Yagur, 1965), 241; idem, “Me-haganah ‘atsmit le-’aliyah halutsit,” in *Halutsim bayinu be-Rusyah*, ed. Yehudah ’Erez (Tel Aviv: ’Am ’Oved—Tarbut ve-hinukh, 1976), 113.

28. Yitzhak Sadeh, *Mah bidesh Palmah* (Merhavyah: Sifriyat Po’alim, 1950), 14.

29. Shapira, *Land and Power*, 79–81, 96–97, 111–14. Jewish Bolsheviks also picked up on this topic as evidence of British unreliability: Mikhail Pavlovich (Mikhail Lazarevich Vel’tman) “Sionistskaia lozh’ i palestinskaia deistvitel’nost’,” *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei* 23, no. 121 (October 25, 1921): 3.

30. On the Odessa Druzhina, see, especially, David Cebon and Benjamin Rodney, *The Forgotten Zionist: The Life of Solomon (Sioma) Yankelevitch Jacobi* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2012), 24–40; Iaroslav Tynchenko, *Pid zirkoiu Davida: Evreis’ki natsional’ni formuvannia v Ukraini v 1917–1920 rokakh* (Kiev: Tempora, 2014), 48–84. See also my forthcoming article in *East European Jewish Affairs*.

31. Interview with Nahum Shadmi, HHA 59.11/2–3; Nahum Shadmi, *Kav yashar be-ma’agal ha-bayim* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitahon, 1995), 57–58. Witnessing the riots of 1929, Tsvi Nadav—then a member of the Haifa Haganah—also recalled the pogroms. Nadav arrived with the Second Aliyah, but returned to Russia and partook in self-defense in Odessa. See Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1929*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2015), 42–43. On Nadav in Odessa, see Interview with Tsvi Nadav, HHA 35.17; Manuscript by Tsvi Nadav, “Odessa in the Hands of the White Army,” HHA 80/218P/1.

32. Notably, in March 1919, the Zionist Committee of Odessa compiled a lengthy report on the pogroms, warning of the “wholesale extermination” of Jews. The report was sent to Palestine via Istanbul, and published in June on the front pages of *Ha-Po’el ha-tsa’ir* in a mourning frame. “Tazkir she-nishlah ‘al yad ha-Histadrut ha-Tsionit be-‘Odesah le-D”R Y. Kelev be-Kush’ta,” *Ha-Po’el ha-tsa’ir* 15–16, June 13, 1919, 3–5. For the original report, see YIVO RG80/135/10483-10492. See also Gur Alroey, “Mif’al le’umi zeh i-efshar leha’amid ‘al ha-hemlah vecha-rahamim: Teguvatam shel hayishuv vecha-tenu’ah ha-Tsionit la-pogromim be-Ukra’inah ba-shanim 1918–1920,” *Tyunim bitekumat Yisra’el* 23 (2013): 420.

33. Alroey, “Mif’al le’umi,” 420–25, 427–28.

34. *Ibid.*, 426–27, 434–48.

35. For instance, an article in April 1921 reported on a “Russian-Jewish Legion” in Kiev, a city that had not had a Jewish self-defense unit since the one slaughtered by Denikin in August 1919, and no significant one even before that. “Sha’ah ‘aharonah: Le-haganat yehude ‘Ukra’inah,” *Do’ar ha-yom* 3, no. 165, April 7, 1921, 3. For another reference to the existence of self-defense in Ukraine, see Yehudah Levitov, “Hamesh shanim,” *Ha-Po’el ha-tsa’ir* 14, January 16, 1920, 10. On the killing of the self-defense members in Kiev, see, for example, Committee of Jewish Delegations/Comité des délégations juives, ed., *The Pogroms in the Ukraine Under the Ukrainian Governments (1917–1920): Historical Survey with Documents and Photographs* (London: J. Bale & Danielsson, 1927), 218–22.

36. “Bi-tefutsot Yisra’el: Ha-Hayim ha-Yehudiyim be-‘Odesah,” *Do’ar ha-yom* 2, no. 171, May 2, 1920, 2.

37. “Bi-tefutsotenu: M. Dashevskii,” *Kuntres* 23, January 30, 1920, 21, originally M. P., “M. M. Dashevskii,” *Evreiskaia mysl* 18, September 6, 1919, 31; “Bi-tefutsotenu: H. ‘Ostroï,” *Kuntres* 23, January 30, 1920, 21. Around the same time, a similar obituary of Ostroi was also published in the Paris-based *Evreiskaia tribuna*: “Khronika: Geroi evreiskoi samooborony,” *Evreiskaia tribuna* (Paris) 8, February 20, 1920, 9.

38. Shlomoh Blatman, “Min ha-Haganah ha-Yehudit bi-yeme ha-pera’ot,” *Kuntres* 67, February 1, 1921, 19–22. For recollections of other participants of the Orinin operation, see Y. ‘A. Bar-Lewi “Keshe-nitkafim ‘avru le-hatkafah: 40 shanah le-masa’ ‘Orinin,” *Davar* 10333, June 1, 1959, 3; Beryl Segal, “A Jew in the Russian Army During the First World War,” *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 7, no. 1 (1975): 138–39; Y. A. Bar-Levi (Weisman), “Kamenets-Podolsk,” in *Kaminits-Podolsk u-svivatah*, ed. ‘Avraham Rozen, Hayim Sarig, and Y. Bernshtein (Tel Aviv: ‘Irgun yots’e Kaminits-Podolsk u-svivatah be-Yisra’el, 1965), 41–42; Y. A. Bar-Levi Weismann, “Kaminits-Podolsk,” in *Kaminits-Podolsk & Its Environs*, ed. Avraham Rozen, Chayim Sarig, and Y. Bernshtein (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu Foundation, 1999), 23–24. See also “Report on the Condition of Jews in Ukraina,” JDC Archive, New York City, 1919–1921 / Russia, General, 1920 / 232045 / 9, accessed at search.archives.jdc.org, June 16, 2016. On Jewish units in the Red Army, see Joseph Nedava, *Trotsky and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), 110–15; Baruch Gurevitz, “An Attempt to Establish Separate Jewish Units in the Red Army During the Civil War,” *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* 6 (1980): 86–101; Oleg Budnitsky, “The ‘Jewish Battalions’ in the Red Army,” in *Revolution, Repression and Revival: the Soviet Jewish Experience*, ed. Zvi Gitelman and Yaacov Ro’i (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 15–35; Oleg Budnitskii, *Russian Jews Between the Reds and the Whites*, trans. Timothy J. Portice (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 356–405.

39. ‘Aleksander Ziskind Rabinovits, “Megilat ‘Ukrainah,” in *‘Obel li-devarim shebi-khetav*, ed. Mordekhai Kushnir (Tel Aviv: ‘Ahdut, 1921), 35–36.

40. Alroey, “Mif’al le’umi,” 431–33, quote at 433.

41. On Schwarzbard, see David Engel, ed., *The Assassination of Symon Petliura and the Trial of Scholem Schwarzbard, 1926–1927: A Selection of Documents* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

42. “Ha-Tzav’a ha-yehudi’ be-‘Ukra’inah,” *Do’ar ha-yom* July 14, 1926, 2.

43. Barukh Ben-‘Avram and Henry Near, *Tyunim ba-‘aliyah ha-shelishit: Dimui u-metsi’ut* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak Ben-Tsevi, 1995), 43–44.

44. 'Alter Druy'anov, "Shurah shel pega'im," *Reshumot* 3 (1923): 155–57. Druyanov and Rozental both collected testimonies of pogrom survivors in Odessa: Alroey, "Mif'al le'umi," 430–31.

45. See, for example, "Zametki i khronika: Pogromy v bol'shevistskoi Ukraine i evreiskaia samoo-borona," *Evreiskaia tribuna* (Paris) 55, January 14, 1921, 9; "25 naye blutike pogromen in Ukraine in monat oktober," *Forverts*, November 29, 1920, 1; Leye Glezer, "Vunderbare heldntatn fun yidishe kemfer gegn pogromshtshikes," *Forverts*, December 22, 1920, 3.

46. On *Di kupe*, see Seth L. Wolitz, "A Yiddish Modernist Dirge: *Di Kupe* of Peretz Markish," *Yiddish / Modern Jewish Studies* 6, no. 4 (1987): 56–72; Amelia Glaser, "The End of the Bazaar: Revolutionary Eschatology in Isaac Babel's *Konarmiia* and Peretz Markish's *Di Kupe*," *Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe* 2 (53) (2004): 5–32; Amelia Mukamel Glaser, *Jews and Ukrainians in Russia's Literary Borderlands: From the Shtetl Fair to the Petersburg Bookshop* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 131–40; Roy Greenwald, "Pogrom and Avant-Garde: Peretz Markish's *Di kupe*," *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 3 (2010): 65–84; David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 98–101.

47. Mordecai Naor, "The Underground Press in Eretz Israel," *Kesher* 9 (1991): 21e.

48. The only extant copies of the journal (all typewritten) are located in HHA 86/HMSHM/1. They contain the table of contents for all issues, as well as a few articles from each issue. I was unable to locate the originals, which according to the HHA file are stored in the Lavon Institute Archive.

49. "Yeshu'at Horodishtz," *Al ha-mishmar* 2 (1927). The article in question does not appear in the extant copies; most likely it was the translation of an 1920 piece in *Forverts*: Leye Glezer, "Vunderbare heldntatn fun yidisher kemfer gegn pogromshtshikes," *Forverts*, December 22, 1920, 3; see the reports cited in the article on: R-3031/1/12/3-6ob; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow) *fond* 1339, *opis'* 1, *delo* 417, *listy* 182–183, 29 = 184–184ob (henceforth: 1339/1/417/182–183) = Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kyivs'koi oblasti (State Archive of Kyiv Oblast') R-3050/1/47/1-2ob (Report on the Gorodishche pogrom); "Zametki i khronika: Pogromy v bol'shevistskoi Ukraine i evreiskaia samooorona," *Evreiskaia tribuna* (Paris) 55, January 14, 1921, 9.

50. 'Avraham 'A., "Mi-zikhronotav shel Boguslav'ai," *Al ha-mishmar* 3 (1927): 7–8.

51. Sh. Ben-Nora, "Le-'ahar ker'i'ah be-'itonenu," *Al ha-mishmar* 6–7 (1927): 16.

52. See, for example, N., "Im haitah hitnagdut mi-tsideni ba-golah 2," *Al ha-mishmar* 8 (1927); 'A. M., "Ken ha-nesharim' shebe-pelekh Mohilev," *Al ha-mishmar* 11 (1928).

53. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the Framework," in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27–39; Jay Winter, "Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War," in *ibid.*, 40–60.

54. Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 161–63, 182–88.

55. Bartal, "The Ingathering of Traditions," 77–80, quote at 78.

56. Sivan, "Private Pain," 191–93.

57. Druy'anov, "Shurah shel pega'im," 171–84; 'Eli'ezer David Rozental, "Ha-Tevah be-'Ukra'inah," *Reshumot* 3 (1923): 385–91, 427–30, 437–38, 439–40.

58. 'Eli'ezer David Rozental, ed., *Megilat ha-tevah: Homer le-divre yeme ha-pera'ot veba- tevah ba-Yebudim be-'Ukra'inah, be-Rusyah ha-gedolah uve-Rusyah ha-levanah*, 3 vols., vol. 1, 'A–B (Jerusalem: Havurah, 1927); 'Eli'ezer David Rozental, ed., *Megilat ha-tevah: Homer le-divre yeme ha-pera'ot veba-tevah ba-Yebudim be-'Ukra'inah, be-Rusyah ha-gedolah uve-Rusyah ha-levanah*, 3 vols., vol. 2, G–Z (Jerusalem: Havurah, 1929).

59. 'Avraham 'Asher Finshtein, *Megilat pur'anuyot: Zikhronot 'al me'ora'ot Pinsk ve-bevel Polisyah bi-sbenot ha-Milhamah ha-'Olamit* (Tel Aviv: Ha-'Arets, 1929). On reports about and the publication of works on pogroms, see also Anita Shapira, "Black Night—White Snow: Attitudes of the Palestinian Labor Movement to the Russia Revolution, 1917–1923," in *The Jews and the European Crisis, 1914–1921*, ed. Jonathan Frankel, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Peter Y. Medding, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 146; Alroey, "Mif'al le'umi," 429–32.

60. Rozental, ed. *Megilat ha-tevah*, 2:3–16; 'Eli'ezer David Rozental, ed. *Megilat ha-tevah: Homer le-divre yeme ha-pera'ot veba- tevah ba-Yebudim be-'Ukra'inah, be-Rusyah ha-gedolah uve-Rusyah ha-levanah*, 3 vols., vol. 3, Ch-T (Jerusalem: Havurah, 1930), 3–13, 66–74. The Tetiev episode was originally published by Rozental as Eliezer Doved Rozental, *Tetyeuer kburbn* (New York: Amerikaner forsheteyershaft fun alruslenderishn yidishn gezelschaftlikhn komitet [Yidgezkom], 1922), 6–21. The story of Khabno was republished from M. Libes, “Kamchatka' Kievskoi gubernii,” in *Evreiskoe mes-techko v revoliutsii*, ed. Vladimir Germanovich Tan-Bogoraz (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), 33–49.

61. Aharon Rozental, *Pinkas ha-baganah ha-'Ivrit u-fe'uloteha*, vol. 1, 'Ukra'inah: *Ha-Haganah ha-'Ivrit ba-'ir Boguslav* (1919–1923) (Tel Aviv: Ha-Arets, 1929). The book was edited by the future prominent author and playwright Aharon Ashman—himself a self-defense activist in Kamenets-Podol'sk. On Ashman's self-defense activities, see an interview with one of his former comrades-in-arms: Interview with Yehudah Gur Aryeh, Yad Tabenkin Archive, Ramat Gan (hereafter, YTA) 16-12/5/19/13-15, as well as a memoir on the unit: Avraham Rozen, “Aharon 'Ashman,” in *Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah*, ed. 'Avraham Rozen, Hayim Sarig, and Y. Bernshtein (Tel Aviv: 'Irgun Yots'e Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah be-Yisra'el, 1965), 99. Published in English as Abraham Rosen, “Aharon Ashman,” in *Kaminits-Podolsk & Its Environs*, ed. Avraham Rozen, Chayim Sarig, and Y. Bernshtein (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu Foundation, 1999), 82.

62. The manuscripts are located in the Gnazim Archive, Tel Aviv (file 383). I thank Israel Bartal, Ashman's grandson Idan Segev, and Gnazim archivist Hila Tzur for helping me locate the texts. On the demarcation of “Jewish” and “Hebrew,” see Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 25–28.

63. Rozental, *Pinkas ha-baganah*, “Foreword.”

64. *Ibid.*, 58.

65. Chabad, “Pinkas ha-haganah ha-'Ivrit,” *Davar* 1327, October 11, 1929, 8.

66. Druy'anov, “Shurah shel pega'im,” 171–79.

67. Ya'akov Midrashi, “Mosheh Dubrovinski,” *Davar* 1166, March 25, 1929, 2.

68. Ya'akov Midrashi, “Foreword,” in *Bershad veba-haganah shelav* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Bershad'aim she-be-'Erets-Yisra'el, 1935), 29–30.

69. *Ibid.*, 26.

70. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 88–89, 162–63; Shapira, *Land and Power*, 100–103.

71. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 21–22; Shapira, *Land and Power*, 302–4.

72. See, for example, Derek Penslar, “Normalization and Its Discontents: Israel as a Diaspora Jewish Community,” in *Critical Issues in Israeli Society*, ed. Alan Dowty (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 239–40; Dan A. Porat, “From the Scandal to the Holocaust in Israeli Education,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 4 (2004): 621–27.

73. Ya'akov Kna'ani, *Le-toldot ha-Haganah be-Yisra'el: Sekirah historit* (Jerusalem: Ha-Merkaz La-Hinukh, 1942/1943), 57–58. The first edition was published in 1940/1941.

74. Bartal, “The Ingathering of Traditions,” 85–87, 92; Yisra'el Heylperin, ed., *Sefer ha-gevurah: 'Antologyah historit-sifrutit*, 4 vols., vol. 1, *Ha-Hitgonenut ve-kidush ba-shem mi-yeme Metsadah ve-ad reshit ba-'emantsipatsyah* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1941); Yisra'el Heylperin, ed., *Sefer ha-gevurah: 'Antologyah historit-sifrutit*, 4 vols., vol. 2, *Ha-Hitgonenut ve-kidush ba-shem me-reshit yeme ba-'emantsipatsyah ve-ad reshit ba-'Tsiyonut veba-sots'yalizm ba-Yebudi* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1944).

75. Yisra'el Heylperin, ed., *Sefer ha-gevurah: 'Antologyah historit-sifrutit*, 4 vols., vol. 3, *Tenu'at ha-baganah ha-'atsmit me-reshit yeme ba-'Tsiyonut veba-sots'yalizm ba-Yebudi ve-ad Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-Rishonah* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1950), YD-TW. Heylperin also prepared a manuscript on 1914–1921, devoting dozens of pages to documents and memoirs on Civil War self-defense in Ukraine. This volume, however, was only published by the Israeli Ministry of Defense in 1980: Yisra'el Heylperin, ed., *Sefer ha-gevurah: 'Antologyah historit-sifrutit*, 4 vols., vol. 4, *Haganah 'atsmit u-ma'avak mezuyan bishehot Milhemet ha-'Olam ha-rishonah ve-'abareba (1914–1921)* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitahon, 1980), 119–60.

76. “Ha-Gibor shel Bershad,” in *Pirke gevurah: Mi-sifrut Yisra'el*, ed. Gil'ad Zerubavel (Jerusalem: Ma'arakhot, 1944), 137–39; Mordekhai Ben-'Ami, “Reshitah shel ha-haganah ha-'atsmit,” in *Mo-*

reshet gevurab: Perakim mi-sifrut Yisra'el, ed. Gil'ad Zerubavel (Jerusalem: Ma'arakhot, 1947), 111–16; “Ha-Gibor shel Bershad,” in *ibid.*, 132–34; Yehudah Slobody'anik, “Be-hilufe shilton,” in *ibid.*, 140–43. According to the reference in Zerubavel's volume, Slobodyanik's article was reprinted from a certain *Kovets Ts"Sh*. I was unable to identify this work, and according to the *Sefer Ts"Sh* published in 1963, no earlier collections appeared on the Zionist-Socialist Party (pp. H–V). The article in question appeared in a longer form in *Sefer Ts"Sh* and the Shpolah *yizkor* book: Yehudah Slobody'anik, “Ha-Haganah bi-Shpolah,” in *Sefer Ts"Sh: Le-korot ha-Miflagah ha-Tsiyonit-sotsy'alistit u-Verit No'ar Ts. S. bi-Verit ha-Mo'atsot*, ed. Yehudah 'Erez (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1963), 311–17; Yehudah Slobody'anik, “Irgun ha-haganah ha-'atsmit,” in *Shpolah: Masekhet haye Yehudim ba-'ayarah*, ed. David Kohan (Haifa: 'Irgun yots'e Shpolah be-Yisra'el, 1965), 253–63. Ben-Ami's article originally appeared as Mordekhai Ben-Ami, “Odesskii pogrom 1881 goda i pervaiia samooborona,” *Evreiskii mir* 1, no. 5 (May 1909): 18–49.

77. David N. Myers, “Was There a ‘Jerusalem School’?,” 81–83, quote at 82.

78. Uri Ram, “Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur,” *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 91–124.

79. Penslar, *Jews and the Military*, 7.

80. Ben-Tziyon Dinur, “Sefer ‘toldot ha-haganah’ ve-tokhnito,” in *Sefer toldot ha-haganah*, ed. Ben-Tziyon Dinur, 8 vols., vol. 1, *Mi-bitgonenut le-haganah* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved—Tseva haganah le-Yisra'el—Ma'arakhot, 1954), LZ–LCh.

81. Yehudah Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 8 vols., vol. 2/1, *Me-haganah le-ma'avak* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved—Tseva Haganah le-Yisra'el—Ma'arakhot, 1959), 10.

82. *Ibid.*, 2/1:42–44.

83. *Ibid.*, 2/1:51–52.

84. The journal itself was intended to take up a long-dropped thread: *He-Avar* was originally published in 1917–1918 in Petrograd by a circle of leading Hebraist Zionist scholars in search of a usable past; see Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 156–57.

85. “Me-et ha-ma'arakhah,” *He-Avar* 1 (1952): 3–4; “El kol yehudi, yotz'e Rusyah ve-'Ukra'inah, ka-'asher hu' sham!,” *He-Avar* 1 (1952): 163.

86. See Midrashi's memoirs mentioned above and Ya'akov Goldburt, “Ha-Haganah be-Yek'aterinoslav ba-shanim 1917–1919,” in *Sefer Yek'aterinoslav—Dnepropetrovsk: Ha-Kehilah ha-Yehudit mi-bitvasdab ve-'ad ha-yom*, ed. Tsvi Harkavi and Ya'kov Goldburt (Jerusalem: 'Irgun yots'e Yek'aterinoslav—Dnepropetrovsk be-Yisra'el, 1972), 72–74; Mordekhai Yesh'ayahu 'Albinger, “Reshitah shel ha-pelugah ha-Yehudit ha-lohemet be-'Odesah,” *He-Avar* 17 (1970): 121–23; I. Klinov, “A kapitl zelibstshuts,” in *In der tkufe fun revolutsye: Memuarn, materyaln, dokumentn*, ed. Elias Tcherikower (Berlin: Yidisher literarisher farlag, 1924), 157–210.

87. 'A. 'Avtichi et al., “Le-khol havre ha-haganah u-fe'ileha be-Rusyah ve-'Ukra'inah,” *He-Avar* 2 (1954): 160. See the leaflet in Central Zionist Archives, Tel Aviv F30/94/1.

88. Ha-Ma'arekhet, “Yovel damim (pera'ot ve-haganah 'atsmit be-'Ukra'inah, 1919–1920),” *He-Avar* 17 (1970): 164. Emphasis mine.

89. 'Avraham Levinson, *Be-reshit ha-tenu'ah: Perakim be-toldot “Tse'ire-Tsiyon Hit'abadut”* (Tel Aviv: Merkaz ha-Sefer la-Kefar, 1947), 104.

90. Avraham Levinson, “Gevurat Yisra'el,” in *Magen ve-sbelab: 30 shanah le-baganat Tel Hai: Yalkut* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Histadrut ha-kelalit shel ha-'ovdim be-'Eretz Yisra'el: ha-Merkaz le-tarbut u-le-hinukh, 1950), 86.

91. M. Lampert, “Tsherkasi,” in *Naftule dor*, ed. Binyamin West, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Mishlahat huts-la-'arets shel Tse'ire Tsiyon—Hit'abadut be-Rusyah, 1945), 1:141.

92. Binyamin West, “Divre mavo,” in *Naftule dor*, ed. Binyamin West, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Mishlabat huts-la-'arets shel Tse'ire Tsiyon—Hit'abadut be-Rusyah* (Tel Aviv: Hit'abadut be-Rusyah ha-Sovyetit, 1955), 141.

93. Ze'ev 'Igeret, “Ha-Haganah ha-'atsmit bi-Khmelnik,” in *ibid.*, 149–50.

94. See Kaniv (Kanivski), “Ha-Yamim ha-rishonim,” 107.

95. Ben-Tsiyon Yitshar, "Ha-Haganah be-Tarasht's'a," 328–29, quote at 328; Shne'ur Aharonov, "Irgun ha-haganah ha-'atsmit ha-Yehudit be-'Ukra'inah," in *Sefer Ts"Sh: Le-korot ha-Miflagah ha-Tsiyonit-Sotsyalistit u-Verit No'ar Ts. S. bi-Verit ha-Mo'atsot*, ed. Yehudah 'Erez (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1963), 307–9. Other entries in this volume include "Hozer merkaz 'Tse'ire-Tsiyon' 'al 'irgun ha-haganah," 309–10; Yehudah Slobodyanik, "Ha-Haganah bi-Shpolah," 311–17; Y. Raz, "Ha-Haganah bi-Zlatopol," 318–25; 'Avraham Zdranovskii, "Ha-Haganah be-Monastirishet'eh," 325–28. On Erez's service in the Red Army, see Yehudah 'Erez, "Ba-Tsav'a ha-'adom be-sof Milhemet ha-'Ezrahim," in *ibid.*, 258–68.

96. Yisra'el Trivush, "Reshitah shel 'ha-Haganah'," *Herut* 457 (Tel Aviv), March 31, 1950, 10; for his claims on continuity between the Druzhina and the IDF, see also Yisra'el Trivush, "Reshitah shel 'ha-Haganah'," *Herut* 2232, December 30, 1955, 7, also published as Yisra'el Trivush, *Reshitah shel ha-Haganah* (Tel Aviv: Yodfat, 1950/1951), 16.

97. (Golub) Ben-'Amiti, "Ha-Haganah ha-Yehudit be-Lutsk," *Yalkut Voblin* 4 (1945): 14–16.

98. For a *yizkor* book with a particularly rich section on self-defense, see that of Shpolah: Moshe Kats, "Shpolah bi-fera'ot ha-mahpekha vaha-haganah," in *Shpolah: Masekhet haye Yehudim ba-'ayarah*, ed. David Kohen (Haifa: 'Irgun yots'e Shpolah be-Yisra'el, 1965), 251–53. Other memoirs in the same volume include Yehudah Slobodyanik, "'Irgun ha-haganah ha-'atsmit," 253–63; Hayah Evyatar-Bronshtein, "Shpolah ben por'im ve-Bolshevikim (mukdash le-zekher Shmu'el Bronshtein)," 263–69; Aniutah Pust-Bronshtein, "Shmu'el Bronshtein z"l: Rosh ha-va'ad ve-ha-haganah bi-Shpolah," 269–72; Mikhael Pertzik, "Hisul ha-haganah ha-'atsmit bi-Shpolah," 272.

99. Although the editor of the Shpolah *yizkor* book spent much of the Civil War years away from his hometown, he served as a rabbi in the tsarist army, as the secretary of the Union of Jewish Soldiers in 1918 in Moscow, was among the founders of the He-Haluts with Trumpeldor, and, before his emigration in 1920, was a cultural worker in the Red Army. These experiences might have very well made him inclined to provide space for memoirs on self-defense. See Dan Pines, "David ben Shlomoh Kohen," in Kohen, *Shpolah*, 11–12. A signatory of the *He-Avar* call for self-defense materials, Yakov Goldburt, was a self-defense activist in Ekaterinoslav, and included his own memoirs in the *yizkor* book of the city, which he co-edited; see Harkavi, *Sefer Yek'aterinoslav—Dnepropetrovsk*.

100. Shapira, *Land and Power*, 96–98.

101. Yaacov N. Goldstein, *From Fighters to Soldiers: How the Israeli Defense Forces Began* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 148.

102. Yohanan Ratner manuscript, "The General Problems of Self-Defense in Palestine," HHA 80/135P/17/12.

103. Yochanan Ratner, *Hayai va-'ani*, trans. Rinah Klinov (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1978), 235. See also Nahum Bogner, *Mabshavah tseva'it ba-"Haganah"* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitahon, 1998), 23.

104. Yohanan Ratner manuscript, "The Phases of the Irgun's Development," HHA 80/135P/17/18.

105. Yohanan Ratner, Speech from 1944–1945, HHA 80/135P/17/24–25, quote at 25.

106. Ratner, *Hayai va-'ani*, 224–25. See also Bogner, *Mabshavah tseva'it ba-"Haganah"*, 59–60.

107. Bogner, *Mabshavah tseva'it ba-"Haganah"*, 36.

108. Shadmi, *Kav yashar*, 85–86. Tsvi Nadav, too, recalled that during his time at the officers' course in Odessa in 1919, he challenged his officer regarding the worth of formation trainings, and argued for the use of partisan warfare. Manuscript by Tsvi Nadav, "Odessa in the Hands of the White Army," HHA 80/218P/1/29–30.

109. Sadeh, *Mab bidesh Palmah*, 9–12.

110. *Ibid.*, 24. On his experiences in the Red Army, see Yitshak Sadeh, *'Albom* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1972), 3; Shlomoh Derekh, "Yitshak Sadeh—ha-'Ish u-netivo," in *Ketavim: Yitshak Sadeh*, ed. Shlomoh Derekh, 4 vols., vol. 1, *Ha-Pinkas patugh, reshimot 'otobiografiyot shonot* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1980), 14, 299–300, 304. In 1950–1951 Sadeh published two long articles on partisan warfare in the *Ma'arakhot* military journal, which are collected in Tsvikah Dror, ed., *Ketavim: Yitshak Sadeh*, 3 vols., vol. 3, *Milhamah bilti shigratit* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibutz Ha-me'uhad, 1990), 39–50.

111. Yigal Allon, *Shield of David: The Story of Israel's Armed Forces*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 87–88. Emphasis mine. Nahum Gershon (Gershonovich), a Haganah commander in Jerusalem, also recalled that Sadeh used to tell him stories about Russia. Interview with Nahum Gershon [Gershonovich], YTA 12-3/32/38/21.
112. John Horne and Robert Gerwarth, “Paramilitarism in Europe After the Great War: An Introduction,” in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War*, ed. John Horne and Robert Gerwarth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–18.
113. Interviews with Avraham Berman, HHA 10.50/1-2, 196.42/1.
114. Interview with Avraham Ben-Ziv [Alper], HHA 8.37/2-3.
115. Interview with Zeev Brodski, HHA 178.10/2-3.
116. Respectively, see Rozental, *Pinkas ha-haganah*, 10–12; Cebon and Rodney, *The Forgotten Zionist*, 24; Raz, “Ha-Haganah bi-Zlatopol,” 320.
117. E. Vainshtein, “K istorii evreiskoi samooborony v Odesse,” *Rassvet* (Paris) 19, no. 108, December 25, 1924, 9; E. Vainshtein, “K istorii evreiskoi samooborony v Odesse (Okonchanie),” *Rassvet* (Paris) 21, no. 3, January 18, 1925, 5–6.
118. E. Vainshtein, “Urok Odesskoi ‘boevoi druzhiny,’” *Rassvet* (Paris) 21, no. 6, February 8, 1925, 8–9.
119. HHA 37.25/1; see also Ze’ev ‘Ivanski, *Lebi—Tsevat risbonah: ‘Iyunim be-naftule tekufah va-derekh*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Ya’ir ‘a. sh. ‘Avraham Shtern, 2003), 1:210–11.
120. Interview with Avraham Tehomi, HHA 59.3/2.
121. ‘Ivanski, *Lebi*, 1:208–11, 214. Ben Chorin reportedly was “the initiator and the living spirit” of a special operations group within the Hasharon Group. HHA 19.2/4.
122. HHA 59.3/2-3; HHA 76.41/2; Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 2/1:426–27, quote at 427; ‘Ivanski, *Lebi*, 1:214–16.
123. Shapira, *Land and Power*, 194–206.
124. Slutsky, *Sefer toldot ha-Haganah*, 2/1:427–30.
125. HHA 76.41/1-2.
126. Shadmi, *Kav yashar*, 42, 55–57, quote at 57.
127. Penslar, *Jews and the Military*, 188–89.

PART IV

SOVIET INTERLUDES

CHAPTER 13

American Jews and the Zionist Movements in the Soviet Union: The Joint and He-Haluts in Crimea in the 1920s

Chizuko Takao

The plain issue before American Jewry is, shall the promise of Balfour be junked for the offer of Trotsky? . . . This issue was raised by those who sprang this Russian proposal on the American public. Palestine and Russia—Russia, and Palestine! What opposite thoughts, what different memories, do these names arouse in the Jewish mind!

—Henry J. Dannenbaum, *The Case of Palestine
Versus Russia: Statement of Facts Presented at the
Bar of American Public Opinion*, 1925

Crimea and Palestine

Ever since the Russian Revolution, Soviet Jews have been regarded as cut off from the rest of the world. In fact, however, Jews in the USSR have never been isolated. Soviet treatment of Jews has been the focus of international Jewish communities, and Soviet leaders were fully aware of this.

In the mid-1920s, American Jews were divided over whether they should support the Jewish colonization project in the Soviet Union. In 1925, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the JDC, or the Joint) launched its

United Jewish Campaign with the goal of raising \$15 million, the main purpose of which was to assist the Crimean colonization project. The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), which had only just begun fundraising efforts for Palestine (the United Palestine Appeal) argued for the primacy of Palestine over Russia. Henry Dannenbaum, a prominent Houston lawyer and a Zionist, condemned the Russian project using stereotypical images: for Jews, Palestine was “the cradle and home of our national genius,” while Russia was “the Dungeon, in which Jewish life is chained and whipped and starved.”¹

Studies of American Jewish aid to Jewish agricultural settlements in the Soviet Union have paid much attention to the anti-Zionist motives of the Joint’s leaders and the conflict between the Joint and the ZOA, which caused a serious split within the American Jewish community.² Other studies concentrate on the tragic end of the Jewish colonies in the Soviet Union and the Stalinist repression and arrest of the local staff workers in 1937–1938.³ Recent works drawing on former Soviet archives reveal that the activities of foreign Jewish organizations not only contributed to the welfare of Soviet Jews but influenced Soviet agricultural policy. For example, a tractor project that incorporated agricultural improvement measures directed by Joseph Rosen, a representative of the Joint, and conducted in Ukrainian Jewish farms in 1923, was a model for tractor column (detachments or squads) operations in the Shevchenko *sovkhos* (state farm) in Odessa Okrug (district) in Ukraine in 1927, and then became the origin of Machine Tractor Station (MTS) at the national level.⁴

Since World War II, of course, Jewish colonists in Palestine and in Crimea have met starkly contrasting fates. The former played a pivotal role in the foundation of Israel, the latter disappeared without a trace: Crimean Jewish colonies were devastated by the Holocaust, and the Jewish farming population in the USSR has all but disappeared. However, in the interwar period, Jewish colonization in Crimea constituted a significant alternative to Palestine and fascinated contemporaries such as Israel Zangwill, Yisrael Zinger, and Louis Fischer. My work and that of Jonathan Dekel-Chen have uncovered the distinct path of Jewish colonization projects in and around Crimea, which have typically been overshadowed by the story of Zionist colonies in Palestine.⁵

That said, Zionist and non- or anti-Zionist colonies overlapped in interesting ways, with individual members of the latter occasionally ending up in Palestine because of Soviet persecution. Stepping back from the rivalry that existed in the interwar period between Jewish colonists in Crimea and Palestine, the present chapter re-examines Jewish agricultural experience in a larger context. Drawing in part on my interviews with former Crimean colonists conducted in Israel in 1986, I focus on the Joint’s aid to the Jewish colonization project in Crimea, its relations with Zionist youth (He-Haluts) movements in the Soviet Union in the

1920s, and the role played by the Joint in the emigration of He-Haluts members to Palestine.

The He-Haluts Movement in Russia

Joseph Trumpeldor, who worked with Vladimir Jabotinsky to establish the Jewish Legion in Palestine during World War I, returned to Russia after the February Revolution in order to recruit Jewish youth. On his way back to Palestine, he visited Crimea in March 1919, with the intention of establishing a commune to train recruits. At Trumpeldor's initiative, about one hundred young Jews reportedly traveled from Belarus to Crimea at that time. Although the attempt to construct the first training farm in Crimea ended in failure because of Russia's civil war, Trumpeldor emerged as one of the originators of the He-Haluts movement on Russian soil.⁶

He-Haluts ("pioneer" in Hebrew) was a Zionist youth movement aimed at training its members to settle in Palestine. After the October Revolution, attempts to secure legalization for the He-Haluts movement caused disputes among He-Haluts's leaders. In September 1923, He-Haluts split into a left wing ("legal"), whose activities were approved by the Soviet government, and a right wing ("illegal").⁷ The left wing advocated class struggle and collectivism, and its members were required to accept its collective principle of production, while the right wing regarded itself as a national Jewish workers' movement.

Commune Tel Hai was one of the training farms constructed by legal He-Haluts in the Dzhankoi district in the northern part of the Crimean Peninsula. The name Tel Hai came from the name of the Palestinian village where Trumpeldor was killed in 1920. Legal He-Haluts, which had seven thousand members in its peak years, published the journal *Gekbolutz* from 1924 to 1926. With a circulation of three thousand, the journal covered developments in both Palestine and Soviet Russia.⁸ According to Mordechai Altshuler, a legal He-Haluts member, it was the only journal that fostered the Zionist idea among Jews in the Soviet Union and kept them informed about the situation of the Yishuv in Palestine.⁹

As already mentioned, the government permitted the existence of the left wing in August 1923. Dan Pines (1900–1961), general secretary of the Central Committee of He-Haluts movement, recalled that it was necessary to get approval from the government for practical work and that the movement considered the Soviet Union to be the most appropriate place for the training of *halutsim* (members of He-Haluts).¹⁰ Its platform provided that "He-Haluts constitutes a part of the international working classes," and its statute was officially approved by the government and called "Legal He-Haluts." Under the strategic retreat of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Soviet government found

common goals with Zionism: making Jews productive and developing the collective farming (kibbutz) movement. However, harassment of He-Haluts by the anti-Zionist Yevseksiia (the Jewish section of the Russian Communist Party) had become more severe since 1925, and many *Halutsim* were arrested, while others succeeded in reaching Palestine. The He-Haluts communes were liquidated in 1928.

The legalization of the left-wing He-Haluts seems to have made it easier for the Joint to support Zionists in the Soviet Union. According to a memoir by a Tel Hai member, the Joint's aid to Tel Hai started secretly, but later became open.¹¹ In 1923, the Joint funneled \$32,370 to Crimea, mainly for He-Haluts communes.¹²

Russian Zionists were generally considered isolated from the rest of the Jewish people after the Revolution. However, in the first half of the 1920s, He-Haluts maintained contact with Zionists abroad. At the International Agricultural Exhibition held in Moscow in 1923, the Soviet government invited a delegation of the Histadrut from Palestine, and David Ben-Gurion attended the exhibition as one of the representatives from Palestine. Though Ben-Gurion was later known for his anti-Communism, he supported the Soviet Union at least until 1928, and admitted that only the Soviet regime could protect Jews against pogroms on its territory.¹³ He met *Halutsim* and other Zionists at the exhibition and informed them of the situation in Palestine. He evaluated the He-Haluts movement in Russia positively and wrote that "it was worth visiting Russia if only to see them."¹⁴ Immediately after he returned from Moscow to Palestine, Ben-Gurion wrote the following to *Halutsim* in Russia:

Dear comrades, . . . the economic situation in Palestine has begun improving, and I think that the unemployment problem is expected to be solved in four to six weeks. This year, we will start a large-scale tobacco plantation project. . . . This project initially needs about 1,000 workers and probably needs another 1,000 workers in the future. Therefore, 1,000 to 1,500 *Halutsim* will be needed to carry out this project. We have already received entry visas for 600 *Halutsim*. We are to receive visas for at least 1,000 more *Halutsim* soon. Of these, we will allot 300 to 500 visas for you. . . . We hope that more personnel trained by *Halutsim* will join the list of workers in Palestine.¹⁵

The problem for Zionists in the first half of the 1920s was an economic recession in Palestine, rather than difficulty leaving the Soviet Union. Aside from raising funds to cover the cost of exit visas, socialist Zionists, who aimed to restore

the Jewish state by productive labor, faced an anemic labor market in Palestine, where there were not enough jobs to employ every Jewish worker.

Joseph Rosen and the Joint-Soviet Partnership

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was founded in New York just after World War I broke out in 1914 in order to relieve the war-devastated Jews of Europe. A curious partnership between the Soviet government and the American “bourgeois” organization began in the early 1920s as they shared a mutual interest: to reconstruct the Jewish agricultural colonies in southern Ukraine, which had been devastated by pogroms, civil war, and famine.

Joseph A. Rosen, an agronomist of Russian Jewish origin, was responsible for the reconstruction work. Born in 1877 in Moscow, Rosen immigrated in 1903 to the United States, where he studied agronomy. From 1908 to 1913, he was the head of the Agricultural Agency in Washington, DC, set up by the Ekaterinoslav provincial zemstvo to study and introduce American farming methods in Russia, and wrote a dozen reports on American agriculture.¹⁶ In this period, Rosen analyzed soil and climate correlation between the American and Russian agricultural areas, and collaborated with a number of agricultural specialists in Russia.¹⁷ From 1914 on, Rosen was the headmaster of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School in Woodbine, New Jersey.

In the fall of 1921, when the American Relief Administration headed by Herbert Hoover began to aid famine victims in the Volga region, Rosen was sent to Russia as an agricultural specialist and also as a representative of the Joint. In November 1922, after the Soviet government officially acknowledged southern Ukraine as a famine area, Rosen concluded an agreement with the Kremlin to reconstruct Jewish agricultural colonies located in the region.

Jewish agricultural colonies had a rather long history in Russia.¹⁸ They were first created during the reigns of tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I. The statutes concerning Jews issued in December 1804 encouraged Jews to colonize the Black Sea steppes acquired from the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth century. Both the Haskalah movement, which attempted to rebut the prejudice that Jews avoided manual labor, and the Russian government, which intended to make Russia's Jews “useful,” encouraged the creation of Jewish agriculturists. The statutes provided a variety of incentives, such as tax exemptions, and allowed the Jews, who were otherwise forbidden to do so, to purchase lands. The first Jewish colonies were established in Kherson province, and 294 families settled on 24,000 dessiatines (25,920 hectares) of land allocated in 1807.¹⁹ In 1859, in total, there were 2,598 families in 21 colonies in Kherson province, and 16 colonies in Ekaterinoslav

province. The number of colonists had decreased somewhat by 1880, to 1,950 families. A significant number of Jewish colonies were not engaged in agricultural production.²⁰ Though they represented less than 1 percent of Russia's entire Jewish population, these colonies in New Russia became a starting point for Jewish agricultural colonization all over the world. Jewish colonists with a shortage of land were attracted to Argentina; for example, Jews from the Izluchista colony emigrated to Argentine in 1904.²¹

In order to reconstruct the remaining Jewish colonies and nearby non-Jewish villages, the Joint introduced eighty-six mechanized tractors from the United States. This was the first large-scale importation of tractors by the Soviet Union. Headed by Rosen, the Joint adopted a new method of organizing tractors: They centralized distribution of tractor columns, trained local peasant tractor drivers with American instructors, and planned provision of imported seeds and agricultural instructions to the colonies. A mobile repair shop was created for each tractor column, and a central repair shop was set up at the colony in Novo-Poltavka in Kherson gubernia. The entire organization was integrated into the central technology base in Novo-Poltavka, where both the repair shop and a tractor driving school were organized, in addition to offices and warehouses. Fuel depots were built at railroad stations located near the tractor bases. Seven American instructors provided tractor-driving instructions. This experiment in 1923 had a decisive impact on the mechanization of Soviet agriculture.²²

In June 1923, Rosen traveled on an inspection tour to the Crimean Peninsula with local Joint staff members. During the tour, Rosen surveyed villages and colonies of various nationalities in Crimea for two weeks and worked out a plan to create Jewish colonies in the northern part of Crimea by using funds raised in the United States. According to the report written by Samuil Efimovich Liubarskii, a member of the Joint's local staff, 4,000 families were expected to settle on 200,000 dessiatines of land in northern Crimea over the course of two years, and \$4.5 million were expected to be raised from American Jews. The report concluded that "responsible leaders of Jewish social organizations have to be aware of the significance and possibility of this epoch-making opportunity, and such opportunity is historically very rare."²³ What was the "historic opportunity" for Soviet Jews? First, a portion of land that had been confiscated after the Revolution was left untouched, not far from the former Pale of Settlement, where many Soviet Jews were still concentrated. The density of population in northern Crimea was much lower than in Ukraine. Northern Crimea was thus considered to be the most appropriate place for Jewish agricultural colonization. Second, Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of the Crimean Autonomous Republic, accounted for only one-fourth of the total population. In the middle of the

1920s, Russians and Ukrainians accounted for half (49 percent) of the total population of the Autonomous Republic. The report acknowledged that such ethnic diversity in Crimea, where Jewish settlers would not be regarded as outsiders and anti-Semitism was comparatively weak, was a favorable factor for Jewish colonization. Third, He-Haluts farms already existed in northern Crimea. In his report, Liubarskii hailed the training farms of He-Haluts as the “vanguards to acquire lands for Jewish settlement in the future.”²⁴

On April 24, 1924, the Politburo decided to form the Committee for the Settlement of Toiling Jews on the Land in the Soviet Union (KOMZET) to promote Jewish agricultural colonization. A KOMZET meeting on June 2, 1924, attended by Petr Smidovich, a deputy chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, as well as Avrom Merezhin and Semen Dimanshtein of the Yevseksiia, designated the vast area from the “existing Jewish colonies” in southern Ukraine to the entire district of the northern part of the Crimean Peninsula as land for Jewish colonization. The meeting encouraged the construction of Jewish settlements “in areas that are as contiguous as possible (na vozmozhno sploshnykh uchastkakh).”²⁵ The Jewish colonization in Crimea thus started with the full approval of the Soviet government.

In the summer of 1924, the Joint formed the Agro-Joint as a new organization that specialized in providing aid to Soviet Jews. When the Agro-Joint was established, the Joint in New York intended to secure a contract with the Soviet government to get exclusive concession rights over the lands allocated for Jewish colonization. However, according to the agreement concluded with the Soviet government in 1924, the land was allocated to the Jews not as a concession to the Agro-Joint, but on the basis of *trudovoe zemlepol'zovanie*—“toiling land usage”—which meant that the Jewish colonists had the right to use land as long as they cultivated it by their own labor. James N. Rosenberg, a lawyer and member of the executive staff of the Joint, expressed the following concerns: “If the land is not granted to the Agricultural Corporation as a concession, what is there to prevent the government from taking the land away and from evicting the settlers whom we put on the soil? . . . I am not sure as to what protection either the Agro-Joint or the settlers have if the Russian Government wishes to cancel the whole arrangement.”²⁶

The Joint believed that the Jewish agricultural colonization project should *not* be a Soviet state undertaking but a private project. Furthermore, Louis Marshall, the renowned lawyer and president of the American Jewish Committee, expressed reluctance to invest further in the Crimean colonization project. In a letter to Rosenberg, Marshall stated that he was “skeptical as to the advisability of doing anything further in this colonization work.” According to Marshall, it was necessary to deal with reality. American Jews seemed to be completely

exhausted and financially depleted by their efforts for European relief work during 1914–1922.²⁷

E. A. Grower, Rosen's legal adviser in Moscow, pointed out that it was not advisable that lands for Soviet citizens be owned by a foreign organization: "Should the Agro-Joint occupy a tract of land on concessional basis with the right to settle Jews on this land, it would be dangerous for the settlers because their rights would of necessity be subject to limitations depending on the terms of the concession."²⁸ Since Soviet law completely eliminated private ownership of land, and ordinary Russian peasants had no right to dispose of their lands (which was the case even before the Revolution), Grower concluded that the "toiling land usage right is the most solid and complete form of land usage" in the Soviet state. According to I. S. Urisson, a legal advisor to the Agro-Joint in Moscow, Jewish settlers "must share the historical fate of the Russian peasantry. . . . It would be a wrong policy to attempt to create a special 'concessional' form of ownership for them. . . . Jewish settlers, settling on land, must, in legal and political respects, be 'Russian farmers of the Jewish creed,' sharing all joys and tribulations of the hundred million Russian peasant population."²⁹

These statements and memoranda from Moscow seem to have convinced JDC executives such as James Rosenberg, Louis Marshall, and Felix Warburg to launch a full-scale campaign to invest in the Jewish colonization project in the Soviet Union. At the Philadelphia conference for the United Jewish Campaign in September 1925, Marshall showed his appreciation for the Soviet Jewish policy: "[The Russian Revolution] was an agrarian revolution. . . . One thing is certain: that land will never go back where it came from. . . . It is not so crazy a scheme after all. I don't care what the motive of the Soviet government may be. One thing however is evident. . . . They have treated the Jews like anybody else. . . . Equality of opportunity—that is what we ask here, and that is what is being accorded to them there."³⁰

The Crimean Jewish Experiment as a Soviet Socialist Utopia

Starting in 1922, in close cooperation with locals from Jewish communities, the Joint conducted activities for famine relief and the reconstruction of old Jewish agricultural colonies in Ukraine. In spite of the fact that the Joint was a foreign organization, it created closer relationships with local Jewish communities than did Jewish representatives of the Soviet Communist Party.³¹ The Agro-Joint headed by Rosen cooperated with KOMZET under the new agreement concluded in November 1924. In the period of the NEP, which made it possible to

independently distribute funds and plan activities, the Agro-Joint—the only organization serving Jewish settlers—held strong sway over the colonies. Under the 1924 agreement, the authority to approve plans of operation and inspect documents and accounts of the Agro-Joint belonged to KOMZET, representing the Soviet state. While the Agro-Joint maintained its independence to carry out operations without the interference of any organization other than KOMZET, and could freely select its staff members, KOMZET was responsible for coordination with local authorities.³²

The newly established Jewish colonies served by the Agro-Joint were in many ways a model of mechanized “socialist agriculture.” Article 9 of the 1924 agreement stipulated that the Agro-Joint would help Jews establish their farms in the colonies and organize them in collectives and cooperatives. According to a circular by the KOMZET in July 1925, Jewish settlement in principle had to take collective form, whether as cooperatives, *kolkhozes* (collective farms), or settler associations, and had to register their founding charters within one month after arrival.³³

In the Jewish colonies where the Agro-Joint served, tractors were introduced in advance to prepare land. The Soviet government regarded tractor columns organized by the Agro-Joint as a model of the mechanization of agriculture. These tractor columns cultivated lands before the cost of tractor work was collected from settlers. The organized method of dispatching tractor columns had many merits compared with sending tractors to each collective farm. It relieved settlers of many hardships, such as breaking virgin soil, training tractor drivers on their own, repairing tractors, and preparing fuel. However, the Agro-Joint regarded the centralized organization of tractor columns only as a temporary means to be used until the settlers became independent. The Agro-Joint was not meant to be a permanent organization.

At the end of 1925, two-thirds of the new Jewish settlers had organized themselves into *kolkhozes*. At the time, 1.5 million Soviet peasants were organized into *kolkhozes*—only 1.5 percent of the rural population. Compared to the large majority of ordinary peasants in Russia, who continued their communal use of land even after they settled in new places, the proportion of Jewish settlers who formed *kolkhozes* was surprisingly high. With this fact in mind, Yuri Larin, a Jewish economist, expected that Jewish agriculture would bring a new vigor to Russian villages, where conventional farming methods endured.³⁴

It is interesting to note, however, that as tractor columns were demobilized, Jewish *kolkhozes* tended to dissolve and revert back into individual farms. Furthermore, most Jewish *kolkhozes* that were registered as such were in reality

immigrant associations, machine associations, or TOZs (associations for the joint cultivation of land). According to Yuli Gol'de, "It is wrong to assume that Jews are born to be suited for collective management just because of the number of Jewish kolkhozes."³⁵ Many of the settlers organized collectives to make up for lack of funds and insufficient experience. Samuil Lubarsky described the Jewish kolkhozes as "fictitious." As mentioned above, the Agro-Joint regarded the settler kolkhozes as temporary organizations. Despite the Soviet government's plan to create collective farms, Lubarsky found it desirable to give Jewish settlers an opportunity to experience "farmer-type large-scale management" so that they could become independent farmers.³⁶

Alexander Fabrikant, professor at the Moscow Agricultural Academy, who investigated the Jewish colonies in Crimea in 1925, reported negative aspects of the collective form of possession, such as treating domestic animals shared with other members like tools.³⁷ In general, settlers preferred to separate themselves from their collectives and become individual farmers if circumstances permitted. According to Rosen, Jewish settlers had to adopt the collective form in the first year of settlement in order to effectively use domestic animals and machines. Beginning in their second year, more and more settlers organized credit cooperatives and machine/tractor associations to help them become individual farmers. In the third year, almost all settlers abandoned the collective form. Comparing Russian Jewish colonization patterns to those of Palestine, Arthur Ruppin, a Jewish sociologist and statistician who visited Russia in October 1927, observed this phenomenon with special attention:

In Russia, the cultivation of the soil was originally carried on collectively, and the government recommended that the settlers continue in this manner. It developed, however, that the individualistic tendencies of the colonists made it impossible for them to continue the collective system. At the present time, [that system] is in general use in White Russia only. It has been given up in the Ukraine and the Crimea, where every family tills its own land as soon as its house has been built. Joint cultivation is still practised only in the farms founded by the youth organization He-Haluts. . . . The other settlers however, most of whom are mature family men, lack this common bond of [a] higher ideal. . . . Here, individual interests come to the fore, causing such great internal friction in the collective agricultural units that the joint enterprise must suffer. For this reason the colonists demanded that the collective settlement be resolved [*sic*] into individual units; and the government did not oppose their wishes.³⁸

Reports by the Agro-Joint's agronomists from 1925 onward often discuss the issues of the dissolution of artels into individual farms,³⁹ and of the reorganization of collective farms. The 1925 report on activities in Crimea recommended against any artificial selection of collective farm members from above, arguing that people should not be forced to work together.⁴⁰

In contrast to the "fictitious" collectives that were dissolved into individual farms despite the government policy of forming collectives,⁴¹ He-Haluts Tel Hai commune in Crimea served, until it was liquidated in 1928, not only as a training farm but as a model of Jewish farming in the Soviet Union. In comparing ordinary Jewish colonies with those of the *Halutsim*, Ruppin exalted the self-sacrifice of the latter: "[For *Halutsim*] the important thing is not possession and the improvement of their economic situation, but preparation for Palestine. The members of these colonies are united in the common idea which pushes their individual interests into the background."⁴² Ironically, among Jewish farms in Crimea, it was Zionist farms that came closest to the Soviet ideal of collective agriculture. As Dekel-Chen notes, non-Zionist Jewish farmers who intended to remain in the Soviet Union often aspired to work in cities.⁴³

Crimea was where He-Haluts created Jewish farmers in preparation for future agricultural colonies in Palestine. But there were also occasions of Zionist youth who had trained in Palestine moving to Crimea. When the members of He-Haluts were "exiled" to Palestine in 1927–1928, as we see in the next section, another group of young Zionists were invited to the Soviet Union from Palestine. They were the left wing of the Gdud Ha-'avodah (the Workers' Battalion) led by Mendel Menahem Elkind. Gdud Ha-'avodah was created by immigrants to Palestine during the Third Aliyah (1919–1923). With their dream of building a Jewish state based on socialist ideals, they formed kibbutzim such as Tel Yosef and Kfar Giladi. Abraham Cahan, the eminent Yiddish journalist from New York who visited Palestine in 1925, praised the hard-working Gdudniks as "true Zionists."⁴⁴ However, in 1926, Gdud Ha-'avodah split on ideological grounds into right and left wings. The extreme leftist faction, led by Elkind, returned to the Soviet Union. With a 1,300-hectare tract of land in the Evpatoria district of Crimea, allocated by the Soviet government, Gedud ha-'avodah created the commune Vojo Nova ("New Way" in Esperanto). Zeheva Gordon (born in Lithuania in 1906) was one of the Gdudniks. "When we arrived in the Soviet Union," she recalled, "we thought it was a communist Utopia and our dreams will come true at last! We were young idealists, and believed Esperanto will become the world's common language."⁴⁵

Why did these true Zionists abandon Palestine? The Histadrut led by Ben-Gurion disliked their collectivism, ruthlessly imposed sanctions on Gdud, and

expelled Gdud members from the Histadrut.⁴⁶ For its part, the Soviet government welcomed their return and used them to propagate the Soviet-Zionist alliance against British imperialism.

The “Exile” of Zionists to Palestine and the Role of the Joint

In the middle of the 1920s, the Soviet government’s relatively lenient policy toward Zionism in general and He-Haluts in particular abruptly ended.⁴⁷ The opposition of American Zionists to the Crimean colonization project might have influenced the suppression of Zionism in the Soviet Union. Amid the intensifying repression of Zionist activities, the Kremlin adopted a policy under which arrested *Halutsim* were deported to Palestine as a substitute for internal exile. In fact, more than one thousand *Halutsim* emigrated from the Soviet Union to Palestine between 1924 and 1930.⁴⁸ According to Ziva Galili, the main motives of the Soviet government’s preference for deportation of Zionists to Palestine rather than to Siberia were the desire to remove them permanently from Soviet society and the chance to acquire hard currency in the form of fees assessed for exit visas. The greatest contributors of hard currency for this cause were Ekaterina Peshkova (1876–1965) and her organization Pompolit (Pomoshch’ politicheskim zakliuchennym), established in 1922 to help political prisoners, and the Immigration Center of the Histadrut in Palestine.⁴⁹

Yet another important link in the chain that fostered immigration of *Halutsim* to the Yishuv was provided by Rosen and the Agro-Joint. While in Israel in 1986, I interviewed sixteen people who had settled in Crimea and Ukraine with help from the Agro-Joint.⁵⁰ Four of them were *Halutsim* who immigrated to Palestine in 1926 and 1928, following their arrest by Soviet authorities and subsequent release thanks to interventions by the Agro-Joint. One of them was Benjamin Gorshteyn (1888–1987), a member of the Tel Hai commune soviet (council) and a sector agronomist of the Agro-Joint.⁵¹ In the spring of 1926, the USSR’s anti-Zionist campaign intensified, and the Yevseksiia attempted to weaken He-Haluts influence with Jewish settlers, forcing the latter to adopt resolutions urging the Soviet government to close He-Haluts communes.⁵² Gorshteyn described the events as follows:

In the spring of 1926, many members of Tel Hai, including me, were arrested. However, we were released on the same day. The reason for our sudden release was that a U.S. delegation headed by Rosen was about to visit Crimea. Rosen recommended that I go to Palestine. He knew that my release was only temporary. It was obvious that I would be arrested again after the delegation returned home. Rosen told me, “You want to

go to Palestine rather than being sent to Siberia.” “I cannot go alone,” I replied. “I cannot abandon other arrested comrades of Tel Hai.” Rosen could have quickly made arrangements for me alone. But I remained with my comrades. I was sent to Novosibirsk in Siberia. We were not exiled anywhere further than this Siberian city. We waited there until exit permits were given to all of the arrested members, and we left Siberia for Palestine in December 1926. We arrived in Palestine in February 1927.⁵³

Gorshteyn was released from prison thanks to James Rosenberg, the vice president of the Joint, who visited Tel Hai with Rosen on May 9, 1926. Rosenberg was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Crimean settlement project, as he wrote in his diary about the “happy boys and girls” of Tel Hai: “Tel Hai is one of the most famous *Halutsim* settlements. One hundred and fifty young men and women; all unmarried. They not only work the land, but are entirely self-sustaining. . . . [*Halutsim* in Tel Hai] are prosperous, these young Zionists. They’re hardy, healthy and happy, these boys and girls. I wish Dr. Weizmann could see them, and their fields and homes and herds.”⁵⁴

Although Rosenberg did not mention the behind-the-scenes difficulties, Tel Hai was liquidated in 1928. Another He-Haluts member, Shterna Ninburg (b. 1907), an agricultural instructor in the Tel Hai commune, recalled: “We gathered in Odessa Port in September 1928, and all eighty Tel Hai members then departed to Palestine. We obtained visas thanks to the secret assistance provided by the Joint to the headquarters of He-Haluts in Moscow.”⁵⁵

In addition to these oral testimonies, there are documents showing that the Joint was actively involved in the “exile” of He-Haluts to Palestine. According to World Zionist Organization files located in the Central Zionist Archives, Rosen conducted secret negotiations with the Soviets regarding emigration to Palestine, and the Zionist Organization sent the funds required for their exit visas through the Joint, whom the Zionist Organization otherwise regarded as an “enemy.”⁵⁶

Contact between the Zionist side and Rosen was established through Dr. Arthur Hantke, then the head of the Keren Hayesod in Berlin. By 1933 Berlin served as an important “relay point” between Moscow and New York, to mediate secret correspondence from Rosen to Zionists as well as the Joint. In March 1925, Rosen proposed to Hantke that an office should be established in Berlin in order to support Zionists in the USSR and carry out “illegal activities” there. As Hantke recorded in a memorandum: “I spoke today with Dr. Rosen who came to Berlin for a few days. . . . He told me that about 200 of the arrested [Zionists] left for Palestine. Another 200 are in prisons. . . . It is possible for some of them to escape via illegal means.”⁵⁷

To be sure, there was discontent among Zionists. F. H. Kisch of the Palestinian Zionist Executive opposed cooperation with the Joint in negotiations with the Soviet Union. On May 3, 1926, Kisch complained to the political secretary in London: "We are opposed to cooperate with the JDC, or any kindred organization, such as is known to be, in Russia, of a definite anti-Zionist attitude. . . . It is thought here that Dr. Hantke has been negotiating for our being represented [*sic*] in Russia jointly with the JDC . . . and if there is any basis for this belief, it is desired that the above should be brought to his [Hantke's] notice."⁵⁸

And yet, the Joint undoubtedly served as a link between "those who organize emigration" from the USSR and the Zionist Organization of London. Moreover, the Zionists remitted money to Moscow through the Joint. It was Felix Rosenblit (1887–1978), a German Zionist, who insisted on the usefulness of the Joint.⁵⁹ He was in London then as a member of the Zionist Executive to head the Organization Department. In his letter dated October 30, 1928, to F. H. Kisch, Rosenblit stated: "We have always been satisfied when remitting money through the Joint, which possesses its own organization in Russia, and we doubt whether any other body has the requisite facilities for remitting sums of money to that country in such a simple way."⁶⁰

Rosenblit stressed that the Joint "desires its financial and technical aid" for the emigration of *Halutsim* to Palestine "to be kept strictly secret" and never be mentioned in the press or "in our correspondence with the other Zionist bodies," and expressed his confidence in Rosen: "As for correspondence between those who organize the emigration and the Joint, you can be quite at ease. The Joint is very well acquainted with the subterranean methods of this kind of work. We are corresponding with Dr. Rosen in whom we have entire confidence."⁶¹

In a recent study on the fate of the Estonian Swedish colonies in Ukraine, we find another case in which the Soviet government allowed an ethnic minority to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and the Agro-Joint played a crucial role in their emigration just before the collectivization drive began, supporting several hundred Staroshveds, or Gammalsvenskby, as they left for Sweden in 1929. Gammalsvenskby were the old-Swedish-speaking people originating in Estonia who had settled on the Ukrainian Steppe in the nineteenth century. They were neighbors of the Jewish colonists. When some of them decided to return to Sweden, Samuil E. Liubarskii met with Gammalsvenskby representatives in Moscow, agreed to clandestinely buy their lands and houses in the Berislav region, and promised to support their emigration to Sweden.⁶² According to Andrej Kotljarchuk, a Swedish historian of Gammalsvenskby, "the Joint played the role of non-official representative of the United States to the Soviet Union until 1933."⁶³

During the period under consideration, Rosen had a close relationship with Soviet high officials such as Petr Smidovich, the president of KOMZET. Rosen

had a common interest with the Soviet government in promoting the Crimean colonization project. The Joint's campaign to raise funds in the United States in the middle of the 1920s caused disputes about whether the priority should be given to Crimea or Palestine, and the Crimean colonization project formed an axis of opposition between the Zionist and anti-Zionist camps. In the 1920s, the Yevseksiia made much use of the Jewish agricultural settlement project in the Soviet Union for anti-Zionist purposes. Palestine under the British Mandate often rivaled the Crimea Plan under the auspices of the Soviet government, and this rivalry divided diaspora Jews into two camps. The American Zionist attack on the Crimean project put He-Haluts and the Agro-Joint in a difficult situation in the Soviet Union. According to a secret report sent by the Zionist Organization in Russia to Palestine in July 1926, "the attack by the Yevseksiia on Zionists was intensified particularly by the negative stance of American Zionists toward the Crimean project." During the mass arrests of Zionists by the OGPU (State Political Directorate, or secret police), the report said, Rosen faced the dilemma of whether to withhold aid to the Crimean Project as an act of protest.⁶⁴

In March 1926, Rosen asked Felix Warburg, the chairman of the Joint, whether it was advisable to intervene against the anti-Zionist policy of the Soviet Union, "which might lead to [a] break with the [Soviet] government and to discontinuation of activities" of the Joint.⁶⁵ Of course Rosen did not want to provoke the Soviet government because his priority was to save the entire colonization project in the Soviet Union. In the end, *Halutsim* were rescued by the Zionist project. That is, they were "exiled" to Palestine. He-Haluts was officially outlawed in the USSR on March 1, 1928, all He-Haluts colonies were liquidated by 1929, and Tel Hai was renamed Krasnyi Oktiabr' (Red October). Benjamin Gorskhteyn left Russia at the end of 1926 and reached Palestine in February 1927. "Exiled" to the Yishuv, he found himself unemployed because of a severe economic crisis there and waited in vain for the coming of Rosen to Palestine.

Conclusion

As the United States virtually closed its doors to East European immigrants under the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act, many Russian and East European Jews were stranded in European ports. For Zionism, the colonization of Palestine under the British Mandate became more important and compelling than ever before. This was the context in which the Soviet government offered another colonization scheme in Crimea. Crimea (and later Birobidzhan) under Soviet rule came to international attention as an alternative means of solving the "Jewish Question," a "Soviet Zion" against Zionism. Jewish opinions abroad were

divided over Crimea and Palestine. The Agro-Joint, with Soviet government support, invested millions of dollars for Jewish agricultural colonization in Crimea to make shtetl Jews “productive.”

As Israel Bartal argues in Chapter 1 of this volume, Jewish agricultural colonization in both Palestine and the Soviet Union was a continuation of the process that began in the first half of the nineteenth century in imperial Russia. Though competing with each other, the projects in the Soviet Union and in Palestine shared roots, and represented parallel endeavors for the future transformation of the Jewish people. Soviet policy makers, American Jewish leaders, and socialist Zionists alike tried to create a “new breed of Jewish farmer,” relocating them to a new world.

According to Anita Shapira in Chapter 3 of this volume, many Zionists from Russia felt an affinity for the Soviet Union rather than for the British Empire, which controlled the immigration quotas for Palestine. But, more substantially for my purposes, while the older generations involved in the Agro-Joint devoted themselves to saving Jewish agricultural colonies and Jewish agriculturalists in the international arena, the youth similarly sought a place for their utopia on a transnational scale. In hindsight, almost every effort appears to converge in Palestine and be part of Zionist history. In actuality, however, the boundary between Zionist and anti-Zionist forces was not only ambiguous; Zionists were supported by anti-Zionists and vice versa, at times with significant consequences for Soviet and local society, as the Jewish goal of “productivization” mediated between the two.

Notes

1. Henry J. Dannenbaum, *The Case of Palestine Versus Russia: Statement of Facts Presented at the Bar of American Public Opinion* (Houston, TX: private publishing, 1925).

2. See, for example, Herbert Parzen, “Enlargement of the Jewish Agency for Palestine: 1923–29, A Hope Hamstrung,” *Jewish Social Studies* 39 (1977): 129–58; Zosa Szajkowski, *The Mirage of American Jewish Aid in Soviet Russia 1917–1939* (New York: Szajkowski, 1977); Jerome Rosenthal, “Dealing with the Devil: Louis Marshall and the Partnership Between the Joint Distribution Committee and Soviet Russia,” *American Jewish Archives* 32 (April 1987): 1–22.

3. Mikhail Mitsel’, “Posledniaia glava” *Agro-Dzhoint v gody Bol’shogo terrora* (Kiev: Dukh i Litera, 2012).

4. Chizuko Takao, “The Origin of the Machine Tractor Station in the USSR: A New Perspective,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 19 (2002): 117–36. Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen does not agree with this view. See Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924–1941* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

5. Takao, “Origin of the Machine Tractor Station”; Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land*.

6. Yihezkel Keren, *Ha-bityashvut ba-baklait ba-Yehudit ba-batsi ba-i Krim* (Jerusalem: Zak, 1973), 18–20.

7. Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 132.

8. Yehuda Slutzky, "Gekbolutz Perek be-toldot ha-'itonut ha-Tsiyonit-Rusit," *Shevut* 1 (1973): 131–37. Gekholutz ceased publication in the middle of 1926 for lack of funds.
9. Joseph Rosen file no. 83, "He-Haluts in Soviet Russia, 1924–1925," YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York (hereafter YIVO Archives).
10. Slutzky, "Gekbolutz," 132.
11. Rivka Vainshtein-Vilkomirski, "Tel-Hai be-reshitah," in *Halutsim bayinu be-Rusyah*, ed. Yehudah Erez (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1976), 386–87.
12. This sum includes \$5,250 to the commune Tel Hai, \$4,000 to the commune Ma'ayan, and \$1,400 the central committee of He-Haluts. Joseph Rosen file no. 140, YIVO Archives.
13. Shmuel Sandler, "Ben-Gurion's Attitude Toward the Soviet Union," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 21 (1979): 145–60; Anita Shapira, *Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 69–71.
14. David Ben-Gurion, *Zikbronot* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1971), 1:241–44. Ben-Gurion noted the monotony of Jewish life in Russia: "A great majority of the Jewish youth are cut off from all the public life, and except for Communism and Palestine, there is absolutely nothing for them" (244).
15. Correspondence from Ben-Gurion to He-Haluts Central Committee, March 28, 1924, Joseph Rosen file no. 83, YIVO Archives.
16. Dana G. Dalrymple, "Joseph A. Rosen and Early Russian Studies of American Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 38 (1964): 157–60.
17. Agro-Joint file no. 52a, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (hereafter, JDC) Archives, New York; *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co, 1943), 9:202–3.
18. See also Bartal, Chapter 1 in this volume.
19. S.Ia Borovoi, *Evreiskaia zemledel'cheskaia kolonizatsiia v staroi Rossii* (Moscow: M. i S. Sabashnikovykh, 1928), 55.
20. *Ibid.*, 195.
21. Volodymir Shchukin, *Evreiskie zemledel'cheskie kolonii Khersonskoi gubernii (XIX-nachalo XX vv.): ocherki istorii* (Nikolaev: Izdatel' Shamrai P. N., 2016), 78.
22. Takao, "Origin of the Machine Tractor Station," 117–36.
23. Report by S. E. Liubarskii, 1923, Joseph Rosen file no. 191, YIVO Archives.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History-RGASPI), Moscow, Petr G. Smidovich fond 151, opis'1, delo43, listok4.
26. James Rosenberg to Bernard Kahn, January 23, 1925, Agro-Joint file no. 508, JDC Archives.
27. In 1924, JDC's annual income fell to \$ 570,000. Louis Marshall to James Rosenberg, March 19, 1925, Agro-Joint file no. 508, JDC Archives.
28. "Form of land settlement with utmost protection of interests of Jewish land settlers, Memorandum to A. Rosen from E. A. Grower, February 20, 1925," Agro-Joint file, no. 508, JDC Archives.
29. I. S. Urisson to Rosen, February 26, 1925 (translated from Russian to English May 13, 1925). Summary of memorandum of E. A. Grower, legal adviser, and comments of legal adviser Isaak Sovel'evich Urisson to Felix M. Warburg, Herbert Lehman, Louis Marshall, and James N. Rosenberg, Agro-Joint file no. 508, JDC Archives.
30. *Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of the sessions of the National Conference Launching the United Jewish Campaign for the 15,000,000, 1925*, United Jewish Campaign, 1925, 87. Zosa.Szajkowski Archives (miscellaneous unnumbered files), Centre for the Research and Documentation of East European Jewry, Jerusalem.
31. Takao, "Origin of the Machine Tractor Station."
32. Agreement between the government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation ("Agro-Joint"), November 24, 1924, Agro-Joint file no. 533, JDC Archives.
33. *Evrejskii kresti'ianin* 1 (1925): 144–46.
34. Yuri Larin, "Novoe evreiskoe zemledelie v SSSR," *Na agrarnom fronte* 5–6 (1925): 112–22.

35. Yuli Gol'de, "Opyt goda pereselencheskoj raboty," *Evreiskii krest'ianin* 2 (1926): 63.
36. Report by Samuil E. Liubarskii "Privlechenie evreev k sel'sko-khoziaistvennym promyslam i ustroistvo evreiskikh poselenii v Krymu," 1923, Joseph Rosen file no. 191, YIVO Archives.
37. From Samuil E. Liubarskii and A. O. Fabrikant on their inspection on the Crimean settlement, 1925, Joseph Rosen file no. 195, YIVO Archives.
38. Arther Ruppín, "Colonization in Russia and Palestine: The Basic Difference Between the Two Colonization Systems," *New Palestine*, February 24, 1928, 236.
39. Artels (association cooperatives) are a type of collective farm (*kolkhoz*) that share principal livestock, land, and farm tools.
40. Report on Agro-Joint Work in the Crimea, 1925, Joseph Rosen file no. 193, YIVO Archives.
41. "They all switched to individual farms from the former fictitious collectives (Oni vse pereshli na indivial'noe vedenie khoziajstva, prezhnie fiktivnye kollektivy unichtozheny)." See Lubarsky's letter to B. E. Gorshteyn, June 22, 1927, Gorshteyn private archives.
42. Ruppín, "Colonization in Russia and Palestine," 236.
43. Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land*, 153.
44. Abraham Kahan, "Mendel Elkin and the Worker's Legion," *Forward*, November 11, 1925.
45. Author interview with Zeheva Gordon, June 30, 1986. Gordon left Russia during World War I and reached Palestine in 1923. Within a few months after arrival, she became a member of the Gdud.
46. Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 206–9.
47. On the background of Soviet tolerance of Zionist activities in the first half of 1920s, see Ziva Galili, "Zionism in the Early Soviet State: Between Legality and Persecution," in *Revolution, Repression, and Revival: The Soviet Jewish Experience*, ed. Zvi Gitelman and Yaacov Ro'i (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 37–68.
48. J. B. Schechtman, "The U.S.S.R, Zionism, and Israel," in *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917*, ed. Lionel Kochan (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 118.
49. Ziva Galili and Boris Morozov, *Exiled to Palestine: The Emigration of Zionist Convicts from the Soviet Union, 1924–1934* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
50. Part of this interview was translated into English and deposited in the JDC Archives in New York in 1988.
51. Correspondence and reports relating to collective Tel-Hai, Joseph Rosen file no. 237, YIVO Archives. According to the journal *Gekbolutz*, "agronomist of the Commune, comrade Gorshteyn plays a great role to facilitate the Jewish settlers to adapt themselves to agricultural works," *Gekbolutz* 11–12 (1925): 26; B. Gorshteyn, "Shikum ha-moshavot ha-hakla'iyot ha-yehudiyot be-drom ukraina," in *Haklaim yebudim be-arabot rusiyah* (Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1965), 383–86.
52. See, for example, "Colonists and Artisans Conference Opens in Crimea, Moscow, April 14," *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, April 15, 1926, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, New York.
53. Author interview with B. Gorshteyn, June 28, 1986, JDC Archives, Reference Code NY AR192132/4/30/1/457b.
54. James N. Rosenberg, *On the Steppes* (New York: Knopf, 1927), 72.
55. Author interview with Shterna Ninburg, December 20, 1986.
56. Correspondence from Mr. Barlas to Colonel Kisch, Oct. 3, 1928 (re. support to immigrations from Russia), Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, S6/580.
57. Correspondence from A. Hantke to Zionist executive and the director of Keren Hayesod, London, March 27, 1925, Central Zionist Archives, Z4/2547; and December 31, 1925, Central Zionist Archives, Z4/5473.
58. Correspondence from F. H. Kisch, Palestine Zionist executive, to the Political Secretary, London, May 3, 1926, Central Zionist Archives, S6/580.
59. Felix Rosenblith later changed his name to Pinhas Rosen and became Israel's first minister of justice.
60. Correspondence from Felix Rosenblith (Zionist organization London) to Colonel F. H. Kisch (Jerusalem), Oct. 30, 1928, Central Zionist Archives, S6/580.

61. Ibid.

62. Andrej Kotljarchuk, "*V kuznitse Stalina*": *Shvedskije kolonisty Ukrainy v totalitarnykh eksperimentakh XX veka* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2012), 70–76. Though returned to their "home," Gammalsvenskby were disappointed with the Swedish policy toward them, and many decided to leave for the Soviet Union in 1930. See also Per Anders Rudling, "Ukrainian Swedes in Canada: Gammalsvenskby in the Swedish-Canadian Press 1929–1931," *Scandinavian Canadian Studies* 15 (2005): 62–91.

63. Kotljarchuk, "*V kuznitse Stalina*," 71.

64. "Ha-histadrut ha-Tsiyonit ha-kelalit be-Rusyah: Matsavah ve-'avodatah," Central Zionist Archives, ZA/2130. This secret report was written by A. Schachuwowitz, a representative of the Central Committee of the General Zionist Organization in Russia.

65. Cable from Rosen to Warburg, March 24, 1926, Agro-Joint file no. 509, JDC Archives.

CHAPTER 14

Refuseniks and Rights Defenders: Jews and the Soviet Dissident Movement

Benjamin Nathans

In October 1970, on the eve of Simchat Torah, an enormous crowd gathered in front of the Moscow Choral Synagogue on Arkhipova Street. In his report on the event to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Philipp Bobkov, the head of the KGB's division for combatting domestic dissent, estimated that roughly twelve thousand individuals had taken part, singing and dancing to "nationalist songs." The celebratory mood also included the circulation of a samizdat copy of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), distributed—according to Bobkov—by Zionist students from local institutions of higher education aiming to foster "the emigration mood."¹

The Universal Declaration's appearance as ersatz Torah, at the dawn of a decade characterized by leading human rights historians as "the breakthrough," invites us to revisit the relationship between Soviet Jewish activists and the broader dissident movement, whose primary goal was to induce the Soviet government to observe its own laws, including civil rights enshrined in the Soviet constitution.² The presence of such a large crowd at an unsanctioned gathering in the capital of the Soviet Empire serves as a reminder that, in its heyday, the Jewish national movement outsized the older and more diverse group known as "rights defenders" (*pravozashchitniki*), at least if measured by numbers of participants at demonstrations and signers of collective petitions. Indeed, among the various ethnic and national activists striving for greater autonomy and/or geographic relocation, Soviet Jews were second in number only to Crimean Tatars.

Like many movements of social protest, dissent in the late Soviet era consisted of a congeries of loosely allied groups, with overlapping but distinct grievances vis-à-vis the Soviet system. Russian and other nationalists sought cultural and political autonomy; religious believers sought greater freedom to worship

and to transmit their faith to their children. “Punished peoples” such as the exiled Chechens and Crimean Tatars campaigned to return to ancestral homelands, while neo-Leninists and monarchists sought to return to their imagined pasts. Activists for civil and human rights, bearers of the dissident movement’s lingua franca who occupied the nerve center of its communication network within and beyond the USSR’s borders, strove to uphold civil liberties enshrined in the Soviet constitution and in international rights covenants such as the Universal Declaration and, after 1975, the Helsinki Accords. Over the course of the 1970s and up to the eve of the USSR’s dissolution, only a *single* one of these dozen or more groups could claim visible success in achieving its self-declared goals: the movement for Jewish emigration. Between the 1970 Simchat Torah gathering in Moscow and Leonid Brezhnev’s death in 1982, the Kremlin permitted more than a quarter of a million Jews to exit the USSR.³ Such an achievement was not only without parallel in the annals of dissent in the Soviet Union; one recent study called it “the preeminent case of Jewish human rights activism.”⁴

As with the unraveling of the Soviet Union, many parties have been eager to claim credit for this remarkable fact. The determination and fortitude of Soviet Jewish activists and the larger community of refuseniks have been celebrated in dozens of first-person accounts. In much of the secondary literature on what is commonly called the “Jewish national awakening,” the former *Jews of Silence* (the title of Elie Wiesel’s 1966 report on his visit to the Soviet Union the preceding year) become the *Jews of Hope* (the title of the historian Martin Gilbert’s study of the same subject two decades later) as they prepare their exodus from the Soviet behemoth.⁵ The emigration movement’s genesis is commonly ascribed to factors both within and beyond the Soviet Union. Rising discrimination in education and employment threatened to reverse the meteoric rise of Jews in the Soviet system, while Israel’s transformative victory in the Six-Day War gave many Soviet Jews, no less than their counterparts elsewhere in the world, a visceral sense of identification with the Jewish state. As Dmitry Shumsky recently noted, the historiography of Soviet Jewry still tends to present its subject in terms of a contest between assimilation and nationalism, even as scholarship on modern European Jewry as a whole (to which Soviet Jews ought to belong) has recognized the centrality of the process of acculturation as well as the extent to which Jewish nationalism, including Zionism, represents a form of assimilation to European nationalisms.⁶ In other respects, historians of the Jewish national movement in the late Soviet era have been methodologically precocious: For decades they have explored its transnational dimensions, highlighting the flow of people, texts, and goods across continents and stressing the historical work that got done outside the realm of formal state-to-state relations (without, however,

neglecting the latter). In fact the lion's share of academic scholarship (especially in English) on the mass emigration of Soviet Jews has focused on the relationship of the Jewish national movement to actors on the other side of the Iron Curtain: citizens' initiatives in the United States, Canada, and Britain to free Soviet Jewry; the U.S. Congress and its passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in 1974, linking U.S. trade to Soviet policies on emigration; and, despite restricted access to relevant sources, the clandestine work of Israel's Lishkat ha-Kesher.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship of the Jewish national movement to actors closer to home, namely to the Soviet rights defenders who championed Soviet civil rights and international human rights, including the right to leave one's country. The burgeoning field of human rights history has drawn attention to the variety of ways by which local movements have deployed what was rapidly becoming the dominant moral vocabulary of late twentieth-century global society.⁷ This process is of particular salience to the Jewish national struggle in the USSR insofar as that struggle constituted, by the mid-1970s, one of the most prominent human rights arenas of the Cold War, repeatedly insinuating its way into superpower summits and front-page headlines. During and after the Cold War, moreover, Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union transformed the Jewish landscape in North America, Germany, and, above all, Israel, where Jews from former Soviet territories now constitute roughly 20 percent of the country's population.

For Soviet Jewish activists, international prominence was a double-edged sword, ensuring high visibility but also entangling the hoped-for Jewish exodus in a host of geopolitical issues, from Soviet relations with the Arab world to the principle of noninterference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. Such entanglements mirrored the tensions that typically arise when universal human rights norms are applied to an emphatically national, particularist movement such as Jewish emigration. Those tensions in turn found their sharpest expression in the fraught relations between individual refuseniks and rights defenders—or within individuals who at various times belonged to both communities.

As with the late imperial Russian revolutionary movement, a remarkable proportion of late Soviet-era dissidents were of Jewish background—far higher than the proportion of Jews in the Soviet population at large. It was by no means obvious that this should be so. In the aggregate, after all, Soviet Jews were extraordinarily successful, outperforming all of the USSR's many ethnic groups, including Russians, whether the benchmark was higher education, residence in desirable urban centers such as Moscow and Leningrad, entrance into prestigious occupations, or prominence in high-status pursuits, from filmmaking to physics. Yet behind hundreds of thousands of individual Jewish success stories

loomed a collective loss of Jewish languages and culture, a complex outcome of both self-Russification and suppression of the Jewish inheritance (religious and national) by the Soviet regime. By the middle of the twentieth century, moreover, what had been the world's first anti-anti-Semitic state, the country most responsible for crushing the Jews' mortal enemy (i.e., Nazi Germany), was now engaged in its own state-sponsored persecution of those it branded "cosmopolitans" and "Zionists." By the time of Brezhnev's rise to power in the late 1960s, the USSR's affirmative action policies had caught up with the Jews, effectively putting a halt to, and in some cases reversing, their meteoric rise. Like its tsarist predecessor, the Soviet government decided to limit Jewish access to institutions of higher education and white-collar professions—the major difference being that Soviet quotas were kept secret, thereby fueling rumors and uncertainty among a generation of Jews whose hopes of matching their parents' achievements were quickly fading.

When the dissident Russian nationalist writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn came to the conclusion in the 1960s that the USSR was doomed, he did so—or so he claimed four decades later—based in part on what he observed to be the rising disaffection of Jews with the Soviet system.⁸ However dubious Solzhenitsyn's assumption that the Soviet project relied on Jewish support to keep it going (Jews at that time constituting roughly 1 percent of the Soviet population), there is no denying that in the Soviet dissident movement, as in the late imperial Russian revolutionary movement, Jews constituted a strikingly higher proportion than they did in the Soviet population at large. To be sure, neither of the two most famous Soviet dissidents—Solzhenitsyn himself and the physicist Andrei Sakharov—were Jewish, although their enemies falsely accused them of having changed their original names from Solzhenitsker and Tsukerman (the latter a Yiddish variant on *sakhar*, the Russian word for sugar). But a striking range of cardinal figures in the dissident movement, starting with Alexander Esenin-Volpin, the progenitor of the rights-based "legal" strategy of dissent, were indeed partly or wholly of Jewish origin.⁹ Other prominent Jewish dissidents included Larisa Bogoraz-Brukhman, one of the organizers, along with Pavel Litvinov (grandson of Stalin's foreign minister, Maxim Litvinov [Meir Wallach-Finkelstein]), of the August 1968 demonstration on Red Square against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and Natalia Gorbanevskaja, a participant in that demonstration and one of the founders, earlier that year, of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the most important dissident periodical (Gorbanevskaja's father was Jewish). To this list could be added Raisa Berg, Elena Bonner, Ilya Gabai, Yuri Glazov, Semon Gluzman, Lev Kopelev, Dina Kaminskaia, Viktor Krasin, Grigorii Pomerants, Boris Shragin, Boris Tsukerman, Petr Vail, Vladimir Voinovich, Petr Yakir, and many others. Even among Russian Orthodox dissidents,

three of the most significant were of Jewish origin: Alexander Men, Anatolii Levitin-Krasnov, and Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov. "I'm outraged that 85 percent of Democratic Movement members are Jews!," the poet Naum Korzhavin (Mandel) once quipped. "The percentage ought to be fair: fifty-fifty!"¹⁰

It was not only the dissident *movement* that was ethnically mixed. Thanks to high rates of intermarriage among the first generation of the Soviet intelligentsia, so were many of their offspring, including those who joined the movement and who had, without exception, grown up in the intensely multi-ethnic Soviet milieu. Even in cases of individuals with comparatively unalloyed ancestry, ethnic identities were commonly subject to criss-crossing attractions and repulsions. Thus Larisa Bogoraz-Brukhman described herself as having "an unquestionable genetic tie with Jewry" even as her entire sensory apparatus—"what the eye sees, the ear hears, the skin feels"—led her to self-identify as Russian.¹¹ When Andrei Sakharov became acquainted with Yasha Tseitlin, a fellow physicist, he was reminded of his childhood friend Grisha Umansky: both displayed a "contemplative nature, a melancholy empathy that seems to be an innate Jewish characteristic," and that not coincidentally echoed many descriptions of Sakharov's own temperament.¹²

Equally striking, among leading activists in the Jewish national movement were more than a few individuals who began as rights defenders advocating the general rule of law, only to shift their activities, typically beginning in the late 1960s, to the world of refuseniks. Mikhail Agursky, Mark Azbel, Eduard Kuznetsov, Vitalii Rubin, Anatolii (Natan) Sharansky, Vladimir Slepak, Julius Telesin, Maia Ulanovskaia, and Alexander and Nina Voronel belong to this category—some as defectors, others as bridge builders between the two milieux. To the best of my knowledge, there was not a single example of a shift in the opposite direction, from the refusenik to the rights-defending cause.

For different reasons, both the U.S. and Soviet governments tended to view refuseniks and rights defenders as part of a single phenomenon. Of all the varieties of national and religious ferment in late Soviet society, the Jewish case was most closely connected to the dissidents at large, on the level of personnel and contacts abroad. In the binary thinking characteristic of (but by no means limited to) the Cold War, Washington and Moscow were both primed to lump together all those identified as "anti-Soviet."¹³ Communist officials, mindful perhaps of their own party's earlier stigmatization as a largely Jewish affair, were not above applying the same stigma to the dissident movement, condemning the latter as a Zionist plot and pressuring numerous dissidents, including non-Jewish ones, to emigrate to Israel.

While Sakharov and other rights defenders privately expressed regret that so many members of the Jewish intelligentsia—and thus, from their point of

view, actual or potential supporters of the dissident movement—were seeking to exit the USSR, they consistently spoke out in support of Soviet Jews whose applications for visas had been refused. Within two years of its founding, the *Chronicle of Current Events* instituted a regular section (run by Rubin and Sharansky) called “News from the Jewish Community,” reporting on instances of rejected visa applications, arrests and trials of Jewish activists, and the fate of those who had been sent to the camps. Sakharov and other members of the Moscow Committee for Human Rights, founded in 1970, added their signatures to some of the earliest petitions by refuseniks and attended numerous public demonstrations by and trials of refuseniks. In one of his most controversial acts—because it violated the dissident movement’s categorical rejection of violence—Sakharov petitioned the Soviet government for clemency for Mark Dymshits and Eduard Kuznetsov, leaders of a group of refuseniks in the attempted hijacking of a plane in Leningrad in June 1970, who had been sentenced to death for treason.¹⁴

In his memoirs, Sakharov acknowledged that “there was some question whether [the Leningrad hijacking affair] was properly a human rights matter.”¹⁵ Human rights were indeed the lens through which dissidents judged the issue of Jewish emigration. And precisely because they framed the exit from one’s country as a *human* right, as a necessary component of freedom of movement and thus of human dignity, rights defenders sidestepped the specifically *Jewish* rationale for emigration, grounded in the Zionist idea of return to the Jewish homeland. In a letter of September 21, 1971, addressed to the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Sakharov wrote that “Soviet citizens of Jewish as well as many other nationalities—Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Armenians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Turko-Meskhetians and others—who are striving to leave for personal, national, or other reasons, are being denied permission for years without cause, and these denials reduce their lives to a constant torment of waiting.”¹⁶ Rights defenders also avoided the analogous *Soviet* rationale of “repatriation,” grounded in Moscow’s longstanding policy of territorializing certain Soviet ethnic and national groups in their putative republican or regional homelands. Consistent with Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, moreover, Sakharov, Esenin-Volpin, Vladimir Bukovsky, and other leading rights defenders insisted that the right to leave one’s country of birth should be paired with the right to return to it.¹⁷

Informed by the moral absolutism of human rights discourse, rights defenders’ support for the refusenik cause was thus driven by an overlapping but distinct logic vis-à-vis that of the refuseniks themselves. Not only Jews but *all* Soviet citizens should have the right to leave the country if they wished, whether for repatriation or any other purpose or indeed for no particular purpose at all. The

Soviet state should acknowledge the right not only to leave but to *return*, in contrast to its practice of automatically stripping Soviet citizenship from those who emigrated and de facto barring their return—unless the latter was carried out in full penitential mode.

How did Soviet Jewish activists view rights defenders and their principled maximalism on the subject of emigration? As the historian Juliane Fürst has noted, for all the talk of specifically Jewish factors behind the Jewish national movement in the USSR—Soviet anti-Semitism, the wildly popular samizdat edition of Leon Uris's novel *Exodus*, Israel's victory in the Six-Day War—refuseniks and rights defenders were largely formed by the same Soviet institutions and overwhelmingly belonged to the same historical generation (the "people of the sixties" [*shestidesiatniki*]), as well as to the same privileged social class (the intelligentsia).¹⁸ Whether or not they had first taken part in the broader dissident movement, Jewish activists began by adopting many of that movement's techniques, couching their demands in terms of law and rights, staging public demonstrations, and, above all, creating an alternative sphere of communication via samizdat, including a remarkable range of underground periodicals beginning in 1970, including *Iton*, *Evrei v SSSR*, *Tarbut/Kul'tura*, and many others (all of them, incidentally, in Russian).¹⁹

Remarkably, the editor of one of the first Jewish samizdat periodicals, *Iskbod* (*Exodus*), Viktor Fedoseyev, was an ethnic Russian whose wife was Jewish. On the cover of each edition of *Iskbod* were two epigraphs, one consisting of Article 13 of the UDHR, on the right to leave and return to one's country, the other excerpted from Psalm 137 ("If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her cunning."). Since the mid-1960s, the samizdat *Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Imprisoned Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR* had featured a quotation from the New Testament on its cover (verse 13:3 from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Remember the prisoners, as though you were in prison with them."). Since its inception in 1968, the *Chronicle of Current Events* had featured UDHR Article 19 (on the free flow of information) on its cover. *Iskbod* adopted both approaches in an attempt to marry universal and particularist agendas. The marriage did not last long.

By the early 1970s, the Jewish national movement was increasingly divided between so-called *kulturniki*, who sought to strengthen Jewish life in the USSR by reviving Jewish culture and the Hebrew language, and *politiki*, who considered emigration to Israel the only solution to the Soviet Jewish predicament. It was a split eerily reminiscent of that between Jewish *da-istn* and *dort-istn* (the "here-ists" and "there-ists") in the late tsarist era, except that the proportions were reversed: with Israel no longer a fantasy but a sovereign state, reachable from

Moscow within hours by airplane via Rome or Vienna, politiki easily outnumbered kulturniki. No less divisive was the split among Jewish activists between those who favored and those who rejected cooperation with the broader dissident movement. Advocates pointed to the many forms of support provided by members of the Moscow Human Rights Committee and other rights defenders; to the likelihood that a general liberalization of the Soviet regime would foster a more open attitude toward Jewish emigration; and to the ubiquitous motive for coalition building—strength in numbers. Opponents of cooperation with rights defenders offered tactical, moral, and ideological counterarguments. Association with the broader dissident movement would only heighten the impression that Jewish activists were anti-Soviet, thereby leading to greater repression by the KGB. Those who sought to leave the USSR, it was further argued, “do not have the moral right to interfere” in the affairs of the country they aimed to abandon. This view—antithetical to even a minimal concept of universal human rights—was expressed by many would-be emigrants, including Evgenii Yakir, cousin of Petr Yakir, a leading rights defender until his arrest in 1972.²⁰ Finally, participation in the general dissident movement was taken as a symptom of precisely the kind of assimilation that was anathema to Soviet Zionists—a repetition of the fatal Jewish attraction to the Russian revolutionary movement a century earlier. Collaboration with the general dissident movement, according to one activist, would “deprive the Jewish national movement of its spiritual authenticity, its precise goals, and its maneuverability, and without these aspects it would become simply a part of the dissident phenomenon.”²¹ Shortly before his emigration to Israel in 1975, Alexander Voronel, who had taken part in the birth of legal dissent at the trial of the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, went further: “We must now remain aloof, while it is not yet too late to separate our problems from their [the Russian people’s] problems. Otherwise they will solve our fate together with their problems, and this solution will be radical.”²²

While the Soviet regime still existed, mutual criticisms among the various currents within the dissident movement were understandably muted, given the shared risk of persecution. Memoirs published prior to the 1990s display a distinct reticence in this regard. With the passing of the USSR, as well as of many leading dissident figures, formerly silent grievances began to emerge.²³ In a 2007 interview, Voronel faulted Sakharov for having “always fought for other people” and thus lacking a healthy sense of self-interest. This was a variation on an old theme, voiced by Russian nationalist critics of dissidents in the 1970s: by supporting greater autonomy for Jews, Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Baptists, and other minority groups, rights defenders had undermined whatever appeal they might have gained vis-à-vis ethnic Russians, an indispensable constituency for any

movement claiming to be democratic. For Voronel, rights defenders practiced the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice—all the more reason, therefore, for Jews to keep their distance.²⁴

In their choice of tactics, Jewish nationalist activists increasingly moved beyond rights defenders' strategy of promoting the rule of law, which required remaining strictly within its bounds and therefore excluded acts of civil disobedience. More media savvy than most dissidents, refuseniks staged sit-ins at the presidium of the Supreme Soviet wearing yellow stars on their coats—and made sure that Western journalists were present to photograph them.²⁵

One of the most extraordinary records of the transformation of a Soviet Jewish rights defender into an (anti-)Soviet Zionist, as my former student Alexander Hazanov has shown, can be found in the diaries of Vitalii Rubin.²⁶ A highly regarded sinologist, Rubin kept a diary from 1956 until his death in 1981, five years after emigrating to Israel. In the early 1960s, the Sino-Soviet split provided an initial opportunity to voice his criticism of the Soviet system, if only obliquely, via attacks on Maoist China as a "totalitarian" state that denied its citizens elementary individual rights. Like many rights defenders, Rubin was devastated by Moscow's crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968—the event that, more than any other, planted seeds of pessimism regarding the dissident movement and triggered Rubin's decision to apply for a visa to Israel. Just as Cold War concepts of freedom versus totalitarianism had shaped his views on China and the USSR, they increasingly informed his identification with Jews as a "free" people, in contrast to the "slave mentality" he found in the Soviet, which is to say, Russian, population. To be sure, the antinomies of freedom and slavery had a long history in Zionist thought, going back to Ahad Ha'am's 1891 essay "Slavery in Freedom" and the later idea of "negation of the diaspora." But these were critiques of Jewish assimilation, or "spiritual slavery," as Ahad Ha'am called it. For Rubin, and for Cold War Zionism, the freedom of Soviet Jews was now defined as liberation from *Russian* totalitarian slavery. As Rubin's wife, Ina Aksel'rod-Rubina, wrote, "The feeling that we were 'free people' came . . . when we submitted our documents to emigrate to Israel."²⁷ Sharansky similarly describes how widespread approval of the invasion of Prague shaped his view of the mentality of the typical Soviet person: "His self-respect derived from being part of the Soviet system, and the more powerful the system, the stronger he felt. . . . This mentality constituted the real power of the regime . . . the consciousness of the slave who looks for guidance to the good tsar, the leader, the teacher." Sharansky therefore dated his liberation not to his arrival in Israel in 1986, but thirteen years earlier, when he applied to leave the Soviet Union: "At the age of twenty-five [i.e., in 1973] I finally learned what a joy it was to be free."²⁸

I noted earlier that the Jewish national movement was split between those who sought to rebuild Jewish life in the Soviet Union and those who regarded emigration to Israel as the only viable solution to the Jewish predicament, with the latter outnumbering the former within the movement. It is worth recalling, however, that both *kulturniki* and *politiki* were outnumbered by those Soviet Jews who belonged to neither group and, when given the choice, emigrated according to the criteria set forth by the UDHR, acting as individuals unmotivated by Zionism, repatriation, or any other collective purpose. By 1977, half of all Soviet Jewish emigrants, having crossed the Soviet border with Israeli visas in hand, opted instead to settle in North America and other regions in the West. A decade later, the proportion of so-called dropouts had risen to 88 percent, before being drastically reduced in 1990 by mutual agreement of the U.S. and Israeli governments.²⁹ The reality of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews deciding for themselves between the logic of repatriation and the logic of the Universal Declaration cast the tension between Soviet Zionists and Soviet rights defenders into exceptionally sharp relief. “We were not only disillusioned,” wrote Mark Azbel, the rights defender turned refusenik, near the height of the “drop-out” phenomenon, “we were humiliated”:

The very possibility of anyone leaving the Soviet Union was due to the heroic efforts of Jews who dreamed of Israel, who sacrificed their liberty, and in some cases their lives, to build the road to freedom. In our opinion, those who rejected Israel cast shame and mockery upon the memory of these people. . . . To abandon our country [i.e., Israel] in favor of another that offered more goods, more choices—I couldn’t stop feeling ashamed of the people who made this choice. These same people would run to Israel if the need arose, and if Israel should ever be annihilated again, the rest of the world would despise the Jews who let it happen. And they would be right.³⁰

Azbel went on to note that the ruse of applying for a visa to Israel while intending a different destination threatened to undermine the Kremlin’s willingness to allow any emigration at all. It remains indeed a mystery why Soviet leaders tolerated this legal fiction on a mass scale, which allowed tens of thousands of Soviet citizens to defect to the rival superpower, making a mockery of the “repatriation” argument in the eyes of both the Soviet population and the rest of the world.³¹

At various moments in this chapter I have alluded to similarities between arguments about emigration to the Jewish homeland (and elsewhere) in the late

Soviet and the late imperial eras. I would like to close with a brief attempt to push the historical comparison further in order to illuminate some parallels as well as particularities of the Soviet case. One ought to begin, perhaps, by noting that the shared designation “late” is anachronistic in both instances; contemporaries, especially in Brezhnev’s USSR, had no inkling that time was running out on the political order in which they found themselves. The two political systems themselves—tsarist and Soviet—were strikingly different when it came to the issue of emigration, Jewish or otherwise. While neither recognized a legal right to leave the country, only the USSR had the actual governing capacity to prevent it. The tsarist state perpetually struggled to regulate the movement of its population, both within and across the empire’s borders. Much of the Jewish emigration that occurred prior to the 1890s took place illegally via the lucrative trade in human smuggling, without the invocation of rights of any kind. The tsarist state eventually permitted transnational entities—above all the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), directed by Baron Maurice de Hirsch—to help organize Russian Jewish emigration at its point of origin, without formally recognizing a legal right on the part of Russian subjects to leave the empire. By 1913, the JCA had over five hundred bureaus in Russia’s western borderlands, offering information, advice, and financial assistance to would-be emigrants.³² The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, as Chizuko Takao demonstrates in Chapter 13 in the present volume, managed to secure similar arrangements for a brief time in Soviet Crimea in the 1920s. These arrangements, needless to say, were unthinkable during the Cold War.

The forms of collective Jewish organization and advocacy were also dramatically different in the late imperial and late Soviet eras. Late imperial Russian Jewry was a hothouse of political parties, each with its own executive committee, ideological program, dues-paying members, publications, and congresses. Jewish advocacy under the tsars also made unfettered and abundant use of Jewish languages, especially Yiddish. The Communist Party’s monopoly on public life under late Soviet socialism meant that Jewish activists were connected at best by loose networks formed largely through personal and professional ties, as well as through the circulation of samizdat. The steep decline in knowledge of Jewish languages across the Soviet era meant that Jewish samizdat was produced and consumed in the same discursive space as other Russian-language samizdat.

These contrasting structures, however, had one important quality in common: both closely mirrored the general forms of oppositional activity of their time. In both historical scenarios, the “general” movement (revolutionary in late imperial Russia, dissident in the late Soviet Union) included a disproportionate number of Jews and was stigmatized as a “Jewish” (or “Zionist”) plot. In both eras, key figures in the Jewish nationalist camp had passed through a phase of

activism in the “general” movement, only to despair of that movement’s capacity to achieve its goals. Moshe Leib Lilienblum, Leon Pinsker, Vladimir Medem, and Shlomo Rapaport (An-ski) found their distant reflections in Vitalii Rubin, Natan Sharansky, Mark Azbel, and Alexander Voronel. In the friction between refuseniks and rights defenders we can hear echoes of the arguments that once divided—and connected—Bundists and Bolsheviks.

The establishment of the modern State of Israel, driven primarily by immigrants from the former Russian Empire, permanently altered the Jewish landscape in that empire’s successor, the Soviet Union—perhaps more than anywhere else in the Jewish Diaspora, apart from the Arab World. But it was not only the pull of a resurrected Jewish sovereignty in the Middle East that explains the extraordinary emigration of Soviet Jews beginning in the late 1960s and continuing beyond the implosion of the USSR. That historic exodus developed in the context of an equally historic contest between two paradigms of human community: one based on the ideal of ethno-religious consolidation in a putatively indigenous territory (“repatriation” or “ingathering,” to use the Soviet and Jewish keywords), the other based on the ideal of individual choice (or “human rights,” to use the contemporary term). In this sense, the Soviet Jewish emigration movement represents not just a late chapter—perhaps the final chapter—in Jews’ entanglement between Europe’s East and the Middle East, but a symptom of the wider competition between the world of nation-states and the forces of globalization.

Notes

1. B. Morozov, ed., *Evreiskaia emigratsiia v svete novykh dokumentov* (Tel Aviv: Ivru, 1998), doc. 27, 107. Samizdat, literally “self-published,” refers to hand-typed texts circulated and copied by Soviet citizens outside the mechanisms of state censorship and publishing.

2. Samuel Moyn, “The Return of the Prodigal: The 1970s as a Turning Point in Human Rights History,” and Jan Eckel, “The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s,” both in *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, ed. Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 1–14, 226–59.

3. Yaacov Ro’i, ed., *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 107.

4. Michael Galchinsky, *Jews and Human Rights: Dancing at Three Weddings* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 51. Galchinsky’s book, it must be noted, is riddled with errors of fact and interpretation.

5. Dina Zisserman-Brodsky, “The ‘Jews of Silence’—the ‘Jews of Hope’—the ‘Jews of Triumph’: Revisiting Methodological Approaches to the Study of the Jewish Movement in the USSR,” *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 1 (2005): 119–39.

6. Dmitry Shumsky, “Ha-Historiyografiyah shel Yehude Berit ha-Mo’atsot ke-shetah ha-hefker shel ha-historiyografiyah ha-Yehudit: Hirhurim ‘ekav ha-’idan ha-Yehudi,” *Tsiyon* 72, no. 4 (2008): 457–70.

7. In addition to Eckel and Moyn’s *The Breakthrough* (note 2 above), see Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

8. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti let vmeste* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2002), 2:439–40.
9. Benjamin Nathans, "The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol'pin and the Idea of Rights Under 'Developed Socialism,'" *Slavic Review* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 630–63.
10. Quoted in Nina Voronel', Mark Azbel, Aleksandr Voronel', "Dvadtsat' let spustia (vospominaniia o protsesse Siniavskogo-Danielia)," *Dvadtsat' dva*, no. 46 (January–March 1986): 175. See also Maiia Ulanovskaia's quip about a meeting between Zionists and Democrats—all of them Jews. Maiia Ulanovskaia and Nadezhda Ulanovskaia, *Istoriia odnoi sem'i: Memuary* (Saint Petersburg: Inapress, 2003), 273.
11. Larisa Bogoraz, "Kto ia?," *Evrei v SSSR*, no. 1 (1972) [samizdat].
12. Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Random House, 1990), 47. On his childhood friendship with Grisha Umansky, Sakharov writes: "It seems to me that back then I was already attracted to something I can't quite describe, something I think of as Jewish intelligence. Or perhaps 'rich inner life' might be a better way of putting that quality found among even the poorest Jewish families" (19).
13. In one of Ronald Reagan's favorite jokes (or fantasies), Brezhnev allows an opposition political party to form but the Soviet Union remains a one-party state—because everyone joins the opposition party. Quoted in Jussi M. Hanhimaki and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 574.
14. Sakharov sought to balance his appeal on behalf of the Leningrad hijackers by pairing it with an appeal to the U.S. government for clemency for the American Communist Angela Davis, following her arrest for assisting an armed attempt by Black Panthers to free several prisoners during a trial.
15. Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 323.
16. Quoted in M. A. Morozova, *Anatomiia otkaza* (Moscow: RGGU, 2011), 223.
17. Article 13 of the UDHR reads: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."
18. Juliane Fürst, "Born Under the Same Star: Refuseniks, Dissidents and Late Socialist Society," in Ro'i, *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union*, 137–63.
19. For a comprehensive list of Jewish samizdat periodicals, see Ann Komaromi, "Jewish Samizdat—Dissident Texts and the Dynamics of the Jewish Revival in the Soviet Union," in Ro'i, *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union*, 286–88. See also the relevant sections of Komaromi's excellent website devoted to samizdat periodicals generally: <https://samizdat.library.utoronto.ca/>.
20. Morozova, *Anatomiia otkaza*, 232.
21. Quoted in B. Lazarus, *Dissidenty i evrei: kto porval zbeleznyi zhanaves?* (Tel Aviv: Effect Publishers, 1981), 34–35.
22. Alexander Voronel, "O vrednoi funktsii slov i probleme assimiliatsii evreev," *Evrei v SSSR* no. 7 (1974), 10 [samizdat]. Reprinted in *Evreiskii samizdat*, vol. 10 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1976).
23. See Benjamin Nathans, "Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs," *Journal of Modern History* 87 (September 2015): 579–614.
24. Komaromi interview with Voronel, described in Ro'i, *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union*, 298. On dissidents' reputation among Soviet Russians, see Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), esp. 304. Other critics of the rights defenders charged them with the opposite of naive selflessness: by emphasizing rights of free speech and assembly and focusing their activities on trials of their peers who had publicly criticized Soviet policies, they were allegedly defending the narrow interests of their own relatively small class, the intelligentsia.
25. See the account of one such sit-in in Mark Ya. Azbel, *Refusenik: Trapped in the Soviet Union* (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 243–45.
26. Vitalii Rubin, *Dnevnik. Pis'ma*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Biblioteka Aliya, 1989).
27. Ina Aksel'rod-Rubina, *Zhizn' kak zhizn': Vospominaniia* (Jerusalem: self-published, 2006), 2:83.
28. Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil* (New York: Random House, 1988), x–xv.

29. Ro'i, *The Jewish Movement in the Soviet Union*, 107. By 1990, roughly 180,000 Soviet Jews had emigrated to Israel and 185,000 to other countries.

30. Azbel, *Refusenik*, 420–21.

31. One can speculate that the Soviet government's motive for permitting (selective) Jewish emigration had to do with getting rid of troublemakers and avoiding potentially worse publicity than was created by the departure of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews for the capitalist West. It is also possible that concerns about Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel voiced by the USSR's clients in the Arab world led Moscow to turn a blind eye when Soviet Jews chose to settle in other countries. See, for example, the correspondence between the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Jordan, in Morozov, *Evreiskaia emigratsiia*, Doc. 48, 171–74.

32. Hans Rogger, "Government Policy on Jewish Emigration," in *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), ch. 6.

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